



JESSIE
STREET
NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT
2025

Jessie Street National Women's Library serves to:

- *Highlight the contribution of Australian women to this country's development*
- *Preserve women's political, cultural and literary heritage*
- *Ensure that documents relating to Australian women's lives and activities are collected and made accessible*
- *Support the fields of women's history and women's studies*

To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful

Ursula K. Le Guin

CHAIR

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the JSNWL Board members for their continued support over the past year. The progress and achievements of the Library rely heavily on the commitment of our volunteers, all of whom are acknowledged in this report, and I thank them all warmly for their contributions.

The Board convened on 9 occasions during the year, with members giving generously of their time and expertise. I wish to make special mention of Sherri Hilario, Secretary, and Jean Burns, Treasurer, whose dedication underpins the smooth and effective operation of the Library. Sherri remains an invaluable point of contact, while Jean's careful and thorough approach ensures sound financial management. Together, they contribute significantly each week to the Library's administration, communications and systems. As noted previously, while they are part of a broader team, their roles are essential. I also extend my thanks to Jann Skinner for auditing our accounts with such professionalism, care and integrity.

The Board identified the development of a Strategic Plan for 2026 –2030 as a key priority in 2025. To support this task, an external consultant was engaged to help develop the plan in consultation with the Board and following a strategy planning day at the start of the process. In addition to the input of our Board members our volunteers and members were encouraged to be part of the process of developing the Plan.

The assistance provided to the consultant on behalf of the Board, volunteers and members by Sherri Hilario is gratefully acknowledged.

The Board endorsed engaging Suzanne Holohan at the 11 February 2025 Board meeting; the Strategy Planning day took place on 3 June 2025; the Board endorsed the Strategic Plan 2026-2030 at the 9 December 2025 Board meeting.

The document sets the Library's direction for 2026–2030. It builds on the resilience and commitment of its community and informed by members, volunteers and the Board, it provides a clear framework to guide the Library's core purpose: collecting, preserving and promoting Australian women's cultural heritage. Drawing on reflection of activities from 2018 to 2024, including lessons from the pandemic and other challenges, it identifies priorities for the future. The Strategy focuses on two streams:

- Stream 1 Cornerstones: strengthening the foundations that enable success (including finances, people, systems, and spaces)
- Stream 2: Activity Focus — expanding JSNWL's reach, relevance, and visibility through programs, partnerships, and broader access to the collection.

The Library continues to have a strong membership base. At the end of 2025 we had 300 members.

The volunteer librarians and archivists continued with their exacting professional work in the Library as well as maintaining its high standing among libraries focused on unique specialist collections and other cultural institutions. Their work is essential to maintaining and improving access nationally and internationally to the Library's collection. The work of the archives and library team is vital in helping to build the reputation of the Library in the GLAM sector and the broader women's community.

Initiatives such as the support of internships and students undertaking research projects further enhance the reputation of the Library. Thanks to the leadership of Librarian Lynne Morton, the Library continues to provide engaging and mutually beneficial internship and placement opportunities for Charles Sturt University and TAFE students. Participants develop skills to support early career/new career pathways whilst contributing to Library activities.

We were very pleased to welcome over 120 visitors to the Library in 2025. Enquiries included the history of political protest posters focusing on feminist issues; research by a Taiwan based researcher/artist for her Sydney Biennale project on gender education and women's labour in domestic, school and factory settings; and a visit by a researcher who received a grant to visit the library to consult My Murky Past.

Our Newsletter continues to be the main means of communication with the broader membership and community of supporters thanks to the team of Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart, Jan Burnswoods, Barbara Henery, Suzanne Marks and Margaret Knowlden. Through their efforts we have an enduring record of the Library's achievements. The Newsletter offers readers an engaging mix of news, updates and articles, many contributed by our Volunteers.

The theme of History Week 2025 was Water Stories: Currents of Persistence. We continued to draw inspiration from our 'Tapestry Project' as well as other sources to share a special series of Facebook posts highlighting stories of women whose lives have been shaped by water.

We were invited to address a number of organisations about the library and its collection during the past year. These included the Lane Cove Women's Action and Information Group on 10 March, the Women's Hawkesbury Regional Museum on 16 August and Sydney University Women's Group on 3 September.

Throughout 2025 we continued to provide our usual services, events and activities. These include our very popular Lunch Hour Talks (LHT), which have been organised by Michele Ginswick. These are held in the Customs House Library, an ideal location that is easily accessible. Michele stepped down from her role as LHT Coordinator as of the end of 2025 after around 18 years as Coordinator – an extraordinary contribution to the Library. In acknowledging Michele's contribution, I also express my heartfelt thanks to

the LHT Committee members for their dedication and commitment over many years.

The Annual Fundraising Luncheon committee, coordinated by Kate Beringer, is our major event for the year. Kate had to step down from her role as coordinator for some of the time in 2024. We are delighted to welcome Kate back to the Committee. Our speaker at the 2025 Annual Fundraising Luncheon was Professor the Hon. Verity Firth AM, Vice-President Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement at the University of New South Wales. Professor Firth has over twenty years' experience at the very highest levels of government and education sectors in Australia.

As I reported in my report at the 2025 AGM the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), which was auspiced and managed by YWCA Australia, came to an end on 30 November 2024. YWCA Canberra was awarded the Federal government tender to establish the Working with Women Alliance (WwWA), which has been active since 1 January 2025. The Library has joined the WwWA and Janet Ramsay has provided reports on its meetings and activities to the Board.

Throughout the year the City of Sydney, Ultimo Community Centre staff provided courteous assistance with our queries and requests, and we extend our thanks to them and the contractors who manage maintenance and our lease. We filled in our quarterly surveys and supplied the 2024 Annual Review required as a condition of our lease within timeframes. We received an A rating from the City of Sydney for our performance.

Finally, the JSNWL welcomes the support of dedicated volunteers who share an interest in safeguarding and celebrating the contributions of Australian women. By assisting with our diverse and significant holdings – including books, serials, archives, posters, and other materials – you will play a part in maintaining our 'unique specialist library dedicated to the preservation of Australian women's work, words and history'. Any time you can offer, whether occasional or ongoing, is greatly valued and will contribute to sustaining this significant work for future generations.

Christine Yeats

Chair JSNWL Board

TREASURER

The Council for the City of Sydney, through its Accommodation Grants Program, provides significant rent subsidy for the premises occupied by the Library. In 2025 the rent subsidy was nearly \$120,000. The ongoing financial support of the City of Sydney is acknowledged with gratitude.

210 people, including 40 students and 11 teachers from 9 high schools, attended the Library's major fundraising event, the **Annual Luncheon** at NSW Parliament

Jessie Street National Women's Library – Annual Report 2025

House in September 2025. Ticket sales, donations and the sale of raffle tickets resulted in a net profit for the luncheon of \$15,290.

Five **Lunch Hour Talks (LHT)** were held in 2025 at Customs House. The profit from the LHTs in 2025 was \$1,507.

The Library's annual budget is prepared on an accrual basis, after the Auditor has finalised the annual financial statements for the AGM in May. Therefore, this report is largely based on actual income and expenditure.

Actual Income in 2025 was \$15,773.26 in excess of the approved budget. This was largely due to interest on the Capital Investment Fund being accrued monthly for the first time. Also, donations to the Annual Lunch and Capital Investment Fund were greater than anticipated, as was the revenue from the Annual Lunch.

Actual expenditure in 2025 was around \$1,000 or 1.4% over the approved budget. The increase is largely due to higher rates for electricity and National Library of Australia membership offset by lower general library expenses.

The Library welcomed 11 new members in 2025. One member renewed her membership as a life member. At \$12,297 actual **Membership revenue** was on budget.

In 2025, the Library received a bequest from the Estate of the Late Judith Winifred Hammond in the amount of \$75,000. A new term deposit account was opened with these funds.

On 31 December 2025, the Library held the following Westpac **Term Deposit Accounts for general funds**:

INTEREST BEARING DEPOSITS	INTEREST RATE	MATURES	BALANCE
Westpac Term Deposit (527513) 1-1146	4.10%	5-Jun-26	\$175,041.38
Westpac Term Deposit (506546) 1-1147	4.10%	30-Jun-26	\$1,144,824.39
Westpac Term Deposit (521842) 1-1148	4.10%	1-Jul-26	\$441,786.91
Westpac Term Deposit (012574) 1-1144	4.10%	30-Jun-26	\$23,031.17
Westpac Term Deposit (713538) 1-1143	4.20%	11-Mar-26	\$75,000.00
TOTAL INTEREST-BEARING DEPOSITS			\$1,859,683.85

Capital Investment Fund (CIF)

In 2025 donations to the Library's **Capital Investment Fund** totalled \$4,316 which was \$1,316 in excess of the approved budget.

Due to falling interest rates at Members Equity Bank, the Board approved of the Capital Investment Funds being transferred to Westpac Bank. The closing balance

Jessie Street National Women's Library – Annual Report 2025

of the Members Equity Account, (\$696,527.16) was transferred to the Library's Administration Account on 13 June 2025, the same day the Members Equity Account was closed. A Westpac Cash Reserve Account was opened on 18 June 2025 with \$696,527.16.

To attract a higher interest rate, the Board approved of \$600,000 of CIF funds being transferred to a Term Deposit with Westpac. This account was opened on 1 July 2025. At a subsequent meeting, the Board approved of an additional CIF Term Deposit of \$90,000 being established and this was opened on 18 December 2025.

As at 31 December 2025, the **Capital Investment Fund** account balances were as follows:

CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND	Interest Rate	Matures	BALANCE
Members Equity Bank (Closed 13/06/25)			\$ -
Westpac CIF Cash Reserve Account	0.01%	AT CALL	\$ 10,008.38
Westpac CIF Term Deposit A/C 716800 (Opened 01/07/2025)	4.10%	1/07/2026	\$ 600,000.00
Westpac CIF Term Deposit A/C 727710 (Opened 18/12/2025)	3.80%	1/07/2026	\$ 90,000.00
TOTAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUNDS			\$700,008.38

The Board has approved of the two CIF Term Deposits being combined when they mature on 1 July 2026.

Jean Burns
Treasurer

SECRETARY

The Library continues to receive a wide range of enquiries and visitors, both from within Australia and internationally: from South Australia and down the street to Glasgow, South Korea and Taiwan.

In 2025 we welcomed a delegation of librarians from South Korea intrigued by the existence of a women's library. A question about one of our International Women's Day (IWD) posters on display sparked a discussion that led to the discovery that South Korea became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984.

We are proud of our partnerships with other cultural institutions. In 2025 we lent items from across the range of our collection for exhibitions at NSW Parliament House and UTS Gallery.

Jessie Street National Women's Library – Annual Report 2025

We were thrilled to be featured in a Blog post for IWD by Catalyst. Catalyst is the company that hosts Koha, our online Library Management System, and online catalogue. The feature was based on interviews and images supplied by the Library.

There were 9 Board Meetings in 2025. The attendance record was:

Chair	Christine Yeats	7/9
Vice Chair	Suzanne Marks – until AGM 2025	1/2
	Janet Ramsay – as of AGM 2025	7/9
Treasurer	Jean Burns	7/9
Secretary	Sherri Hilario	8/9
Members	Michele Ginswick	7/9
	Robyn Harriott	8/9
	Barbara Henery	7/9
	Christine Kibble	6/9
	Alison Rees-Oliviere – as of AGM 2025	4/7
	Beverley Sodbinow	5/9
	Barbara Thompson	4/7
Hilary Yerbury – as of AGM 2025	5/7	

All quarterly surveys and the Annual Self-Assessment required by the City of Sydney's Accommodation Grants program were completed.

The 2024 Annual Information Statement required by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) was submitted.

The Library's Strategic Plan 2026-2030 was developed and endorsed by the Board.

Sherri Hilario
Secretary

LIBRARIANS

Overview

The Librarians are committed to fulfilling the current and anticipated needs of our broad community and to staying informed about the many significant developments in the evolving library sector. Our focus is on ensuring that the delivery of individual support to our users, a mainstay of the library's operations since its inception, will be augmented by the technological changes that we choose to implement.

A changing environment

The Library supports Trove's goal of growing Australia's cultural collections for all to access. As a Trove partner, we also benefit from its information sharing webinars and access to its online learning platform. In addition, we access resources shared by National and State Libraries Australasia, the National Archives of Australia and organisations like the Australian Digital Alliance and the Australian Library and Information Association.

Current projects

Informed by our understanding of the changing environment, the librarians identified the accessibility constraints of two collections, the Lunch Hour Talks recordings and the Tapestry collection. The digitisation of the Lunch Hour Talk recordings from the largely obsolete CD to MP3 is almost complete. Work is also underway to link all related material, for example transcripts and articles in our newsletter, in the catalogue records that are being edited or created. Ultimately, the recordings will be accessible online. The Tapestry collection comprises stories, mostly told by family members or friends, that document the lives of everyday Australian women. All stories are now digitised and an initial record has been created for each story on the Library's catalogue. Provided that permission to publish has been received, a link to the PDF will be added. Final steps to revitalising this remarkable collection will be to update the registration form and Tapestry page on our website. "All women's lives are interesting". (Shirley Jones, one of the Library's founders).

Ongoing Library work

Many other tasks were undertaken routinely throughout the year. Shelf checking and reviewing holdings to check that items fit the Library's Collection Development Policy, liaising with publishers for new acquisitions and with potential donors are perpetual tasks.

Our cataloguers continue to show a remarkable dedication to creating records that accurately reflect our holdings as well as a willingness to adapt to changes resulting from library software updates, some of which substantially impact the way certain tasks are undertaken.

Specific requests

We responded to an intriguing range of reference enquiries and requests for information, research support or loans for exhibitions. Though not necessarily comprehensive, we never cease to be amazed, and inspired, by the breadth and depth of our collections.

Together with the archives, we loaned a banner, posters, serials, books, badges, two illuminated addresses and ephemera for three exhibitions. Two were held at NSW Parliament House, one celebrating the 50th anniversary of International Women's Year 1975 and the other about Australian and British women's suffrage movements. The third contribution was to UTS Gallery highlighting stories of the women's refuge movement and feminist activism in Australia.

The Librarians understand that the timing of many special requests cannot be anticipated. Sometimes our volunteers make adjustments to their own schedules to facilitate the desired outcome. This willingness to assist is greatly valued.

Student visits and placements

It was a privilege to provide work placement opportunities for two students in 2025. It is gratifying to develop a proposal for specific tasks that align with the student's career ambitions and to assist in their uptake of these new skills. Both the students and the supervisor gain valuable insights into library processes and different perspectives. The Librarians are generous in the time that they make available to discuss both established procedures and issues of particular interest to the students. It is not unusual for students to proffer opinions about an item's compliance with the Collection Development Policy that would otherwise have been overlooked.

Two articles written by students were published in the May 2025 newsletter as they expressed interest in researching and writing about a specific topic. The older women's housing article was the result of a successful collaboration between two work placement students and a volunteer who was a recent graduate.

The Library welcomed group student visits organised by Charles Sturt University and TAFE NSW.

Book Club

During 2025 the Book Club, convened by Barbara Henery, continued to meet bimonthly, February, May, July, September and November on the 4th Tuesday at 11am, holding steady at eight members. New members are always welcome.

Books are chosen by consensus depending on acclaim and availability and reflect a wide variety of interests. All books were by or about Australian women, both fiction and non-fiction. The year's readings included the following books: *Down in the City* - Elizabeth Harrower; *Looking for Elizabeth* - Helen Trinca; *Memorial Days* - Geraldine Brooks; *Mermaid Singing* - Charmian Clift; *Portia Geach: portrait of an activist* - Julie Cotter; *Praiseworthy* - Alexis Wright; *The Governor* - Sue Williams; *The Sitter* - Angela O'Keefe.

Our discussions are lively as we all share a love of reading. Many books purchased by members are then donated to the Library. Some recently published books read by our club have been reviewed for the newsletter, thus recommending books by Australian women to library members as well as the wider community.

Lynne Morton, Sherri Hilario
Librarians

ARCHIVES

The Archives hosted several research visitors throughout the year. Of note is Damien Linnane, publisher and PhD student, Newcastle University. Damien spent the day with Jan Burnswoods, viewing photographic collections, specifically Frances Phoenix and Women Against Rape in preparation for his exhibition 'Only Obeying Orders'. Damien's artworks are inspired by photographs of protestors demonstrating against apartheid, sexual assault, police injustice, indigenous discrimination and social justice issues.

Again, we hosted the annual visit by Charles Sturt University School of Information and Communications Studies students. Beverley, Jan and Christine presented various aspects of the Archives, how our collections were first received, the treasures we hold, various experiences with researchers and the process of adapting Koha, the library management system behind our online catalogue, for our holdings. Several of our unique collections were exhibited to the students including a knitting demonstration book, various boxes of our wonderful badges, a colourful banner, the menstruation chart and the Canberra Women's Archive Finding Aids folder.

We received several notable accessions during the year including the glorious Freeda Stares banner generously donated by Liz Mortiss. Helen Zigmond's papers represent her life's work in creative health, combining art and health in developing programs for and with young people. Several notable visitors to the Archives, such as Karen Anderson, sought advice in relation to future donations from the Lyceum Club.

Notable collections recently added to the Koha system, include the Gillian Fisher collection, Preterm Clinic, Sue Baldwin, Frances Phoenix photographs and Barbara Finch photographs. Our researchers are richly rewarded once a collection receives a full arrangement and description in the catalogue system; and it remains a priority to devote more time to this task.

The Archives team has thrived under the direction of our Archivist, Beverley Sodbinow, who celebrated 26 years with Jessie Street National Women's Library in 2025. Beverley was recruited by Library founders, Shirley Jones and Jane Pollard, who established the Archives after receiving material from the former Canberra Women's Archive in 1993. In her first 10 years at the Library, Beverley worked as a salaried employee but continued to work on a voluntary basis when funding was not available and continues to do so. Jan Burnswoods has had many years of valuable input into the Archives and the Library. Jan was a long time Board member and is still contributing to the Newsletter although not able to visit frequently because of ill-health. Unfortunately, Gail Davis has been unable to work with us for the last six months. We wish Gail well and hope her health improves quickly. The Archives welcomes Dr Hilary Yerbury, Board member, who plans to join our team in 2026.

Bev Sodbinow, Christine Smith
Archivists

ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The 29th Annual Luncheon was held in the Strangers' Room at NSW Parliament House on 15 September 2025. Our Guest Speaker, Professor Verity Firth AM, Vice President of Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement at the University of NSW, 'leapt at the chance to talk' at the Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch, having heard 'A Heroine of Mine' as a child. The idea of the privileged having a responsibility to support those less advantaged struck a chord which was to stay with Verity throughout her life. Her talk focused on the way successive governments had undermined funding for Universities, leading to job losses and the cutting of student places. This acts against the long-held idea that education

can be a social equaliser. The teaching of creative and critical thinking through social science degrees had been severely undermined by neo-liberal fee structures leading to the demise of the Arts Degree and the loss of young peoples' ability to study the human condition, and so approach global problems as 'citizens of the world.' Verity left the audience with a challenge, 'What can each of us do to continue Jessie Street's legacy?'

An Acknowledgement of Country which urged our pledge not to harm the land, the people or the ecosystem from Wiradjirri elder Norma Ingram finished with Aunty Norma's vision of all Australians walking in harmony into the future. Our Board Chair, Christine Yeats, as MC, then conducted us through the rest of the program. Our speaker was introduced by Suzanne Marks and thanked most sincerely by Imogen Szabo a Year 10 student at North Sydney Girls High School, Verity's alma mater.

A total of 210 people attended the Lunch including Foundation Library patron, Elizabeth Evatt, Professor Emerita who was joined by our Parliamentary Hosts: The Hon Penny Sharpe (briefly, then represented by Peta Waller-Bryant) and The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, as well State Members of Parliament The Hon. Jo Haylen, The Hon. Aileen MacDonald OAM, The Hon. Tanya Plibersek and The Hon. Meredith Burgmann. Other groups included our ever-staunch supporters, the NSW Teachers Federation (a member organisation), and the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL).

We welcomed 40 students from Auburn Girls High School, Birrong Girls High School, Burwood Girls High School, Matraville Senior High School, North Sydney Girls High School, Rooty Hill High School, Sydney Girls High School, Hoxton Park High School and Wenona, with 11 teachers. This included 8 students with 2 teachers sponsored by Library Members and 6 students with 3 teachers sponsored by local Members of Parliament. The Chair gave special thanks to the continued and generous support of the City of Sydney. A profit of \$15,290 was achieved.

We extend our sincere thanks to the staff of the Strangers' Dining Room, for all their work to make the day a success. Also, to Olivia Sani from Parliamentary Catering for her patience. Above all, it is important to acknowledge the long months of organisation and planning carried out by the tireless Annual Lunch Committee, and to extend our warmest thanks for their cheerful teamwork and dedication.

Michele Ginswick
Annual Luncheon Convenor

LUNCH HOUR TALKS

In 2025 the Library hosted five most successful talks with speakers who came from as far afield as the USA as well as Canberra and Brisbane. We welcomed over 150 attendees.

Thursday 20 February: Rosemary Cutts, Researching Women of Colonial Australia

Rose Cutts came to our attention following a generous donation of three volumes of Women of Colonial Australia series. The stories were produced by twenty

women who participated in an educational program offered by the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG) in 2022/2023. Acting as a consultant, Rose conceived, taught, guided and mentored the group, then subsequently edited and arranged publication of the volumes in association with SAG. The books were donated by Wendy Pryor, a participant in the group.

Rose, spoke about how this project came about, its challenges and highlights and how,

through her studies and with several creative writing programs, she developed a keen interest and focus on blending historical facts and creative story telling. She is also a passionate researcher of her own genealogy. Having worked across the print media, music and tertiary education sectors in a career spanning over 25 years, Rose's roles have included sub-editing, copywriting, and several years editing a quarterly fiction publication. For the last 17 years she has worked in a variety of roles in universities,

Thursday 17 April: Margaret Spence, *The Price Women Paid for Political Choices Made by Men*

While writing *Cold War in a Hot Kitchen: a memoir of mid-century Melbourne*, Margaret Spence delved into history to understand the political and social tensions that pervaded her childhood home as well as society at large: immigration, inflation and industrial unrest, government secrecy and suspicion, the legacy of the masculinist culture of mining on her paternal grandmother and father, and a disturbing career vs. child choice faced by her adored aunt, later known as the feminist journalist Nan Hutton. With a domestic cold war mimicking the external Cold War, Margaret considered the influences and challenges facing women then and now.

At 23 Margaret went to the United States, completing a master's degree in journalism. It was not until she moved to Arizona and became involved with a writers' group that she began to write fiction. Her first novel, *Lipstick on the Strawberry*, was a winner in the in First Coast Romance Writers 2015 Beacon Contest and her second, *Joyous Lies*, was a finalist in the 2021 Somerset Book Awards for Literary and Contemporary Fiction. A visit to Australia to see family enabled her to deliver this Lunch Hour Talk.

Thursday 19 June: Sita Sargent, *She Shapes History*

Describing herself as a tour guide, feminist and history nerd, Sita Sargeant described how she built a tourism company working to promote gender equality by making women's and queer history engaging, accessible, and relevant through historical tourism. Becoming engaged with Australian History for the first time as a result of Covid derailing overseas travel and study plans, Sita explained how she noticed the absence of women's stories in our History and, how, as she explored her home city of Canberra, she found women 's stories everywhere, such as Marion Burley Griffin who was responsible for 60% of the Canberra design and later, Kathleen Muriel Butler, secretary to John Bradfield, who managed the overseas tendering process for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. So, the walking tours began, but not before Sita was talked into writing a book which led to a six month road trip and stories of over 250 women who shaped Australia. The book was published as *She Shapes History: Guided Walks & Untold Stories About Great Australian Women*.

The **She Shapes History Walking Tours** are now in four Australian cities and just starting in New York. Late in 2025 Sita Sargeant was announced as the ACT Young Australian of the Year for 2026.

Thursday 21 August: Dr Sarah Gilbert, Unconventional Women.

Sarah Gilbert's talk told how the book came about, the process of making it, as well as the story it tells. She began her talk by drawing a parallel between the work of Jessie Street, 'transforming our world in the name of justice and freedom' and the role played by the nuns whose story she was recording. extending the idea of how Catholic nuns over centuries, created precedents as the first feminists, the foremothers who laid the foundations which would make modern feminism possible.

In the 1950s and 60s, six young women left their families to join a strictly enclosed order of nuns in Melbourne. They could leave the convent only for medical appointments, visitors were rare and would be met from behind a partition in the parlour. Their lives were the rhythms of the Divine Office and the dictates of the Mother Superior. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s and the changing times had a huge impact. Their convent threw open its doors on a new world and the women wanted to be part of it. Sarah worked hard to gain the nuns' and ex-nuns' trust and told their story with a rare kind of intimacy.

Sarah is a writer, producer and oral historian from Sydney who currently runs Impact Studios, a podcast production house at UTS, and she is the books columnist at Galah magazine. She lives in Darlinghurst with her husband and their two children.

Thursday 16 October: Natalie Conyer, Crime Fiction: Why and How.

When Natalie Conyer wanted to explore some deep ideas about her birth country, South Africa, she chose to do this by writing crime fiction. Why? What can crime fiction, often regarded as inferior to 'literary fiction', offer the reader? In this talk, Natalie considered the ability of crime fiction to examine ourselves and the world around us and related her own journey to writing the form. In doing so, she reminded us of many of the great writers of the genre.

Natalie first book, *Present Tense*, won the 2020 Ned Kelly Award for best debut fiction. It was shortlisted for the Davitt Awards and voted one of 2020's best reads of the year by *The Australian*. Her second book, *Shadow City*, was released in September 2024. A collection of her award-winning short stories, *The Book Club and Other Stories*, was published by Clan Destine Press in the same year. *Present Tense* was re-published in December 2024, and a third book is on the way.

2025 was my last year as convenor of the Lunch Hour Talks and it is with mixed feelings I have handed over to Christine Yeats. Most of the Lunch Hour Talks Team will continue to turn up to give the wonderful 'hands on' help essential to the smooth running of these Talks and they all deserve our most sincere thanks as does Dale Dengate who has retired at the end of 2025.

Michele Ginswick

Lunch Hour Talks Convenor

Working with Women Alliance (WwWA)

Early in 2025 the Working with Women Alliance (WwWA), including the separate National Women's Equality Alliance (NWEA) and National Women's Safety Alliance (NWSA), started work as the successor to the former Equality Rights Alliance (ERA). Katherine Berney was appointed as both the Executive Director of the WwWA and Director of the NWSA. Gemma Killen was appointed Director of the NWEA.

Organisations and individual memberships were invited. JSNWL became an organisational member and, after joining as an individual member, I became the JSNWL contact person to all three national Alliances.

Throughout 2025 both the NWSA and NWEA distributed monthly newsletters, which were sent on to JSNWL Board members. A useful inclusion in both newsletters is a monthly list of media accounts of matters relevant to women.

During May 2025 WwWA members were invited to apply to join the 10 member Working Groups, later known as Policy and Advocacy Advisory Committees, of both the NWSA and NWEA, which are the primary structures for consultation with government. In July members were similarly invited to apply to join two three-month, 10 member, Working Groups, one on each of Reproductive Care and Child Support.

In March WwWA produced and distributed an Election Platform. In May consultations began towards producing a Pre-Budget submission intended to reach the Office for Women in October. This included a Pre-Budget Survey of members and an online Roundtable Consultation.

In other activities during 2025, members were invited to participate in the following online meetings: Economic Equality and Leadership; Insights into LGBTIQ+SB Experiences; Understanding and Responding to Sexual Violence; Members' Forum with Workplace Gender Equality Agency (which I attended); Gendered Dimensions of Work, Education and Skills. Each of these included expert speakers followed by question times.

In December 2025 WwWA reported participation in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, an annual international campaign running from 25 November to 10 December.

In December we received news that Katherine Berney, Executive Director of WwWA and Director of NWSA, had resigned to pursue another opportunity. Gemma Killen, formerly Director of the NWEA, was appointed Executive Director of WwWA in her place. We also learned that instead of the three Alliance structure, the WwWA was to be a single unified Alliance, with the former NWEA and NWSA working as portfolios within the WwWA.

Equality Rights Alliance Archives

Throughout 2025 the JSNWL Board continued efforts to follow through on the possibility of JSNWL becoming the repository for the ERA archives.

Dr Janet Ramsay PSM
JSNWL rep to WwWA

NEWSLETTER

The Library's quarterly Newsletter once again reported on the variety of activities and issues in which our volunteers and supporters were involved. It has been produced on a regular basis since 1990, highlighting the Library's mission to keep alive women's words and women's works.

A major article dealt with the discrimination endured by migrant women cleaners at Eveleigh Loco Works, in 1984, and the steps taken to overcome the problems. Some of the Library's archival holdings were discussed in articles on a journal kept at the Pine Gap women's peace camp in 1983 and on the 'Take the Toys Away from the Boys' badges in our collection. Major current issues were discussed in articles on older women's housing and on activism against gender-based violence

There were a number of articles during 2025 covering exhibitions of material prepared by the Library, including an exhibition of posters and archival material relating to the Women's Refuge movement, displayed in the UTS gallery and Library, and an exhibition of posters, a banner, newsletters, books and badges at NSW Parliament House Library to mark International Women's Day and the 50th anniversary of International Women's Year. Also at Parliament House, there was an exhibition to accompany Clare Wright's talk about the women's suffrage campaign in Australia and the role Australian women played in the British campaign. Items lent by the Library included two framed illuminated addresses.

The Library's Lunch Hour Talks, were held five times in 2025, generally featuring a woman author discussing a new book. All forthcoming talks were announced in the Newsletter, and detailed accounts of the events were published afterwards.

Other regular features included book reviews, volunteer profiles, details about our Book Club meetings, accounts of visitors to the Library and History Week activities, plus records of and thanks to financial donors and donors of items to the various collections.

The Newsletter was edited by Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart and Jan Burnswoods and proofread by Margaret Knowlden, with regular input from Barbara Henery. Three 8-page editions and a 12-page November issue were distributed to all members via post and email. The mailout was coordinated by Suzanne Marks. Notably, over half of our members are now receiving their Newsletters by email. The team would welcome new volunteers to assist in any aspect of the production.

The Newsletter provides valuable material for researchers, accessible through our website and through Trove, reflecting the library's growing resource collection and role in preserving the history of women's contributions to society.

Jan Burnswoods

Newsletter Committee

BOARD 2025

Chair	Christine Yeats
Vice Chair	Suzanne Marks - until AGM 2025 Janet Ramsay PSM – as of AGM 2025
Secretary	Sherri Hilario
Treasurer	Jean Burns
Members	Michele Ginswick Robyn Harriott Barbara Henery Christine Kibble Alison Rees-Oliviere – as of AGM 2025 Beverley Sodbinow Barbara Thompson – as of AGM 2025 Hilary Yerbury – as of AGM 2025
Public Officer:	Sherri Hilario
Hon. Auditor:	Jann Skinner

VOLUNTEERS 2025

Amy Baker, Kathryn Beringer, Jean Burns, Jan Burnswoods, Kris Clarke, Gail Davis, Dale Dengate, Isobel Dewar, Lyn Eggins, Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Jillian Haydon, Barbara Henery, Sherri Hilario, Howard Houliston, Christine Kibble, Margaret Knowlden, Jane Lander, Hanne Marks, Suzanne Marks, Anne McNabb, Laura Morrigan, Lynne Morton, Brenda Padgett, Kerith Power, Janet Ramsay, Alison Rees-Oliviere, Christine Smith, Jozefa Sobski, Beverley Sodbinow, Jessica Stewart, Barbara Thompson, Audrey Wacks, Aleit-Marei Woodward, Christine Yeats, Hilary Yerbury.

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Ultimo Community Centre, 523-525 Harris Street, Ultimo

GPO Box 2656, Sydney NSW 2001

Telephone (02) 9571 5359

Email: info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Website: www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au