

NEWSLETTER

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

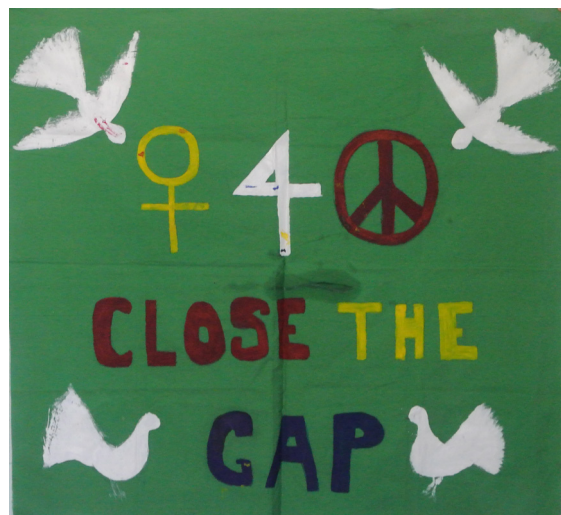


Our banner collection



The work of investigating, photographing, and cataloguing the banners held by the Library's Archives is nearing completion. There are 33 in the collection and nearly all have now been processed and entered in the Library catalogue. With thumbnail photographs and detailed descriptions, they are now readily viewable online. Archivist Christine Smith has coordinated the onerous work on the banners. Five more banners from the Women's March on Sydney in 2017 were offered to the Library just last month, and we look forward to seeing them.

The earliest banner is from International Women's Day in 1972. Several banners come from Anzac Day protest marches against the rape of women in war, which were held in Canberra in the early 1980s and a little later in Sydney. Feminists produced a variety of banners for various campaigns, including abortion law reform, one of which is shown here. The banner 'Uppity Women Unite' (undated) shows women's sense of humour.



The most striking collection is the 'double our numbers' banners taken to Pine Gap in November 1983. The Library has three huge banners prepared by the Armidale Uralla Women for Survival and three finely made vertical banners, including one made by Frances Phoenix, the initiator of the 'double our numbers' project.

An example of the detailed catalogue entries is the following for the Armidale Uralla Women for Survival Banner No 2, 1983, a small part of which is shown here.

'Description: 1 banner Soiled condition. Unbleached calico banner displays colourful hand-painted figures, some named: for example Lindy, Tess (reading book entitled 'Survival Guide'), Kate, Ann Finch, Mum, Sally, Daniel, Sam, Keith. The back of the banner is marked in hand-written capital letters: "DOUBLE OUR NUMBERS' BANNERS PINE GAP WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP 1983 MADE BY ARMIDALE & URALLA WOMEN FOR SURVIVAL" 750cm Height x 1750cm Length Rolled on acid-free tube roll and wrapped in calico.'

*Christine Smith and Jan
Burnswoods*

2024 Book Club update

Due to declining numbers and health issues, Book Club meetings are on hold for the time being. We hope to be able to reinvent it and continue to serve the needs of our members.

Recommended reading

Fiction

Edenglassie by Melissa Lucashenko

Non-Fiction

The Lucky Ones: stories of Australian refugees' journeys by Melinda Ham

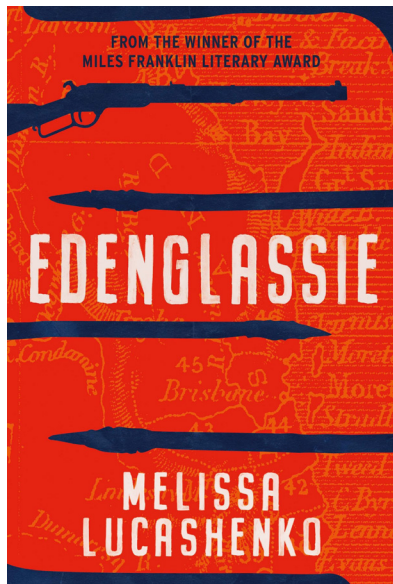
Melinda Ham is an award-winning journalist and activist. She is speaking at the next Lunch Hour Talk at 12 noon on Thursday 22 February at Customs House Library.

Classics

Time Without Clocks by Joan Lindsay (1962) is an autobiographical memoir of the period when Joan Lindsay and her husband Daryl (brother of Norman Lindsay) lived at Mulberry Hill in Baxter.

Biography

An Exacting Heart: the story of Hephzibah Menuhin by Jacqueline Kent



Barbara Henery

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2024

The Library's Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 11.30 am in the Littlebridge Hall of the Ultimo Community Centre (located on the same level as the Library).

A minimum of ten financial members is required to constitute a quorum for the AGM. All current members are welcome. This is a great opportunity to visit the Library, meet members nominating for the Board and join us for a light lunch.

The agenda, draft minutes of the 2023 AGM, Annual Report 2023 and the Annual Financial Report 2023, will be available at the meeting.

Nominations are called for the following positions: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer plus no fewer than five ordinary members of the Board. Nominations must be received by Tuesday 9 April 2024. Please consider nominating for the Board.

Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Ultimo Community Centre. There are no Board meetings in January, April or September.

Please RSVP by 9 April 2024 for catering purposes to the Secretary at info@nationalwomen-slibrary.org.au or by phone on 02 9571 5359.

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; Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Christine Kibble, Janet Ramsay, Beverley Sodbinow.

Editorial Team

Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart, Jan Burnswoods, Editors; Margaret Knowlden, Proofreader.

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 June – 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.

Date change for 2024

The 20 May talk in the November 2023 Newsletter should read Thursday 20 June 2024 (please note correction).



Elsie 50th Anniversary Conference

The second wave of feminist change sweeping Australia in the 1970s was to profoundly impact the lives of women and families affected by domestic violence. One significant advance was the establishment of Elsie, a women's refuge in Sydney. It was in March 1974 that a determined group of Women's Liberation members, led by Anne Summers, broke into two adjoining abandoned houses in Westmoreland Street on the Glebe Estate, changed the locks and claimed squatters' rights. On 16 March 1974, the Elsie Women's Refuge Night Shelter opened as Australia's first emergency safe haven for victims of domestic violence. There are now over 800 refuges and shelters across Australia providing shelter and support for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

The Elsie Conference, to be held on 15 and 16 March 2024, will be chaired by Anne Summers Professor of Domestic and Family Violence, at the University of Technology Sydney

(UTS) Business School and hosted by UTS. It will bring together refuge and shelter workers, advocates and organisations, researchers and public policymakers and anyone interested in reducing domestic violence. The aim of the conference is to provide a national platform for attendees to celebrate 50 years of the women's refuge movement and discuss emerging challenges.

The conference will feature a visual history of the women's refuge movement as well as a selection of 1970s women's political posters from the Library. It will recognise previously unheralded women who have kept the refuges running with the Elsie Hall of Fame Awards.

See elsieconference.com.au to register for the conference or for more information.

Kris Clarke

Annual Luncheon 2024

We look forward to welcoming members and guests to the Luncheon, which will be held on Monday 16 September 2024.

Make a note in your calendar.

As usual the venue is the Strangers' Room at NSW Parliament House, a wonderful setting overlooking the Domain. The speaker for the Luncheon will be announced in the May Newsletter and booking forms will be available in the July Newsletter.

The Luncheon is always a wonderful time to catch up with friends and support the Library in our major fundraising activity.



End of year cheer

Volunteers in their colourful finery were ready to relax and enter the festive spirit of the season after another challenging year, still unable to put the shadow of Covid behind us. However the party was back in the Library as has been the custom, with Jean Burns (left) our ever bright and cheerful dispenser of good spirit.



Chair of the Board Christine Yeats (below) made her first address to the group. She acknowledged the importance of volunteering, and thanked volunteers for keeping the Library functioning and locating the information or

materials that clients seek. She credited the volunteers for the hours they put into moving boxes of archival materials to safety and clearing space for repairs when a leak was sprung after heavy rains.

The afternoon passed with cooling drinks for a sweltering day and a spread reminiscent of those birthday parties of our younger days, albeit without the fairy bread. The cake was a serious contender, with leaf green and (subdued) purple icing revealing a multi layered rainbow interior.



I would like to include a special thank you to Sherri for her tireless and enthusiastic handling of the many and varied complexities of the Library, ranging from day-to-day functioning to the Library's longer term projects.

Kris Clarke

New members

The Library welcomes the following new member:
Sydney Trades Hall Library

Donations

General donations since July 2023

Meredith Burgmann
Elizabeth Clarke
Christine Jennett
Rosa Needham
Helen O'Sullivan
Gretchen Poiner

Ruth Callaghan
Gina Dolphin
Anna Logan
Diane Openshaw
Caroline Phillips

Materials

Miriam Hechtman

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 November 2023

Julie James Bailey (regular monthly donation)
Carolyn Bloch Jean Burns Sue Comrie-Thomson
Anne Conway Christine Currey Anne Giles
Christine Jennett Pippa Preston Rosalind Willis

Parramatta Female Factory Heritage Listing

Last year the NSW and Federal Governments added the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct to Australia's UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List. Tentative listing is the first step in the World Heritage nomination process.

This site is an authentic and well-preserved precinct of buildings, archaeology and landscape that carries this history of women over time and would be a unique addition to the World Heritage List. It has been on the Australian National Heritage List since 2018 and is recognised for its outstanding heritage value to the nation.

In 1821, the Parramatta Female Factory was the first substantial European development by the colonial government, commissioned by Governor Lachlan Macquarie and designed by Francis Greenway. Female factories were a purpose-built institution to manage, discipline and reform female convicts.

Thousands of convict women passed through the Factory which manufactured cloth. It was also the site of the colony's first manufactured export – producing 60,000 yards (55,000 m) of woven cloth in 1822.

Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment, and Member for Sydney, the electorate in which the National Women's Library sits, said: 'The Parramatta Female Factory was a brutal place, particularly for the poor, the lonely, and the powerless. There's a thread that runs through these buildings. It's the way we've sought to institutionalise, control and discipline young women. We want the memory of these women and girls to live on.'

The case for its listing draws on the institution's reflection of the changing role of incarceration that came with the Enlightenment and looked to rehabilitation and protection. 'Immoral' working class women were put into domestic work for their own good.

Although called a factory, it functioned essentially as a prison for convict women and their children. There was a three-class system: first class applied to new convicts and destitute women, second class applied to pregnant or nursing mothers and those who had been returned from assignment because of misbehaviour, and third class applied to repeat offenders. Well-behaved women could progress through the classes while women who breached the rules were given solitary confinement.

After transportation ended in 1840, the Female Factory closed but its buildings continued to house 'destitute' girls, up to the age of 14, ostensibly for their 'care and education'. While orphans may have lost one or both parents, others were admitted to the school to relieve large families.

The school's next incarnation was the Parramatta Girls Industrial School in 1887. Girls continued to be removed from their families and admitted to the school for a number of reasons, ranging from being neglected or orphaned, to having committed crimes from minor theft to murder. The school also housed young Aboriginal women and girls who were forcibly removed from their families and homes. In 1915, the Aboriginal Protection Board in NSW shockingly allowed the removal of older Aboriginal children from their families, without any proof of neglect or bad circumstance, increasing their representation in the institution three-fold.

Training was supposed to give a few domestic skills to the girls and women to improve employment prospects but was often tantamount to forced domestic slavery. They didn't take it lying down. The girls rioted frequently and often hatched escape plans.

Its jail-like appearance, repressive and regiment-

ed routines, abusive staff and outdated facilities and its practices such as virginity testing, finally drew public attention.

Owing in large part to a campaign by the Women's Liberation Movement, the institution finally closed in 1974 but the site continued as a shelter for girls with behavioural problems and then as minimum security/periodic detention centre for women until 2008.

The application for consideration discusses comparable institutions around the world yet finds that 'none of these sites has the integrity or range of experience of the Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct. Most reflect individual institutions rather than complexes and rarely have they exclusively confined women and girls.'

The submission notes that there are very few properties related specifically to women and none of children. The Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct has the potential to fill a gap in the List addressing the specific life experience of women and children, including Aboriginal children.

The site has potential for significant subsurface archaeological evidence of former buildings and structures, as well as an array of other objects or relics which illustrate life in the institutions on the site.

Adapted from the submission by the Permanent Delegation of Australia to UNESCO World Heritage Convention for Parramatta Female Factory and Institutions Precinct listing in the Cultural category (September 2023).



Lunch Hour Talk

Nadia Wheatley on Charmian Cliff

19 October 2023

Nadia (pictured right) has made a study of Charmian Cliff's feminism, drawing mainly upon her essays published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, articles written from 1964 to 1969 and the books she wrote about her reflections on life in Greece. Eighty of these essays have been collected in the volume titled, *Sneaky Little Revolutions: Selected essays of Charmian Cliff*.

The essays were published at a time when women were considered second-class citizens. They had no rights to participate in economic and social life: their role was at home as wife and mother. It was 'sexual apartheid'. The 'women's pages' in the newspaper were written for middle-class women in the suburbs, whose husbands were white collar Liberal voters, and consisted mainly of ads for frocks, handbags, cutlery and baby products. There was no intellectual stimulation for women. Charmian was 'alert and questing' – interested in ideas, not gossip.

After working for a few years in England and Greece, she returned to Sydney in 1964, and began to write for the Herald.

Charmian felt disappointed with Australian society. She simmered with suppressed rage when politicians reflected the authoritarian 'Big Daddy' that she had experienced as a child. She objected to the 'Father knows best' paternalistic system that prevailed. An example to illustrate this attitude was in 1968 when NSW Minister Eric Willis banned the play 'America Hurrah' as it contained four letter words – not spoken, but written on the wall.

Nadia made the point that every generation invents its own brand of feminism appropriate to the time. Charmian was born in 1923, too late for the first wave and too early for the second wave of Women's Liberation in the 1970s. Her model was her mother, Amy Lila Currie, whose own mother had died in childbirth when Amy was aged 12. Holding her father responsible for her mother's death, Amy developed a repugnance for sex and an attitude of prudishness, but she also voiced a strident criticism of men that was unusual for her time..

As a child, Charmian was told she was 'a mistake', an 'afterthought'. However, Charmian did respect her father, and he was the one who introduced her to concepts of radical politics and egalitarianism.

In 1946, she met journalist George Johnston, who was considerably older than her, and they married. Although she was initially enamored with him, she was soon challenging everything he did.

Charmian wrote of the 'Diary of a Modern Woman',

an ABC radio play produced in 1949 where protagonist Emily tries to combine a business career with her role as wife and mother. Her husband Michael tries to dissuade her. She ends up leaving him and goes into parliament. Although she felt 'trapped in marriage' she had the courage to rebel.

She was influenced by the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1953.

In 1954, the family moved to Kalymnos in Greece. There, Charmian observed the patriarchy on the island – men away for long periods of time sponge-diving while the women lived their separate lives. Property descended along the female line, from mother to daughter. The bride received the house as a dowry; if the marriage collapsed it was not the woman who was forced out. In Kalymnos, she felt the strong power of the Earth Mother.

In *Mermaid Singing*, Charmian writes about the tavern full of male customers. How to put the devil in the bottle? Here, there were fresh insights to imbue her feminism.

Charmian sums up her rebellion thus: – *I have been making my own 'sneaky little revolutions' ... by writing essays for weekly presses.*

Kris Clarke

Pioneer diplomat

One of our very interesting and important recent accessions, the Sue Baldwin collection, has drawn the interest of researcher, Melissa Hitchman. Melissa is a doctoral candidate at the Australian National University, on leave from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to research gender and diplomacy.

Sue Baldwin was the first female Australian diplomat appointed in a war zone. The collection is comprised of four books of letters Sue wrote to her parents from her diplomatic posts in Cambodia, France, Portugal and Hong Kong from 1974 until her untimely death in 1988. Sue had accepted an appointment as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Australia to the Republic of Portugal, a post she was to take up in April 1988. Sue Baldwin would have become our 10th woman Ambassador after 87 years of Australian diplomacy.

In March 1988 she died of a cerebral aneurism in hospital in Hong Kong, at the age of 38. Her brother, Geoff Baldwin has kindly donated the collection to the Library Archives.

Christine Smith



Equality Rights Alliance report

As one of the six National Women's Alliances (the other alliances representing particular population groups and expert groups on specific issues) funded by the Commonwealth Government to advance women's leadership and economic security through federal government policy, ERA has had another busy and productive year.

The Library is one of the 66 member organisations of ERA. The Women's Alliances are the current iteration of a series of representative bodies informing the Federal Government of women's needs and opinions, effectively the voice of Australian women to government, since 1976.

During 2023, with input from its members, ERA has produced submissions to government before the May Budget, on the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality, on paid parental leave, on how government engages with the community sector and on priorities for representation to the 2024 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). A submission towards the forthcoming Federal Budget is currently in preparation. Over the past year ERA has also provided, in online sessions open to member representatives, briefings on the meeting of CSW, the Budget, and on the implications for women of the government's Employment White Paper and the recommendations of the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce. A webinar was also provided on the implications for women of a Universal Basic Income.

While all involved in ERA are delighted to participate in a massively increased level of demand from government for gender consultation, neither the staffing nor funding provided are adequate to respond to that demand. An announcement on the next round of funding for ERA is expected during 2024.

Part of the responsibilities of ERA is playing a leading role in the community sector's engagement with the CSW, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights. ERA has advised government on the 2024 CSW theme of 'addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective' and is providing training to women's organisations seeking involvement in that meeting. ERA has been specifically funded to prepare the so-called 'shadow' (community based) report to accompany the government report to CEDAW.

Significant policy developments during 2024 are expected to include: announcement of the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality, campaigning for an Australian Human Rights Act and a draft Religious Discrimination Bill.

Janet Ramsay

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:

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001
and we will contact you.

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

ISSN 1838-0662
ABN 42 276162 418
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:

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