

Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

Newsletter - February 2016

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,

It's really a bit late for New Year Greetings, but nevertheless, we would like to wish you all a happy and healthy 2016.

By the time you receive this newsletter, Midsumma will be nearly over for another year, and I hope you have all enjoyed it. What a wonderful night we had at the Lesbian Comedy Gala, despite the rain! Read all about it in Anneke's report. In this edition we focus again on aged care facilities becoming lesbian-friendly, and learn about Hepburn Health receiving the Rainbow Tick. Read Vera's article about lesbians living in community, and don't forget to mark the next Matrix dance and the coffee afternoons in your diaries!

Reports

The Lesbian Comedy Gala by *Anneke Deutsch*

The 2016 Lesbian Comedy Gala, was a resounding, side-splitting success with a very wet and dramatic ending. Thank you for your generosity in coming along and making it happen!

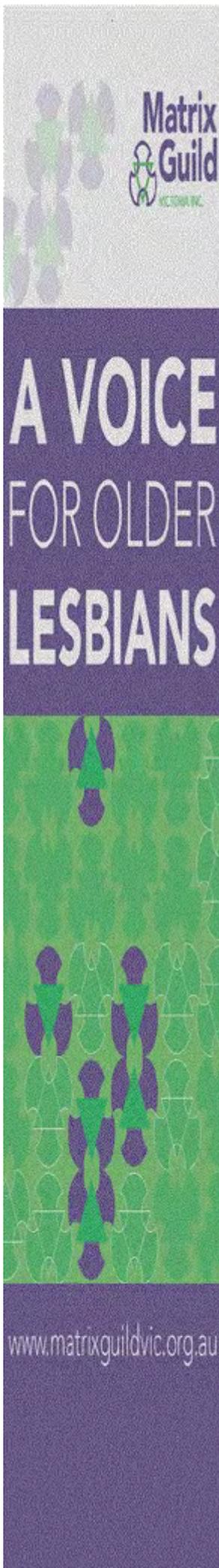
What a wonderful night we had, with six hundred+ lesbians crammed into the Preston City Hall on Saturday night enjoying a hilarious night of mostly lesbian comedy. Angela, Karen and their staff from Angela's Kitchen provided over 300 delicious Spanish and Greek meals as Chris Falk warmed up the crowd in the Shire Hall - what a beautiful voice! The young bar tenders, kept us supplied with hot & cold drinks with good humour and efficiency. They even did an emergency dash to the bottle shop when we ran out of beer. Then our loveable MC, Monica Dullard, kicked off the night with her hilarious routines. A special thanks to Dawn McGuinness for performing the 'Acknowledgement to Country'. Geraldine Hickey, Cal Wilson, Bobby Macumber, Lori



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Bell, Sal Upton, Denise and Dawn McGuiness were crowd favourites. The hall was full of lesbians with aching sides, the atmosphere was celebratory and positive – what a great night!



But it didn't end there, about 200 stayed, intending to dance to Geraldine's music and chat into the wee hours at the After Party. The dancing had just got into full swing when we noticed water on the floor which gradually increased as a torrent poured in through the walls. As the dance floor flooded, Susi & Jo from Darebin council and Shirley Billing, calmly moved us out and back into the big hall and the After Party was sadly cancelled.

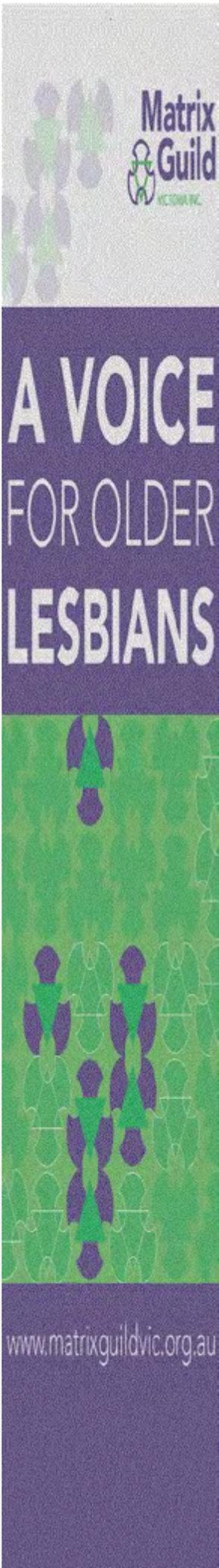
50mm of rain fell in just under an hour in Preston! After the clean up, the Country Women's Lesbian Association (CWLA), Linda and I were last to leave just before 1am.

The evening raised money for Matrix's charitable activities such as our new Volunteer Visitor Program. It will also ensure that we have the money to meet any capital expenses that may arise with our affordable housing – Heather's Flats. This was a very successful fundraiser. Thanks so much to our sponsors: Darebin City Council, Jetts Fitness - Northcote, and Selador Wines for a delightful wine selection. Elliott, the bar tender is also the manager at Jetts Fitness in Northcote. She organised a staggering 650 free gym memberships for everyone present. We're going to be the fittest group of lesbians in the country! Susi, the Hall-keeper looked after every detail and was a pleasure to work with.

Behind the scenes it was a lesbian-only crew who made it all happen so seamlessly.

Thanks so much to all the wonderful performers,





to Monica for her superb MC-ing and production skills; to Susan, Erin & Melissa, the amazing Auslan Interpreters; to Shirley the unflappable Stage Manager; to Anita, Sally and Karen, the quietly efficient volunteer tech crew; to Anna, Carole, Linda, Rosemary, Annabelle and Sarah who worked on the door (apologies for the bottle neck at the door - we will try to get you into the hall quicker next time); to Margo, Fionnuala, Anne and Alysha who decorated the hall, working tirelessly to string up fairy lights, signs and rainbow bunting; to Pat the photographer; and Annabelle who cleaned up rubbish; to the tireless bumping out crew: Chris, Sarah, Shannen, Bec and Cathy; to Elliott, Jenna and Johanna, the hard-working bar staff; to Cathy and Bec who kept you supplied with hot cuppas; to Mary and Cate, the security guards; to Renae, the extremely capable sound tech (apologies for the poor sound during the first few acts); to Nic Phillips for her excellent work with the poster & flyer of the Gala; to my wonderful partner Linda, who has been patiently supportive for months; to Sim, my right hand, who made so many things happen and to Di, Chris, Hoang and Shanaz from the CWLA who baked and hosted the performers and volunteers with true country hospitality. Shanaz even helped make Mon's wedding veil! What an appreciative, enthusiastic and supportive audience we had! They helped the CWLA make the performers feel very special and loved.

Anneke Deutsch
Co-Producer

(Anneke Deutsch and Monica Dullard
- Co-Producers of the LCG)



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Crowds enjoying the party atmosphere at Midsumma Carnival, 2016



Matrix members all ready to answer questions and hand out leaflets at the Matrix stall - Carnival January 17th

About half a dozen Matrix members took turns to be present at the Matrix stall for the opening of Midsumma 2016, Carnival.

Members reported that they were kept busy responding to queries, explaining the role of Matrix and signing up some new members. It was encouraging that a number of younger women asked for information about Matrix; one woman had worked in aged care and was very concerned about how such facilities can better meet the needs of older lesbians in such settings.

All in all, it was definitely worthwhile for Matrix to have a presence at Carnival. Many thanks to those women who gave their time on the day.

Out and Proud!



On Sunday January 31st, somewhat weary after the Comedy Gala the night before, a small group of Matrix members turned up to take part in the annual Pride March along Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda. The weather remained fine for the afternoon, and the whole event was, as usual, colourful and pulsing with energy.

It was great to hear the enthusiastic response of the crowd as we walked along holding the Matrix banner. Barb Williams received enthusiastic applause as she danced along in her rainbow cap and trousers!

It was also encouraging to see the Commissioner for Gender Equality, Rowena Allen marching, as well as other Commissioners and senior members of the State Public Service. Several Federal politicians were also in attendance – well, it is an election year, after all!

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Barb with friends at Pride March 2016

Matrix Social Events



Matrix members keep on dancing!



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Following the success of our Matrix get-together in September we are putting on a sequel.

Join us on **Sunday 6th March**, 2016 from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

at **Clyde St Community Hall**, Thornbury.
64 Clyde St. Thornbury (Melways Ref 30 J6)
Near Bus Route 250 & 251.

No bookings required.

Entry prices:

- Matrix members –\$5
- Not a member? Join Matrix on the day for FREE entry!
- Full price for non-members - \$10
- Concession price for non-members - \$7

Refreshments: Matrix will provide tea and coffee and some nibbles, but it would be much appreciated if you can bring a plate of something yummy to share.

Note: Council regulations forbid alcohol on premises.

Celebrate International Women's Day with your lesbian community and friends!

- Have a dance.
- Have a chat.
- Have a cup of tea and a bite to eat.

A good time will be had by all.



Coffee Afternoons are back!

The Thursday coffee afternoons are about to start up again on February 4th from 12 noon. The café is opposite Northcote Nursery and only 3 minutes' walk from the Dennis railway station, on the Hurstbridge line.



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Come and meet up with new or old friends, have a bite to eat, or play a game. Bring a friend along. It's a friendly and relaxed atmosphere and everyone is made welcome. The coffee afternoons are every Thursday.

If you want more information phone Carole 0437 891 981 or Vera 0434 728 309.

**Thursdays, between 12 and 3.00 pm
"Over the Road" Café
Victoria Road,
Northcote.**

**Melways Map Ref 30 H10.
Nearest train station is Dennis, on Hurstbridge line**

Matrix News

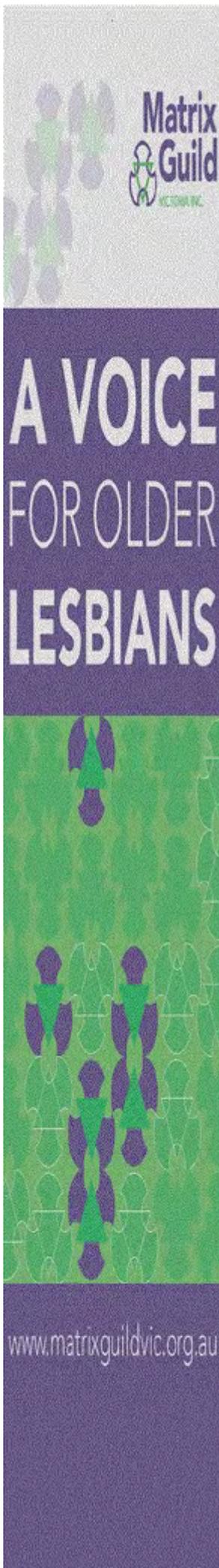
Young Lesbian UK MP

She's a Westminster MP, a lesbian with strong social justice politics and she's only 21! Why don't we have more amazing young voices like Mhairi Black in our parliament???



Watch Mhairi's Maiden Speech here: -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZAmhB55_-k



Vanishing Lesbians?

.....an article by Dr. Alison Laurie

The Charlotte Museum Trust is part of a network of archives preserving lesbian culture for the benefit and understanding of future generations in New Zealand. The Charlotte Museum writes blogs about exhibitions, events, archives and lesbian history.

Last year **The Charlotte Museum** invited Dr Alison J Laurie, a lesbian writer and academic from the Victoria University of Wellington, (New Zealand) to write a guest blog. In the resulting article, Dr.Laurie considers the herstory and significance of lesbian spaces.

Here are some quotations:

"....it does seem that in the big, wide, and ever-expanding alphabet soup of LGBTQI there is a less noticeable presence from lesbians. As we have moved into more recent times, "lesbian" is always included in the alphabet soup. But more often as a letter, than as a reality.

So – are lesbian spaces vanishing from the physical world, into the safer spaces of the virtual world? Can lesbians retain visibility within the alphabet soup, or do we need to move away and rebuild more lesbian spaces like the Charlotte Museum..."

This article was recently reproduced on the Matrix Guild of Vic Inc. site.

Read the full article here:

Facebook page <https://charlottemuseum.wordpress.com/2015/12/21/vanishing-lesbians-dr-alison-j-laurie-considers-the-history-and-significance-of-lesbian-spaces/>



Old Lesbians Talk About Feminism

Check out the website Older Dykes (www.olderdykes.org) This group, based in NSW, have recorded women's shared stories and experiences and turned them into a podcast. Follow this link to listen to older NSW lesbians talk about their experience of life & feminism.

www.olderdykes.org/words/Podcasts/podcasts.html

Hepburn Health is 'Over the Rainbow'



Hepburn Health is proud to announce that we have become the first 'residential aged care' and Commonwealth Home Care Package provider in Australia to achieve Rainbow Tick Accreditation meeting the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) peoples.

Our three aged care residences at Creswick, Daylesford and Trentham, along with the Health Services' Home Care Packages Program, were formally accredited this month by Quality Improvement and Community Services Accreditation (QICSA), Australia's most comprehensive not-for-profit accreditation organisation, for demonstrating inclusivity and a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTI people.

Brian Dunn, Manager of Health Promoting Health Service at Hepburn Health, was part of the working group that guided the Health Service through the accreditation process.

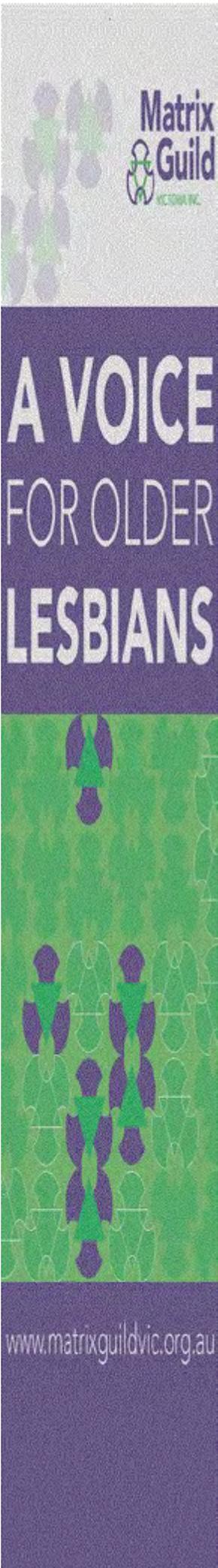
"For many of our older LGBTI community members being discriminated against has been a big part of their lived experience. It wasn't that long ago that being LGBTI was deemed to be a psychiatric illness or a criminal activity," says Brian. "Because of this many older LGBTI people are less inclined to access mainstream healthcare services leading to poorer health outcomes than the general population."

"A major part of the accreditation process was the provision of specialist training and education for our staff along with updating our standards and procedures including admission processes," says Brian. "It further demonstrates our commitment to being a person-centred health service, ensuring that LGBTI consumers are valued and understood."

Although LGBTI consumers have the same right to access safe and high quality services as everyone else, not all service providers are able to understand or respond well to the needs of the LGBTI community.

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Trish Collocott, CEO of Hepburn Health states that “having the Rainbow Tick gives a clear message to our community that we are prepared and in a place to receive LGBTI consumers in an environment where they can feel safe and receive service from our staff who are knowledgeable and respectful.”

An initiative of Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV), the Rainbow Tick is an accreditation program that guides organisations through a cycle of self-assessment and review by external assessors to determine the extent to which the organisation is able to meet the needs of LGBTI consumers. An integral part to achieving Rainbow Tick was the establishment of an LGBTI Advisory Committee that included consumer representatives from within the community.

Jules Sappho is a former theatre nurse and a member of the Hepburn Health LGBTI Advisory Committee who has experienced prejudice firsthand within a healthcare setting based on her sexual orientation.

“Achieving Rainbow Tick speaks volumes to the clients, staff, visitors and the community as a whole. It clearly states that Hepburn Health values diversity and welcomes everyone. When I see the pride flag stickers on the front door, I feel safe to be open about who I am and my family life,” says Jules.



“Having the Rainbow Tick will encourage LGBTI seniors to seek healthcare at Hepburn Health with the confidence that they can be open and honest. It will encourage connection - between their loved ones and staff, and perhaps ease the transition into full-time care.”

Midsumma comes to Werribee with “Park Lounge II”





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On Saturday, February 6th, from 2.30pm to 9.30 pm, Wyndham City Council is holding a Park Lounge Community Day in which the emphasis is on older people, with a specific focus on LGBTI elders. There are a number of older lesbians living in Wyndham who are interested in building community in the west.

A number of coloured inflatable couches will be set up for individuals and groups to meet and chat in a relaxed setting. There will be entertainment, musicians and a number of short films.

At 5.00 pm there will be readings from BOLD, an anthology of elder LGBTIs' stories collected by David Hardy. There will be a panel discussion, and the feature film Pride will be shown from 8 pm.

The venue is across the road from Werribee station. For more details: **Midsumma Park Lounge II**

THE SUBSTATION

YOU AND A GUEST ARE INVITED TO A PUBLIC FORUM HOSTED BY
ALL THE QUEENS MEN



WHERE DO WE START?

A PUBLIC FORUM AROUND ISSUES FACED BY LGBTI OLDER PEOPLE
10 FEBRUARY, 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm

THE SUBSTATION, 1 Market Street, Newport. VIC 3015

FREE EVENT. RSVP is essential at www.outix.net/booktickets/event/ComingOutBall



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In 2016, **ALL THE QUEENS MEN** will commence the development of **THE COMING BACK OUT BALL**, a performance event that aims to empower and celebrate LGBTI older people, many who have faced lifelong discrimination.

Before all this starts, industry experts will gather together to discuss some of the broader issues effecting older LGBTI people, provoking a discussion around ageism, homophobia and transphobia. This panel provides a chance to reflect on the issues that inspired this project. How have, and do LGBTI experience discrimination? How does this differ from their straight identifying counterparts? What ways can older LGBTI community members be supported by the wider community and by health care providers?

Hosted by BRIAN NANKERVIS (SBS's RockWiz), with panel members DR CATHERINE BARRETT (Founder, Val's Cafe / Director, Celebrate Ageing), LIZZI CRAIG (Victorian Aids Council Positive Living Centre), PAULINE CRAMERI (Val's Café) and ROWENA ALLEN (Victorian Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality)

Light refreshments and drinks will be available.

Other Matters.....

Female to Male Trans People Reject Transitioning

On a positive note... an anthology came out of MichFest, by and for Female-to-Male Transsexuals rejecting transitioning.

It is called Blood and Visions: Reconciling with Being Female by Autotomous Womyn's Press. Here is the link: <http://www.greenwomanstore.com/blood-and-visions.html>

The anthology contains writings by 10 womyn who stopped their transition from female to male. Profoundly personal stories, political analysis, practical advice, and resources for womyn who struggle with dis-identification from their female reality. It is deeply moving and informative for all women concerned about the wholeness of our womanhood -- and our sisterhood.

On a Personal Note.....

Living with Lesbians

By Vera Ray

My friends and I had talked for a long time about establishing and living together in some sort of housing configuration. Everyone was also clear about having their own space as well as community. Luckily we could afford to sell our houses, then maybe buy elsewhere – so, at first we dreamed.....

Then I noticed that the Bowling Club opposite my gym was going to be demolished and apartments would be built instead. I thought “What if everyone bought an apartment there?” Well, it’s not exactly as we dreamed and discussed for so long but the position was perfect: a bus at the door, shopping, trains all within easy reach – and the leisure Centre- what a bonus! And we didn’t even have to worry about maintenance of a gym or pool.



Artist’s impression of Bouliste, Australian Property Service

Well, after talking it through with my partner, I convinced about half a dozen others to at least have a look at the plans for the new apartments named “Bouliste”. The others weren’t particularly interested: it was a lovely Sunday afternoon – “What a waste to spend the time on this!” some of them thought but they came and within half an hour we all signed up. We had 3 days “cooling off” time of course but we all decided to stay. Thus the Bouliste “Sistas” came into existence.

What happened next? Living next door, or down the corridor, “does not a community make”. But we have much more: these are the things I particularly appreciate: we help each other out (e.g. shopping if someone’s sick), some of us are on the Body Corporate Committee/s – and when half a dozen strong lesbians take control – well, things get done, solutions are found, community is built. It’s hard work but it needs to be done. I am not on the Body Corporate Committee by choice as that is not my strong point. What I most enjoy is how we create a lot of FUN. Friday night pre-dinner drinks are now an institution, we had a “Progressive” Dinner with dress ups and games, there has also been a Quiz Night, Story Telling, Christmas in July, New Year’s Eve Celebration, First Year celebrations, and many more.

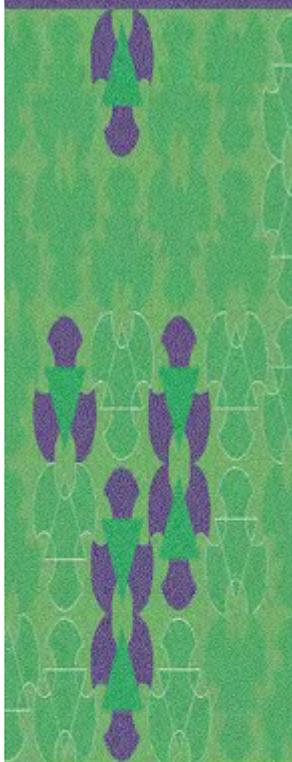
A need for privacy of all individual women is deeply respected by us all. It is a given, some women need more privacy than others, some of us still work full-time and do not have time to spend on many “cuppas” during the day. We respect that, although I must admit that I am looking forward to the day when everyone is retired and cups of tea are always there.

We lesbian women seem to have a desire and an ability to form community, forging strong ties without giving up too much independence or autonomy. It's not always an easy mix to achieve but I for one am so very glad to be part of this amazing Sistahood.

Vera



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The deadline for the next Newsletter is 25th February, 2016.

Please send news items and short articles to:

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