



# Ten Forty Matrix Newsletter

April 2022

## What's On

### Dykes for Dinner

**Thursday 12 May @ 6 30 p.m.**

At The Royal Leichhardt Hotel  
156 Norton Street, Leichhard

We will be upstairs at The Royal.  
The Bistro style food has all the Pub classics plus a few extras based on recipes from Italy and Greece. Vegan and gluten free options available. See their website for details  
[theroyal.leichhardt.com.au](http://theroyal.leichhardt.com.au)

Although Vaccination proof for CO-VID 19 is not required to be shown to enter the Hotel, Ten Forty Matrix Inc. Committee would appreciate all those attending to be fully vaccinated.

**Please RSVP to Fiona**

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

Message: 0412954573

### Country Lesbians Association

**Saturday 28 May @ 4.30**

**Zoom Session**

**Good things about aging**

What are some good things about aging? How do you spend your time? Have you explored creativity? Are you a traveller? Have you started a group of any kind; gotten involved with a group? Does any of it help you be less isolated? Feel more connected to the Lesbian community?

Join us for a Zoom session and share some words with us. RSVP to Diann at [maude\\_au@yahoo.com](mailto:maude_au@yahoo.com)  
She will send a link on the day.

### Dinner and Discussion

**for Older Lesbians**

**Saturday 4 June 6 PM**

**An evening dance**

Put the date in your diary and drag out your dancing shoes and shine up your shirts.

More details will be sent out on Contact. Keep an eye out for them.

## Report on Dinner and Discussion for Older Lesbians Zoom event

Saturday 12 February 2022

### Stories About Ageing

The planning group for Dinner and Discussion for Older Lesbians were still unsure about having a face-to-face event at our first meeting of 2022. So we decided to keep the event safe by having the discussion on ZOOM. With the reduced Omicron infections, hopefully it is our last DDfOL on ZOOM.

Three lesbians agreed to speak from their lived experience of aging, Bridget in her 50s, Fiona in her 60s, and Diann in her 70s. The plan was to listen to each speaker, then the participants break into groups to share our own lived experiences. Some prompt questions were provided to support the discussion.

- Was there an age when you considered yourself old enough for something but were actually too young?
- When did you first have an experience that made you think, 'I am ageing!'
- Menopause is one of the markers of aging in women, how did you experience it?
- How does your ageing process compare with that of your mother or grandmothers?
- Have you started an activity or hobby as an older woman that is usually for those younger? How did it go?
- For some of us older lesbians it took some time for us to act on our feelings for other women, stories about coming out later in life are always interesting.

Eighteen women logged on, and following the acknowledgment of country, our speakers were introduced one at a time.

#### Bridget

My name is Bridget. I am 57 years old. I was in my 50's when I got a new boss; ageist, sexist and homophobic. He started getting rid of the few women in my department and hiring men who were similarly revolting. I felt totally isolated.

It was in my 50s that I broke both my wrists chasing an overweight, anxiety driven bulldog, who ran out the door in the middle of the night. I also cracked a tooth and broke my glasses.

It was also in my early 50's that my mum's dementia got even worse, and she refused to shower or maintain any semblance of hygiene, not to mention believing that Scott Morrison was visiting her every day. Then, one of my eldest dearest friends, Cate, had a life changing stroke, and lost her independence. Watching her deteriorate broke my heart. And as if that wasn't enough. Sleepless nights, hot flushes, bouts of sadness, urine incontinence, weird dark hairs growing from my face.

But then, during a recent bout of terrible insomnia, I realised that it was because of menopause. Living in my 50's is actually the best decade I have ever lived

through. Those sleepless nights gave me the opportunity to think about my life. One such night I decided enough was enough at work, I was sick of the mistreatment, sick of crawling out of bed every morning, frightened and anxious about the day ahead. I was sick of being unhappy. I just couldn't imagine another 15 years of this shit.

My partner loves her job and wants to work for another 20 years. She was thrilled with my decision to leave work. I immediately told the Department of Education to shove their job. Since then, the smile has not left my face.

My life today as a 57 year old is completely different to ten years ago. I love my 50s. I am having so much fun. I also realise that I am very lucky to be in this position, not everyone can retire early. I am grateful for the situation I am in and certainly make the most of every day.

I now spend my time doing what nourishes me and makes me happy. My body and mind as a woman in her late 50s are still strong and active. I started volunteering at the Sydney Dog and Cat Home, we rescued 2 cats – I was very anti cat at first

as I had never had the time to really understand them but now I am a crazy cat lady. I started a kayaking group called The Mullets who clean rubbish out of the Cooks River every month and have met so many wonderful people through this environmental group. I started studying again. I got a new job teaching gardening to adults, but only did 2 days before Covid hit. I adopted a regular exercise routine and started bushwalking again. I am also taking art lessons which I love.

Having more time means I visit my mother more frequently in her nursing home. Mum can be very hard work. She has serious OCD and is fixated on time – asking every couple of minutes what time it is. She also rings constantly; her record is 157 times in one day – asking what the time is.

Before this latest outbreak of COVID, I started taking mum swimming at the local pool and we reconnected on a completely different level. She is so happy in water; she is absolutely in heaven. Her face looks so serene when leisurely floating through the water. She doesn't talk, doesn't obsess, she just is. She soon discovered the hot spa at the swimming centre we attend, which is not so enjoyable for me due to my hot flushes, but I just dangle my legs in and

watch the little kids learning to swim in the large inside pool.

I also shower my mother at the end of the swim. That was a bit confronting at first as I hadn't seen my mother naked since my teens. But now it's just me witnessing the ageing process. My mum is 86, her skin is wrinkled and saggy, her back is hunched over, and her body is practically hairless. In the shower, she is calm and relaxed. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to share this time with her.

Not working also has given me time to care for my 93-year-old darling friend, Cate. After a major stroke, Cate has struggled with her speech, reading, hearing and mobility. I really thought I had lost her last year which greatly upset me as I had never really sat down and told her how much I love her. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, her 93rd birthday, she had another major stroke. Would she survive? That night she was sitting up in bed, flirting with one of the nurses. That's our Cate, full of surprises.

It has been a gift being able to support Cate during this time. I often think about how we first met, me a young girl in her

through WEL. We are both kiwis and immediately hit it off. Over the past 30 years, Cate has taught me so much, sharing quotes and sayings with me, one of her favourites is “a little of what you fancy does you good Bridget”. She also always told me never to judge people, “be curious, not judgemental”.

I know and totally understand that for some women, as they get older, they begin to embrace the “inner cranky” woman, no longer tolerating or putting up with bad behaviour. Why should they? Often, they have lived a lifetime of having to be nice and tolerate mistreatment. I get that. But I also don’t want to be cranky or angry. Hopefully, when I die I will be remembered as being good natured and kind. And as Cate always said to me “you attract more bees with honey than vinegar.”

Being in my 50’s makes me recognise and truly appreciate the life I have. My life didn’t start that way. But now it is terrific. I have the most loving partner in the world, we share a much loved 34 year old daughter, and I have the most wonderful friendships. I’m in good health, have a lovely home, 2 cats and a dog, and a gorgeous garden. I am very fortunate.

Role models have always been important to me and I am so lucky to have had quite a number – women and the occasional man who I have looked up to and have learned so much from them. They have taught me what is important in life. I am the person I am today because of them.

My first and most important role model is my partner, Kylie. We have been together for nearly 28 years and she is my best friend. Kylie is a wonderful example of what it means to be honourable, ethical and how to love unconditionally. She has taught me about perseverance, determination and being happy. She says that when she is unsure of herself, she thinks about the enormous confidence of the most mediocre white man and that always gets her through.

My second role model is Cate who some of you know. Some of the older women at WEL could be quite exasperated by me and my friends. We were young feminists, finding our way in the 90’s. We didn’t always behave in the way the older women thought best. Cate would take me aside and tell me to just keep going. She has taught me what getting older, being less mobile as your body ages. Once this is taken away, either

late 20s, she a woman her in early 60s. I thought she was so worldly. We met it means to be strong, stoic and kind.

My third role model is my daughter Rebecca. She is 34 years old now. A strong sassy feminist, she lives to the beat of her own drum. I am not overly rapt in her latest craze of getting tattoos but at least they are botanical in nature and one is of a woman holding a feminist symbol. She often encourages me to stand my ground.

My final role models are many of you reading this now. I have learned so much from all of you and the important of inclusiveness in our lesbian feminist community.

### **Fiona**

I begin my story on ageing by quoting Lucille Ball:

*“The secret of staying young is Live honestly, Eat slowly, And lie about your age.”*

I am not going to lie about my age. I am talking about life in my late 60s. I have a vision of myself as someone younger. I don't see myself as a person in their late 60s.

I see myself as someone a lot younger.

When I was a young child, I didn't know any of my grandparents, they had all died. However, I did visit Aunt Clara, my Great Aunt who was very OLD. She lived in a dark terrace in Leichhardt. Wore black clothing and had her grey hair in a bun. The curtains were always closed and I assumed she was about 100. She was 84 when she died so my memories would be when she was in her mid 70s. Now, I tend to see someone in their 70s or 80s as still young and my image of them is very different to my little and stooped Aunt Clara.

#### Loss of Agency

The main thing to happen to me in my 60s, and for most other people, is the loss of agency though the end of a 'working life' in inverted commas. For me, my full-time work /employment ended due to Covid. This caused fear about how I was going to support myself through the remainder of my life. Full time employment, secure work, sick leave, annual leave, superannuation being paid into an account provided security and a sense of all will be alright. You don't have to worry about economic security and voluntarily or involuntarily, insecurity can arise.

I had already gone through a number of careers so my self-identity and the meaning of my life was not dependent upon my work identity. This loss of agency can be so drastic for some that they return to work or they deteriorate very quickly. To find a different identity not based on your work persona is important.

When I lost my full-time employment due to Covid 19, I was able to go onto Unemployment Benefits. Great I thought, but this payment only lasted one month as I turned 66 and was then moved onto the Old Age Pension, or more accurately the Age Pension as it is called in Australia. I was told very clearly you are too old to work and no one would want to employ you. You can now be pensioned off. This aroused feelings of anger and I felt as if I didn't matter anymore.

I persevered and through friends secured part time work as a support person funded by NDIS and some real estate work, again through friends and connections. I am very fortunate that I have secured this part time work as nothing was available through the Government system.

Getting older also brings up images of ill health, and an ageing body.

I have never been in hospital and don't intend to be a patient in one any time in the near future. I do Yoga to improve the way my body functions, my flexibility and to improve my bone health. During an early morning class, one of the younger students in her 30s, asked what age we were. Some had just come down from a headstand and this young woman was unbelieving when we said, 66, 67 and 68.

In conclusion, you are only as old as you feel, so I am going to go on feeling young. When I went to see my GP recently, a different doctor was filling in and he said that there were some vital statistics missing from my file. What could that be? I asked with curiosity. Your height, weight and BMI, he replied. We could do those now, he suggested. I reluctantly agreed as I had been working on ignorance as bliss as my philosophy.

He calculated my BMI as 28. I said, 'Is that good, bad?' He replied, 'it's a little bit up there'.

Oh, I said.

Seeing my grief, he said 'it's a bit like a buffed-up Bondi Life Saver and flexed his upper body.

I thanked him and walked out of the surgery feeling happy with my very toned, tanned and fit Life Saver Body - a woman's of course!

### **Diann**

I am 72. I identify as lesbian and feminist. I have read that Feminism gets seen by younger women as nostalgia from a bygone generation. And some define it as women hating men. I find that sad.

As a feminist I want to be part of those who want to change the world, especially the position of women in our society. Access, Equity and social justice, the rights of women have been my catch-cry.

I have witnessed a few changes. But as we age, even lesbian feminists are at risk of becoming invisible. We are those 'poor things' that need to be offered a seat on the bus. Or we are seen as a relic, to be smiled at but not taken seriously.

At the age of 72 I enjoy creative endeavours and I am a technology user. I am also someone who lives with a major health challenge. I worry about the medical profession I have to deal with periodically. Are they starting to stereotype me? Not give me the same

attention, or care that they might give a woman of 30? Of course, that is starting to happen but it is only part of the picture.

When I turned 30 I thought I was old, over the hill, too old to achieve anything. I was in India at the time, hoping to do volunteer work at a women's refuge and orphanage. Though I still had not met any feminists. Health intervened when I returned to Oz. That changed my plans. Doors had to be closed. New doors opened. I met feminists and by age 35 realised that I was definitely lesbian.

At age 40 I started going through menopause. Health problems meant I had to give up my photography business. I fell into a deep depression and various childhood memories of abuse arose. It was a challenging time. But that was menopause, and health, not ageing. Menopause is part of the ageing process but I thought of it as a health issue.

At age 50 I didn't know if I was going to make it through the year. My heart had recently gone into an arrhythmia and had other damage. Health challenges loomed large. But I was still here at the next milestone of 60.

When I turned 70 I found it hard to believe that I was now part of the 'elderly'. I taught myself how to use Zoom in my 70<sup>th</sup> year, at the beginning of the Pandemic. I discovered I could play cards with friends online, using zoom to talk to them. I host Zoom events and meetings for Ten Forty. I am a member of Websisters. We manage the Ten Forty website. I developed my printmaking skills and was part of a printmaking exhibition. Unlike my 30<sup>th</sup> year, at 72 I do not think of myself as old.

Most of my friends are my age or older, so I don't notice so much how we are all slowing down. We are all in this process together. Being involved with Ten Forty has helped me expand my social network. Creative endeavours save me from the white noise of social stereotyping.

The biggest challenge with ageing that I notice is keeping up with the new technology. I am what is known as an 'early adopter'. I am not afraid of it. I was teaching intro to computing and digital storytelling before I retired. But all I learned in the past 20 years is now old, superseded. And trying to keep up

with all the new ways of communication leaves me with no time to smell the flowers.

I do have a twitter account, and an Instagram account, a facebook account, a blog, and an email account and know how to send texts and pics on my phone. However.....I barely have time to keep up with my emails, and texts, let alone twitter, Instagram, facebook. And if I blink, they are likely to be upgraded and they won't be recognisable when I do try to access them.

I am enjoying slowing down. And that might be part of ageing. But the slower I go, the faster the rest of the world seems to move. I am just glad I have friends who are going through the same process.

Ageing also brings me closer to the last chapters of my life. Some of my friends who are older are beginning to fade, have strokes, heart attacks, dementia, or some other debilitating health issue that takes their time and energy away. And I can only be a witness. I can't rescue them.

That aspect is one of the most painful challenges.

I have to acknowledge my own mortality as well. What do I want to say before that last chapter closes? That is one of my questions. And have I said it?



**Older does not mean the end of laughter.**

## **COUNTRY LESBIANS ASSOCIATION - CLA.**

During COVID lockdowns Ten Forty Matrix continued our events and meetings using ZOOM. We are now back to Face-to-Face events but missing the contact with those in regional and interstate locations we met on ZOOM. The Ten Forty Websisters discussed the use of Zoom to keep in touch with our far flung members. One of us suggested that we could set up a Zoom group and call it the Country Lesbians Association, a title we thought would resonate with our membership.

We have now had several sessions, at present every two months, and have chosen topics to discuss and have had breakout groups to allow deeper discussions. These sessions have facilitated meetups among us for lunch and a chat.

We are contemplating extending the activities of the group a little. One possibility would be to run a CLA ZOOM book group which could be managed by any woman regardless of location. Guidelines on the pros and cons of how to run a book group could be provided if necessary.



The other possibility would be for someone outside of Sydney to run the regular CLA group. More frequent meetings would be possible for general discussion or planning. The Sydney workers have a lot on their plates and once every 2 months is all we can manage at the moment. You do need a ZOOM account for this.

The Ten Forty Inc. constitution specifies that we are NSW based. This was pre-ZOOM and COVID pandemic. Interstate communication via ZOOM allows a wider reach.

It would be very useful to have some feedback from our country members on these ideas.

In the terms of our constitution it would be useful if those who would like to be involved had personal contact at some stage with some of our present members.

FEEDBACK PLEASE. To  
[Contact@olderdykes.org](mailto:Contact@olderdykes.org).

## Women's Electoral Lobby 2022 WEL Survey Results

### ***“Women face great challenges but we can achieve positive change”*: 2022 Women's Electoral Lobby's Survey Results released**

At the end of 2021 the Women's Electoral Lobby surveyed its supporters to help inform its 2022 Federal election campaign policy platform. Their feedback has given us important insights into what matters for Australian women who want genuine government commitment to gender equality.

Jozefa Sobski AM, WEL Australia National Convenor described the findings as “a confirmation of the stronger action and increased resourcing needed to support women. We can have a more equitable future for everyone and the responses in the survey highlight which issues facing women need to be addressed to secure this better society”.

This is an election where the stakes are high for women's issues. In March 2021, tens of thousands of women expressed their frustration at the slow pace of change

towards equality by declaring ‘Enough is Enough’. The results of the WEL survey provide first hand insights into these frustrations. When respondents were asked to list the top three women's issues likely to influence their vote this year, they said: women's safety, housing security and climate change.

The survey's key findings include:

- Ending violence against women is ranked as the biggest challenge for Australia with 99.5% of survey respondents demanding adequate and sustainable funding for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
- 90% list women's job security as essential for gender equality
- 92% want welfare payments indexed more fairly, at the cost of living
- Well over 90% respondents nominate women's housing security and homelessness as a critical issue, especially for women escaping domestic violence and for older women. There is an overwhelming call to action to address health access barriers for women, especially for First Nations Women, regional and rural



- women, migrant women and trans women
- Over 90% of respondents are deeply concerned about women's underrepresentation in politics. This means a gender safe and supported political system, and a strong participation and career trajectory for women.

Ms Sobski said the survey was “a clear reflection of the far-reaching demand for women’s equality, safety and continuing progressive reform into the future”

WEL’s Campaign Manager Bronwyn McDonald thanked the participants for their insights, saying the results have informed WEL’s federal election platform: “Women from all around the country have shared with us their frustrations with the lack of genuine commitment to gender equality as well as their vision for a better future for women and girls”.

She said, “It was resoundingly clear from the survey that rights and equality for women will be a key issue this election. WEL intends to lobby for a far-reaching reform program”. WEL will continue to

advocate for policies that are funded, practical and sustainable.

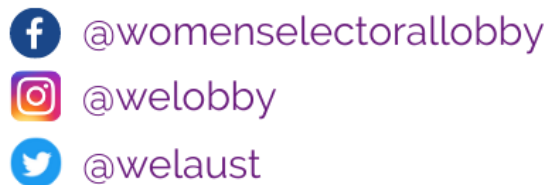
WEL will be releasing the survey results online and inviting its supporters to have a conversation about the policy areas on social media. [Click here to follow the release and join the conversation](#)

#### For Media:

For more information, or to arrange an interview contact Dr Bronwyn McDonald at [bronwyn.mcdonald@welns.org.au](mailto:bronwyn.mcdonald@welns.org.au) or phone 0408 477 403



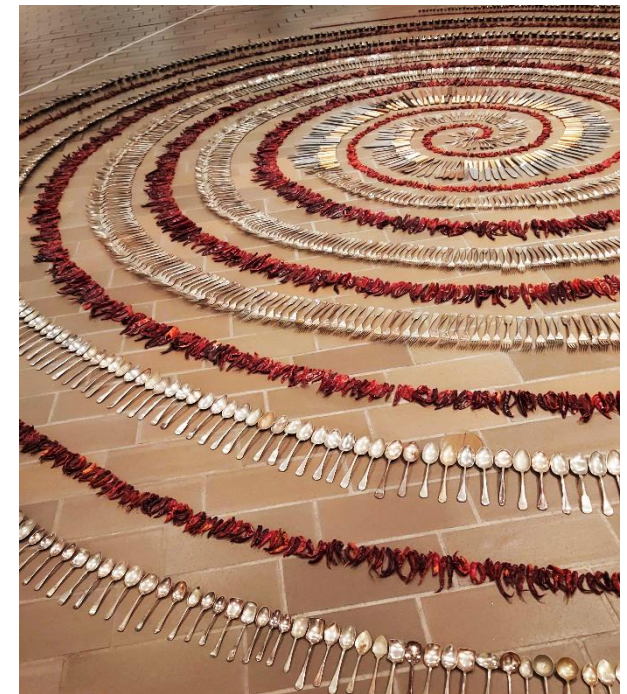
ph: (02) 9517 4475  
[www.wel.org.au](http://www.wel.org.au)



*WEL acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn, and work*

## Letters to the Editor

Disappointing not to receive anything for this column. Please write to us and give us your feedback.



*From the Know My Name exhibition, part II*

## The Newsletter

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

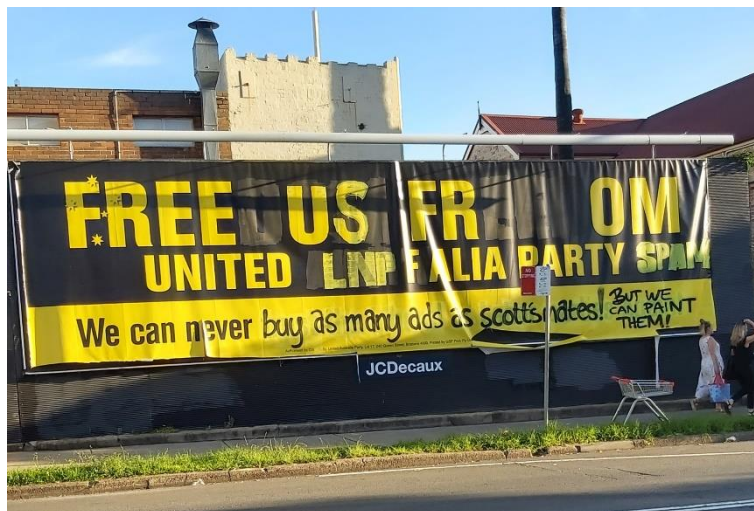
Please keep giving us your feedback and let us know topics of interest you feel need to be shared in the newsletter.

Follow us on FaceBook

Ten Forty Matrix NSW

Browse our website

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



## 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. 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 [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 Jan

**Money Management:** Fiona

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

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

**Management committee:** Jan, Sylvia, Pearlie, Diann, Fiona, Wendy, Chris