



NATIONAL OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK-(NOWN)

NEWSLETTER 4. NOVEMBER 2019

Including National Conference hosted by OWN NSW held in
NSW October 18 & 19

President's Pen



National President, Aloma Fennell. (Left)

Opening address to the National Conference held on 17 & 18 October 2019 and hosted by OWN NSW.

On behalf of our National Older Women's Network (NOWN), we acknowledge the traditional and continuing owners of the land on which we meet here today.

Beverly Baker OWN NSW, host State (Right)



I'll begin, sadly, with some apologies:



From our **Patron: Prof Gillian Triggs**. Who, as I am sure you are aware is now living and working in Geneva as the recently appointed Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. Responsible for Refugees. Gillian sends her best wishes for a successful conference.



From our **Patron the Hon Dame Quentin Bryce** who called this morning to advise her husband Michael had been taken to hospital. Quentin sends her apologies and her best wishes for a successful conference.

Apologies from Dr Sonia Laverty, the former head of OWN NSW someone who's team really put OWN NSW on the map and, who in a moment of spontaneity, perhaps madness, on meeting me for the first time, recruited me to restart and save what was then, OWN Australia. In doing so she said "I will give you the best people: Sharan Tuite (what would I do without her), Barbara Malcolm a true supporter, followed, unofficially, by Cate Turner my very own role model and NOWN's National Treasure. (Right).



Our sister organisations: **OWN Ontario, Canada** yes, we are in Canada, has sent their apologies for not attending and their very best wishes for a successful conference. As have members of **OWN U.K.** yes, we are in the U.K. as well, all send apologies and best wishes.

Sharing Good news is that last week I was informed by the head of the UN's Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) that I have been elected to join 3 other countries' new representatives as members of the steering committee of GAROP. This is a **fantastic boost internationally** to the status of NOWN and our advocacy efforts for older women.

At this time, I congratulate the NSW Administration for the excellent work they have done in preparing for this conference. I thank my Executive Assistant Mary Hacio, our Ambassador, Prof Shirley Randell AO and my husband, all of whom keep me sane, keep me going and are highly supportive. We, NOWN, have no external funding and operate solely on our capitation fees from States, along with our own deep personal pockets. We appreciate all this support given.

Let's now Acknowledge our National Councillors and I ask them to stand from NSW, from WA & from Qld. National Secretary Sharan Tuite, National Treasurer Larissa Bergmann and I make up the National Executive, we are all from NSW. National Councillors from W.A: Sue Joslin and Julie Boyd. From Queensland June Donnelly and Lee Hodgson.



(Minister Geoff Lee, Left with National President)

This conference is hosted by NSW. Every two years one of the State OWN's hosts a National Conference, the last one was held in Qld and the next will be in WA.

I honour those women who have gone before me from Sally Jones, Qld, Ruth Kershaw, W.A., Barbara Silverstone, NSW. These and many more wonderful women have gone ahead of us and many more will follow. We need to be sure that the path we now pave is the very best one for those who follow us. On this note I will argue at our National Council meeting tomorrow for a position of past presidents to honour these women and their efforts on behalf of

NOWN and the women of Australia. An Honour roll is already in the making and will be on our website in the very near future.

I am often asked what does NOWN do? Well I trust all our members know this.

We advocate, yes advocate, for the rights, dignity and wellbeing of the older women of Australia. We take the big picture and we do our best to support states in their focus areas. Yes, we take the big picture, the inequalities and we participate in National and International events, taking a place on the International stage, on international complex issues impacting Older women.

It is my view every country should have a dedicated Independent (Non Govt) National older person's commissioner. A commissioner who provides access to justice, access to the economy, access to the law. Older people, especially women should be entitled to free and just education on these issues, as well as on wills and testaments, and all personal matters. In support we need to show we care.



The Hon Susan Ryan AO former Age Discrimination Commissioner (Left). Susan was a speaker at this conference where she demonstrated she is a treasured supporter of National OWN. We thank Susan for stepping in for Dame Quentin Bryce with her tremendous experience, expertise and regard for NOWN.

Following Day one for the Conference, a Ministerial Reception was held at NSW Parliament house hosted by Minister Geoff Lee, Acting Minister for Seniors (see photo page 2). Following Day 2 of the Conference events NOWN held it's AGM when some new Councillors were elected:

Executive positions were filled by **Aloma Fennell (NSW) President. June Donnelly (Qld) Secretary and Cate Turner (NSW) Treasurer.** Getting ahead of ourselves, we mistakenly nominated a Vice President: AnnMarie Kestle from NSW. I say mistakenly as our current Constitution does not provide for a VP. We had been so determined to ensure we started to provide education and training for the position of future Presidents we prematurely voted on this position before adding the position to the Constitution. This change will of course be sent to all members for their agreement to this asap.

Since the Conference NOWN has been exceptionally busy with attendance at the 2 day CPSA Conference, the first GAROP teleconference (11pm appears to be the



best time for all international members), constitutional meetings, our National teleconference, the ES4W meeting in Brisbane (Qld) and my best friend from my university days going into a Care Home. Lastly as I write I have just returned from 2 days in Newcastle (NSW) when I attended the Aged Care Commission regional conference and I was invited to address the Commissioners. The morning immediately following this last conference was spent preparing for an ABC Breakfast radio interview which took place on 13 November. (Commissioner Briggs AO & National president)

I appreciate that the following may cause you some distress therefore it is wise, to

be recommended that you read this with a friend/supporter. The Aged Care Commission Conference was attended by approximately 200 people, a good mix of men and women although I would say there was certainly more women than men in attendance. Having said this quite several men made presentations. Each of us making a presentation were given 5 minutes only with a bell at the 4-minute mark. Some of the presentations were harrowing, very emotional and quite damning of many of the organisations mentioned. Given a choice I wouldn't want to be in any of them and when I arrived home, I made this clear to my loved ones. I spoke of a dear friend who had arrived from Tasmania to be nearer to her only grandson. She was in Wahroonga which is considered to be a very upmarket Sydney suburb not that the fact that it was up market should make any difference and I don't believe it did, given the stories told.

Most of the comments had to do with a lack of qualified nurses, minimum staffing numbers, costs of care, rampant ageism, evident lack of staff training and particularly with dementia education and training. There should be checks done on staff as there is with childcare workers. A clear need for a top down culture change with most of these residential homes.

(Commissioner Briggs & Sue Jarrad, Facilitator, below)



Again, with a focus on training, with staff selection, including use of English language and improved pay and conditions to attract quality staff. The need for different models of care for different issues/circumstances. One of the areas I had not heard discussed before was the need for awareness of the **grief and grieving** that would be suffered by residents as they left their previous home behind with all that goes with it, all of the familiarity and moving into a 'foreign' place.

There were many comments made regarding the need for established Power of Attorney, an area I ensured was covered by a Barrister who spoke on these topics on day 2 of the National Conference along with being sure of enduring guardianship, which our Barrister also discussed. The need for both areas to be well covered prior to entering any home care is critical to your legacy. In fact, critical even if you are not considering such a move.

Finally, as I have discussed many times, we need to be very aware of the isolated and vulnerable people in our communities: Lonely older people. Some friends who work with 'meals on wheels' have told us that many of the older people they visit would rather not have the meal they just need to have the visit, the visitor, someone to talk with, **someone who cares**.

Letter, The Age, 2 November 2019 (next page) Staff **who treat the aged with love and respect**

After reading the Aged Care Royal Commissioner's heart breaking interim report, I realise how lucky my parents were to find an aged care home where the staff treated them with kindness and respect – and who had time to care, chat/laugh with them and take an interest in their lives. We found the aged care home by luck. It was the only aged care home in their area that allowed them to sleep together.

Could the good aged care home providers please stand up and be counted?
Now more than ever, the public needs to know you exist.

Staff who treat the aged with love and respect

After reading the heartbreaking interim report, I realise how lucky my parents were to find an aged-care home where the staff treated them with kindness and respect - and had time to care, chat and laugh with them, and take an interest in their lives. We found the aged-care home by luck. It was the only one in my parents' area that allowed them to sleep together. Could the good aged care providers please stand up and be counted? Now more than ever, the public needs to know you exist.

Sarah Russell, Northcote

As was stated at the beginning of this newsletter, NOWN's primary purpose is to **represent and advocate for the rights, dignity and wellbeing of the older women of Australia**. We take the big picture and we do our best to support states in their focus areas. Yes, we take the big picture, the inequalities and lack of recognition and support for older women and we participate in National and International events, taking a place on the International stage, on international and complex issues impacting Older women.

From the National team we send you our best wishes for the upcoming festive season and we look forward to hearing from you as to how we can better support you:

Aloma Fennell, National President: NOWN contact nationalown@gmail.com.

