



# Ten Forty Newsletter

September 2015

[www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org)

## Dinner and Discussion

**6pm Saturday 17 October 2015**

**Guest speaker: Maree O'Halloran**

Maree O'Halloran AM is a passionate trade unionist, lawyer and former teacher in public schools, TAFE and Corrective Services. She worked as an Industrial Officer and President of the NSW Teachers Federation and then as the CEO of the Welfare Rights Centre. The Centre is an NGO specialising in social security law. Maree likes to dance, especially the foxtrot, and also likes twitter where she is @Mareeh.

Maree plans to place a gendered lense over class politics to analyse the highs and lows of her trade union experience.

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.

Entry to the Mervyn Fletcher hall is in Dixon Street, which has unrestricted parking after 6pm.

By bus, catch the 436 or 438 buses which set down on the corner of Ramsay Road and Dalhousie Street.

## Dykes for Dinner

**6.30pm Thursday 8 October**

Il Goloso

60 Dalhousie Street Haberfield

Please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) by Sunday 4 Oct

**6.30pm Thursday 12 November**

Marina Lunga

367 Darling Street Balmain

Please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) by Sunday 8 Nov

**6.30pm Thursday 10 December**

Hotel Saravan Bhavan

15 The Strand Croydon

Please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) by Sunday 6 Dec

## Over and out...

The final Dykes for Dinner organised by me will be held in December. I have been organising the dinner group for close to ten years and feel it is time to move on.

Many women are now retired and meet for lunch or coffee, but I hope someone else will want to take over the role of organising the monthly dinners.

I have had many good meals and met many women at the dinners, all of which have been most enjoyable. Thank you to all the dozens of women who have graced the dinners over the past ten years. I hope to see some of you in the next three months, particularly at the December dinner.

Janne

## Dykes for Dinner organiser wanted

If you are willing to organise the monthly dinners in 2016 please email

[contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

## A Berry Fun Weekend

Subsidised by Ten Forty Matrix Inc. through the Julie Hacker Bequest.

### Friday 9 to Sunday 11 October 2015

Forty two women have registered for what is shaping up to be a perfect short break in a peaceful setting. We are very lucky to have the entire camp to ourselves – something not always guaranteed at Sport And Recreation facilities.

While interesting and diverse indoor, outdoor and evening activities (fun, frolic and fantasy) will be on offer, there will also be lots of time to quietly unwind down by the river, read a book or chat with friends. In other words, no pressure...

## Momentous Michfest 2015

by Kaye

In 1975 – International Year for Women – gutsy feminists and lesbian feminists committed to empowering themselves and others rented bushland in Michigan State and organised a weekend Women's Music Festival. Males were excluded. Media coverage was hostile: 'witches, man haters, lesbians...' Women were harassed and physically attacked by males who repeatedly rampaged onto the private land and tried to intimidate them into fleeing.

Out of this weekend, collective strategies were developed for self-defence and skilling and supporting an all-female musical industry from stage constructing-lighting-sound to writing-performing-stage presenting. Many 'wannabees-couldibeets' dared to dream, had a go, and were encouraged by those who were willing to collectively pool their skills. Foundations for new personal healing, creativity and employment were birthed and grown. The impact of the annual Michigan Music Festival has been huge.

In 2015 the 40th Festival was the LAST Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. If it was on your Bucket List you've missed it!

I first went to MichFest in 1998 with a mate, joining 4000 others, including Alice Walker (The Colour Purple), Sweet Honey in the Rock and the Topp Twins. I hadn't planned to go again this year but following an inner tug, thinking that it might be the last Womyn Born Womyn Festival in the world, I went again. Of the 10,000 attending, 40 of us were from Oz.

It was inspiring to see and be part of a large community that is well planned, peaceful, considerate, caring, educational, inventive, and safe for women and girls of all ages, and boys to age 10. It was great to be bush camping with absolute safety. No hoon was going to wreak havoc. Campsite areas reflected lifestyles and needs, for instance,

chemical free, no alcohol, quiet, disability access, family, scent free and a campervan area.

I shared a tent in the 'Over 50's adults only' area with a Texan, arranged via a Face Book group. We had easy access to toilets, showers, community centre, stages, kitchen, crafts, movies and workshops. True to type I never made it to Loud & Rowdy Camping-age 18+ area and its Late Night Loud & Party Zone as by 10pm I was exhausted from attending workshops, and performances on the three stages. It was not possible to do everything. Such is MichFest....



Some of the magic times for me were listening to lesbian comedians including Karen Williams, the first out black lesbian comic in America, Julie Goldman and Elvira

Kurt. Also magic was singer/songwriter Crys Matthews, who does her radical coloured ancestral peers proud with her own brand of contemporary rhythm and blues.

I'd heard some recordings by Carolyn Gage, read some of her writings and seen her on video, but seeing her in real life sermonise in the outdoor workshop space to a bunch of us sitting under the shade of oak and maple trees was a buzz. She's been approved to perform in China! I hope we can organise for her to come here for L40 2017?



Staceyann Chin, a radical poet, identifies as Caribbean and Black, Asian and Lesbian. If she comes to Australia again I'll try and attend a workshop or performance. Her memoir *The Other Side of Paradise* is on my list to check out. She gave us a taste of her

new theatre piece, *MotherStruck*, which opens in October in NYC. Producer is Rosie O'Donnell. Oh, for the good old days before Sydney MardiGras blew its budget and international talent was funded to be part of its cultural program.

It was heartening to see the old familiars ageing well, especially Ferron, thanks to *Bitch*. Having personally reclaimed the words 'lesbian', 'dyke', 'feminist' I now have a personal sense of the shock reaction I got and still get from others, as I reacted at MichFest with 'no one's calling me a 'bitch'. *Bitch* is a gem, a glowing light – an inspiration living her truth.

Valerie Mason, also known as Vimalasar of the Triranta Buddhist Community, skilfully lead a meditation workshop on Focusing on Fears with Loving Kindness. For more on her work see [www.bullyvictimbystander.com](http://www.bullyvictimbystander.com)

On a three-hour Land Walk stroll with Margaret Flowing Johnson we learned about ecology, caring for the property, minimising the impact of the annual MichFest Village, stories of individuals/incidents and site planning modifications. Oh, to have the likes of her on my Blue Mountains City Council that borders an underfunded and human impact threatened World Heritage listed National Park. It's all about priorities and will and persistence...

I could go on with many more energising and special moments ... like the Parades ... so if you are interested, please ask me.

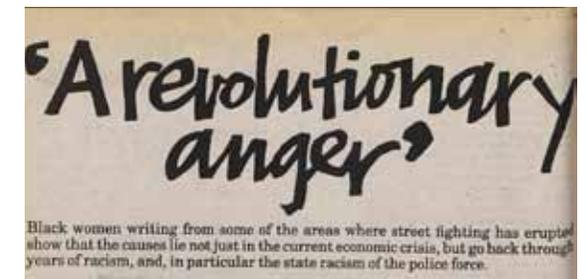
## Spare Rib goes digital

From 1972 to 1993, when it ceased publication, *Spare Rib* charted the grassroots feminist movement, its eye-catching covers railing against sexism and racism, promoting good orgasms or debating the tricky question of just what to do with unwanted body hair.

Funny, irreverent, intelligent and passionate, *Spare Rib* sought to provide an alternative to traditional gender roles, tackling subjects such as "liberating orgasm", "kitchen sink racism", anorexia, and the practice of "cliterectomy", now called female genital mutilation.

With so many different threads of feminism being explored, the ensuing debates were often acrimonious, and the magazine reflected the sometimes "painful" discussions between the collective on how best to tackle issues such as sexuality and racism.

Now, thanks to the British Library, *Spare Rib* is available online to anyone after the digitisation of its entire run. <http://www.bl.uk/spare-rib>



## Five lesbian novels that made a difference

For young women who were unfortunate enough not to live in an era where they could safely come out, some found refuge in lesbian novels that would touch them to their core.

*Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown

Bawdy and moving, the ultimate word-of-mouth bestseller, *Rubyfruit Jungle* is about growing up a lesbian in America – and living happily ever after. How irreverent is it? Here's a clue: "rubyfruit jungle" refers to the female organ.

*Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg

The movie is not the same as the book. While the movie focused on friendship, in the book—set in the 1920s—Idgie and Ruth lived openly like husband and wife. I'm sure we've all had aunts who were exactly like them.

*The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

There's really more artistic freedom in literature. In *The Color Purple* movie there's just one scene indicative of lesbianism. But in the book, Celie, the protagonist, is a woman-loving woman. Fourteen when the book begins, Celie is a poor, black, uneducated young woman who writes letters to God. Raped by her father when she was younger, she later finds herself attracted to women. Colourful is an apt description.

*The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith

Patricia Highsmith, author of the suspenseful *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, wrote this particular romance novel. When she first published it in 1952, she had to use the pseudonym Claire Morgan because of its lesbian angle of two lonely women finding love with each other.

*The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall

You're not a lesbian purist if you haven't read this as it's not exactly an easy read. As the title states, it's quite sad. Set in the Victorian era, Stephen, the protagonist, pushes the love of her life away to a man because Stephen thinks she can never make her happy.

Like any great work of literature, these lesbian novels were a lifeline for women recognizing—and accepting—who they were.

From <http://www.lesbiannews.com/5-lesbian-novels-impact-women/>

## Read any good lesbian novels recently?

Check out a range of lesbian fiction at <http://www.goodreads.com/genres/lesbian-fiction>

Have you read any books recently that have moved, influenced or entertained you? Like to share? Please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) and we'll feature them in the next newsletter.

## About Ten Forty

The first national conference of Ten Forty in the mid-eighties attracted politically active feminists of all hues and sexualities. However, over time it became obvious that a huge majority of women attending follow-up meetings and activities in Sydney were lesbian feminists. Today Ten Forty and Older Dykes refer to the same group of women. We enjoy discussion 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. Our website [www.olderdykes.org](http://www.olderdykes.org) encourages national and international connections between older lesbians.

Ten Forty 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](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org) and ask to be put on our mailing list.

Please note our new postal address is PO Box 1312 Randwick 2031

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## Newsletter

To receive a free emailed newsletter, please email [contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:contact@olderdykes.org)

The web edition and back copies of the newsletter are available for download from our website [www.olderdykes.org/about\\_us/newsletters.html](http://www.olderdykes.org/about_us/newsletters.html)

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## Who currently does what?

Events planning: Diann, Gillian, Krystyna and Bronwyn

Contact listing in LOTL: Jan

Utilities box: Sylvia and Gillian

Money Management: Cheryl

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Dorothy, Diann,

Sandy

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Dorothy