

Euphemia Bostock: *Born lucky*



© Euphemia Bostock, 1990. Licensed by VISCOPY, Sydney

Possum Skin Design is Euphemia's signature piece. She created it when she realised there were very few representations of material culture from south-east regions of Australia in major public collections, or contemporary versions drawing on her heritage.

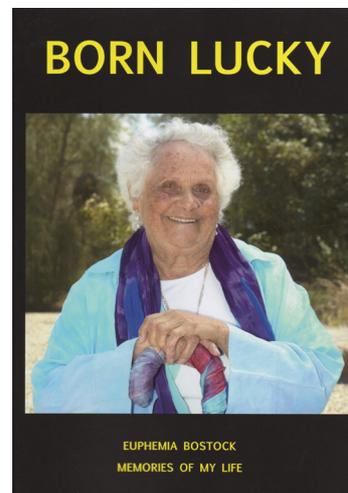
The Library congratulates Phemie and Jenny on the successful launch of *Born lucky*. We are proud to have been associated with this important project on Aboriginal women's history, starting at the Library back in 2011 when Jenny first began the interviews with Phemie.

Research on Euphemia Bostock and her oral history, a project we commenced in 2011, has finally come to completion. This initiative in recording Aboriginal women's history was reported in the Library's Newsletter in February 2012, and the work has continued ever since. The book called *Born lucky* was launched at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists cooperative in Leichhardt on 7 May.

Born lucky captures the life memories of Euphemia Bostock, well known Aboriginal mentor, community leader and artist. Her story is a fascinating journey through the eight decades of her life, revealing the powerful support of friends, her political activism and her success as an artist, specialising in textiles, ceramics and sculpture. Her story touches on many key events affecting Aboriginal people and provides many perceptive insights.



Phemie and Jenny



Phemie decided to call her story *Born lucky* because she believes she is. She has achieved a great deal and feels she was lucky to have such wonderful parents and family. However Phemie also believes in taking chances and giving new things a go. This is demonstrated in her decision to leave her factory job and join the public service. She also took up the challenge of becoming an artist aged 50. Her first artwork, the Possum Skin Design screen print, was purchased by the National Gallery in Canberra. A firm believer in self-improvement, Phemie has taken courses in sculpture, pottery and art. Her enterprising approach to life has been a key factor in her success.

Phemie and I recorded a series of interviews at the Library and then started a long and evolving process of working these yarns into a story. We have called it a collaboration – Phemie's words, written by me.

The decision to publish the resulting story means that an Aboriginal woman's history is added to the Library's collection – the purpose of the project. It surely deserves to find a home in many libraries, schools and galleries for the enjoyment and benefit of the wider community.

Jenny Reeves

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Jessie Street National Women's Library

Australia's National Women's Library is a specialist library, its focus being the collection and preservation of the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

- To heighten awareness of women's issues
- To preserve records of women's lives and activities
- To support the field of women's history
- To highlight women's contribution to this country's development

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Domestic Violence collection

On 4 July the Library hosted an informal event to mark the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Library, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and the Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN), a network of researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Chair Jozefa Sobski executed the document on behalf of the Library, together with Heather Nancarrow, the Chief Executive Officer of ANROWS and Jan Breckenridge, Co-Convenor of GVRN.

The librarians have been collaborating with Jen Novak, the Information Management Officer for ANROWS, and Paula Bennett, the Manager of GVRN since 2013 to determine which items within the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse collection, previously housed at UNSW, met the Library's collection development policy. The Library has agreed to preserve those items and to allow UNSW and ANROWS reasonable access to the collection. Jessica Gregory, the Media Officer for ANROWS, also joined Jen and Paula at the signing.

A lively discussion about the history of services to support women escaping domestic violence and the current role of social media in the dissemination of information ensued. Heather and Jan both acknowledged the importance of the Library's commitment to the preservation of material about domestic violence issues as well as women's history generally.

The Library is acutely aware of the need to preserve such material. As the only holding institution of the 1987 report to the Premier Barry Unsworth, 'Report on personal and family violence legislative reforms' by the Violence Against Women and Children Law Reform Task Force, the Library has made the report available by interlibrary loan to university and government libraries. Similarly, the transcript of a 1997 Lunch Hour Talk about child sexual abuse has been made available to the legal representatives of a party appearing before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

2016 Annual Luncheon

The Annual Luncheon at Parliament House, the Library's major fundraising event, will be held on Monday 19 September. Our guest speaker is Tanya Hosch, who will give an overview of the work of 'Recognise' in raising awareness and support for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Australian Constitution.

This year's Luncheon raffle offers an array of wonderful prizes, including accommodation for two nights at the Grand Langham Hotel, Sydney, with buffet breakfast and other inclusions donated by Teachers Mutual Bank, and a sterling silver handmade brooch designed by Connie Dimas Jewellery.

There are also David Jones and Brays Books vouchers, a Middle Harbour Coffee Cruise, signed copies of books plus bottles of wine produced by Mount View High School.

The Library appreciates your support in buying tickets in the Raffle.

LUNCH HOUR TALKS — third Thursday of the month

18 August: Robyn Arrowsmith

Memories and Experiences of Australian War Brides in America

Fifteen thousand young Australian women married US servicemen during the 1940s, leaving their families to join their husbands in America. This talk covers their experiences and memories of adjusting to cultural change while settling into new roles.

20 October: Suzanne Leal

The Teacher's Secret: fact, fiction, secrets and the law

A lawyer specialising in child protection, criminal and refugee law, Suzanne draws upon her own experience in her new novel. While seeking to uncover the truth, she also tells of a young mother facing the end of a marriage and of a family starting afresh in a new country.

17 November: Charlotte Wood

Messages from another realm

Charlotte will discuss the writing process for her Stella Prize winning novel, *The Natural Way of Things*, and why she departed from realism to tell the story which sprang from the bones of the real Hay Institution for Girls. She will discuss how her subconscious, strange images and symbols – and one's 'inner objects' – drove its creation.

Venue/Time: 12.00-1.30pm. Southern Function Room, 4th Floor, Town Hall House, 456 Kent St Sydney.

Cost: \$16 (members) \$22 (non-members) including light lunch. Pay at the door. **Book by noon Monday before the talk.** Ph (02) 9571 5359

Beryl Women's refuge

One of the great things about being a volunteer at the Library is to experience the surprise and joy of a researcher who comes to us seeking information and discovers the riches of our collections. This occurred recently when someone researching the history of violence against women found how much material the Library has, including books, posters and archives. This inspired us to take a fresh look at one section of our archives.

An important component of the archives collection of papers and records of individual women and women's organisations came to us in 1993. The Canberra Women's Archives document the lives of second wave feminists during the 1970s and 1980s. The archives were donated to the Library when they lost their home at the Australian National University. Frances Sutherland and Mary Hutchison negotiated the transfer to the Library in 1993. Among the collections donated are the records of the Canberra Women's Refuge from 1974 to 1988.

In June 1974 Women's Liberation (Canberra) and Women's Electoral Lobby (ACT) members met to discuss the possibility of establishing a women's refuge. The Canberra Women's Refuge committee was formed at that time. One of their first duties was to send a submission to the Minister for the Capital Territory. The submission was successful and the Department provided the Committee with a house in the suburb of Watson and a \$4000 establishment grant for the creation of a women's refuge.

The Refuge appears to have been unofficially known as Beryl Women's Refuge in honour of Beryl Henderson (1897-1990), an international feminist who officially opened the refuge in March 1975 on International Women's Day. A short account of Beryl's life can be found in *Australian Feminism – a companion* Caine, Barbara et al (eds) Oxford University Press 1998.

The records held in the collection comprise 2.4 linear metres of papers held in manila folders. They contain various files of handwritten and typed sheets, hard and soft covered journals and some published material. There are 139 files which are distributed among 22 different series. The Annual Reports are in bound published volumes. The records include a short history of the refuge by Biff Ward, a member of the refuge collective in 1981. In it she states the aims of the refuge were to operate as an open feminist collective; for collective members to offer non-directive support, care and empathy; and for the household to be seen as the home of the women and children.

The Refuge, now known as Beryl Women Inc, continues its work to the present day. It celebrated 40 years of operation on 8 March 2015. *Opening a new door: The history of Beryl Women Inc 1975-2015* Farzana Choudhury (ed), was published last year. Further information concerning the records of the Refuge can be found in the Library's catalogue.

Bev Sodbinow



Sister Angelique Namaika wins UNHCR Nansen Award

Last year I represented the Library at a luncheon at the Botswana High Commission in Canberra to honour Sister Angelique Namaika. She won the 2013 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Nansen Refugee Award, giving global recognition to her work. Sr Angelique greeted women at the luncheon, largely attended by the Canberra diplomatic community.

From time to time we hear news about the troubles in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sr Angelique's presentation, in her French native language, brought home the realities of the horrors experienced by the women she has helped.

In Geneva in 2013 the UNHCR and many high-profile government and UN leaders honoured this humble and courageous Congolese Catholic Augustine nun, who has spent years helping women recover from abuse and suffering in the violent northern district of Dungu, Orientale Province. Most of those she has helped at the Maison de la Femme (House of Women) are young women who were forcibly displaced and abused by armed groups, mainly the brutal LRA, a Ugandan rebel group that moved into northern DRC in 2005.

Many of the LRA's female victims were beaten, raped and forced to become sex slaves. Over the past decade Sr Angelique has helped some 3,000 of them to rebuild their lives with newly learned trades, to find their place in the world again, overcome their trauma, counter the stigma and regain some dignity.

Sr Angelique explained her methods. She has organised a safe camp where these women and children live. She has helped them learn business skills, in a bakery, a collective farm and a sewing workroom, and organised micro loans and schooling. 'I saw the displaced women had many difficulties; they lived through atrocities and had enormous trauma. This is what pushed me to help these women and help them become independent. The productive work takes their minds away from the atrocities they have experienced.'

In 2009, during morning mass, the LRA attacked and the nuns fled. Her experience was similar to that of the displaced women. 'When you're displaced you have to ask for everything. Sometimes you ask but don't receive help'. This strengthened Sr Angelique's resolve. The Nansen Award meant that she had people and funds to help her cause and she expressed her gratitude to the UNHCR.

Sr Angelique appealed to the Canberra diplomats to promote peace and safety for all women worldwide. In question time she was asked what the Congolese Government was doing for the Maison de la Femme. Sr Angelique replied that they provided guards to the compound perimeter, but it became apparent that the women have no safe water supply and are dependent on bottled water. With the assistance of the UNHCR, Sr Angelique will be able to continue helping the women of Dungu.

Educating a woman is like educating the whole nation because women are the ones who teach their children.

– Sister Angelique Namaika

Robyn Harriott

THE SUMMIT OF HER AMBITION: THE SPIRITED LIFE OF MARIE BYLES

Filmmaker and conservationist Anne McLeod was on a meditation retreat in India in 1992 when she discovered a book about Gandhi, written by Marie Byles. Inspired to find out more about Marie's achievements, Anne drew together her research in a book about the little known lawyer, conservationist and Buddhist, titled *The summit of her ambition: the spirited life of Marie Byles*.



Marie Byles was born in England in 1900, and came to Australia aged 11. Her father was Chief Signal Engineer for the NSW Railways and set up the electrical work for electrifying the entire signaling system in NSW; she inherited his dominant personality. He built the family house in Beecroft, Sydney. Her mother Ida's family had a connection with publishers Allen & Unwin. An art student, Ida engendered in her daughter belief in women's equality and non-conformist, feminist principles – Marie refused to wear a corset.

Marie was educated at PLC Croydon and later PLC Pymble. An excellent student, her father suggested she study law. Marie also had her dreams. While staying at the Palm Beach holiday house she would look across to the unexplored Bouddhi headland.

A significant event occurred in 1918 which allowed women to practice law and become magistrates and judges, at the right time for her entry to Sydney University to study law. In those days women put their hair up when they reached a certain age but she decided to cut her hair, much to the horror of those around her. In 1924 she graduated, did her articles, becoming the first female solicitor in NSW and started work in a legal office.

In 1928 she took up another challenge, setting off on a Norwegian cargo boat, learning to sail, steering the boat through the night. Her first mountain challenge was the peaks of the Lakes District in England, then the Scottish Highlands and the Canadian Rockies. Obsessed by mountaineering, she was keen to take an alpine training course. Determined to conquer Mt Cook in New Zealand, she was not deterred by the blizzard at the top, but was forced to return by sliding down the mountain.

A year later she established her own law firm in a theatre foyer in Eastwood. Putting her clients' needs first, she managed to survive the Depression. In 1932 she hired a law clerk and a secretary. A significant win for her was in the campaign for the guardianship of infants, of mothers' rights to their children. Her social justice ethic drove her to work with Jessie Street in the equal pay for women campaign in 1935 and in divorce law reforms, in a time when women needed witnesses of assault to be heard in court. In her role as an educator of women, Marie was also legal correspondent for women's magazines, writing about how divorce law discriminated against women.

After the Depression, Marie Byles & Co moved into a new office in Eastwood where she ran a very streamlined, efficient business, eventually employing 13 women

paralegals. She allowed her employees to fit their working lives around their families. In the 1950s she built her own chambers next door.

In 1929 she joined the Sydney Bush Walkers club – the start of the conservation movement and the saving of the Blue Gum Forest campaign in Sydney's Blue Mountains. Her high profile enabled her to promote causes, especially conservation. She campaigned in the lobby groups for areas to be reserved as National Parks and acting as their solicitor, was responsible for overseeing the papers for its creation. She realised her dream of reserving the Bouddi bushland and created the paths leading to the beautiful Maitland Bay, organising working bees for the tracks. Bouddi National Park remains as the only major undeveloped stretch of coastline between Sydney and Newcastle, and her work is commemorated at the Marie Byles lookout at Killcare. She was also instrumental in the founding of the Warrumbungles National Park.

Her biggest mountaineering challenge was undertaken in 1938, when she led an international expedition to Mt Sansato in southern China, at a time when war was unfolding. Entering via Burma during the rainy season, it was difficult trekking on the mule train on uncharted paths. Within 150 metres of the summit the expedition party found it covered in ice, and to their chagrin, had to abandon the climb.

In the next phase of her life Marie turned to spirituality, philosophy and reflection. She set up a house in Cheltenham situated by the national park, Ahimsa (meaning non-harming), based on Gandhi's principles of non-violence and opened it to the public. She committed to voluntary simplicity, sleeping on the verandah, and wrote four books on Buddhism as well as articles on legal, political and environmental issues.

Her association with the Quakers strengthened her practice of meditation, but they rejected her because she was not Christian. She built a hut expressly for meetings, which has been donated to the National Trust and is now used for yoga. Finally she became a Buddhist, and made a pilgrimage to India to write *Footprints of Gautama the Buddha*. She died at Ahimsa in 1979.

She was described as 'a trailblazer for feisty women' – her life an inspiration to women. Our patron Elizabeth Evatt AC commented in the book's foreword, '... an enigmatic and elusive woman. She was ahead of her time with her commitment to equality, peace, justice and humanity.'

Report by Kris Clarke

Facebook update



The Library's facebook page recently introduced women who were 'first' in some particular achievement. The item with the most hits, 1860, was on Linda Burney, the first Aboriginal woman in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party in that state. Now we celebrate her most recent victory, as the first Aboriginal woman elected to the House of Representatives.

THE FEMALE FACTORY RIOT OF 1827: THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE?

Francis Greenway's Female Factory at Parramatta was built by convicts in 1821 to accommodate 300 women. Designed as a prison and a place of employment; in reality it was also a brothel and marriage mart. The three storey golden sandstone building has survived to the present day but as an inaccessible and neglected place, rarely visited by tourists or locals, its sorry history mostly forgotten by the descendants of the women who laboured, gave birth or died there.



Since 2010, Gay Hendriksen, President of the Friends of Parramatta Female Factory (FPPF) has been working with the North Parramatta Residents Action Group (NPRAG) to lobby the NSW government to reconsider its plans for a massive commercial and residential development of this historic site. Their joint goal is to 'save the precinct as a highly significant social, economic and cultural asset for Parramatta, NSW and Australia'. In 2015, they sought National Heritage Listing for the site and gained bipartisan support from Federal Parliament. They believe their next goal – World Heritage Listing – is absolutely critical to preserve this site for posterity.

Gay began her talk by highlighting some little known facts. There were 24,000 convict women who came to Australia and over 5,000 went through the Parramatta Female Factory. It is estimated that one in seven Australians is descended from these women. The Parramatta Female Factory was the model for every other female factory that operated in this country and the earliest surviving female convict site. There were two similar factories in Tasmania, one in Launceston and one in Hobart (preserved as a museum).

Assessing the historical significance required intensive research of original records. This brought to light evidence of what might be the colony's first industrial dispute, in 1827. It was 'a strike' by women but was described in all accounts as 'a riot'. As Gay read more about the working conditions and treatment of the women workers, it occurred to her that its industrial significance has been downplayed by most reports and was overshadowed by the Eureka Stockade and men's industrial action in the 1850s. Thus has Australian women's history been largely unrecorded and disregarded.

Gay illustrated her talk of the 'riot and mass escapade' with slides of the few images she was able to find during her research. She commented on the paucity of pictorial records: 'We're not getting any voice of the women, you're only getting that in the trials. What we're getting is cartoons and attitudes to the women' (expressed by others in prejudicial terms). She went on to describe how the terrible, cruel and inhumane treatment of inmates included starvation, resulting in the riot. Working and

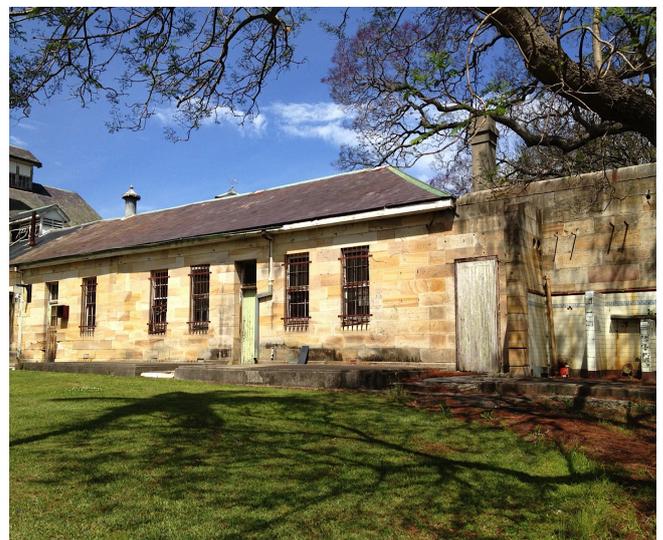
living conditions in the factory were appalling, especially for pregnant women. Infant mortality rates were high because of the unhygienic conditions due to lack of any heating, water supply or sewerage. Food rations were extremely short and gradually became insufficient to sustain the workload. In 1826 Mary-Anne Hamilton died of starvation at the factory. An assigned servant testified that Mary-Anne had been confined to her cell without food or water. The Coroner's inquest found her death was caused by 'hunger and hard treatment'. Women complained they could not do their work 'owing to their weak condition and they wanted more food. Even if they were getting their proper portion, they were only getting half [as much as] the men.'

Discontent continued to fester as no further rations were forthcoming. In March 1827, unrest began to escalate. In October, 13 women stopped work and refused to work until their rations were returned. Those striking women were locked away for their rebellion. When bread and sugar rations were stopped altogether, the women threatened to tear down the factory unless the rations were reinstated immediately. Using hammers and sledges, the women broke down the gate and ran amok through Parramatta streets. Their main aim was to find sustenance and once food was procured, they submitted to capture and returned to the factory. Solidarity amongst the rioters prevailed and the ringleaders were not surrendered by their peers for special punishment.

This story is one of many untold stories bound to the fabric of this building. If heritage listings are achieved, the Friends and NPRAG envision the Female Factory as a living museum and national resource centre. Gay summed up, 'We don't have a museum of New South Wales but this story is bigger than New South Wales – it's a national story! It deserves to be told'.

To help save this iconic site, sign the online petition at www.change.org or the printable petition at femalefactoryfriends.org.au. For further information about the Female Factory, see Newsletters February and July 2015.

Barbara Henery



Anne Conlon Lecture 1980-2002

'It is the hardest task in the world to try and present, to those who never knew her, the qualities in Anne that keep her memory so vivid to those who did know her. She radiated a sort of energy which lit up not only herself but those around her', wrote Dr Clare Cunningham, paediatrician and close friend of Anne Conlon (nee Cardin).



Anne's diagnosis of terminal cancer shocked her family, friends and colleagues and her loss four months later was deeply felt. Her children were only five and nine.

To honour Anne's memory and her key role as a women's rights advocate, the NSW Women's Advisory Council, of which Anne was a founding member, established the Anne Conlon Memorial Lecture held annually from 1980 to 2002. The organising committee included Anne's friends and feminist co-activists Edna Ryan, Joan Bielski, Pam Simonds, Barbara Coddington and Suzanne Marks as coordinator. Suzanne has deposited the committee's archives with our Library.

The lecture was to provide a forum for presenting and analysing current gender issues by women recognised as experts and leaders in their field. Its objectives were to inform, stimulate and widen knowledge and understanding of issues affecting women. Topics included: Proving a dispute: Women as trade unionists (Edna Ryan 1980); Women in the workforce and the elimination of discrimination – Whose responsibility? (Justice Mary Gaudron 1981); Feminism and religion (Jean Skuse 1985); Women and philosophy (Professor Moira Gatens 1990); Valuing women's work: Women, equality and Family Law reform (Justice Elizabeth Evatt 1991); Women and self esteem (Ita Buttrose 1992); Being black and female in the performing arts (Justine Saunders 1993); The role of women in journalism (Monica Attard 1995); Women and sport (Libby Darleson 1996). The lecture proceedings were published and our Library holds most of them.

Anne's marriage in 1967 introduced her into the world of political thought considered to be of little consequence to young women raised in the 1950s. She flourished in the climate of political and social ferment of the times – the '60s and '70s. New ideas were in the air and old ideas were being challenged. This political ferment offered a rich field for Anne's considerable intellect, especially that exciting and challenging set of ideas and action which formed the Women's Movement. She quickly connected to the fledgling Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), lobbying governments to acknowledge women as a political force whose needs could no longer be ignored.

Working through WEL she authored many submissions including to the Minister for Labour and Immigration on Women in the Workforce; to the Henderson Poverty Inquiry on Women in Poverty; to the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission (ACAC) on the

minimum wage for women; and intervened in an appeal to ACAC by the Australian Bank Offices Association against part-time work. She worked on the WEL lobby group for antidiscrimination legislation in NSW and when appointed to the NSW Women's Advisory Council her work on the proposed Bill led to improved provisions for women. She convened WEL's Industrial Action Committee and with Edna Ryan co-authored the ground breaking book *Gentle invaders: Australian women at work 1788-1974* (1975).

As Special Projects Officer in the NSW Women's Coordination Unit she worked on rape law reform, victimless crime, migrant women, apprenticeship for girls, maternity leave and equal employment opportunity. She passionately pursued the recommendations affecting women prisoners flowing from the Nagle Royal Commission into Prisons on which she continued to work when she moved on to the NSW Premier's Department.

Politically Anne leant towards the ALP, but she valued finding common cause among women politicians across the political divide. And in the all-male environments in which she often worked, through her evidence-based arguments she effectively demonstrated how her feminist views could be reconciled with positive action. In both spheres she won widespread support. The archives tell the story of how, when in 1988 the NSW government changed from Labor to the conservative coalition, it was this bipartisan respect for Anne that in part ensured the lecture's survival for another ten years until it ceased in 2002.

Suzanne Marks

Facelift for the Library

Library volunteers were pleased to see the fresh new carpet on 30 June when the Library reopened after two weeks work in replacing it. The week of preparation, packing books and papers, was a good opportunity for volunteers to declutter. Thanks to everyone for their efforts with moving the furniture, plugging and unplugging computers, packing and then putting things back in the right places.



You are most welcome to visit the Library to have a look!

Library wish list

Here are some titles we would really like to have in our collection. Unfortunately our resources do not stretch to purchasing a new copy. If you have finished with your copy or you find a secondhand copy for sale, please think of donating it to the Library:

- *No fit place for women: women in NSW politics*. Eds Deborah Brennan & Louise Chappell. University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2006
- *My story*. Julia Gillard. Random House 2015
- *The wife drought*. Annabel Crabb. Random House 2015

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Level access is via the Ultimo Community Centre in Bulwara Rd

Opening times:

The Library is open to the public Monday to Friday 10 am to 3 pm

Borrowing policy:

The public can access items using the interlibrary loan system. The public cannot borrow items but may use them in their library of choice. A loan collection is available to financial members

How to reach the Library:

There are several ways to travel to the Library:

- ▶ The Library is a 20 minute walk from Town Hall Station through Darling Harbour or from Central Station via the Goods Line walk or via Harris Street
- ▶ Bus 501 (Railway Square to Ryde/West Ryde) at Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre stop
- ▶ Bus 389 (Maritime Museum to North Bondi) at Harris and Allan Streets stop
- ▶ Light rail from Central Station or Dulwich Hill to Exhibition stop
- ▶ There is limited two hour street meter parking available



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