



Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

June 2012

www.olderdykes.org

Our future looks bright

On the 28 April around 25 women attended our discussion about the future of Ten Forty Matrix. The general consensus was that everyone wanted Ten Forty to continue.

A planning group of nine women was formed to handle the organising of our bi-monthly dinner and discussion evenings at Haberfield and Sunday social events. If you have any suggestions for topics or events please send them to contact@olderdykes.org and they will be forwarded to the organising group.

A program for the rest of the year is on page four. Any last minute changes will be sent out via the contact email list.

Damsels in De-Stress

(or How To Successfully Relax Without Really Trying)

6.00 pm

Saturday 2 June

Dinner and discussion

Mervyn Fletcher Hall, 81 Dalhousie Street (cnr Dixon St), Haberfield

BYO food to share and your own drinks.

Entry fee: \$10 fully waged, \$5 concession.

The evening's activities will be presented by not one, not two, but three women whose sole aim will be to show you how to have a "good time" by using simple but effective methods of dealing with stress.

You will have plenty of opportunity to practice the relaxation techniques we demonstrate as well as receiving the benefits of being "treated".

Come prepared to completely unwind, chill out and hang loose.

Please bring a pillow and towel (that you won't mind getting massage oil on)

Note: No-one will be asked to remove any clothing (which may disappoint some) except for shoes and socks.

The presenters undertake to wake up anyone who becomes so relaxed that they fall asleep before we turn off the lights and lock up the hall

Entry to the Mervyn Fletcher hall is in Dixon Street. There is unrestricted parking in Dixon St after 6pm.

By bus, catch the 436 or 438 buses which set down on the corner of Ramsay Road and Dalhousie Street. It takes less than half an hour from Central then a 2 minute walk from the bus stop to the hall.

Skirting Sydney

Social event - walking tour

Sunday 24 June

Meet: Circular Quay, Wharf 5

Time: 10.30 am to about 1 pm then lunch and the rest of the walk after lunch

Discover some of the less known city spaces women occupied promoting women's causes and abilities. Join us to discover who they were, where they were and how these women influenced public opinion and government.

Details of the walk can be downloaded from www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
To join the walk email contact@olderdykes.org by Saturday 23 June.

Dykes for Dinner

Thursday 14 June 2012

6 for 6.30pm

La Spiaggia - Italian cuisine
248 Coogee Bay Rd, Coogee
Fully licensed, no BYO

To book email contact@olderdykes.org.



For your diaries:

Gay Marriage: Reformist Rubbish or Great Leap Forward

6.00 pm
Saturday 4 August

Dinner and discussion
Facilitated by Margot
at Mervyn Fletcher Hall, Haberfield

Lesbians who Lunch

Thursday 7 June
12pm

Gioia Restaurant
126A Norton St
Leichhardt (near Marion St)

To book email
contact@olderdykes.org

About Ten Forty Matrix

Ten Forty Matrix is an informal group of lesbians over forty, many of whom have been socially and politically active in Sydney since 1987.

We enjoy discussion and debate on the issues we face in work, life and at home, and hold regular fun events to keep us in touch with the lighter side of life.

Ten years ago we established the website www.olderdykes.org to encourage national and international connections between older lesbians.

Ten Forty Matrix is not an organisation you have to join, but if you want to receive regular information about our activities

and our bi-monthly newsletter, email contact@olderdykes.org and ask to be put on our mailing list.

Newsletter

To receive a free emailed newsletter, please email contact@olderdykes.org

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website www.olderdykes.org

Who currently does what?

Events planning: Cheryl, Daniela, Diann, Frances, Gillian, Helen, Krystyna, Rob, Wendy

Contact listing in LOTL: Jan

Utilities box: Sylvia and Wendy

Money Management: Frances

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Dorothy, Diann,

Helen, Margot, Sandy

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Dorothy

If you would like to become involved in any of the above, or have some ideas about social events and/or topics for our bi-monthly dinner and discussion evenings, please email contact@olderdykes.org



Elsa's Farewell

On Tuesday 15 May more than 30 of her friends gathered at the Kemp's Creek Catholic Cemetery Natural Burial Field to farewell Elsa. There were her South American friends, both men and women, and women from the Older Women's Network and Ten Forty Matrix.

Elsa had chosen this place as offering the most natural form of burial - a grave in a field with no head stone and her name engraved on a rock. Her coffin was of natural unpolished wood with no metal. It appeared to be held together with wooden pegs and was quite beautiful.

Her pallbearers were all women. Liz, her long-time friend, was responsible for organising the farewell and the ceremony was run by Silvana, another long time friend who is a marriage and funeral celebrant. Eulogies were given by a number of friends and representatives from the Older Women's Network and Ten Forty Matrix.

A selection of South American music was played and a poem read which was written for the occasion by Beatriz. Tears were shed but there was an overwhelming feeling of a life well lived and a calm death. Admiration was expressed for the care she had received at Greenwich Hospital and one of the staff was there to hear this.

In general we were lost in admiration for the planning Elsa had put into organising the end of her life - her trip to Asia to care for elephants, her book launch, the bringing out of her sister Olga for a final visit, an overnight stay at the Zoo, and the location of this amazing cemetery for her last resting place. Elsa had even arranged for Silvana to be given transport to this rather remote place. We all felt that she had even organised a lovely fine day with small birds singing.

So farewell, Elsa. Thanks for sharing your life with us and providing such inspiring lessons in dying. Con dios (with God), or in feminist terms, con las diosas - with the Goddesses.

Por la pantera. Jan



Ten Forty Matrix program for 2012

Ten Forty discussion evenings and social events

Date	Activity	Organisers	Committee contact	Meeting chair
Saturday 2nd June	Stress Busters and Maintaining Health	Fran, Wendy, Sandy	Cheryl	Gillian
Sunday 24th June	Skirting Sydney: Walking tour of areas where women made history	Krystyna	Krystyna	
Saturday 4th August	Gay Marriage: Reformist Rubbish or Great Leap Forward	Margot	Cheryl	Helen
Wednesday 12th September	Riverboat Postman's Run Hawkesbury River	Daniela	Daniela	
Saturday 22nd September	Bradley's Head walk and picnic lunch 1.7km	Daniela	Daniela	
Saturday 6th October	Launch of Esther's book	Krystyna	Krystyna	
Saturday 13th October	Tramway Museum Loftus	Janne		
Sunday 18th November	Ballast Point Park Twilight Picnic	Janne		
Saturday 8th December	Christmas Party at Margot's	Margot		

Other Ten Forty activities

Date	Activity	Organiser	Committee Contact
Bi-monthly	Newsletter	Dorothy and Ruth	Diann
2nd Thursday each month	Dykes for dinner at a restaurant	Janne	
Once a month	Older dykes website maintenance	Websisters	Diann

Related Activities

Monthly Lunch Friday	Retiring Women	Cheryl
Monthly Lunch Thursday	Inner West lunches	Rose



Is a woman leader possible?

Written by Dr Jocelyne A. Scutt, a Barrister and Human Rights Lawyer in Melbourne and Sydney. She is also chair of Women Worldwide Advancing Freedom and Dignity.

‘This country is no matriarchy, nor are we in any danger of being governed by women,’ wrote Eleanor Roosevelt in a 1940 article published in the US magazine *Good Housekeeping*. ‘Can a woman be President of the United States?’ she asked, reiterating what she had ‘so often said’:

‘At present the answer is emphatically “No”. It will be a long time before a woman will have any chance of nomination or election.’

She concluded that even if ‘an emotional wave swept a woman into [the presidency], her election would be valueless, as she could never hold her following long enough to put over her program’:

‘It is hard enough for a man to do that, with all the traditional schooling men have had; for a woman, it would be impossible because of the age-old prejudice. In government, in business, and in the professions there may be a day when women will be looked upon as persons. We are, however, far from that day as yet.’

In 1940s Australia, the possibility of a woman as a political leader – whether Premier or Prime Minister – was equally remote. Not until 1943 was any woman elected to federal Parliament. Dorothy Tangney sat in the Senate, Enid Lyon in the House of Representatives, each the first woman ever to do so. Electors had put Edith Cowan into the WA Parliament some twenty years before and, following that lead, elections in other states saw occasional elevation of a woman as MP. Yet it took one of the territories – the ACT – to elect the first woman leader of any Australian government: on 11 May 1989 Rosemary Follett became Chief Minister. Carmen Lawrence (February 1990) and Joan Kirner (August 1990) followed as WA and Victorian Premier respectively; neither won an election as leader. Then the territories again showed the strength of voter sentiment by electing Kate Carnell minority government leader following the ALP’s 1995 election loss, whilst the NT elected Clare Martin in 2001 and again in 2005. In 2007 Anna Bligh became Queensland’s first woman Premier upon Peter

Beattie’s retirement, then in 2009 was the first woman to win the Premiership of any state, serving until the 2012 Liberal National Party election win.

As for Prime Minister, names were bandied about over more than a decade before in June 2010 Julia Gillard took the post first by ALP parliamentary caucus vote, then through negotiations with independent members after the August 2010 election. This meant the ALP retained government, and she retained the top post.

Julia Gillard thus broke through the barrier recognised by Eleanor Roosevelt. Yet Roosevelt saw more than simply gaining office as the goal. For her, it was necessary to make something of it, through implementing a policy programme of the leader’s own making. This, for Roosevelt, was a major barrier. ‘Age-old prejudice’ was the key.

How, then, does Australia’s first woman Prime Minister measure-up? Policy gains of the Australian government since 2010 election contradict Roosevelt’s contention that a woman leader ‘could never hold her following long enough to put over her program’. Since coming to power the Gillard government has:

- Passed the climate change policy on carbon pricing and emissions, incorporating supports for householders and ways business can implement it whilst retaining productivity, and awarding \$1.9 mill. toward geothermal exploration advancing renewable energy potential;
- Launched the National Broadband Network (NBN) aiming to ensure rural and remote access to contemporary communications along with urban dwellers and business;
- Negotiated a Mental Health National Partnership Agreement (NP), providing states and territories mental health project funding, commencing with \$57.6 mill. over 5 years to NSW for services for those often ‘presenting at hospital emergency departments’ or at risk of ‘recycling’ ‘in and out of institutional settings’;
- Supported the Australian Service Worker (ASU)’s equal pay claim, endorsed by Fair Work Australia on 1 February 2012;
- Introduced the R&D Tax Credit policy aimed at generating high-wage, high-skill jobs through a 45% refundable Tax Credit for firms

under a \$20mill turnover, and a 40% refundable Tax Credit for all others, retrospective to 1 July 2011;

- Passed ‘plain packaging’ laws effective December 2012, to ‘reduce the number of deaths from smoking-related diseases’, ‘giving [Australia] the best chance of having the lowest smoking rates’;
- Announced a new cash-payment plan replacing the Education Tax Refund, so ‘a typical family will get more than \$720 extra each year’ from 1 January 2013, ensuring payment is automatic, ‘upfront’ and prior to the end of the tax year;
- Implemented and expanded a National Bowel Cancer Screening Program to reduce bowel cancer, and announced a ‘blitz’ on dental treatment waiting lists to cover 400,000 patients, ‘benefiting low income Australians’;
- Introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), from July 2013 operating from ‘up to four locations across the country’ ensuring ‘about 10,000 people ... will receive support ... rising to 20,000’ by July 2014 and meaning, in the government’s words: ‘For the first time in Australia’s history people with significant and permanent disability will receive lifetime care and support, regardless of how they acquired their disability’.

Far from exhaustive, the list omits policies coming under significant humanitarian fire: the NT intervention or ‘second invasion’ and asylum seekers and refugees policy – although recently modified. However, here the Gillard government has pursued policies supported by the Prime Minister.

For Australia, then, Eleanor Roosevelt’s assertion that a woman will fail as political head through ‘not lasting’ sufficiently long to carry through a platform falls.

Yet despite substantial policy achievements, many of which have major community support, and despite their being gained whilst leading a minority government, a Sydney Morning Herald poll: ‘How do you rate Julia Gillard as prime minister?’ shows confounding results. Of 16,832 votes, 15% rate performance as ‘excellent’, 17%

‘good’, 7% ‘average’, with the remainder devoted to ‘poor’ - at 10%, and 51% ‘woeful’.

Limited to Fairfax readership, such polls can include multiple voting. Yet the figures prompt the question why, defying substantial policy outcomes and an undeniable capacity on the Prime Minister’s part to effect this, a not insubstantial number fail to acknowledge it?

Owen Jones, UK Independent commentator, pinpoints sexism as the key to ‘rampant’ abuse leveled at women who speak up, speak out, and will not be put down whatever the invective. A predictable response dominates against articulate, determined, achievement-orientated women unafraid of power. Jones cites Louise Mensch, MP, viewed in some circles as an abrasive Conservative Party member, most recently featuring on the parliamentary committee reporting on Murdoch, the media and ‘hacking’.

Observing she is ‘a craven apologist for Rupert Murdoch, and deserves to be exposed as such’, Jones notes that this ‘does not distinguish [Mensch] from the Tory leadership, except that she is more honest about it [with] less power to act on her sycophancy’. She at least ‘had the courage’ to ‘ride to the much-maligned mogul’s defence’ on television’s Newsnight, only to receive a backlash constituted by ‘a torrent of violently sexist tweets’:

‘She was a “whore”, a “cold faced cold hearted bitch”, and far worse. “Louise Mensch ... You would wouldn’t you?” tweeted Northern Irish “comedian” Martin Mor. “Given half a chance you’d strangle her!” Vice magazine proceeded to ask Occupy protesters if they’d have sex with her: just for the “lulz”, as the kids say.’

And, as Jones concludes: ‘No male cheerleader for the Murdochs – there are many – is subject to these chilling attacks.’ The same goes for journalism, he says, for although Jones is ‘no stranger to Twitter abuse’, his critics most often are ‘wound up’ by ‘what they regard as [his] excessively youthful appearance’ characterised by ‘Does your mum know you’re up this late?’ and ‘Shouldn’t you be doing your paper-round?’. Jones notes: ‘It is nothing compared with the poisonous misogynist vitriol that women in politics and journalism – such as colleague Laurie Penny – receive.’

“*the poisonous misogynist vitriol that women in politics and journalism ... receive*”

Like commentators on online journals, Twitter 'is an interesting insight into attitudes rampant in society, because it allows people to easily project venom most would never dream of screeching at a passerby in the street'. Twitter '... provides alarming evidence that sexism – of varying intensities – remains widespread among men':

'Whether purporting to be on the left or the right, there are all too many men who simply cannot bear to be lectured by a woman they passionately disagree with. "Who does this bitch think she is?" sums up their attitude; and if Twitter is anything to go by, what they say can be a lot more explicit than that.'

And although men may predominate in this form of discourse, women may also be implicated.

Returning, then, to Eleanor Roosevelt's nomination of 'age-old prejudice'. It is this – a phenomenon now termed 'sexism' – that dogged Hilary Clinton's 2008 White House bid. Misogynist invective came from the right, the left, and even her pre-selection opponent's camp. Samantha Power, an Obama campaign worker, took the hit for the sexist comment emanating from the candidate's office – but ended up on his Presidential staff in any event.

This phenomenon dogs the steps of Australia's Prime Minister.

Childless – unwomanly or unnatural. Childfree – unwomanly and selfish. 'Hard', 'uncaring', 'unfeeling' – yet men alone (Bob Hawke, Malcolm Fraser) are allowed to cry or show emotion (Hawke, Kevin Rudd) and get away with it, even be praised for it. If a woman leader cries, she 'can't mix it'. If she resists tears, she's 'unwomanly' or worse – even worse than Lady Macbeth, and who but a woman could be worse than this?

If she is assertive or simply able to stand up with conviction to deliver a message to the masses, she's 'tough as nails'. If she falters not a step, but an inch, a millimeter – she's hopeless or 'woeful'. And these are only a few – a mild few at that – of the misogynistic comments Australia's Prime Minister has weathered.

Former Senator Bob Brown said it: 'Quite a bit of the criticism [of the Prime Minister] is sexist and unfair and unrelenting ...' And when questioned by one commentator, the Prime Minister contrasted expectations of her predecessors:

'... looking across Australia's political history when Bob Hawke was there or Paul Keating ... or John Howard ..., I don't recall there being constant demands for them to show more personality. I don't remember people looking at John Howard and saying gee, I wish he'd be warmer and cuddlier and more humorous and more engaging in his press conferences. They looked at him and said, well he's the bloke running the country, and I think the same standard should apply to me. I'm a woman running the country, I don't ask people to come to the view that they want to have me round for dinner on Saturday night, that's not what I'm here to do.'

Nonetheless, reason lies for hope that the prejudice is shifting. Not only did the Parliamentary Labor Party support the elevation of the first woman to the Prime Ministership. It shouldn't go unnoticed that in the lead-up to the 2012 challenge, members of the caucus came out strongly in the Prime Minister's support – Simon Crean, former leader and longtime parliamentarian, one of them. The ALP has long been seen as male-dominated, yet it has produced and supported the women coming forward as leaders, apart from the Liberal Party's Kate Carnell, and Kerry Chikarovski as NSW Liberal Opposition leader (1998-2002) before her ousting.

As Owen Jones concludes, responsibility lies upon men to end 'the continuing scourge of sexism', speaking out against it, not perpetuating it. This is not an invitation for men to 'muscle in on' the Women's Movement. Rather, it is to recognise that 'sexist abuse is a symptom, or a warning sign, of a society in which women overall are still not equal'. This inequality is colluded in and supported by those who attack the Prime Minister with invective rather than addressing policy issues as policy issues.

All who engage in the abuse or support it by failing to acknowledge it for what it is, standing up to speak out against it so as, ultimately, to end it, remain wedged in the territory of the 'age-old prejudice' Eleanor Roosevelt identified. This age-old prejudice not only militates against the rights of women holding posts of 'high importance' and power. It erodes the dignity and human rights of every woman. It demotes all women to the category of 'non-persons', denied the respect and rights to which every human being is entitled.

