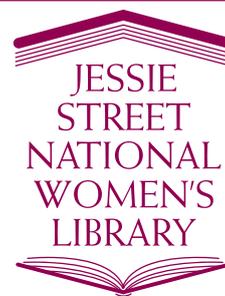


# NEWSLETTER

*To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful* — Ursula LeGuin



## CHANGING WITH CHANGING TIMES

Libraries are changing, but their role in preserving our literary, historical and cultural heritage remains a core and relevant public service. They are storehouses — repositories and also hosts to a variety of community activities and events.

Jessie Street National Women's Library is a small specialist library. Its central aim, in this time of mass digitisation, is to collect and preserve books, unique documents and posters for, by and about women. It was established in 1989 by a women's community sharing common interests and concerns. Its goal was to serve particular groups seeking particular knowledge about women, with a feminist emphasis. As an organisation incorporated with charitable status relying almost totally on the generosity of members and a vast community of dedicated supporters, it enjoys the support of the City of Sydney which leases premises to the Library at a subsidised rate.

In recent years, there have been many generous donors and many activities and events which have enhanced the Library's image. The bequest from the estate of Joan Bielski AO will, when received, be a significant addition to the modest Capital Investment Fund. This bequest, like others before it and ongoing donations, enables the Library to continue its work with confidence while facing a transforming future in the world of libraries.

Trends with libraries, including mass digitisation occurring under Project Gutenberg, the World Digital Library, the Library of Congress National Digital Library Program and the Google Books Library Project, necessitate a continuous examination and review of collections, as well as a diversification of activities for users whether they are readers, researchers or media workers.

These trends, as well as previous decades of growth in the publication of books, have led to budget reviews of costs, and subsequent cuts in funds and collections across institutions. The rapid expansion of eBooks, serials, newsletters and journals, and prohibitive subscription costs have meant that the Library has ceased to collect publications now on-line. Our Library needs to review and revise its collection policy as well as respond to changing user preferences stimulated by contemporary communications transformation. It needs to be a reliable and professional repository.

The Library also needs to look at deepening not broadening its collection, that is specialising not generalising, and focussing on what is unique. It needs to encourage diverse uses for the

materials it holds. The Feminism and Fashion special event in History Week 2012 provides an example as do the exhibitions at Parliament House, Sydney curated by the Library. The poster collection and some audio-visual material have been progressively digitised, but ongoing work in digitisation needs to concentrate on rare and unique material so that it can be accessible to a broader readership.

The Library's educational and small 'p' political functions need to continue and expand into communities not yet pursued, with a clear strategy such as women's and gender studies and the like. The forthcoming life story of Aboriginal woman Euphemia Bostock suggests a direction to be considered. Comprehensive knowledge of the Library's collection is confined to small groups of volunteers or members. This expertise needs to be nurtured, and extended to a broader group of volunteers. The Library needs a planned program to educate and inform its dedicated workers about the richness and uniqueness of its collection. It will be planning for this in the future.

Lunch Hour Talks have been an invaluable cultural event for disseminating the Library's message. Their link to the collection is one of their underlying messages. The notion of a women's and/or feminist cultural centre and hub for information is forming as a key idea for the future.

With the passing of some key activists of second wave feminism, the memories of surviving women of that era need also to be recorded and preserved. Dr Sue Wills is undertaking part of this task as a personal research project in her history of Sydney Women's Liberation. She has committed to donating copies of the digital recordings and transcripts with the permission of the women interviewed. Last year's reunion of feminists of this era provided an opportunity for the Library to promote its work and encourage further donations.

Following changes in 2012 to the *Newsletter* and to publicity material, the website is being professionally updated and upgraded aimed at improving its content as well as opening a Facebook and Youtube presence with the Library's promotional DVD uploaded so it can be universally accessed. There are many challenges facing the Library, but it has a future firmly founded in its work and ably supported by its dedicated volunteer base. Join us in the journey. You will be most welcome!

*Jozefa Sobski, Chair of the Board*



*L to R Jozefa Sobski, Chris Burvill, Jane Pollard*

### Membership Renewal

Membership is by calendar year — see p 7. Thank you to those who have already resubscribed for 2013.

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**Jessie Street 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

## Patrons

Elizabeth Evatt AC; Sir Laurence Street AC KCMG;  
Dr Evelyn Scott AO; Clover Moore MP Lord Mayor of Sydney

## Board of Management

Jozefa Sobski	Chair
Michele Ginswick	Vice Chair
Jan Burnswoods	Secretary/Public Officer
Jean Burns	Treasurer

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Diane Hague, Robyn Harriott, Beverley Kingston, Christine Lees, Marie Muir, Katharine Stevenson, Beverley Sodbinow

## Editorial Team

Kris Clarke and Margot Simington, Co-editors  
Katharine Stevenson, graphic design advice



Kris Clarke (l) and Margot Simington

## From the Editors

Further to Jozefa Sobski's reference on page 1 to *Newsletter* changes (which have included making a book review a regular feature), we will continue to innovate during 2013. Adjacent on page 2 we resume an occasional series begun informally in 2011 – profiling the roles of volunteers in the Library. There is scope to further develop our approach and we welcome your comments and feedback generally on the *Newsletter*.

## Annual General Meeting 2013

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 13 April at 10.30am in Littlebridge Hall (near the Library) at the Ultimo Community Centre, corner of Harris St and William Henry St Ultimo, Sydney.

This is your opportunity to visit the Library, meet the Board and other members and join us for morning tea.

Nominations are called for the following positions: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and no fewer than five and no more than nine ordinary members of the Board. Nominations close on Friday 15 March. Please consider nominating for the Board yourself or suggesting it to a friend. Nomination forms will be available from the Library.

Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 12.30pm at the Ultimo Community Centre.

## About our volunteers

**Helen Ruby** Neither distance nor changing technology has been a barrier for this volunteer: Helen lives in Queensland! She joined the Library in 2002, has been transcribing Lunch Hour Talks from tape and more recently from disc, since 2005. For this purpose, a transcription machine serves admirably – the machine she uses in her business, Here and Now Biographies, to record a person's life story and develop a book for a client. When the Library changed from tape to disc for recording talks, Helen was concerned that she would no longer be able to transcribe the Library's audio material. However, using a recorder enables her to tape the disc and then play back through her transcription machine. Her contribution, always so very prompt, is invaluable for reporting on Lunch Hour Talks in the *Newsletter*. She enjoys the transcribing and active involvement, and has put through over seventy tapes and discs.



**Nik Trevallyn-Jones** Computer consultant (hardware and software), Nik has been the Library's hands-on computer support since it was founded in 1989. Nik, son of co-founder Shirley Jones OAM, has a busy consultancy taking him world-wide to provide business computer consulting and training, yet he has been the essential trouble-shooting expert keeping our computers running over the years. He was involved in the production of the *Newsletter* until 2010, and planned and installed the Library's networked computer system using free Open Source software, also in 2010. Usually working behind the scenes – at the Library out of hours, and on-line answering queries – he is rarely seen, except at Annual Luncheons where he has helped document these occasions as a roving photographer.



## Keeping up to date on KOHA

Board Member Christine Lees took the opportunity while visiting Melbourne in November 2012 to meet with other users of the KOHA Library Information System. KOHA, as many readers are aware, is the Library's on-line operating system which became operational in early 2011. KOHA software is customised to adapt to the needs of each library.

There is no formally organised KOHA user group but users and those interested have met a few times in Melbourne. On this occasion 14 people were present from niche libraries covering areas from theology to dementia. Also in Melbourne were Sydney couple Irma and Bob Birchall, proprietors of the Calyx Company which supports the Library's system. The Birchalls, known to a number of Library volunteers from their work on getting our system up and running, were delighted to see Christine's familiar face, as Irma did not know any of the Victorian user group members personally.

Everyone was very pleased to meet others who already use or want to use KOHA. Discussion included the updated version of KOHA with its new look home page; cataloguing (eg how do you catalogue 'doll-dressing?'); creating Reports (lists obtained from material in the system) and, amongst other things, the very useful KOHA Report Library, which provides models adaptable for individual use.

Archives and the topic of posters were also discussed. People were interested to hear about our Library's work with digitised posters and await with interest the result of collaboration by Irma and our Archives team for an on-line Archives catalogue. The need to customise KOHA software to cater for the Library's specific requirements is one reason why on-line access to Archives holdings is yet to become available. JSNWL is at the forefront of KOHA development going once more 'where no-one else has gone before'.

Christine Lees

## New acquisitions recognising Australian women writers

Recently Barbara Henery, Acquisitions Librarian, noticed a gap in Library holdings. The Library already holds several titles by Indigenous women writers awarded the David Unaipon prize: Doris Pilkington Garimara's *Caprice: A Stockman's Daughter* (1991) (first of an autobiographical trilogy comprising also *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (1996) and *The Wintejemarra Whisper* 2000)), and *Home* (2004) by Larissa Behrendt. Books by six other women winners of the David Unaipon prize were missing: Vivienne Clevan *Bitin' back* (2001), Yvette Holt *anonymous premonition* (2008), Gayle Kennedy, *Me, Antman & Fleabag* (2007), Elizabeth Hodgson *Skin Painting* (2008), Nicole Watson *The Boundary* (2011), and Jeanine Leane *Purple Threads* (2011). Barbara's polite letter in December last to the University of Queensland Press rectified the situation. We are very grateful that UQP wasted no time in promptly dispatching copies of these six titles. They arrived on our doorstep in January and are now in process of acquisition. It was UQP which in 1988 had created the annual national David Unaipon Award for unpublished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers.

The Stella Prize, taking Miles Franklin's first name, is an annual literary prize for Australian women's writing. It was

established in 2012 by a group of women in the publishing industry. They had noticed that the Miles Franklin prize went to few women, and decided to raise the profile of women's writing. The \$50,000 Stella Prize will be awarded for the first time in April 2013, open to fiction and non-fiction books published between 1 January and 31 December 2012.

Winning books will be widely publicised. The judging panel will be chaired by Age reviewer Kerry Goldsworthy and include novelist Kate Grenville, actor Claudia Karvan, and ABC broadcaster Rafael Epstein. Books awarded the Stella Prize will be a future acquisition priority.

Meanwhile, generous publishers and individual donors may like to peruse Barbara's list of titles suiting the Library's collection criteria! This list includes:

- *Women of the Outback* by Sue Williams (Penguin)
- *Avoiding Mr Right* by Anita Heiss (Random House)
- *Hey Mum, What's a Half-Caste?* by Lorraine McGee-Sippel (Magabala Books)
- *Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History* by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (Vintage)
- *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians* by Julia Baird (Scribe Publishing)

### LUNCH HOUR TALKS – third Thursday of the month

#### 21 February – Pamela Bradley *The blood, sweat and tears of writing memoirs*

Pamela Bradley's controversial *Nefertiti Street* (2010) examined themes of the strength needed to follow your inner voice to lead a life independent of the opinions of others. Pam will talk about her forthcoming book, also biographical, and the risk taking and courage needed to write such personal histories.

#### 21 March – Dr Jan Roberts *Maybanke Anderson: a woman for all times*

Dr Jan Roberts, historian and publisher, has uncovered the many layers of Maybanke's long, complex life. On 13 November 2011, the Maybanke Fund of the Sydney Community Foundation was launched, focussed on reducing social inequality in Sydney, honouring the work of Maybanke Anderson.

#### 18 April – Robin de Crespigny *The People Smuggler: The True Story of Al Jenabi*

Robin speaks from the Iraqi refugees' point of view and tells the story of Ali Jenabi, a 'unique individual ... with high moral standards and a great sense of humour', following his remarkable and horrifying journey in bringing his family and 500 other Iraqis to safety.

#### 16 May – Marlene Arditto *Women's work in Jane Austen's writings*

Two hundred years since publication of *Pride and Prejudice*, Marlene, Jane Austen Society Vice-Pres, will examine how Austen uses needlework and related crafts (called 'work' in Regency times) in her six novels to develop character and plot. Rare Georgian work tools will be on display.

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

# THE WORK OF DR CATHERINE HAMLIN



*Lucy Perry with fistula patients*

Lucy Perry, CEO of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, became involved in the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital when she saw Dr Catherine Hamlin AC on the Oprah Winfrey Show in 2004. Inspired by this Australian woman, she began donating to the organisation and receiving their literature. With a background in art direction she felt that the visual communication of the

organisation could be improved and offered to help. She began assisting Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia with their communications on a volunteer basis. After a couple of years she felt there could be better images and soon was on her first photo assignment in Addis Ababa. Arriving at the Hospital, she was whisked straight into theatre and there she first met Dr Catherine Hamlin, at the operating table!

The core business of HFE is the treatment of obstetric fistula patients, a simple operation to restore a woman's dignity. Obstetric fistula is the tragic outcome of an obstructed labour causing permanent incontinence and the associated social stigma. Patients cannot work or tend to their families and many are excluded from their communities. There are an estimated 9,000 new cases in Ethiopia each year. A specialist fistula hospital of 140 beds opened in Addis Ababa in 1974.

In mid-2011, an internal dispute began at the hospital. An ethos statement outlining the Christian faith of the founders was distributed without the board's approval to all international fundraising partners, together with instructions that these partners would have to live by the Christian ethos or they could only be donors, not partners. This did not impress the four secular European trusts, loyal supporters of the hospital for many years. Dr Hamlin and the majority of her board of directors moved quickly and requested the resignations of those who pushed for this elite Christian stance. The dispute moved to Australia when the fundraising company here objected to the resignation of some of the hospital staff.

Lucy discovered that this fundraising company was encouraging donors to give their money to other charities. Catherine appointed Lucy as her spokesperson in Australia to assist in negotiating with the fundraising company. By July 2012, unable to work with the company's directors, Dr Hamlin asked her to incorporate a new charitable entity in Australia for HFE.

From volunteer to CEO in eight years, Lucy feels she is in the best job in the world - her purpose and her passion. Using her skills as a communicator, she raises funds to run the hospital and change the lives of Ethiopian women and their families. However, much of her time is spent negotiating with the old fundraising company, which still holds \$14 million in funds raised in the name of the hospital. Authority

for that company to represent the organisation was withdrawn in 2012, but they continue to raise funds in the name of the hospital, against the wishes of HFE. In November 2012 the old fundraising company offered the hospital \$2 million per year. HFE had formerly requested \$3 million per year with a 20% increase each year. This will only cover a portion of operational costs and does not cover any capital works. They await a response.

One of the hardest things for patients is travelling to the capital for treatment. Catherine tells the story of a patient who spent six years living in a bus shelter - the time it took her to beg the bus fare to Addis. In 2003, HFE began building fistula centres in the provinces and there are now five regional hospitals. Each regional centre has an obstetrician/gynaecologist who handles all their fistula surgery. Dr Hamlin continues to operate once a week, at age 88. She now uses a walking stick but sits to operate and has an extremely steady hand.

Catherine often tells the story of one of her most famous patients. Mamite came to the hospital in the 1960s, aged 16 with a serious rectal/bladder fistula. Her baby had died during labour and Mamite had suffered terrible injuries. When Mamite recovered, Reg and Catherine employed her as a nurses' aide. Eventually Mamite trained as a theatre nurse and today is one of the world's most experienced fistula surgeons, having performed over 2,000 surgeries. Now in her 60s, she assists Catherine when she operates each Thursday.

In 1959 when Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin arrived in Addis Ababa, they trained midwives. Three years later their focus switched to the plight of the fistula patients, as there was insufficient government support for training midwives. In 2007 the Hamlin College of Midwives opened, and three years later the first batch of midwives graduated and was deployed to country regions. There are now over 70 midwives in training.

Dr Hamlin's dream is that obstetric fistula will be eradicated in Ethiopia and Hamlin fistula hospitals will become maternity hospitals. The condition would dramatically decline if every pregnant woman in Ethiopia was assisted by a trained midwife while in labour. With 100 million people in Ethiopia, 5.5 births per woman, there are fewer than 2,000 midwives to care for them.

HFE runs a farm on the outskirts of Addis Ababa where long-term patients go to learn some skills. These women have to manage a stoma and bag to collect waste and will need

medical care for life. The residents can learn various microbusiness skills including hospitality. An Australian woman spent a year training the women in hospitality and taught them how to make the best lamingtons and meat pies in Addis Ababa!

HFE runs entirely on donations from individuals and companies. If you are able to donate to HFE or help in other ways, please visit the website, [www.Hamlin.org.au/how-to-help](http://www.Hamlin.org.au/how-to-help).

*Report Kris Clarke*



*Dr Catherine Hamlin AC*

# GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN

Drawing on her own challenging experience as a grandparent raising a grandchild, Judy Turner discussed a topic not often canvassed publicly, and reflected on ways to help. 'I used to think', Judy said, 'Grandparents are taking over, the children will be fine', that is rather than institutions – government or non-government. Experience with granddaughter Sapphire opened her eyes. Judy's focus was the very important needs of a growing number of grandparents raising grandchildren because of parental illness, accident, death, and mental health problems, with alcohol and drugs being the underlying factor in 80-85% of cases.

Judy's eldest son made poor life choices. Travelling around Australia, he did drugs and alcohol, fathered her granddaughter Sapphire and moved on. Having no contact with the mother, Judy feared rejection should she visit. Sapphire's first four years were spent living in various houses or a caravan with her mother (who suffered mental illness) and her four siblings. Then, because of neglect, the family was suddenly split up. Sapphire was fostered out until her father tried raising her – a big ask for a single man recovering from addiction. He soon called on his parents. So at age 64 Judy found herself with granddaughter Sapphire, albeit happy and bubbly, starting late in kindergarten, unable to say the alphabet, counting barely past ten, and running up to visitors as if saying, 'Here I am. Aren't I cute?' She'd had four placements, didn't know if this would happen again, and needed much reassurance. Later, she suffered from marked food intolerance. At high school in 2012, Sapphire found the film *Rabbit Proof Fence* about Aboriginal children's experience, 'very close to the bone'.

Early in her full grandparenting days, Judy joined an emerging grandparent support group in Newcastle NSW and heard stories far worse than hers. Jean's\* four step-grandchildren, two sets of twins aged four and seven, would huddle together, unfed, the mother abused by the drug runner partner; when the mother died of cancer, Jean took on the abused children. During four years of court processes costing \$35,000, no authority raised the issue of professional welfare guidance; the children couldn't bond with anyone and stole from her. Margaret\* raised her granddaughter after her son died (the mother had left years before). A ghastly murder/suicide left grandparents raising Emma\*, aged four; the grandmother died of cancer when Emma was 14, and the grandfather continued raising her on his own until he remarried. Dawn\* had four grandchildren: her son (his partner addicted to drugs) died in a house fire. Linda\* was raising her granddaughter: her daughter had left home aged 14 and become a prostitute. The grandchild in Helen's\* care was a 'methadone' baby. Elaine\* who was raising nine grandchildren declared, 'they haven't got their mother as she's no good; they don't know who their father is; they're going to know each other.'

A medical specialist once told Sapphire, 'You only need one person who really loves you.' Judy had not previously fully appreciated the trauma these children suffer, nor heard of detachment disorder which occurs when a child is not nourished, nurtured and cuddled and so does not bond with any carer. Judy soon noticed in grandparent groups a higher percentage than in the general population of children with

attachment disorders and other problems – attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, food intolerance, self-harm, autism, Asperger syndrome, short term memory loss, anxiety. Research identifying 'poor health and social competence' in this cohort now confirms her observation. These grandchildren are usually very insecure on their arrival; at bedtime they may not settle, aware grandparents are old, and fearing what might happen

to the one person in their lives – children normally do not think of their parents' mortality. Many are behind in school work and have low self-esteem. Even if things go smoothly, by puberty the children often feel resentful or depressed. Many stories are not 'happy ever after'.

Grandparents typically have health issues – mobility, vision, hearing. A grandfather, retired and home all day and unused to handling a child especially a troubled one, finds it hard to change from the disciplinary to the negotiating style now common. Grief over death or divorce can affect everyone – the child because of separation, grandparents from the death of their own child. Access visits can disturb grandparents as well as grandchildren. Some grandparents have elderly parents. Relatives may blame grandparents. On a restricted income, some must stop work until grandkids adjust, others need to work again; some grandparents work full-time and/or have other children at home resenting the newcomer. The change in lifestyle (visits to government agencies and home at 3.00pm) can compromise holidays and visits to friends. Marriages can break up.

The parenting grandparent is not a rare phenomenon. In the Newcastle/Hunter region, 350 families raise grandchildren, probably more, and NSW had 9,000 children in grandparent care in 2011 with numbers rising. Research shows grandparent care (which may involve the extended family) is more successful than foster care. But grandparents, untrained for their new parenthood, need support. Grandparent groups are a great help. Legal aid without means testing and access arrangements suiting children would also help – if a child has cigarette burns or nightmares after access, visits should at least be supervised; respite for grandparents could enable attendance at a parent's funeral or time out when sick. Judy stressed that above all grandparents need immediate and ongoing professional assistance.

Responding to an audience question, Judy, now 74, applauded a recent NSW Government initiative towards taking children at birth from 'bad' parents: the longer a child stays in poor care, the harder it is; some never recover. And she celebrated the huge rewards of raising a grandchild. Sapphire, now maturing delightfully and in touch with all her family across three states (her eldest brother was found on Facebook) once wrote, 'I will always look after [Nana], even in Heaven'.

*Transcription Helen Ruby*

*Report Margot Simington*

\* Names have been changed to protect privacy.



# BOOK REVIEW

Anne Watts *From Eskimo Point to Alice Springs: Adventures in Nursing*  
Simon & Schuster, 2012  
ISBN: 9781847376435

This is Anne Watts' (1940-) second autobiographical book. Her first publication, *Always the Children: A Nurse's Story of Home and War* (2010), is a vivid memoir by a young Welsh nurse who left behind rural life in post-war Britain to work in various war zones.

How lucky for the reader that her friends convinced her to write this current book which portrays her nursing experiences during peacetime, often in a very amusing way. The 'adventures' promised by the subtitle may not have taken place had Anne's father had his way. 'No daughter of mine will spend the rest of her life wiping other people's arses. I will not have it. That is my final word.' Whereupon the daughter just thinks to herself, 'we'd see about that'. Yet it was her sea-captain father who inspired her desire to travel the world and encounter other cultures. It was only after his death that she came to realise his love for, and pride in her: he kept every letter she ever sent to him and these letters are the basis for this book.

She does, of course, train for a degree in nursing and midwifery and again defies her father and stepmother. It is expected that she will 'do the right thing' and get married and 'settle down'. She had actually become engaged, but suddenly realises that the 'trap of domesticity' is not for her. So she breaks off her engagement to follow her dual passion: to care for others in their pain and suffering and to see the world.

And this she does in an amazing way! She either nurses in places as sophisticated as London's Chelsea at the height of the hippie culture or as remote as an Inuit settlement in the Antarctic or Alice Springs, as safe as Europe or as dangerous as during the Vietnam or First Arab War. She travels in cultured Italy, follows the hippie trail in the 70s and marvels at the expanse and natural beauty of the Canadian North and the deserts of the Australian outback.

From her first overseas trip to Italy it becomes clear that Anne Watts is fascinated by foreign cultures, which she observes with interest and without judgement. But even as a young woman she already notices that authorities – in the small Italian village it was the doctor and the priest – can dominate and frighten poorer and uneducated people.

Over the course of her life it becomes more apparent and painfully clear to her that strong cultures have suppressed or wiped out traditional ways of living. The results are the marginalised American or Canadian Indians or Australian Aborigines. She meets them first as patients in the emergency wards, then comes to know them and feels a deep anger at authorities who seem to be uninterested or incapable of altering the self-destruction of these people. She also realises that women are even more exploited and abused than men and ultimately pass this on to their children through birth defects caused by alcohol or drug use or just plain neglect. But she also admires their traditional ways where they are partially preserved, as by some Indian tribes in the Yukon. Their herbal medicines, for instance, prove to be so effective that

there is hardly any need for antibiotics.

While she finds the excessive use of alcohol and drugs amongst indigenous peoples distressing, but somewhat explicable, she cannot comprehend this self-destructive behaviour among well-to-do white people, particularly in the younger generation. This and the ravages of our environment are the major themes of her reflections as an older woman and we can all agree.

As the book deals mainly with her early working life, however, it abounds with amusing episodes and funny mishaps sometimes involving Anne herself. Someone steps on her hem at a fancy dress dance and she loses the whole rear part of her skirt. Or she has to pull a huge splinter out of someone else's ample backside.

She writes in a clear matter-of-fact way and calls a spade exactly by that name. She manages to capture and quote people's turn of phrase or dialect that colour an event precisely and amusingly. 'Honey, you fill out the details every time you screw up', an American nurse explains the procedure when a medical mistake has occurred.

Although this is a book by a nurse, it does not really describe actual medical procedures, which might disappoint nurses who read it. The average person would not mind this and is probably quite happy not to be given graphic description of horrific injuries which Anne would have treated during the Vietnam War. It is particularly during these times of conflict that she despairs about the futility of these battles, the unnecessary suffering they cause, the complete lack of vision by some leaders just for the sake of some political idea.

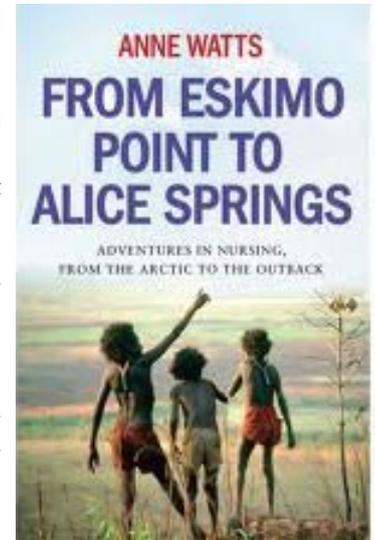
After her retirement she decides to visit the places where she worked in her youth to see how the native people have developed. There is now a common trend to honour their languages and alter English placenames back to the native ones. Land rights are being granted and indigenous people are starting to slowly fill professional positions. Land degradation and destruction of nature seem, however, inevitable. Equally bad, especially from her nurse's point of view, is the seductive and damaging trend towards the consumption of junk food with its resulting health problems.

Despite all this, this is a book that will make the reader laugh aloud. It also awakens memories in most of us of the events that are described in it. Who does not remember the death of President Kennedy, the hippie era, student protests or Cyclone Tracey?

In particular her years in Alice Springs are most interesting and, in parts, hilarious. She does admit, however, that her youth prevented her comprehending fully the situation of the Australian Aborigines

Anne Watts has retired from active nursing now. What a varied and extraordinarily well-lived life she can call her own!

*Aleit-Marei Woodward*





Jessie Street National Women's Library  
GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

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**Note: Please advise the Library if your contact details have changed.**



**Visit Us:**

523-525 Harris Street (Cnr William Henry Street), Ultimo

Please use the intercom for admittance.

For level access, enter via the 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 Harris Street);
- ▶ Bus 501 (Ian Thorpe Pool Stop) from Sydney Town Hall or Railway Square;
- ▶ Bus 443 (Harris and Allan Streets Stop) from Circular Quay or Wynyard Station;
- ▶ By Light Rail From Central Station to Exhibition Stop
- ▶ If you drive, there is limited two hour street meter parking available.

**Contact us:**

**Postal Address:**

GPO Box 2656  
Sydney, NSW 2001

**Telephone:**

(02) 9571 5359

**Facsimile:**

(02) 9571 5714

**Email:**

[info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)

**Visit our website:**

[www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](http://www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)