



Ten Forty Newsletter

September 2014

www.olderdykes.org

Dinner and Discussion

6pm Saturday 11 October 2014

Topic: Lesbian Zest: Tips on How to Thrive and Flourish

Facilitators: Diann and Krystyna

Our October discussion is inspired by Lesbian Zest, a publication by Ea Mulligan that shares what twenty seven lesbians say about where they get support and what helps them to flourish. (The booklet is available for download at www.qahc.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/Lez_res.pdf) They also offer their tips on how to thrive as a lesbian. We thought we could explore our own experiences of what sustains us.

What is important in our friendships? Is friendship important only between lesbians? What about strong lesbian/straight friendships, biological connections?

What winds us up? How do we manage to accept the annoying parts of ourselves and our friends?

What about community? What does that mean? What relationship do we want to have with it?

There are many other aspects to what provides and maintains our joy of life, that zest that puts a spring in our step despite

whatever else is happening in our lives. We will discuss all this and more in small groups and share what works for us.

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.

Social Activities

Dykes for Dinner

Gloria's Restaurant (Portuguese)

6.30pm

Thursday 11 September 2014

82 Audley Street Petersham
Licenced and BYO \$3 corkage pp

Please email

contact@olderdykes.org

by Sunday 7 September

Marina Lunga

6.30pm

Thursday 9 October 2014

367 Darling Street Balmain
Licenced and BYO \$2 pp

Please email contact@olderdykes.org

Sunday 5 October

Tenpin Bowling

Sunday 2 November at 10.30 am

Strathfield Superbowl, 546 Liverpool Road, South Strathfield.

Please let us know if you are coming so we know how many lanes to book. Price is \$14 for one game, \$19 for 2 games (concession \$12 and \$17). Shoe hire is included in the cost. Even if you don't bowl you're welcome to join us for coffee or lunch anyway. There is a modest café on site for lunch after the game.

Please email

contact@olderdykes.org to book.

Ideas welcome

If you have some ideas for social events and/or topics for our bi-monthly dinner and discussion evenings, please email contact@olderdykes.org

Imogens photo exhibition

Well the Imogens is over for another year. Congratulations to our winners, and congratulations also, to all our entrants.

We had some stunning pictures, so thank you all for your entries. Many thanks to our judges Liz, Phillipa and Diann. Their selections were:

Interaction:

- First prize of \$200 was won by Ruth for *Old and New*
- Second prize of \$100 was won by Ping for *Mahjong session*
- Third prize of \$50 was won by Gabriele for *Blow me away*
- Lesbian choice prize was won by Rose for *Day in the Sun*
- Highly commended prize was won by Mystie for *Rainbow Pride*

Wild Things:

- First prize of \$200 was won by Wendy for *Rainbow Rose*
- Second prize of \$100 was won by Julie for *What's on tonight?*
- Third prize of \$50 was won by Gail for *Three little lambs*
- Lesbian choice prize and Highly commended prize was won by Angela for *Backyard Butterfly*

Go online www.olderdykes.org/gallery/interaction.html to see all of the entries.



Old and New
by Ruth



Rainbow Rose
by Wendy



What's on tonight?
by Julie

Photography Walks

Saturday 13 September

The Imogens competition seems to have inspired women and created a further interest in photography. The photographs reflected effort and creative vision.

Working with the exhibitions has inspired me to run monthly photography walks where you can practice with others, share skills and explore the workings of your camera. You might even like the photos you take!

On the first photography outing we will go to Centennial Park. If you are interested, please email contact@olderdykes.org for further details.



Mahjong session
by Ping



Blow me away
by Gabriele



Backyard Butterfly
by Angela



Three little lambs
by Gail



Day in the Sun
by Rose



Rainbow Pride
by Mystie

Report of discussion on Feminism: past, present and future

Our discussion topic for August 2014 was 'Feminism: past, present and future'.

What a great night it was! Diann proved herself an ideal facilitator, providing generous time for a panel of three women to speak at the beginning, then organising us into five small groups to talk amongst ourselves and report back, before facilitating a dynamic discussion of current feminist issues at the end of the night.

The three panellists told personal, and often revealing, stories about feminism in their lives. For privacy reasons only two agreed for their stories to be converted into podcasts. Podcasts of both Viviane's and Jan's talks will shortly be available at www.olderdykes.org/words/Podcasts/podcasts.html.

The focus of their stories revolved around four questions:

- What attracted you to feminism?
- How has feminism impacted on your life?
- Have there been any disappointments?
- What are the big issues now?

Small group discussions

What stood out in the summaries of the small group discussions was not only the diversity of women's understanding and experience of feminism – but also the similarities.

Some women came to feminism through their lesbianism, others turned to feminism as a result of workplace and other forms of discrimination, sexual violence, the lack of



reproductive freedom and so on.

Some described leaving husbands, going to university and breaking into 'men only' jobs. Others had been 'radicalised' through working in women's services.

One of the biggest feminist battles at present appears to be apathy - especially among young women.

Current feminist issues

One of the issues raised at the end of the evening was the rise of domestic violence, with more than one woman murdered by her current or former partner every week. Australia's first women's refuge, Elsie's, was opened in 1974. How sad that today the need for refuges is greater than ever.

Chris, who has been involved in the domestic violence field for many years, provided some background to the government's decision to redirect funding away from specialist shelters for women and children into generalist services catering for both men and women and run by faith-based organisations.

The fragmentation and lack of information about current feminist concerns was another issue.

Check out sheilas.org.au and www.dailylife.com.au

Jan: Feminism: past, present and future.

Jan has been involved with Ten Forty from the very early days. Through thick and thin, she has facilitated acceptance, growth and unity within the group.

She is 77, has three daughters and three grandchildren. Jan has worked as a teacher, in women's health, the prison system and the public service.

Her political activism began during anti-Vietnam demonstrations and continued in the early seventies in Canberra (where she was then living) after Liz Reid became the first adviser on women's affairs to Labour Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Jan was an original member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, a feminist, non-party political group founded in 1972 to create a society where women's participation and potential would be unrestricted, acknowledged and respected. Her main areas of feminist activism include prostitution law reform, family planning and abortion rights.

Jan's past experiences and influences include:

- Her mother telling her that 'men are stronger than we are'
- Receiving equal pay as a first-year teacher
- Her headmaster's comment to the boys in her class: 'You let a girl beat you!'
- Superannuation – being told to opt to retire at 55 'because you will have more money when you leave to have babies and you cash out your super'.
- Her early interest in the union not being encouraged.
- Realising that having kids and wanting promotion were incompatible, but gradually understanding that it wasn't her that was the problem – it was the system.
- Understanding that organised religion is inimical to women – and joining the Humanist Society.

The issues that currently concern her include:

- The hugely powerful role of media in sex role stereotyping etc.
- Definite backlash from men to wind back the gains women have made.
- The creeping influence of religion in working against freedom of choice and the position of women in general.
- Ongoing difficulties for women combining paid work and having children.
- Ambiguous role of technology.



- Lesbians may not be too concerned in general about what men think of them but there are plenty of places where we are vulnerable, e.g. the workplace.

Jan isn't fond of the RSL-type view of the 'glory days of old feminism'. She thinks there are currently some very good female role models (whether you like their politics or not).

Jan believes there are good signs that we can use new technologies in interesting ways to help run new feminist campaigns.

Contribute to the newsletter

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please email your contribution to contact@olderdykes.org by the following dates:

**1 October 2014 and
1 January 2015**

Viviane: Feminism: past, present and future

What attracted you to feminism?

Feminism offered me a new way of being that I had never thought of before. It put into words what had been invisible to me. I had been affected by other people's drinking from an early age and as a result was filled with self-doubt and self-hatred, and sought out relationships with emotionally unavailable people. One way that this played out in my life was that I struggled to find a sense of independence and sought safety in submitting to male power in patriarchal institutions such as heterosexuality, marriage and tertiary education institutions.

University, however, was where I initially found support to change myself personally. Whitlam's reforms in the 1970s made it financially possible for me to attend and there I benefitted personally by learning new ideas and philosophies, exercising my mind, and developing myself emotionally by using free student counselling services. Back at uni in the early 1980s I found support to change myself politically, when I met my first radical lesbian feminist. She quickly convinced me that it was absolutely logical to be a feminist and that, to be woman-centred, I had to be open to claiming a lesbian identity. Pivotal to my new understanding was Adrienne Rich's article "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" published in 1980. I launched into postgraduate and feminist politics, as Secretary of my university's postgraduate association and then as its Women's Officer, organizing the first national women's postgraduate conference.

How has feminism impacted on your life?

Feminism brought about life changing experiences for me, which inspired and enabled me to work with other feminists to free women from patriarchal oppression and promote positive change in our lives. These changes supported me to eventually identify

as a lesbian, leave my (second) marriage and my postgraduate research, move into a household of lesbian separatist activists, and continue both my political and personal development based on feminist ideas and action. It led me to change not only my sexual identity but also my name, as well as guiding my work and voluntary projects. For example, my Masters thesis was on the topic of the socio-economic shaping of minor tranquillizer use in Australia, and my PhD was on ethical decision-making about prenatal diagnosis for Down syndrome, and courses I developed and taught all had major components dealing with feminist ideas. I have been active in the women's peace movement, feminist spiritual groups, a member of the management committee of the Wollongong Women's Centre, and active in other ways in a range of feminist groups.

"I'M A FEMINIST.
I'VE BEEN A FEMALE FOR
A LONG TIME NOW.
IT'D BE STUPID NOT
TO BE ON MY OWN SIDE."

MAYA ANGELOU

Have there been any disappointments?

One disappointment for me has been when women don't treat each other respectfully across our differences. This lack of respect can be expressed in many ways. A more "passive" expression of this was when I witnessed a group of strongly feminist women display hurtful indifference. At the beginning of a political rally

a woman we didn't know walked up to us eager to start becoming politically involved with feminism. She was wearing high heels, lipstick, nail polish and a skirt. Several friends of mine responded by turning their backs, continuing their conversation and ignoring her. Other disappointments are when it is hard to find unity over complex issues and stronger expressions of disrespect erupt in aggressive intolerance. Examples are in the long-running controversies about the exclusion of trans people from women's spaces.

What are the big issues now?

Patriarchy has not been eliminated (yet) and feminism is not dead! Feminist consciousness raising groups and political action now happen in "real" and "virtual" space. These are exciting times for continuing our efforts for liberating lesbians and other women from oppression. For 10/40, a big issue for me is to attract new members, to make ourselves relevant to as many women as possible, to keep developing our ideas and to be open to new ideas. New communication technologies offer more ways for patriarchy to invade and oppress us, and pornography immediately springs to my mind. But they also offer new possibilities for feminist consciousness raising and other action. We are doing this with our olderdykes website and with our many other activities, supported by members' energy, resourcefulness, wit, friendships and money.

Feminism NOT past its use-by date...

The focus of Radio National's *Life Matters* program on 1st August was 'Feminism: past its use-by date?' (Ironically, this was the day before our Ten Forty discussion on 'Feminism: past, present and future'.)

Many RN callers – male and female – voiced strident anti-feminist opinions similar to those expressed on 'Women Against Feminism' on US social media sites. Women post 'selfies' on these sites while holding up signs explaining their reasons for opposing feminism. For example, 'Men and women already have equal rights where I live.' 'I was raised to be an independent woman not a victim of anything.' 'Men have rights too.'

One caller to *Life Matters* reminded these women that, "Without the vote you wouldn't be able to voice these opinions. There was a time when you would have been told to get back in the kitchen, then get into bed, and do your 'duty' and then possibly die while giving birth to one of your 8 or 9 children. Oh, and you may have been slapped around a bit for daring to disagree with any of these instructions. Access to healthcare, the right to vote, the right to work and have access to childcare options, the right to say no ... these were all fought for and won by the feminist movement!"

♦♦♦

Below is an extract from an article called 'I was a teenage non-feminist' by broadcaster,

blogger, and freelance writer Clementine Ford. It was written in response to recent outpourings from 'Women Against Feminism'. You can read the entire article at www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/by/Clementine-Ford

"Women consent to the limiting of their behaviour in an attempt to negotiate their own protection. They consent to being the enforcers of patriarchy and misogyny in order to carve out a small slice of symbolic power within those structures. Negotiation is not power - it's compromise.

If you're not forcing yourself to routinely interrogate the benefits you enjoy in society, it's all too easy to tell yourself that other people are inventing their disadvantages. Who cares about the grievances of angry, bitter women when your own situation is relatively comfortable?

Part of feminism's core mission statement is to advocate for a world in which all women, not just some, are given equal opportunities and respect. That some women don't yet understand this is a shame, but they may one day come to this realisation. That some women do but simply don't care is an outrage.

I expect Women Against Feminism will flare briefly and then disappear into irrelevancy. It boasts a fundamental misunderstanding of feminism from the outset, and seems instead designed to support the conservative ideals that harm women rather than help them.

This is nothing new. The backlash has always attempted to push back against feminism's success and it will keep trying.

But the world has forged women into fighters. We'll keep pushing right back, as we always have done and as we always will, until we create a world in which all women are treated with dignity and liberated from patriarchal oppression - even the ones who don't believe it exists."



Report from Ten Forty Matrix Inc.

The first AGM of Ten Forty Matrix Inc. was held on Saturday 2 August 2014. (This is the group incorporated to handle the bequest left to us by Julie Hacker.) The minutes of the AGM included an updated list of members and their email addresses. This should not

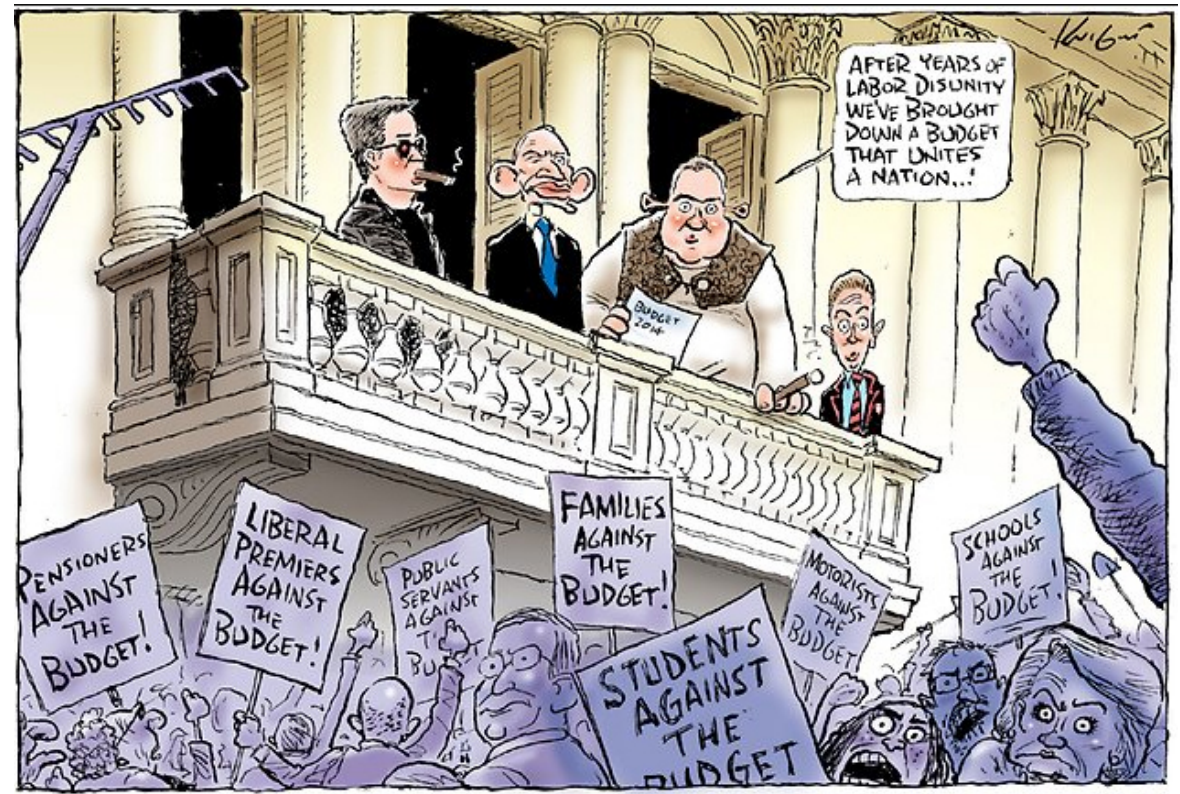
have been circulated and will not be in future.

Six members were elected to the Management Committee: Jan (chair), Dorothy (secretary and public officer), Cheryl (Treasurer), plus Sylvia, Margot and Viviane. Mel has since accepted the casual vacancy.

Two social events are currently being explored: a party in Sydney to celebrate Julie Hacker's life - some time in November this year - and a three-day weekend in Berry in 2015. We'll keep you posted.

At the AGM members agreed to make small donations to campaigns of interest and concern to feminists/lesbians. Three \$100 donations have since been made: to GetUp in its campaign to stop the privatisation of the ABC; to support self-publication of an anthology on the NT Intervention edited by Rosie Scott and Anita Heiss; and to support a documentary film project which involves lesbians and feminists.

If you would like to join Ten Forty Matrix Inc. please email Contact for an application form



Monster Climate Change Petition

The absence of a real national debate about climate change has led the Victorian Women's Trust to take a leadership role on this critical issue.

They have initiated a Monster Climate Change Petition to present before the International G20 conference in mid-November to show the world how much Australians care about reducing carbon emissions. Then they will present it to the national parliament.

The idea for a Monster Climate Petition was inspired by the actions of Victorian colonial women in 1891. They collected 30,000 signatures for a petition in support of voting rights for women – it became known as the Monster Petition – and presented it to the Parliament of Victoria. A decade later their petition played an important role in Australia becoming the first nation in the world to give women the right to vote.

The Victorian Women's Trust believes that huge numbers of Australian people are willing to express their concern for a safe climate by signing the Monster Climate Petition. If women in 1891 could get 30,000 signatures, surely we can get hundreds of thousands today!

Send the website link monsterclimatepetition.com.au to everyone you know. Photocopy the petition and give it to friends who aren't on the

Internet. Start collecting signatures yourself. Let's make our voices heard!

The SHIFT-Depression Inventory

Helen, a registered psychologist, has conducted research studies over many years into what women believe are, or have been, connected to their sadness or depression.

Her research shows that there are four main areas implicated in sadness and depression in women.

1. The things you think and feel about yourself and your role as a woman in society.
2. The impact on you of your physical health, what you eat and drink, whether you can exercise or not, having enough money and where you live.
3. Your relationships with others, how people treat you, and whether you have trusting, confiding and supportive people in your life.
4. Whether you're isolated or whether you have positive links to one or more communities or groups.

Helen has established a website where women can anonymously access and complete a short online questionnaire – The SHIFT-Depression Inventory – which can assist them to reach a fuller understanding of what issues may be connected to their sadness or depression. She welcomes your feedback and comments – www.shiftdepression.com.au

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 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 and ask to be put on our mailing list.

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

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?

Planning Committee: Diann, Gillian, Krystyna, Vivianne, Bronwyn

Contact listing in LOTL: Jan

Utilities box: Sylvia and Wendy

Money Management: Cheryl

Websisters: Jan, Ruth, Dorothy, Diann, Margot, Sandy, Mel

Newsletter: editing and layout Ruth and Dorothy