

Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

Newsletter - August 2014

The aims and objectives of Matrix are to:

- Promote appropriate care and support for older lesbians
- Provide some accommodation that caters to the needs of ageing lesbians who experience financial disadvantage
- Support ageing lesbians' accommodation choices
- Challenge ageism and oppose discrimination against older lesbians
- Advocate on behalf of older lesbians to governments and other relevant bodies
- Promote social contact and support among older lesbians
- Research lesbians' experience of aged care

Hello Everyone,

No special announcements this month.

We are always looking for suitable copy for this newsletter, so don't be shy about submitting something. One particular area we are interested in hearing about is stories from our lesbian elders. If you know someone who has tales to share (and don't we all), have a chat with them and let us know.

My Ride With Matrix by Sara Elkas



The idea for Matrix was born in 1992 with the 10/40 conference and we followed in the footsteps of the WA Matrix group. I wasn't there at the first meeting but I did join a couple of months later. I do remember feeling rather shy at first because everyone else there was involved in lesbian political activity a lot longer than me. And believe it or not I was the youngest! I was 42.

I can't remember how it happened but in that first meeting the subject of Matrix becoming incorporated came up and unaware of the amount of work that would entail I volunteered to do it. We did become incorporated on the 22nd of September 1992.

Soon after I also became Matrix's Public Officer & Financial Co-ordinator and held that position until last year when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

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LESBIANS

Matrix
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I remember Matrix as having a very dynamic collective. From the beginning there were lots of discussions about what was the best strategy to achieve our aims and we probably had as many opinions as there were women in the meetings. This was especially the case when it came to discussing locations for a possible Matrix housing/ respite/holiday project (not that we had money at that stage to do so!) with some favouring the city others the country not to mention one or two who insisted that what we needed was a caravan park. But there was no denying the dedication and motivation of all involved. We even formed a committed Business Group in an attempt to establish a business that would give Matrix a financial base to realise its vision of the "Old Dykes Home". Despite coming up with an innovative idea for a business as well as a business plan the whole project ran into legal difficulties and was finally abandoned.

As all of you know Matrix over the years has been doing a lot of fundraising but in putting on our signature Satin & Silk Ball and other dances we have also provided unique entertainment in a safe environment for lesbians. San Remo in the late 1990s and early 2000s provided the glamour that drew hundreds of lesbians to listen to Dusty. However the venue became too expensive for us because of the cost of catering. Those days are long gone but I personally like the smaller dances that we have been having at the town halls such as St Kilda and Fitzroy.

During my time at Matrix and on the Matrix committee I saw lots of women come and go although a large number continued to be supportive. We also had a variety of venues where the meetings were held including the Trades Hall which I liked because it had a book shop. I also remember the community centre off Nicholson St as my car that was parked on the narrow street outside the centre was hit by a large van that didn't leave a calling card.

I was talking to Jean Taylor, a founding member of Matrix, the other day about how long it takes for a group to come up with a logo that everyone agrees to. I think everyone will agree that Matrix does have a very distinct logo. I do remember that we went through a large number of possible logos and finished with one that the late Thelma Solomon found in a book about Mathematics. The original logo is still with us but about 4 years ago it was decided to turn it upside down as it then acquired a more female like form. The designer we employed to give Matrix's letterhead and website a more professional look was keen on us choosing another logo. She said the Matrix logo reminded her of the sign for nuclear waste! But as you can see the logo is still around. And so is Matrix and going from strength to strength.

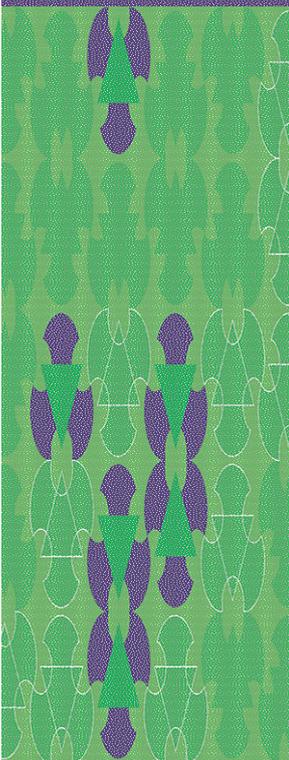
I am proud to have been a member of the Matrix Committee for all these years. Our major achievements have included producing a number of publications concerning GLBTI friendly aged care services as well as a guide to lesbian inclusive practice in aged care. We have provided 3 accessible apartments to older lesbians experiencing financial disadvantage. More recently we have embarked on a volunteer project to visit and support isolated older lesbians.

We are always looking for new people to become involved so give us a call!

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Matrix Games Afternoons

Second Saturday of the Month

The next Games Day will be held on **Saturday 9th August** and the following month on **Saturday 13th September**. Bring your favourite games such as scrabble, cards, mah-jong, or chess. Women are always welcome to just come for a “cuppa and company”. A gold coin donation helps fund the tea, coffee and biscuit supplies. If you don't have transport, let us know and we might be able to put you in touch with someone coming from your area.



When: 1.30 – 3:30pm

Venue: Jika Jika Community Centre. Cnr Plant and Union Sts. Northcote. (Mel. Map 30, F11)

How to get there: Tram - No. 86 Stop No. 27. Bus – No. 506. Train - Westgarth Train Station.

Contacts: Ardy Tibby: 9387 6610 or Margo van der Voort: 0407 672 757

Could you be a volunteer visitor?

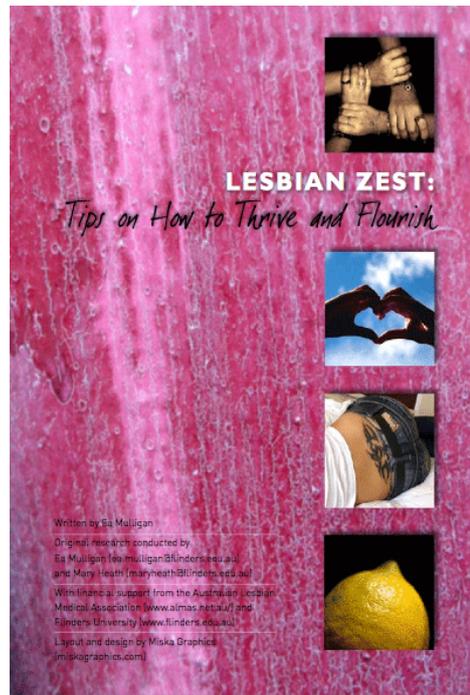
Growing older brings its joys and challenges. It can bring feelings of loneliness and isolation. It might bring more interaction with services and family and they may or may not be lesbian friendly. Even being lesbian friendly isn't really enough. Some older lesbians miss lesbian company. Matrix is planning a visiting service where lesbian volunteers will meet with isolated older lesbians in their homes or residences for a minimum of two hours per month. The visitors will be supported by a coordinator and receive induction training. They will be covered by insurance and will receive a small travel allowance for visits.

Would you consider volunteering?

Do you know someone who would like a visitor?

An information and training day will be held on **Saturday 20th September from 10am tip 4pm in Northcote**. To register your interest in attending either of these sessions or for more information contact Anna Cook on inquiries@matrixguildvic.org.au or on **0448 002 870**

Lesbian Zest: Tips on How to Thrive and Flourish

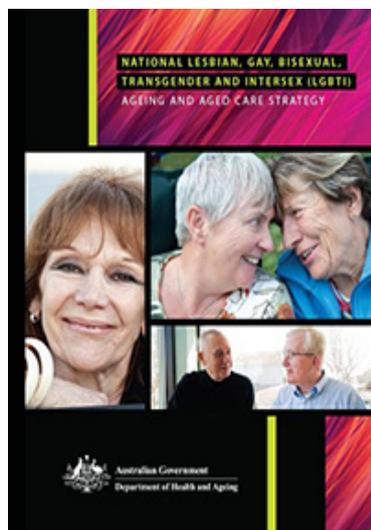


Ea Mulligan and Mary Heath have interviewed a number of lesbians to produce this uplifting piece called 'Lesbian Zest: Tips on How to Thrive and Flourish'. To put some Lesbian Zest in your life, read more about the participants' tips including:

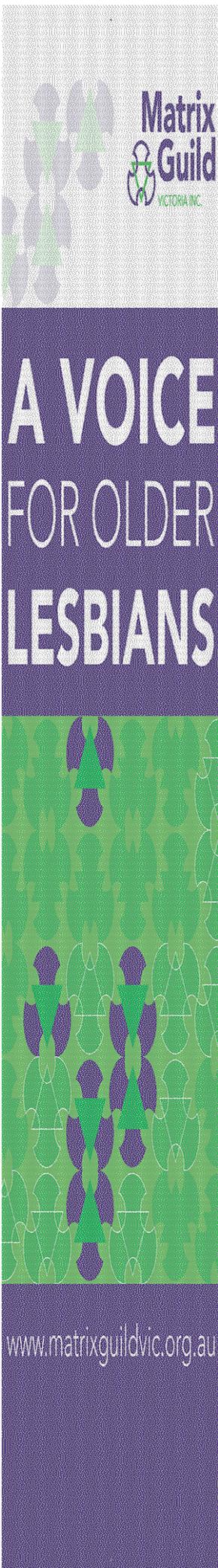
- Treasure your friends
- Gain nourishment from your community
- Birds of a feather flock together
- Be adventurous
- There are many passionate pursuits and many sources of strength
- You need to believe in yourself and care for yourself
- Come out and don't let anyone put you down

(http://www.qahc.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/Lez_res.pdf)

Roundtable on Ageing and Aged Care



It's been Almost 2 years since the National LGBTI Aged Care and Aging Strategy (<http://www.health.gov.au/lgbtistrategy>) was launched in Melbourne by the then Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler. About a dozen Matrix members were present at this historic occasion that saw LGBTI elders recognised as having particular difficulties in accessing Aged Care services that are appropriate and sensitive to our particular needs and culture. Our lived experiences of such things as: having to be closeted to keep our jobs, our kids and to avoid being assaulted were acknowledged by the federal government.





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We are now considered a 'Special Needs' group and both Community and Residential services are being developed specifically for us. So if you need a hand with home or personal care (HACC and other assistance packages), services are now being funded for LGBTI people. But these are under-subscribed, perhaps because lesbians in need don't know about them, or maybe because many of us are so used to being closeted that we don't realise that it's safe to be 'out'.

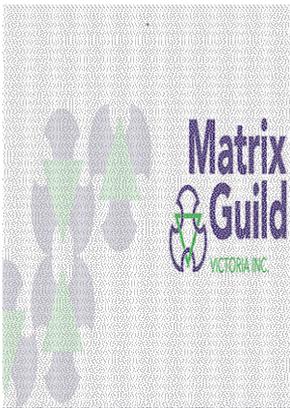
On the 12th and 13th August in Sydney, there will be a review of the rollout of the LGBTI Aged Care Strategy. Anneke will attend to represent Matrix and talk about the first housing for lesbian elders in Australia - Heather's Flats, the Aged Care Training she has led, as well as our Volunteer Visitor Scheme. Alongside Helen Daintree from Queensland, she will also try to ensure that lesbians are better represented in the LGBTI Awareness training manual that is being taught to Aged Care staff around the country. As it stands, lesbian-specific needs and information have not been included and it seems that no older lesbian has been part of the group who wrote the manual. At least Anneke, Sue, Margo, Anna and Dot have been working over the last 2 years, providing training sessions to Victorian Aged Care services in how to meet the needs of lesbian elders. The LGBTI Health Alliance worked very hard to bring the Strategy into being and this was a remarkable achievement. Now we need to ensure that lesbian voices are heard in an environment where the dominant voices tend to be those of gay men and trans people. The minister for Social Services will be represented by Senator Dean Smith. If you have any positive or negative experiences with aged care or have any point that you would like Anneke to make, please call her on 0427 482 976 or email at housing@matrixguildvic.org.au

How did you get through it?

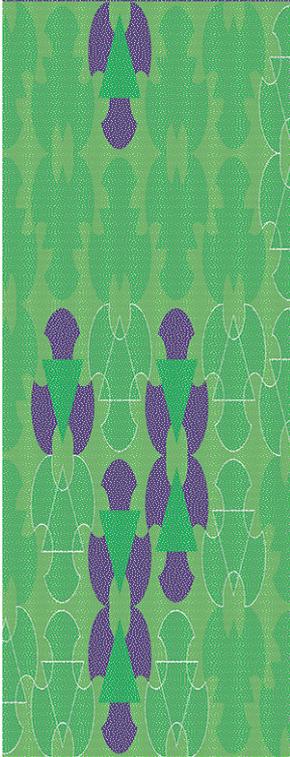
If you haven't already arranged to be interviewed for this important project, please consider sharing your wisdom. The researchers are offering a free double pass to the movies as a thank you for participating. We have currently interviewed 8 lesbians, but we need at least another 12. It's important that lesbian voices are heard, please don't let our opinions get swamped by those of gay men and trans elders. Please pass this request on to any other lesbians you know who are 65 or older.

Most of us, at some time in our lives, have been depressed or anxious. It's difficult not to, given the lesbophobia and discrimination we have all lived through. Many of us tried to avoid this by being closeting all or some of the time, but living in hiding has its own stresses. Lesbian researchers, Catherine Barrett and Caz Whyte are currently seeking older LGBTI Australians to participate in confidential interviews. The interviews are part of a project to educate service providers about the issues associated with depression and anxiety for older LGBTI people. The project is a collaboration between The National Ageing Research Institute, Val's Café (at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University) and RMIT and has been funded by *beyondblue*. The project has been approved by La Trobe University's ethics committee. Anneke from Matrix is part of this project's advisory board.

We would like to speak with **lesbians aged 65 years or more**, from any state/territory who have experienced depression and/or anxiety – about their strategies for managing. Hearing about the ways in which you got through could be invaluable for others. Interviews will be conducted over the next couple of months.



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For more information or to book an interview contact:

Dr Catherine Barrett, Val's Café
P: 03 9479 8702 5297 or
E: c.barrett@latrobe.edu.au

Carolyn Whyte, Val's Café
P: 03 94798739 or
E: c.whyte@latrobe.edu.au

Carer's Focus Group

Some Matrix Guild members met with Carers Victoria in July as part of a project to further educate those who provide support to carers, in the specific needs and challenges that face lesbian carers. The meeting was very productive and lots of ideas were exchanged. Thank you to those members who gave their time to this important project. Further information will be published in the newsletter at a later date.



The deadline for the next Newsletter is 28th August. Please send news items and short articles to:

- Rosemary at r.wealthy@bigpond.com
- Anneke Deutsch, Matrix Guild of Vic Inc at secretary@matrixguildvic.org.au

