

NEWSLETTER

To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful — Ursula Le Guin



2023 Annual Luncheon

The 2023 Annual Luncheon report has been a difficult one to write, in the wake of Australia's 'No' vote only a short time after we heard a compelling speech for 'Yes' to the Voice. Our planned guest speaker Megan Davis was unable to attend but Bridget Cama made a special, last-minute appearance at the Luncheon. We are grateful to her for her warm and deeply moving talk about the Uluru Statement and her journey working with the Youth Dialogues to amplify young Indigenous voices.

Bridget Cama is a Wiradjuri First Nations and Pasifika Fijian woman, born and raised in Lithgow. Bridget is a constitutional lawyer, an associate of the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW and was part of the legal support team to the Uluru Dialogue.

Bridget documented the Aboriginal rights history in which Jessie Street played a role. With Faith Bandler and other activists, Jessie worked tirelessly to change the constitution to recognise the rights of First Nations people. In 1967, there was support from both sides of politics and over 90 per cent of Australians voted to remove its discriminatory provisions. But, she reminded us, over 50 years later there is still nothing that recognises the original inhabitants of this continent.

This community, she said, looking around the Strangers Dining Room, NSW Parliament House, is important to First Nations people. Bridget said that we would need every person in this room to take action and she invoked Jessie Street who, she reminded us, lives on in the questions that we face. Do we want to be a country that is proud of our collective history? Do we wish to live with the status quo? Do we want to be a country that is prepared to give First Nations people a seat at the table?

A No vote would say that it is okay that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives are worth less and our

governments will continue to resist the improvements that are needed, that are recommended, yet our wealthy country does not implement.

She told us that the Uluru Statement from the Heart was written by communities to deal with their powerlessness.

It was to set out a pathway to start to deal with the past's unfinished business to heal and an offering to walk forward together. Bridget talked of the misinformation in the No campaign. Race, she reminded us, has always been in the constitution. The race power allowed the states to regulate Indigenous people and every aspect of their lives was indeed regulated—from birth to death, ostensibly to 'protect' Aboriginal people. The Voice was proposed as a practical measure to address the chronic disadvantage that Indigenous people face—a First Nations representative body to bring better information to make laws that would improve outcomes. It would have been a body that could not be abolished for political reasons, as one after another such bodies have been in the past.

The months leading up to the referendum were tough, she said. We can only imagine how hard the weeks since the vote have been. She deplored the politicisation of the Voice.

Bridget invited us to walk with her for a better future, a fair and truthful future for our children. She urged us to involve ourselves, to participate, to join the movement, to start conversations.

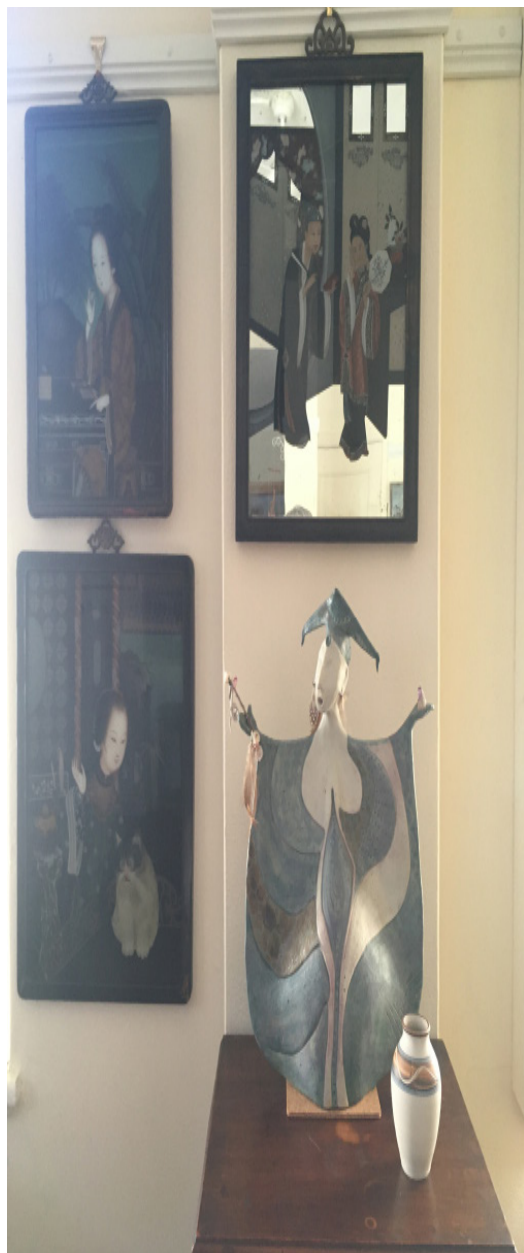
Australia said No on 14 October. We cannot continue to turn our backs on our past and so perhaps we can reflect on her words and think about what Jessie Street would have done. She would not have given up, and neither will we.

Jessica Stewart



Wishing all our readers a happy and joyful festive season!

The Library will be closed on Friday 16 December and reopen on Monday 15 January 2024.



Grateful prizewinner

How wonderful to win this ceramic statue! Suzanne Bellamy's *The Independent Scholar* now sits on an antique wash stand in my sunny living room where I can see and admire her every day.

She wears a mortar board which is also a jester's cap; she holds an amethyst (earth) in her left hand; seashells in her right (water); feathers here and there (air).

Her mouth is shaped in song; her colours are earth, sea and sky. I have placed a small jar in the same tones to her left so she can draw her joyful spells up and out to a suffering world.

I do hope she feels at home. Thank you for entrusting her to me. She is safe here and will be passed on to Jessica when I am gone.

Mary Stewart

Book Club report

The Library's Book Club met in October to discuss *Bad Art Mother* by Edwina Preston.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 28 November – note the change of day to Tuesday. We will discuss Anna Funder's new book *Wifedom* and finalise plans for next year.

Raffle winners

Congratulations to the winners of our fundraising raffle drawn at the Luncheon on 11 September 2023:

1st Sofitel Darling Harbour luxurious getaway package

Ticket no. 0543 R Parkin

2nd Ceramic sculpture by Suzanne Bellamy

Ticket no. 1125 M Stewart

3rd Connie Dimas jewellery

Ticket no. 0398 S Tingle

4th VisaCash gift card

Ticket no. 0654 L Christian

5th Captain Cook Luncheon cruise

Ticket no. 0436 C Lee

6th Sparkling High Tea

Ticket no. 0352 A Stevens

7th Gleebooks gift voucher

Ticket no. 1681 V Morrigan

8th Signed book *Everything you wanted to know about The Voice* and bottle of wine

Ticket no. 1281 K Clarke

9th Signed book *Staging a revolution* and bottle of wine

Ticket no. 0524 K Armour

10th Signed book *The bookbinder of Jericho* and bottle of wine

Ticket no. 0706 J Stewart

All wine produced by Kurri Kurri TAFE and donated by NSW Teachers Federation

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.

Patrons

Quentin Bryce AD CVO; Elizabeth Evatt AC; Dr Beverley Kingston; Clover Moore Lord Mayor of Sydney.

Board of Management

Christine Yeats, Chair; Suzanne Marks, Vice Chair; Jean Burns, Treasurer; Sherri Hilario, Secretary; Suzie Forell, Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Janet Ramsay, Beverley Sodbinow.

Editorial Team

Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart, Jan Burnswoods, Editors; Audrey Wacks, Proofreader.

Vale Elizabeth Webby (1942–2023)

In September we were saddened to hear of the passing of Library Patron Elizabeth Webby. Scholar, mentor, teacher and advocate, Elizabeth did more to build the discipline of Australian literature than anyone else in the field and her generosity has shaped the field of literature in lasting ways.

Elizabeth enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney in 1959, majoring in English and Psychology and earning First Class Honours in English Literature in 1962. Her dissertation was on Patrick White, a choice which signalled the specialisation in Australian Literature that was to be her life's work.

Elizabeth's research never lost sight of the pleasure of reading. Her expertise included both a commitment to contemporary writing and a deep interest in the history and circumstances of literary production and readership. Her groundbreaking work on early 19th century literature in Australia extended into a career-long interest in both 19th century Australian writing (especially poetry), and histories of reception and readership. She was Patron and Chair of the NSW Writers' Centre and judged numerous Australian literary prizes including the first prize for Australian women's writing, the Nita B. Kibble Award and the Miles Franklin Award.

The breadth of her research is remarkable including Patrick White, early Australian writers Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, Miles Franklin, Marcus Clarke, Henry Handel Richardson, Henry Lawson; and on contemporary writers including Alex Miller, Joan London, Janet Frame and Elizabeth Jolley. She wrote about periodicals, publishing history, book groups, readerships, short stories, theatre, cinema and the novel.

Elizabeth was a feminist scholar and worked tirelessly in recognising, encouraging and supporting Australian women writers at all stages of their careers. As Chair in Australian Literature at the University of Sydney, Elizabeth presided over an Australian Literature Major that included multiple standalone courses on Australian literature. A steely and effective advocate for the discipline, she was instrumental in supporting works of scholarly infrastructure including the Austlit Database, numerous scholarly editions and the online Australian Poetry Library. She edited *Southerly* for more than a decade and was a founding member and President of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL).

Elizabeth contributed to the field in many acts of collegiality and generosity: reading drafts, advising and encouraging. She supervised many honours and PhD students who went on to have careers in the field. She examined theses, refereed essays and wrote more than 80 book reviews across her career. In 2004 Elizabeth was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). The legacy of Elizabeth's scholarship, generosity and enthusiasm for literature continues among the many lives she has impacted.

Robyn Archer: an Australian Songbook

Robyn Archer's performance at Belvoir in October was a delight. In turn it was moving, hilarious, reflective, but never sentimental or patriotic. We were there on the last night of the Belvoir season, part of a national tour which began in Brisbane last year and has just concluded in Hobart. It was a cabaret performance with a trio of musicians, lasting over two hours.

It is astonishing to think that Robyn has been performing professionally for more than 60 years throughout Australia and the world. Her first album was released in 1977. She is not only a singer but a performer, writer, artistic director, festival director and public advocate for the arts. The Library holds a variety of her discs and writings.

There were over 30 songs in the show, but not the ones most of us know as 'Australian'. There were songs reflecting her early memories of growing up in South Australia with her country music loving mother, works from First Nations songwriters and colonial settlers, and several of her own songs, including *The Backyard Abortion Waltz*. Other feminist songs included *The Menstruation Blues*, soon followed by a melancholy recognition of our ageing, *The Menopause Blues*.

There were settings of words by poets, a great rendition of Julia Gillard's misogyny speech set to music and the self-described rude and crude *Bob Menzies' Balls*.

'I'm not much of a love song person,' Robyn says, 'But I'll do one of my so-called love songs called *An Insect on the Windscreen of My Heart*.'

Jan Burnswoods



Volunteer profile: Audrey Wacks

We welcome Audrey as the Newsletter's new proofreader and a very welcome returning volunteer at the Library.

Here is her account of her various community activities.

I first became aware of the Library in a local newspaper article. It included a photograph of Shirley Jones and Marcia Bass at the old Town Hall in Marrickville. As a reader and a feminist, it was easy to make the decision to join this new organisation. The Library was then housed in the Writers' Centre on the Rozelle Hospital grounds.

I worked as a volunteer at the Library on Monday afternoons, after my shift at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. I collected the post from Rozelle Post Office, wrote acknowledgments of donations, sorted books before they entered the system and were catalogued. I was on the Acquisitions Committee which looked at books to determine whether they fulfilled the Library criteria. I was the Returning Officer for the Library AGMs for several years.

Having retired from NSW Health during Covid, with almost 45 years' service, I continued with my various volunteering jobs.

During the 1990s, I worked on the Community Noticeboard of Radio Station, 2DAY FM. I loved answering enquiries from listeners about events happening in and around Sydney.

Another volunteer role was working for Balmain Police. People would come to us with a variety of issues. Luckily, there were no serious crimes committed while I was on duty. We were also based at Rozelle Hospital.

In the evenings after work, I worked at the Stables Theatre for 20 years as a bartender and usher. The reward was a double pass to see each production we worked on.

I have been producing and presenting a Community Radio program at 2RDJ in Burwood for nearly 20 years. Since my retirement, I also do a breakfast programme at 2RPH in Glebe, another Community Radio station, reading articles from the daily newspapers. The target audience for this station is vision-impaired and blind people.

I also worked on Cockatoo Island, welcoming people and advising on what to do and where to go. I really enjoyed meeting all the visitors from so many countries.

Currently I am assisting with the Library's Lunch Hour Talks and as proofreader for the Newsletter, as well as admin work in the Library. My next project is at a school in Newtown helping children with reading.

Audrey Wacks



Donations

General donations since July 2023

Elizabeth Clarke
Jude Conway
Chris Currey
Daphne Degotardi
Elizabeth Evatt
Jenny Foster
Julia Gennissen
Anne Gorman
Anne Hanley
Christine Lees
Bronwyn Marks
Alice Paul
Gretchen Poiner
Joanna Quin
Anne Riches
Jann Skinner
Penelope Tolz
Rosalind Wallis
Penny Young

Donations of material

Jill Merrin
Jacqui True
Spinifex Press

Newsletter future issues

When the Library reopens on 15 January 2024, the Newsletter team will be starting work on our February issue. We would love to hear from anyone interested in contributing articles for next year, reporting on Lunch Hour Talks, or helping to produce the Newsletter.

– The Editors

Capital Investment Fund

Since it was launched in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has reached \$ \$678,206. Our target is \$1,000,000, which will provide essential support for Library operations.

If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form.

CIF donations since July 2023

Estate of the Late Barbara Campbell
Robin Low

Lunch Hour Talk

Lenore Coltheart 24 August 2023

Lenore Coltheart, co-founder of our Library with Shirley Jones, shared the challenges of writing the first full biography of Jessie Street, to be published by the National Library of Australia.

Among valuable biographical work available, Lenore singled out *A rewarding but unrewarded life* by Peter Sekules and Heather Radi's edited collection of papers from the 1989 conference commemorating the centenary of Jessie's birth. She also explained the unique project when Jessie's family commissioned her to prepare a new edition of Jessie's 1966 memoir *Truth or Repose*, published in 2004 as *Jessie Street: A revised autobiography* (see photograph right).

Lenore's fieldwork for the new biography meant following Jessie's footsteps, first to San Francisco where in 1945 she was the sole woman on Australia's delegation at the United Nations' founding conference. Lenore stayed in the same hotel, finding everything Jessie described and 'trying to catch the light in the same way'. At New York's Martha Washington Hotel, founded by women for women visitors, Lenore sat in the lounge where 26-year-old Jessie had sat (and been warned of the assumptions made about women who smoked in public). Downtown, Lenore walked to the Women's Court where Jessie had volunteered, helping girls procured into prostitution – the 'white slave trade'.

The trail led on to London, the Scottish Highlands, then Paris, Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Venice, with Jessie's daughter Belinda eagerly reading Lenore's accounts and recalling Prague was Jessie's favourite city. Lenore later picked up the trail again, spending a month in Russia and finding both Moscow and St Petersburg as unforgettable as Jessie had.

Lenore sketched the biographer's challenge of 'putting a person in their place' and their time – from 1889 to 1970 for Jessie. The settings of Jessie's life stretch around the globe – northeastern India where she was born; the country of the upper Clarence where she grew up; Buckinghamshire where she loved her school; the Sydney home where she and Kenneth Street raised their four children; Jessie's city offices; and the circuit of cities around the world where

she worked. Among the crowded cast, Lenore singled out Bessie Rischbieth and Ruby Rich as deserving their own biographies. Like Jessie, both have their papers in the National Library in Canberra. Jessie's documents occupy 6 metres and Bessie's 7.6, but Ruby's future biographer faces the biggest challenge – 17 metres of documents!

As well as the facts of public life, a biographer must peek into the personal. Jessie was secretly engaged to Kenneth Street at University; when war was declared in 1914 she was in England with her parents. A rich trove of letters reveals the stormy seas two such contrasting personalities navigated – symbolised by the 'pedestal desk' her fiancé deplored, but which Jessie installed in their tiny flat as her 'office'. When they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1966, these two distinctively different people had contrasting careers. Jessie travelled frequently, while Ken was always

happiest at home. His neat Sunday night letters to 'My darling Jessie' now rest alongside Jessie's (scarcely decipherable) airletters to 'Darling Ken'.

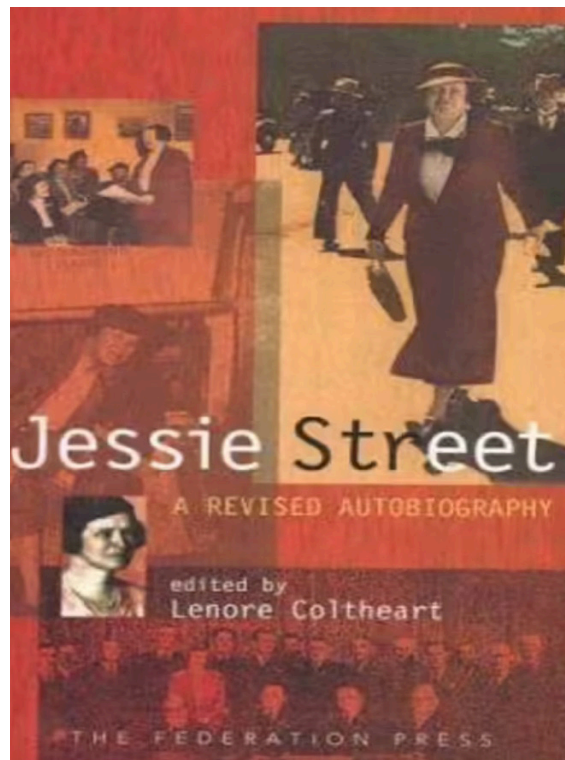
While Jessie certainly did not see herself as heroic, Lenore had imagined her as commanding, until put right when interviewing those who knew her. Everyone remembered her voice, never raised, always modulated and engaging. Those who had worked with her scorned the notion she was bossy, saying 'Jessie's ideas were inspiring and working with her was great fun'.

Lenore read from a chapter dealing with Jessie's first Women's Charter conference in 1943, when the Curtin Government's planning

for postwar reconstruction included organisations like Jessie's United Associations of Women. This was an era of vital activity for feminist leaders, when hope was key to wartime sacrifice and Australian democracy vibrant with citizen participation. Lenore coined the term 'associative citizenship' for Jessie's collaborative political participation – the stage was always shared.

Asked about the 'essence' of her subject, Lenore answered 'sociability, sense of humour, an interest in everyone, but most of all, she had the great gift of humanity. Jessie Street saw every human being as equal'.

The Library created in Jessie Street's name honours this spirit too.



Lenore Coltheart and Kris Clarke



Members and guests gathered in the Strangers' Dining Room at NSW Parliament House for the Library's 27th Annual Fundraising Luncheon. We were joined by our hosts for this year's event - Penny Sharpe MLC and Leslie Williams MP, together with other politicians.

This year we welcomed 250 guests including 42 students and teachers from the following schools: Auburn Girls High, Birrong Girls High, Inner Sydney High School, Kincoppal Rose Bay, Kogarah High, Matraville High and Wenona High.

It was disappointing that Professor Megan Davis, our invited speaker, was unable to give the address due to being away on sorry business. However we were most fortunate to welcome Bridget Cama to speak at our Luncheon. Bridget Cama is an associate of the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW and legal support team to the Uluru Dialogue. She is also the Co-Chair of the Uluru Youth Dialogue with Allira Davis, who work closely to provide a national platform for First Nations youth voices. How wonderful to hear from such an inspiring young woman.

Students and adults alike were encouraged by Bridget's words and suggestions for raising awareness of Indigenous issues.

Thank you and congratulations to the raffle winners and to all those who supported our fundraising by buying raffle tickets. The list of prize winners is published on page 2.

The Annual Luncheon Committee thanks our generous prize donors – Teachers Mutual Bank, Connie Dimas Jewellery, Gail Hewison and the NSW Teachers Federation. I would like to thank all the hard-working members of the Annual Luncheon Committee for their support and encouragement throughout the year and the other Library volunteers who assisted on the day of the Luncheon. The success of the Luncheon is due to this team of wonderful women.

The Luncheon is always a great time to get together with friends and enjoy the camaraderie of others as well as the meal provided by Parliamentary Catering. This year was no exception. We do hope that you will be able to join us in 2024.

Kate Beringer



Celebrating our extraordinary Matildas!

We are here to support our national team, the Matildas, at Sydney's Olympic Stadium in the 2023 International Federation Association of Football (FIFA) Women's World Cup. This is the ninth rendition of the Women's World Cup, the first to be staged in the Southern Hemisphere. Millions of people across the planet are watching and the Australian public, young and old, male and female, has been enthralled by exciting games and incredible performances.

As in all aspects of human endeavour, women have had to make their own space in the sporting arena of women's football amid sadly familiar stories of gender bias and paternalistic rhetoric. The struggle to play, let alone achieve recognition, has been a battle against incredible claims and trifling objections. After years of being told there is no appetite for watching women's sports, the success of the 2023 Women's World Cup reminds us that we can do everything, we are excellent, we are courageous, we are 'Beyond Greatness'.

Women have been playing football in Australia for over a century. The first recorded game was at the Brisbane Gabba in 1921 with 10,000 spectators. After World War I and the return of the men, women were banned from using club fields in Britain. Although this ban did not apply to Australian women, attitudes here reflected what was happening in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Germany and Spain, where women were banned from playing the game. Australia had a 'shadow ban': women were refused access to the facilities and resources needed to play.

Finally in 1971 the English Football Association ban on women playing was officially lifted. Sexist attitudes continued to pervade women's football in Australia. The first Matildas formed in the 1970s but were constantly overshadowed by men's football. Women found themselves in the musty, dusty storerooms of training facilities. They were ignored by both the sport's governing body and broadcasters. Capable and committed women with coaching ambitions were actively opposed and male coaches were ridiculed if they demonstrated an interest in becoming involved in the women's game.

Real opportunities for women's football in Australia resulted from the first Women's World Cup tournament in China in 1991 and the



announcement that women's football would feature as a full medal event in the 1996 Olympic Games. Soon after, Sydney was announced host of the 2000 Olympics. As members of the host nation, the Matildas would gain automatic qualification. Australia needed a competitive side and wanted to do well. Significant funding followed to provide professional coaching, well-resourced training facilities and better organised infrastructure.

Even after winning the 2010 Asian Cup and becoming Australia's most successful football team, the Matildas' success was ignored. They struggled with part-time jobs, juggling work, study and football commitments; they were financing their own travel expenses, medical insurance and treatment; grateful for men's ill-fitting hand-me-down uniforms and do-it-yourself alterations.

The 2019 Women's World Cup became a turning point with former Matildas players finally given leading roles in media commentary teams. The games were officiated skilfully by all-female referee teams and increased media coverage

scrutinised the unfair allocation of resources and wages by the federations. Women's football has emerged in the 2023 Women's World Cup to capture the imagination of Australians who watched the televised games in their millions, bought nearly two million tickets and bought Matildas merchandise. Soccer is the most popular team sport for young girls in Australia.

The Matildas are the most successful football team in Australia, progressing to quarter finals in three Women's World Cup tournaments and in 2023 producing magical performances, lots of exciting goals, courage and commitment all the way through to the semi-finals.

Teams embroiled in disputes with their federations has been a common theme of this Women's World Cup as women seek parity in remuneration, conditions and recognition. Jamaica was the first Caribbean team to make it through the qualifying rounds of the Women's World Cup. The team have disbanded twice because their soccer federation stopped funding them in favour of the

men's team. Ongoing finance has been achieved through fan support and GoFundMe campaigns. The Spanish team thrilled the world with their magnificent final victory against England. The media reported widely on twelve of their best players who were missing, refusing to play in this tournament under the head coach who, despite these objections, received full support from the Spanish Football Federation.

As they were crowned 2023 World Cup Champions, the Spanish team's off-field problems were amplified on the world stage. Spanish Forward, Jenni Hermoso, was forcibly kissed by the Spanish Football Association President, Luis Rubiales. It took weeks of international outrage to force him to resign. As Craig Foster, Australian retired soccer player and human rights activist, commented: 'Luis Rubiales is not only a misogynist. He's a symbol of a much bigger problem in women's sport'.

It seems that the merit of women will not be recognised and genuine gender equality in global sport will not be achieved until patriarchy's sense of entitlement is removed. Women continue to dream of a cultural shift and work persistently towards future change.

Christine Smith

References

Never Say Die: The Hundred-Year Overnight Success of Australian Women's Football, Fiona Crawford & Lee McGowan, NewSouth Publishing, 2019.

See the Library's catalogue for a variety of items on women's sport.



History week



"Women's Dreaming Continues", Karen Vance, Garage Graphix, 1988; JSNWL Poster Collection

The theme of History Week across NSW in September was Voices from the Past. The Library marked the Week with an invitation to listen to First Nations women's voices. At two lunch-time Story Cafés, Library members read from a selection from our broad and diverse collection, across time and Country

From Two Sisters, traversing vast desert country, their lives disrupted by the relentlessness of colonial incursions, to Talkin' up the white woman: Indigenous women and feminism, disrupting the "white subject position" at the heart of feminism, First Nations women's voices continue to sustain and maintain cultural integrity grounded in the deep spiritual, intellectual and philosophical knowledge of and connection to Country.

The Library had previously organised story cafes for History Week in 2019, with readings from a range of items in our collections, accompanied by an exhibition of posters and other material. Covid temporarily ended things of course, but it is good to see the Library re-establish a celebration we have organised for many years. Who could forget Dr Beverley Kingson's talk on 'Feminism and Fashion' in 2012? Or our subversive take on the commemoration of World War I in 2014, when we held a symposium on women's peace activism?

New members

The Library welcomes the following new members:

Cathy Ashcroft	Sheila Caldwell
Christine Fox	Melissa Hitchman
Jane Hyde	Christine Kibble
Sue Downes	Deborah Kuras
Patricia Meagher	Glennis Mowday
Ea Mulligan	Nicola Mercer
Wendy Oughton	Caryl Palmer
Marie Parmenter	Diann Payne
Trina Supit	Sally Tingle
Kate Wealleans.	

Book review

Like Mother

Cassandra Austin

On an ordinary summer's day in 1969, in a small Australian town, a new mother finds her baby missing from her cot. In this gothic novel, Cassandra Austin draws out the isolation and claustrophobia of new motherhood — and the judgement heaped upon 'bad mothers'.

Louise is exhausted. Her baby daughter has been screaming for days, refusing to eat, and her husband is away. Steven sells refrigerators and is on the road for days at a time.

Austin creates a lingering sense of disconnect between the characters, their part in the unfolding drama, and more generally with the real world, which is unsettling. Louise's response, often distracted, jars. Why would a missing baby not provoke the most immediate alarm? But she moves as though under water, plagued by self-doubt; she cannot trust herself, she must be to blame. Over this one day, different characters will come and go from the house, hover over Louise, circle her, hint at past events and eventually, at its close, force open secrets that have festered for years.

The limitations of women's lives in First World domesticity have been canvassed in much modern literature and Austin brings this out exquisitely. Sold as the dream, Austin shows up its smallness, its hollowness. In the opening pages, Louise is standing in her kitchen, surrounded by pot plants she has brought inside to save from the heat.

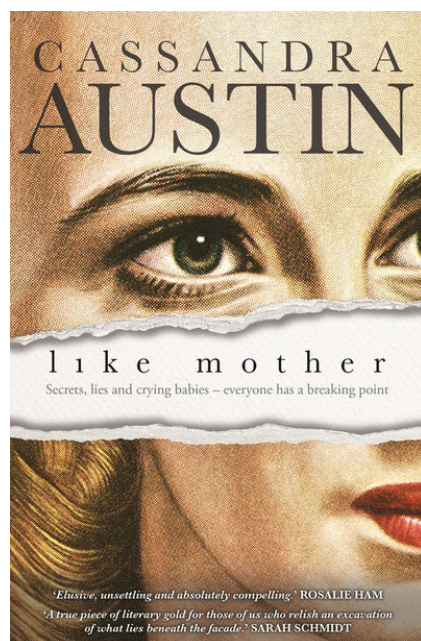
[It] has become a jungle, lush with greenery. They line the countertop, brush the cupboards and crowd the edges of the sink, fronding and leafing and flowing... she will have to remove them before Steven gets home. He doesn't like mess. She, on the other hand, likes the company.

Louise feels the confines of the house so acutely that one day after her daughter's birth she moves the furniture outside and sits in the front yard. She tries to explain to Steven: 'You have an office, a business, but I don't have anywhere else. Some days I don't hear another human voice except to hear it cry.' Steven's refrigerators with their new crispers and multiple compartments are a metaphor for suburban living — houses that are cold and clean and keep their contents separate from each other.

Sometimes Louise muses on her life, but her husband: ... tells her these thoughts are 'unproductive'. It seems that everything she does is unproductive — each meal cooked is eaten, the clean sheets are dirtied, the swept floors gather dust, over and over into mindlessness. She is worn down while producing nothing, and it hurts to contemplate.

Betty Friedan called this unnamed emptiness 'the feminine mystique' in her seminal 1963 book of that name — a major contributor towards second-wave feminism. In centring home and family at the core of women's existence, with few avenues for meaningful public engagement or contribution, women's private pain went unacknowledged.

Louise's mother, Gladys, is another mystery. Austin is a clever



writer; her careful selection and placement of words creates surprising, vivid images. Her characterisation is original, unpredictable. For the most part, the men are not sympathetically drawn. They will have (women) readers wondering what they were thinking.

The women, in contrast, seem capable, supportive and feisty. Gladys is complex — sexual, divorced, independent. Steven's secretary, a woman of surprising strength, will play an unexpected role in Gladys's plans for Louise. The denouement of *Like Mother* is satisfying, but plot is only one reason to read, and reread, this page-turner.

Edited version of review first published in The Newtown Review of Books

Jessica Stewart

An unexpected catch-up in Western Australia

After over 20 years as a Library volunteer, Christine Lees recently moved to Western Australia.



In July she was thrilled to catch up with long time member, Helen Tuckey.

Christine and her husband moved into Foley Village, near Fremantle. The Village was honoured to have a string quartet from WASO (West Australian Symphony Orchestra) come for a morning concert. To her surprise and delight the viola player was Helen Tuckey whom she had met about 10 years ago with other Library members from Western Australia.

Helen has been part of the orchestra for many years and was introduced as a highly valuable member. She spoke fondly of the Library and was pleased to hear how it is flourishing and continuing its unique role in Australia and beyond.

Lunch Hour Talks

Venue/Time: 12.00-1.30pm

Customs House Library, 31 Alfred St, Sydney
on Circular Quay

Enter via front of Customs House

Cost: \$20 (members) \$25 (non-members)
including light lunch. Pay at the door. Book
by noon Monday before the talk. Ph (02)
9571 5359

Please note: From 2024, no bookings can be taken for a talk until the beginning of the month in which the talk is scheduled, ie 1 February for the LHT on 22 February, 1 April for 18 April and so on. Please book by noon the Monday before the talk for catering purposes.

22 February – Melinda Ham

Melinda's book, *The Lucky Ones*, looks at migrant experiences in the successive waves from the 1950s, including Jozefa Sobski's family. Though they are from different generations, countries and cultures, the families in this book have all escaped persecution in their homelands to find safety in Australia.

18 April – Rose Ellis

Rose tells the story of Bee Miles, Australia's famous bohemian rebel, and the untold story behind the legend.

Bee Miles was a truly larger-than-life character. Famous for being outrageous in public, or, as she said, living 'recklessly', she shocked and intrigued cities and towns across Australia. But she was no ordinary wanderer.

20 May – Nadia Wheatley

Nadia's new book, *The End of the Morning*, is due for publication in April. Edited by Nadia, this is an unfinished autobiography by Chamian Clift but it stands alone as a novella. This is the first time it has been published and the volume will include a selection of Clift's essays.

Lunch Hour Talk Dates for 2024

Thursday 22 February 2024

Thursday 18 April 2024

Thursday 20 May 2024

Thursday 22 August 2024

Membership/donation form

I wish to ☐ join the Library ☐ renew my membership
☐ make a donation ☐ become a Library volunteer.

Date: ____/____/____

Title: Ms/Mrs/Miss/Mr/Dr/Other _____

Name: _____

Address: : _____

Preferred tel: _____

Alternative tel: _____

Email: _____

☐ Please send Newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.

Membership category

☐ Full member \$70 ☐ Life member \$1,000

☐ Organisation \$140 ☐ Student (conditions apply) \$25

☐ Concession (Pensioner/Centrelink cardholders) \$35

A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

Members joining after 1 October are financial until the following year.

Donations (donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

☐ I wish to make a donation of \$

☐ to the Library for general purposes

☐ to the Library's Capital Investment Fund

☐ I am happy to have my name published in the Newsletter

☐ I wish to remain anonymous.

Payment details

☐ Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$ _____
(payable to Jessie Street National Women's Library)

☐ Please charge my Mastercard/Visa \$ _____

Name of cardholder _____

Card no. _____

Expiry ____/____ CCV ____

Signature _____

Auto debit authorisation

I authorise JSNWL:

☐ to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due to this credit card number.

☐ to charge \$ _____ annually to this credit card as a donation to:

☐ the Library for general purposes

☐ the Library's Capital Investment Fund

Signature _____

Become a volunteer

The Library runs on volunteer labour. Join us! We'd love to have you. Forward this form to us at the address below and we will contact you:

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

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Registered Charity No. CFN10255

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

Visit us:

523–525 Harris Street (cnr William Henry Street), Ultimo
Enter through the Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Rd
Please use the intercom for admittance

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.

How to reach 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

Postal Address:

GPO Box 2656
Sydney, NSW 2001

Telephone:

(02) 9571 5359

Email:

info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Visit our website:

www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Find us on social media:

