



# Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

November 2021

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

## Ten Forty AGM

**ZOOM Event  
20 Nov 4.30 PM**

This year we will be holding the AGM on ZOOM. In this way, more members from regional areas outside of Sydney will be able to join as well as our usual Sydney cohort. And we will definitely be COVID safe!

We have an exciting speaker at the AGM. Lynne Spender, Sydney-based writer, editor, public speaker, Board member of the Australian Society of Authors, and lover of the Coogee women's pool, has agreed to be our guest. She will talk about her edited book of several women's recollections of The Women's Pool, to be launched in December.

The ZOOM link for the meeting will be sent out on the day of the meeting.

if you wish to attend, RSVP to our secretary Chris at [chris.fox6@gmail.com](mailto:chris.fox6@gmail.com)

## Pearlie's Booklaunch

**Sunday 21 November 2-4pm  
At The Older Women's Network,  
Victoria Street, Newtown**

Well-known author, creative writing teacher, and lesbian, feminist, activist, Pearlie McNeill is launching her latest book, ***Speaking Personally.***

Lynne Spender, a well-known Sydney feminist writer and activist, *will launch the book.*

This is Pearlie's third book in her autobiographical trilogy. Now in her 80s Pearlie has the wisdom of experience to look back and reflect on a life lived to the full. The book is about: the issues of life and death, risks taken, lessons learned, love found, intimate, passionate, revealing, and a lesbian love story.

This is a free event, with refreshments. Proof of double vaccination, and pre-registration required. Due to COVID-19 regulations, there are limited numbers.

RSVP to Sylvia

[skinder@bigpond.net.au](mailto:skinder@bigpond.net.au)

with your name, email, phone number and, if possible, proof of vaccination, or bring with you to the event.

## Women in the Bush Short Walks

**Wednesday 24 November**

**Blue Mts. Waterfall Circuit, South  
Lawson.**

This is a beautiful series of four waterfalls, some steps. Easy/med 4km. Then a short drive to the next valley to visit Victor falls and the famous Terrace Falls 2.5km.

Contact Sylvia for more information

[skinder@bigpond.net.au](mailto:skinder@bigpond.net.au)

## OUT AND ABOUT

**Sunday 28 November**  
**12 Noon**

Mancini's Italian Restaurant  
21 Burwood Road  
Belfield.  
Licensed and BYO (\$4.95 per bottle)

RSVP Sharon  
[Biara1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:Biara1@optusnet.com.au)

## Country Lesbians association

**ZOOM Event**

**28 Nov 4.30 PM**

**Lesbian Life outside the big cities.**

We are thinking of a zoom session every 2 months, aimed at connecting with women who live outside the Sydney area. We will have a speaker or two on a topic and then move into breakout rooms. Women will be in small groups and have a chance to share. The first session will be on 28 November

If you are interested in being involved and have ideas email me at  
[maude\\_au@yahoo.com](mailto:maude_au@yahoo.com)

## Big Picnic

Following last year's successful Big Indoor Picnic held at Leichhardt Town Hall, your Ten Forty Matrix Committee is planning a repeat event. This is a FREE EVENT. Due to the lockdown we have moved the event from October (Mental Health Month) to:

**Saturday 11 December**  
**11.30am for 12 noon – 3pm**  
**Leichhardt Town Hall**

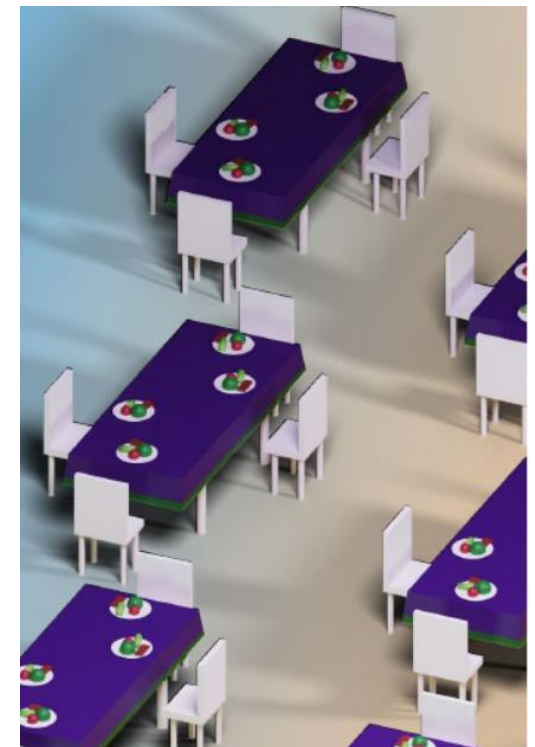
We will provide the entertainment, coffee, tea and individual lunches to meet your dietary requirements. You just need to bring your own personal drinks and sense of fun. Numbers will be limited to 60 to provide lots of space for safe physical distancing. We have a COVID Safe plan and all care will be taken to ensure we have a great time together safely.

All participants must be double vaccinated and wear a mask except when eating.  
If you have not already registered, please send a request for a registration form now as only a limited number of places are still available.

Email your full name and mobile number with 'I am coming to the Big Picnic' as the subject heading to:

Sylvia [skinder@bigpond.net.au](mailto:skinder@bigpond.net.au)  
Any questions please contact Sylvia

Ten Forty Matrix is planning and funding this event. We are grateful to Inner West LGA for the free use of Leichardt Town Hall, and WayAhead Mental Health Month Grants for support funding.



## Report: ZOOM book re-launch on 1 September 2021

### “Woman to Woman: a guide to lesbian sexuality” by Carol Booth

*Woman to Woman* was first published in 2002 and as the first Australian book on Lesbian sexuality filled an enormous gap in the information source available for lesbians.

Carol Booth organised a Zoom re-launch of the book. Because it had gone out of print, she was urged to organise a reprint. It has also come out as an e-book. She decided not to change anything in the book as the information was still current. The pages of resources are dated but remain, more as a historical reference. Carol is developing a website with up-to-date resources listed.

Carol opened the Zoom event to 45 participants with an acknowledgment of country. After giving a short account of the reasons for the re-launch she introduced the first speaker Gail Hewson, well known for her long-time lesbian activism and a past owner of the Sydney Feminist Bookshop for many years. The first launch of *Woman to Woman* took place at the Feminist Bookshop in 2002.

She talked about how important the book was to the lesbian community.

And how the books *flew off* the shelves. She took copies with her to many events the Feminist Bookshop was invited to. She sold hundreds of copies, a clear indication of how important this publication is to women.

The next speaker was Pearlie McNeill, well known lesbian feminist activist and writer. She spoke about the title, how it gave the right feel to the content of the book. It is not just a sex manual she continued, but about the intimacy possible between women. Pearlie talked about the lack of information on sexuality and sex for out lesbians in the 70s. One promoted book was the 1980 book by Beatrice Faust, *Women Sex and Pornography*. The author had set herself up as an authority on women's sexuality, but as Pearlie said, lesbians learnt more about what was **not** our sexuality from the book. Hence the importance of *Woman to Woman*. Pearlie selected a short reading from the book; a beautiful passage, very poetic and sensual, about two women having a bath together and later, snuggling up in warm sheets. An inspiration to read the book!

Next Jean Taylor, well known Radical Lesbian Feminist Activist and lesbian historian from Melbourne, spoke. She started by saying *Woman to Woman* was an amazing book. She commented on the strong, proud, lesbian community that had been the background to Carol's research material.

Many lesbians contributed to the book from their own personal experience of sex and relationships in a very honest and open way. Jean went on to recall that time when many lesbians explored their clitoris with a mirror, in our consciousness raising groups. Also exploring new ways to love and relate to each other, sometimes with joy and sometimes with heartache.

Jean raised the importance of the chapter on older lesbians. Being a historian, Jean also appreciated the list of resources as a valuable historical record. She also commented on the value of the index.

The final speaker was Dr Ea Mulligan famed for her research on the clitoris and her work on lesbian health. Ea came out as a young woman in 1975 and talked about the limited information available then, for young women, on lesbian sexuality. *The Little Red School Book*, (a parody on Mao's *Little Red Book*), was the first she read that had chapters dealing honestly with sex and sexuality. I might mention here that it was banned in many places for its openness. Ea was delighted at the earlier publication of *Woman to Woman* and promptly bought three copies, which she donated to Flinders University Library. Today, she reported, two remain, somewhat thumbed.

*Woman to Woman* has a number of clear diagrams of the anatomy of the vagina, clitoris, and breasts, correctly labelled. Ea talked of the invisibility of the clitoris in medical education and medical texts. The shock to hear that at, 'The Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Rights,' which Ea attended in 2014, the invisibility of the Clitoris was still an issue. She produced her life size model for the audience during her presentation. This model is just wonderful and we all need one to show those younger women who are carelessly having their labia 'tidied up', and risk damaging the internal parts of their clitoris. An organ much larger than many of us knew.

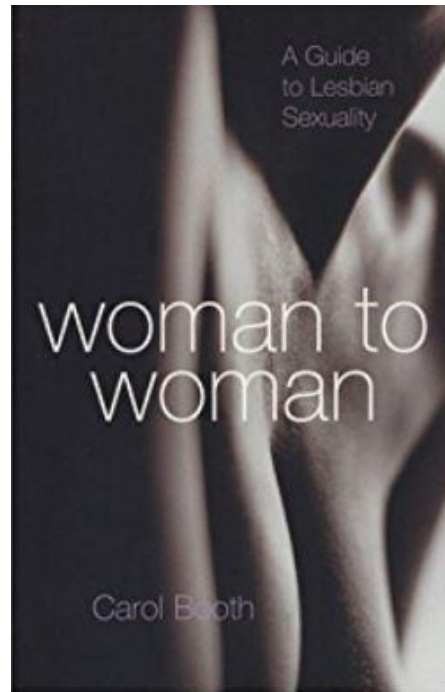
Carol then read from chapter 15 on Lesbian courage, a very moving passage, and acknowledged the women who had contributed to her book, and their role in changing the lives of women and girls and thus the world.

Research is currently being undertaken in regard to the link between the clitoris and the brain, so more to come.

The ZOOM event finished with some fun online games and prizes of the model of the clitoris. The website for resources that is being set up is:

[www.womantowoman.com.au](http://www.womantowoman.com.au)

The book is available from Amazon Kindle ebooks \$6.95 (still) and from Angus and Robertson as a a a paperback for \$25.25.



## **Report: Ten Forty Zoom event: Lesbian Identity and Feminism revisited. Saturday 18 September**

Following a previous successful zoom discussion on Lesbian Identity and Feminism, Ten Forty organised another zoom event. Three different speakers agreed to start the discussion, Francesca Sodaro, Ella Hogan, and Viviane Morrigan. The same stimulus questions were used as in the previous event. 25+ lesbians participated in the event.

Diann welcomed everyone to the zoom event. Then following the acknowledgement of country, she introduced the three speakers in turn:

### **Francesca: Dharug country**

Francesca gave a superbly prepared talk that took us through the way her lesbian life was influenced by her Italian immigrant background, the era in which she grew up, her family's catholic faith, and her working-class background. Despite the many labels and lesbian stereotypes there are many lesbians who see themselves as just that, lesbians. This is where Francesca locates her identity.

Francesca was born in Italy. As was common in that era her father, seeking work and a better life, migrated to Australia. After he

had raised money for their migration, the family followed.

While waiting to migrate Francesca was in a woman centred household and this had a positive influence on her sense of self. Italian culture puts the family at the centre of importance not the individual. This means that there is a high degree of conformity for women, learning to be a good wife and mother. Francesca noted that some of the teachers in her Catholic school supported positive self-identity for girls. Her university studies also played a part in how she developed a sense of independence.

When she was 28 Francesca became aware that she was a lesbian. She was in an unhappy marriage, and had a young child. After her divorce it was three years before she had her first lesbian sexual experience.

18 months later she met Joy, her life partner. Together over 34 years, they built a life in the lesbian community, hosting events in their home as well as political activism; like doing TV interviews, protests and work in many groups in particular, the Older Women's Network. Those who know Francesca are aware of her brilliance on the dance floor. Why hasn't she been on dancing with the stars? She has won a number of same sex dance competition medals and competed as a dancer at the Gay Games in Sydney.

Years after Joy's death after a long illness, Francesca described herself as fortunate to have found Barbara, her new partner.

Coming out to her family was not on her agenda. Her mother was dying of cancer and as many of us have found, the pain of dealing with having a lesbian daughter is not always of benefit to either party. Despite this family situation, Francesca has been an out and proud lesbian most of her life. She strongly believes that lesbians from non-English speaking backgrounds need to speak out about their experiences and struggles. Fortunately, today we are far more aware of the cultural diversity within our lesbian community, but there is always more to learn.

#### **Ella: Dharawal country**

Ella was a feminist long before she was a lesbian. This is a path that many of us who became active in the 70s followed, our passion for women's rights soon transferred to a recognition of our lesbianism. She was the only girl in a family with five brothers. The expectation was that she would stay home and look after the younger brothers, clean etc. Once refusing to take up her older brothers' jeans, she told him if he could fix a car, he could use a sewing machine. So he did.

Ella's mother had won a scholarship to be an astrophysicist but thought that was no place for a lady so settled for being a pharmacist.

For Ella, dismissed as a girl at home, sexually abused as a child, and pushed by social expectations to have a boyfriend, played the game. She had a series of boyfriends, more like "friends with benefits" before that was a thing.

She left home at eighteen and got a job at a young women's refuge. She met her first lesbian when she was twenty-three but she was twenty-eight before she had her first lesbian relationship.

There were two significant influences in her development as a feminist and lesbian. One was when her university tutor said a girl did not need to get married and have children. The other was a visit to Women's Land. (Amazon Acres). Lesbians there were experimenting with relationships and political lesbian and feminist theory. Ella did her university thesis on Consciousness Raising Groups. This would make good reading today.

Coming out to family brought its surprises; she had expected her father to be hostile to her lesbian identity, but he was more accepting than her mother who made it clear she did not want Ella's girlfriend to visit.

Ella continues to be a lesbian activist in her beloved home town of Wollongong.

### **Viviane: Bediagal country**

Viviane spoke about the confusing early experiences she had. Her parents separated when she was eight years old. She had a lot of illnesses when young. She and her sister went from living a comfortable middle-class existence with two parents, to living with a single mother who had become an alcoholic. Vivian described a situation that left her feeling emotionally neglected. Her sister used drugs and alcohol to fill the emotional vacuum, Vivian focussed on comfort food, books and fantasy. Her mother's new partner, her stepfather, was a gambler. His mother moved in with them. Another alcoholic.

As a child she had strong friendships with other girls. She recalls dancing to Bandstand with Henrietta Haim, her primary school friend.

Vivian married her childhood sweetheart at twenty-one and transferred her need for care to caring for him, 'he needs me' was oft her thought. She understands now that she simply denied her lesbian desires. They divorced and a second unsuccessful marriage followed. This second marriage meant that

She did, though become involved in the peace movement in the early 1980s and was arrested at one of the protests. Like so many others, she gave a false name and jumped bail. When she went to University (in the early 1980s) a new radical lesbian feminist friend introduced her to feminist literature.

Vivian has led a woman-centred life from that time, as she says, for sanity and survival. She came out to herself at age thirty-three and had her first lesbian sexual experience at thirty-five. Later she began a seven-year relationship and remains friends with her ex to this day.

Influenced by many feminist, spiritual and activist writers, Viviane moved from what she called her wishy-washy politics to radical feminist theory and activism. Viviane holds a PhD, and has worked as a lecturer in Universities. She currently works part time, teaching English to overseas students studying in Australia. She is active in the older lesbian movement and currently is on the committee of the Coalition for Activist Lesbians (COAL). She has been doing a lot of online international activism, concerning gender critical thinking, and is working on a collection of radical feminist writings; a critique of pornobots, commonly called 'sex robots', a misnomer she points out, as it is impossible to have real 'sex' with these bots.

### **Breakout Groups**

Diann, with a few deft mouse taps, moved us all into small groups (about four in each) into a separate private space, to enable us to share personal stories. From reports back at the end of the session, it was clear that there was enormous diversity in the lives of the lesbians present and how they came to a realisation of their lesbianism. Women also talked about the many ways that lesbians have struggled alone, without support, and how this changed once they met more activist lesbians, working together on any number of issues and campaigns. One comment from the breakout groups was concern for younger lesbians. We understand they no longer have a visible lesbian movement and have expressed the lack of role models. Would a zoom intergenerational session like this one be possible was a question posed. A thought for future planning.

### **General Comment**

We have moved from a 1970s Women's Liberation Movement that aspired to be inclusive of all women regardless of sexuality, to a divided lesbian movement. From our two ZOOM events it is clear that as older lesbians we still have a connected community of lesbians with diverse views on our sexual identity and feminist theories. We are still a strong, inclusive community.



she missed out on the lesbian feminist activities of the 70s to her later regret.

Sadly, for younger lesbians there is a division between those who identify as radical lesbian feminists and those who are labelled this by others regardless of their views, and those who claim political correctness or 'woke' politics. This division sometimes comes with verbal or physically violent attacks, and moves to exclude those who they disagree with and can threaten the lives of those affected in harsh ways; on various social media, speaking engagements, and even threatening their jobs.

Amongst some younger lesbians there is a growing theory that only those who have never had sex with a man can call themselves lesbians. This definition leads to discounting the voices and ideas of many older lesbians.

In summary, both of the Lesbian Identity and Feminism ZOOM events have been successful in confirming that the path for lesbians to find their identity and feminist thought has been problematic for most of us. The lives of older lesbians have much to offer the younger generation, who have their own struggles, but may be able to learn something from the older generation of lesbians.

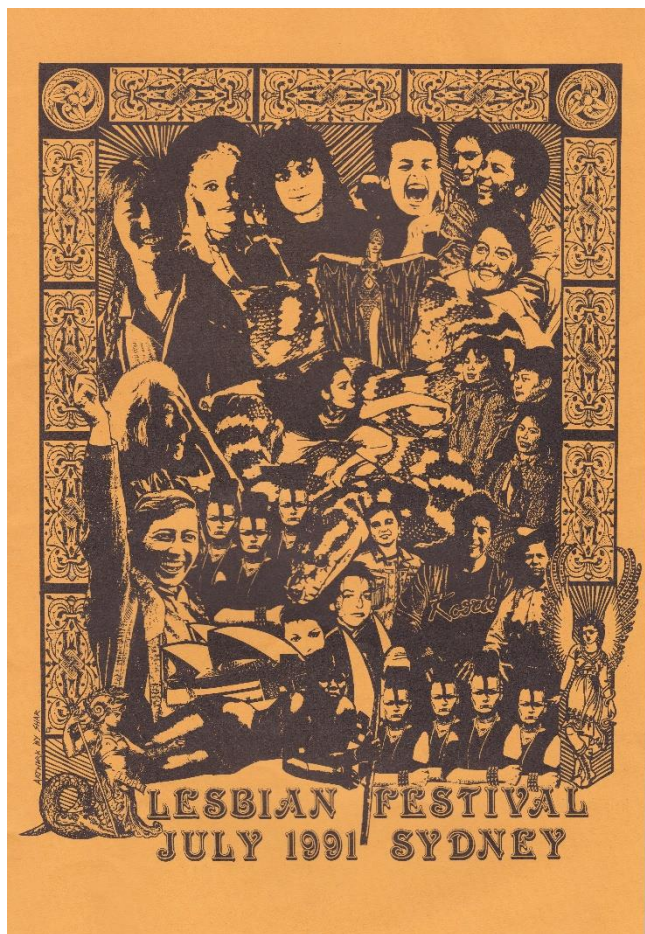
Sylvia September 2021

**The questions we asked participants to think about for the discussion.**

1. How old were you when you first thought you may be a lesbian?
2. What influence do you think your childhood had on your understanding of yourself as a lesbian?
3. How old were you when you had your first lesbian sexual experience?
4. When did you come out to yourself and then family and friends?
5. What was your first contact with feminism/Women's Liberation?
6. What if any, involvement have you had with any of the lesbian feminist theories and actions?
7. Add your own questions you would like to talk about.



## Report on Living Our Passion Revisiting the 1991 Lesbian Festival A Ten Forty ZOOM event



The first of a series of lesbian festivals was held in Adelaide, South Australia in 1989. Melbourne followed in 1990 with a week's festival, a dance, a memorable concert, then a three-day conference. The baton was passed to Sydney in 1991, and taken up with enthusiasm.

Diann Payne our own well-known photographer who has documented many events, took a series of photographs of many key events held over nine days from Saturday 6 to Monday 14 July. These events included cabaret, theatre, dance, music, book launches, a lesbian trade fair, a three-day lesbian conference, with many workshops, and a 2000+ lesbian concert at the Opera House. The theme was Living our Passion.

The ZOOM event was opened by Diann who gave an acknowledgment of country and explained that she would be providing a slide show supported by speakers. Participants would be able to share their memories as well. 48 women had logged into the event showing that this was indeed an event that they wished to be reminded of or, like some of us, who were unable to attend, an event we wanted to find out more about. Sand Hall one of the main organisers of the Festival, Lavender, one of the organisers of the Conference, and Mei Ling a main organiser of the Women's Land theatre piece, Unearthing Birdwood, shared their memories and insider information about the festival. They spoke to the photographs that were part of the slide show Diann had prepared, explaining what was happening and identifying some of the lesbians in the photographs. Another highlight of the slide show was the wonderful posters and

brochure covers made by various lesbian graphic artists. These were indeed magnificent art works. Each aspect of the Festival had its own poster and title.

Photographs of the opening event, held at Glebe High School, showed lesbians of all ages, but so many young lesbians, all engaged in watching, participating and enjoying the rich array of events. Lesbians had come from all over NSW and interstate. There were New Zealanders and lesbians from other countries present. Many of the photographs revealed that there were great crowds of lesbians engaged in this Festival.

The conference was held at UTS on different levels of the building. No kitchens were made available to the resourceful caterers who managed to provide amazing food despite this. A significant thread ran through the Conference, 'Connecting Cultures'. A key organiser, Chris Sitka, spoke about the significance, which we could see from photographs of lesbians from many different ethnic groups.

The presence of indigenous women participating in the festival was great to see. The lesbian group, Koorie Wirguls, was formed, (incorporated to handle approx \$12k from the 'pay the rent' component of the festival).



One area that the Women's and Lesbian movements have been leaders in is the provision of child care. The child care workers did a fantastic job, sometimes working until 1am when there was a late event.

The piece de resistance was the Concert at the Opera House. Sand explained that some women were sceptical it would be possible to pay for the hire of the Opera House. The photograph of the Main Theatre of the Opera House completely full of lesbians was proof of the organisers' determination to make this event stand out in our history. Too many performers to name all but a few well known today: The Topp Twins, Robyn Archer and Deborah Cheetham, all looking so young and fresh!

The big question that many of us have in regard to the incredible events we as lesbians have planned and executed in the past is how was it done without any funds? No internet or mobile phones. Very limited computers available, and little prior experience in organising national events on no budget.

The answer of course is: willingness to take a risk, hard work, determination, great team work, financial generosity of lesbians and massive lesbian community support.

Thanks go to Diann for her significant collection of photographs and Sand Hall, Lavender, Mei Ling and participants who added details to the event.

The Sydney Lesbian Festival was the last of the large widely publicised Lesbian Festivals. Sadly, although Lesbian Festivals have continued in a smaller way, somewhat narrow political views have prevented many lesbians from experiencing the joy of such a diverse and inclusive event.

There was a big request for the photographs and some text about the event to be made into a book. This of course requires more work and energy. It is hoped this will happen.

Sylvia October 2021



## **Report on Beyond the Pandemic; Finding the Silver Lining Ten Forty Matrix 5-6.30pm October 23rd, 2021. Mental Health Zoom event**

Ten Forty Matrix originally planned to hold a second Big Indoor Picnic on 23 October at Leichhardt Town Hall. The almost four-month lockdown which only ended a few weeks before our planned event and the COVID-19 regulations, meant we had to change the date to 11 December 2021. It was decided to have a ZOOM event in which we looked at the positive outcomes and issues that the lockdown raised. We decided that the issues for regional areas and those in other states in particular those in Melbourne should also be included. Speakers were invited from Melbourne and regional NSW. The event was advertised widely in the hope that we would have participants from as many locations in Australia as possible.

The plan included speakers followed by breakout groups to share women's own responses to lockdown and the events they have participated in or organised in the last two years.

A set of questions to stimulate discussion were developed:

Did you do or try something new or different? (new recipe, get familiar with ZOOM, learn a new game, take on new hobby, do more exercise, do something you had been meaning to do for ages?)

Did you find you noticed some things more than usual? (natural surroundings, scents, birds, trees, less noise, traffic?)

Did you notice any positive changes in people's behaviour? (Strangers striking up a conversation, local social media communities, dads out playing with their kids more, offers of help, friendliness?)

What tips if any can you give others for maintaining mental health in times of difficulty like the pandemic, what if anything that you learnt is worth keeping in the post-pandemic future?

The first speaker Sarah Yeomans, from Melbourne, had prepared a wonderful pictorial diary of her activities during the six long lockdowns in Victoria. She made even the simplest events, like talking to a friend from their car windows at the 1.5m distance, or her Zoom and Facetime highly amusing. As we were on ZOOM it was not possible to hear the laughter she generated with her cartoons and amusing anecdotes.

Sarah and her friends made the lockdowns a time of connection with each other and in house activities.

Lavender, the next speaker, has lived for 13 years in Lennox Head, still a fairly sleepy community, unlike most of the beach communities in Northern NSW. Within 48 hours of the lockdown being announced neighbours were knocking on her door offering help. In their street Lavender participated with other locals in regular quizzes, all at 1.5m distance. Also, a street party socially distanced on the nature strip. ACON did deliveries, the women's health centre offered online courses, cooking as usual, and the development of a mini vegetable garden also took some of the lockdown time.

Chris Sitka, from Melbourne, claimed to have found herself institutionalised and, tongue in cheek, wondered if she will ever come out again! For an activist like her that is unlikely.

There was a general feeling from the breakout groups that women found many ways to make the lockdown period a time in which they did a range of activities, some of which were new. The big plus was the improvement in the use of technology to maintain contact with friends and family. For some their initial anxiety in using ZOOM was soon overcome and became an important communication tool.

With lockdowns around Australia now over and COVID-19 restrictions gradually being relaxed in all states, as the majority of the population is fully vaccinated, we will soon be meeting face to face, although at times with that face in a mask. It will be back to our rich and fulfilling social life. Our experience of lockdowns will soon be a memory.

*The encouraging thing is that every time you meet a situation though you may think at the time it is an impossibility and you go through the tortures of the damned, once you have met it and lived through it you find that forever after you are freer than you ever were before.*

*Eleanor Roosevelt*



*Unearthing Birdwood*

## Critical Review of the Documentary *Brazen Hussies: The Women Who Started a Feminist Revolution in Australia*

I first met Catherine Dwyer, Writer and Director of the documentary, when I was on a discussion panel at the Wheeler Centre, as part of the discussion around the USA documentary *She's Beautiful When She's Angry* (2014), that documented the WLM in the USA, and was shown as part of the Melbourne International Film Festival, on 15 August 2015.

Catherine told me she was interested, after her experiences working on the US film, to direct a similar film around the WLM in Australia. I was impressed. I gave her copies of two of my books, sent the fundraising appeal a small donation, passed on to her the contact details of several WLM activists, answered questions, even gave her permission to use the title of one of my books, *Brazen Hussies*, as a work-in-progress title, and half expected, that I might even be interviewed at some stage.

Then, a couple of years ago, with the film nearing completion I was utterly disabused of that idea, with *Brazen Hussies* now the official title and, without checking this with me at all.

With all the publicity about the Australian film screenings, it became obvious that this was not the doco I'd expected. My name was included in the long list of people at the end who were thanked but that was it.

I have seen the doco a number of times but I am concerned here with the screening at the Como cinema in South Yarra on 26th November, 2020.

Catherine was looking understandably pleased with herself and with good reason. The doco was getting good reviews, four stars from David Stratton and four and a half from Margaret Pomeranz. Several of my friends also thought the film was good.

Afterwards, the Q&A started well until after many questions and comments, Lola Mathews, a member of the Women's Electoral Lobby stated that while WEL was a practical organisation and did a lot of work, the WLM spent most of its time either in protests on the street, which was good in terms of drawing attention to the necessity for the liberation of womyn, and in Consciousness Raising discussions, but not much else.

I was furious. I waited till Catherine handed me the mike, pulled down my mask and held forth. You can imagine my response. There was so much to tell.

And not only all that, I paused for breath, radical lesbian feminists were at the forefront of the WLM during the 1970s and 1980s and how could anyone possibly dismiss all the hard work the WLM had done over many years by saying otherwise.

As soon as I'd finished there was a smattering of applause then another WEL womyn in the audience took the microphone and virtually repeated what Lola had said, it was as if I hadn't spoken!

It seemed that the criticisms that the predominantly conservative middle-class reformist WEL womyn used to level at the grassroots radical WLM for going too far, being outrageous, and outspoken, for doing the hard work of putting our WLM theories into radical actions, were still very much in evidence, judging by what these WEL womyn were saying.

Since then, the ABC has screened the truncated and altered version of the BH doco on 5 April 2021, narrated by the well-known Australian actor Sigrid Thornton and emphasising her mother, Merle Thornton's action in 1965, where she and Ro Bognar chained themselves to the front bar of a Brisbane hotel to protest the male-only ruling in a so-called public bar. While noteworthy in itself, this was not the beginning of the WLM in Australia.

And in this version, there was no mention of Kerry Higgs who as we all know, wrote the first Australian lesbian novel *All That False Instruction* (under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Riley) and was instrumental in finding and then organising to buy what became known as Amazon Acres. Kerry was one of two lesbians, out of several in the doco, who actually said she was a lesbian, the other was the academic and filmmaker Barb Creed who, ironically, wasn't too impressed with Amazon Acres.

The omission of Socialist Feminists who were very active in Sydney and Melbourne in particular is also not a surprise.

And, as Pat O'Shane and other Aboriginal womyn say in the BH doco, Aboriginal womyn are still not impressed by non-Aboriginal womyn's efforts to support Indigenous womyn's concerns. I agree with Pat O'Shane and Lilla Watson that the WLM and radical feminists have not done nearly enough to support the Indigenous communities in their fight for Sovereignty, land rights and self-determination.

That Catherine has taken 1965 as her starting point shows a distinct lack of understanding about the origins of the WLM in Australia, which didn't begin with two middle-class womyn chaining themselves to the foot rail in

a Brisbane bar to protest about not being allowed to drink with the boys in 1965.

Dramatic gesture though that was, it was certainly repeated several times and in different ways around the country in the early 1970s. For example, Zelda D'Aprano chained herself to the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne to protest about Equal Pay in 1969, which led to the formation of the Women's Action Committee on 2nd March, 1970 and started the WLM in Melbourne.

Catherine has, quite understandably, based the doco on film available from the era, and matched the womyn who spoke up and were filmed back in the early 1970s, (most of it from Sydney filmmakers), with interviews of them in their now old age. Liz Reid, for example, the first womyn's advisor to the PM, who was in a paid bureaucratic position that was doomed to failure, featured a great deal.

Most of the high-profile womyn who were also featured are either well-known middle-class academics and/or bureaucrats in positions of power and privilege. They have influenced this doco to the degree that they control the narrative and have made it their own in terms of emphasising the reforms that needed to happen with little or no reference to the grassroots radical feminist actions and ideology.

I've written this critical review of the BH doco because I can't, in all conscience and for my own peace of mind, let the doco be the definitive record of the WLM in Australia when so many lesbian feminist and radical feminist womyn's activist groups and issues weren't acknowledged, not to mention the radical Women's Liberationists in every other state in Australia.

Apart from those mentioned on the east coast, womyn working on other campaigns and issues in other states were left out altogether, as if they too were not as actively and radically involved as the radical feminists in Melbourne and Sydney.

To my mind, the BH doco in no way does justice to our fierce fight for Women's Liberation back in the day and certainly does not properly acknowledge that there are as many violent and misogynistic challenges from the patriarchy now as there ever was.

Oddly enough, I'm not suggesting that you don't see the BH documentary for yourself. As I explained earlier, I have seen it several times, attended a few virtual discussions about it and bought the DVD. But if you do, I hope you will note the huge differences between the radical revolutionary Women's Liberation Movement and the reformist Women's Movement and



decide where you stand in terms of bringing down the patriarchy.

Jean Taylor

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country Bulleke-bec Naarm

**Please note:** This is a heavily edited version of Jean's review, abbreviated in order that it could be included in our last issue of the 10/40 newsletter for 2021. If you would like to read the fuller version, please contact Jean Taylor directly via email: [jetaylor168@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jetaylor168@yahoo.com.au)

Pearlie



## Vale Silvana Gruber 1934 - 2021

Silvana, caught up in WWII, a small child at the time, was a post-war refugee, in the northern part of Italy that subsequently, became part of what was then known as Yugoslavia.

Her mother died when Silvana was just two years old. This was a tragic loss, one that Silvana never quite recovered from. Cared for by other family, they chose to remain Italian and were moved to the refugee camp in Mantova. Food in the camp was scarce. Silvana made friends with two girls and they went about together, stealing fruit. Those two girls, now old women living in Rome, remained staunch friends with Silvana throughout their lives.

Here in Australia, she settled in well. For many years she worked as a Co-Ordinator and Mediator for Community Justice in the western suburbs of Sydney. She retired at the age of 64.

But retirement didn't mean slowing down. Silvana began a series of creative writing classes for both migrant and Australian-born women. Her devoted students returned year after year and the classes continued for more than fifteen years. At the end of each year Silvana edited and published a book of the collected stories and celebrated their year's work with a well-attended, get-together lunch.

Silvana died in Sutherland hospital, alone, but nurses were able set up a computer and a Zoom link so that she could say goodbye to her son in Tasmania and her daughter in Sydney. She had been diagnosed with Covid-19 a few weeks before.

Her funeral, held whilst we were all still in lockdown, was broadcast via Zoom and many of us were watching. Silvana will be missed by the many people who loved and admired her, and were honoured to call her a friend.

In the 1990s Silvana cooked an Italian festive meal for 70 lesbians at Clover. If you were to mention it today, there'd still be women telling you *I was there too!!*

Thank you to Daniela for providing this information about her dear friend Silvana.

## The Case of the decomposed snail

Imagine this: A little girl is drinking a glass of ginger beer, laced with a scoop of ice-cream. Her friend upends the last of the ginger beer into the little girl's glass. Out drops a decomposed snail. Soon enough, the child is ill.

The snail scene happened 93 years ago, in Paisley, Scotland and the snail became a legal legend. The ginger beer manufacturer was sued and, as it happens, the *law of negligence* came into being. In Britain's House of Lords, a Judge Atkins (born in Brisbane actually) made it clear once the judgement was made for the child that "The rule that you are to love your neighbour becomes in law, you must not injure your neighbour."

So why am I telling you this now?

Just prior to one of Melbourne's lockdown periods, in May this year, an important judgement decision was handed down by Federal Court Justice Mordecai Bromberg. He was tackling the relevance of the decomposed snail story in a case 'Sharma v Minister for the Environment' on what might well be the most important climate case in this country to date.

A nun, Sister Bridget Arthur, on behalf of children in her care, was out to prevent Environment Minister, Sussan Ley from going ahead to approve an extension of the Vickery coal mine in NSW. It is reported that 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide would be released into the atmosphere, in addition to the pollution the mine already discharges.

The decision in favour of the children is incredible. But don't breathe easy yet. The Minister can of course appeal. If she does, her position will be transparent. She will be revealing that for her government, children's health, anyone's health, is just not important enough.

Watch this space!!

Pearlie

## Ode of a Recovering Heterosexual

Went to college; smoked some dope -  
Gained some knowledge; that I hope!

Lived my life; went to work -  
Got into strife; what a jerk!

Then with a click; an epiphany -  
It wasn't a Dick; it was a Tiffany!

I wanted a her; not a him -  
Oh yes sir; how was I so dim!

Out I came; all a-quiver -  
Looked for the same; she made me  
shiver!

I'm home; the real me at last -  
My life now a poem; I got here fast!

I have now a wife; a woman called Anne -  
Living my life; the best I can!

Ali

## Letters to the Editor

### Something new!!!!

Diann and I, in this issue, are opening up a new section in the newsletter.

### Letters to the Editor

This is your newsletter, and your chance to tell us if you think we are covering the issues important to you, ideas for future events or Zoom sessions, or simply feedback on the newsletter. All comments are welcome.

Or maybe, there's simply something on your mind that you'd like to tell our 10/40 older lesbian community about?

We are hoping this section will prove to be an important part of the newsletter, so please, write to us.

[bookwormpjm@gmail.com](mailto:bookwormpjm@gmail.com)

[maude\\_au@yahoo.com](mailto:maude_au@yahoo.com)

Diann and Pearlle





## The Newsletter

We, Diann and Pearlie, hope you have enjoyed reading the newsletter.

Please keep giving us your feedback and whatever items of interest you feel need to be shared in the newsletter.

Follow us on FaceBook

[Ten Forty Matrix NSW](#)



## About Ten Forty and Older Dykes

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 <http://www.olderdykes.org> encourages national and international connections between older lesbians. Ten Forty is not an organisation you have to join, though members do get some discounts. If you want to receive regular information about our activities and our bi-monthly newsletter, visit our website and put yourself on our email list.

### Newsletter

The newsletter comes out on our email list. If you do not receive it, email us at

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

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

### Who currently does what?

**Events planning:** Sylvia, Diann, Wendy

**Contact email list:** Diann, Julie

**Archives:** Sylvia and Pearlie

**Money Management:** Fiona

**Websisters:** Jan, Ruth, Diann, Pearlie, Julie

**Newsletter:** editing and layout Pearlie and Diann