

Matrix Guild of Victoria Inc.

Newsletter - March 2015

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,

Does anyone else think that Autumn is well and truly with us?

This month we have lots of new information for you as well as our regular items.

Social support for older lesbians

We now have a new brochure, hot off the presses, to publicise the Matrix Volunteer Visitor Program. Many older lesbians may have lost touch with their community, may not have internet access and may not read the mostly gay-male focussed queer publications.



Can you help us find them? Can you help us get the word out into the suburbs, rural and regional areas by taking a small bundle of brochures to display at your GP's practice and/or local Community Health Centre? If so, please contact Anna Cook: 0448 002 870 or www.matrixguildvic.org.au

Matrix Guild of Victoria has a free visiting service where lesbian volunteers meet with older, isolated lesbians in their homes or residences for a minimum of two hours per month. Visits might also include outings to cafés, shops and other social activities. The visitors are supported by a co-coordinator, and receive induction training, some reimbursement for travel costs and insurance cover.

Do you know of any older, isolated or disabled lesbians, aged over 40, living in the country or the city, who would like to be in contact with their community and who would like regular social contact with one of our trained lesbian volunteer visitors? Do you fit into this category yourself? Visits are free.

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LESBIANS

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Please contact:

Anna Cook, Co-coordinator, MMVP
E: inquiries@matrixguildvic.org.au
W: www.matrixguildvic.org.au
T: 0448 002 870

Become a Volunteer Visitor

Metropolitan and country volunteers are urgently needed to service our growing demand.

- Do you have a spare couple of hours a month?
- Do you identify as lesbian or as a gay woman?
- Would you enjoy a rewarding exchange with an older lesbian?

Our next training day for volunteers will be held on Saturday 28th March 2015 in Northcote.

For more information, please contact:

Anna Cook, Co-coordinator, MMVP
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T: 0448 002 870

Fingers crossed this doesn't happen to you ...



Colleen WOOLLEY OAM JP
Member, RVAHJ
Tel: 03 9438 5137
Diamond Creek 3089

If you don't get me straight away or I don't contact you within a few hours, please ring the JP Registry on 1300 365 567, follow the prompts and you will be directed to another available JP in the area.

You've just been hit by a tram. Both arms and both legs are broken and you have a serious head injury. You've been put into an induced coma and it'll be months before you're in a position to look after yourself and your affairs.

Meanwhile, at home, important correspondence is arriving. Your bank is wondering why you've dropped behind in your mortgage payments. Your driver's licence must be renewed. Your credit cards are about to be cancelled. And so it goes. You get the general idea.

All of this is "fixable". And it will only take an hour or so of your time. And you can do it for free!



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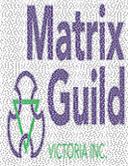
Introducing the Matrix Guild's new service. Matrix member Colleen Woolley has been a Justice of the Peace (JP) for 16 years and specialises in helping people organise their Enduring Powers of Attorney, Financial, Medical and Enduring Power of Guardianship . She provides all the paperwork needed and is qualified to witness them for you. All you have to do is determine who will act for you. Obviously, this must be someone you trust implicitly as they will have control of all your affairs. Preferably, you will have two people to act for you, say, your partner (if you have one) and a second person just in case you and your partner were both crossing the road in front of that tram. Ideally, both those people would be available (and can also do their own Powers) at the same time as they will need to sign that they accept the responsibility.

Colleen lives in Diamond Creek and you are welcome to go to her home office to complete the papers. If you are genuinely unable to make the trip, Colleen is happy to go to your home to help you complete the required forms. This service is available as of now. Just contact Colleen to make a mutually convenient time.

Vale Jude Jackson 1940 – 2015



The Rainbow Initiative – Shop online to Donate to Matrix



If you ever shop online, please consider shopping via The Global Fundraising Initiative (<http://www.globalfundraisinginitiative.com>). Their new Rainbow Initiative enables consumers to create a free donation to the LGBTI charity of their choice by shopping with the participating retailers. It is the retailers who pay the Initiative a commission on each sale made. This will then be paid in full to Matrix if you select us as your preferred charity. We will send you a tax deductible receipt for the donation.

You can shop for clothes, shoes, flowers, sporting goods, office supplies, book hotels, credit cards, beauty products, insurance or even mobile phone accounts from participating businesses including HSBC, Vodafone, Berlei, General Pants, Mossimo, Quiksilver, Cellarmasters, Clarks and Interflora to name but a few of the more than 100 retailers participating.

You pay the same price for a product whether shopping direct with the retailer or shopping via the Initiative. So why not do all your shopping via their website and help Matrix out at no cost to yourself?

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Ovarian Cancer Risk for Lesbians

'Lesbian women may be at higher risk of ovarian cancer due to a lower incidence of protective factors including use of the contraceptive pill, pregnancy and breast feeding, and a higher incidence of risk factors such as smoking and high body mass index (Dibble et al 2002). [The expectation of] discrimination ... may also makes this group less inclined to seek regular medical and gynaecological care.' This is the paragraph Sara Elkas wrote to address lesbian invisibility in the Department of Health's publication "Optimal Cancer Care for People with Ovarian Cancer"

Sara has been the longest serving member of Matrix. Even now, after an Ovarian cancer diagnosis, she is still on the Matrix Committee. We have relieved her of an executive role, but value her long-sighted, ongoing, quiet and thoughtful input. She continues to be a lesbian activist whilst battling the cancer. Last year she attended an "Ovarian Cancer Expert Working Group" at the Vic Cancer Council as a consumer representative. Other cancer survivors give her hope: 'There was another woman ovarian cancer survivor there who is 6.5 years post diagnosis with stage III. Besides us there were top medical oncologists, gynaecologist oncologists, a psychologist, a social worker and a dietician (from Ireland!). Our task was to go through a draft of "Optimal Cancer Care for People with Ovarian Cancer" produced by the Dept of Health'.

She goes on to say: "I created some controversy by saying that I wanted a specific section for lesbians under 'Populations with Special Needs'. There is mention of GLBTI under "psychological needs" but I didn't think that was sufficient, not to mention that it made lesbians invisible. I argued that lesbians had a greater risk than straight women of ovarian cancer because of not having children. I also brought up issues of historical discrimination and therefore reluctance to use health care services." Once Sara did some research on the topic and found some papers which showed "that lesbians were indeed at a higher risk of ovarian cancer", the group agreed to include her paragraph in their publication.



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Because the symptoms of Ovarian cancer can be easily attributable to other relatively minor medical issues, it is most commonly detected once it is well advanced. That's why it's so deadly. If you have any of the diverse symptoms like bloating, abdominal or pelvic pain, urinary urgency or frequency, changes in bowel movements, feeling full too quickly, fatigue or indigestion; please don't delay in seeing your doctor. Those with the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes have an increased risk of both breast and ovarian cancer. These genes are more common in those of us with an Ashkenazi Jewish background.

If you want to find a lesbian-friendly doctor or specialist, consult the Australian Lesbian Medical Association's (ALMA's) helpful, interactive website www.doclist.com.au

These are the articles Sara found:

http://www.cancer-network.org/cancer_information/lesbians_and_cancer/lesbians_and_ovarian_cancer.php

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11845216>

<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=214215>

DocLIST Links: extensive list of resources for lesbian, bi and queer women

There's now a wonderful new resource for lesbian, bisexual and queer women on the DocLIST website.

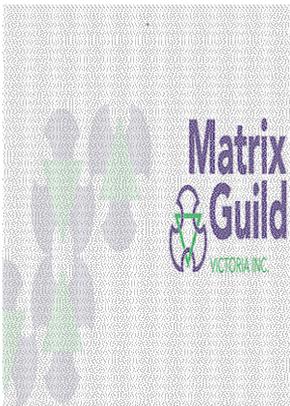
The new Links section is a table of over 600 national and state-based organisations which may be of interest to lesbian, bisexual and queer women.

Have a look at: www.doclist.com.au/links

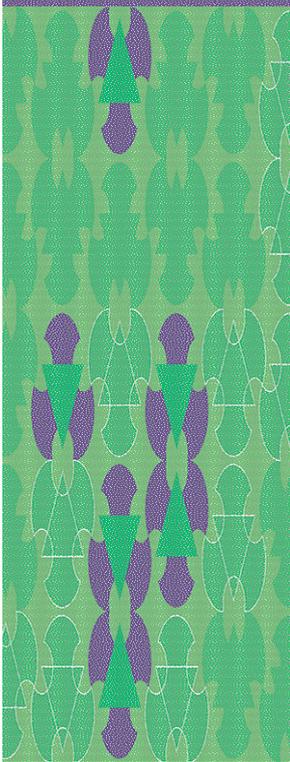
You'll find a huge number of groups, organisations, services and other resources. Examples include community events, health services, counselling and support services, social groups, sporting groups, artistic organisations and organisations from which people can get information about legal and human rights issues.

Links has been set up as a searchable table - you can search it using the search box, or by using the categories. It is possible to search by state, by category, or by both at once. Multiple categories and states can be selected at once. There are brief descriptions about each organisation, and hyper-links to each organisation's website in the table.

DocLIST itself is an online list of doctors and mental health professionals recommended by lesbian and bisexual women. It is a national resource administered by the Australian Lesbian Medical Association. DocLIST has been online since 2010 and continues to grow thanks to recommendations by lesbian and bisexual women.



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Lesbian Bi Queer Women's Conference

A free Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Women's Conference will be held on Friday the 27th of March, 2015. This conference is a collaboration between VAC and the Rainbow Network and is proudly supported by beyondblue and the Commonwealth Department of Health. It aims to build the capacity of those working to improve the health and well-being of lesbian, bisexual and queer women.

Dr Ruth McNair will provide a keynote address on her work with the beyondblue funded ALICE study, a research project exploring alcohol and other drug use by lesbian, bisexual and queer women. Please see flier attached for further information.

This is a FREE event, please RSVP by clicking **HERE**. Please RSVP by March 5th.

We are now accepting abstracts to run workshops in the afternoon. Please see attached for more information. We look forward to hosting you for a day to focus on the health and well-being of lesbian, bisexual and queer women. For more details, visit:

<http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-womens-health-conference-tickets-15595277896?aff=es2&rank=1>

A Room of One's Own

Heather's Flats, the affordable apartments that Matrix owns in partnership with Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) provide secure, long-term homes for older lesbians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Last year, one of our original tenants decided to move into a retirement village nearby and this gave Rhonda the opportunity she'd been dreaming of. *'Things are going very well for me at Heather's Flats!' says Rhonda. 'I have settled in to my new home brilliantly, and feel totally connected to the local community. Having secure, affordable housing has made a huge impact on my life - thank you!'*

Recently, Shirly was successful in applying for another vacancy. Again, the previous occupant had difficulty living independently and decided to move in with her family. Shirly is chuffed to have a home of her own after living in a string of run down rooming houses alongside people with drug, alcohol and mental health issues. Although she was in a stable share house just prior to moving into Heather's Flats, she is so pleased to have her own place now.

On an annual basis, we are also able to apply for \$500 grants for our tenants from the philanthropic Queen's Fund. This money helps women on low incomes with dental, medical, equipment or other unexpected expenses.

We have Heather Chapple to thank for her generous bequest to Matrix that provided the seeding money for these flats to be purchased. I've put Matrix down as a

beneficiary in my will, have you considered doing this?

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Join The Darebin Sexuality Sex & Gender Diversity Advisory Committee

Help ensure there's an older lesbian voice in Darebin. Darebin Council is seeking expressions of interest from people who would like to join the SSGDAC. The Committee is made up of people who live, work or study in Darebin and who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, transgender, gender questioning or queer.

The Committee provides advice on how Council policies, services, programs and celebrations can better respond to the needs and interests of Darebin's LGBTIQ community.

Applications are open and will close on 6 March 2015. For more information contact Gabriela Cabezas, Diversity Officer on 03 8470 8423 or visit www.darebin.vic.gov.au/lgbtiq **National**



New Committee Member Secretary - Sarah Yeomans

Sarah is a lesbian feminist who has been active in many political and lesbian cultural arenas, such as the Journal of Lesbian Feminist Studies, Amazon Games, L40 Reunion camps. Originally from Sydney, Sarah migrated to Melbourne in 1992 to study landscape architecture and stayed for the vibrant community here, especially lured by Dance Cats. Her first question is usually "Do you play 500?" Sarah joined the Matrix committee as Secretary in late 2014

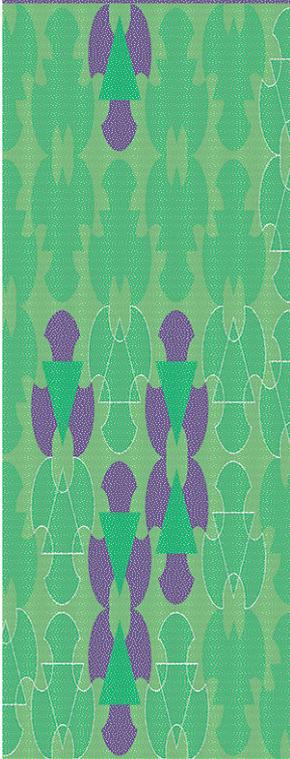
Retirement Villages - Some Information

Sarah Yeomans, our newest committee member, attended a presentation by Deborah Cook of retirementvillageinfo.com.au (at the local library) on retirement villages, the financials of. Herewith some notes:

Things to understand and investigate -



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1. Is a retirement village for you? Do you like joint decision-making? Paying for facilities you might not use? Having rules- about pets, paint colours, dispute processes, your garden? Main drivers are health problems and downsizing from unmanageable property, then death of spouse, proximity to family and desire to change lifestyle. Happiness and life satisfaction surveys show 7% decreased, 35% the same, and 59% increased happiness after moving into retirement village. Offers an excellent lifestyle on a pension; but cases of great disappointment (activities, animals, family moved again anyway).
2. Different contract types - 90% are lease/loan/licence contracts where you don't own the unit (only the right to live there) and theoretically can be ousted (e.g. to a nursing home) but you pay no stamp duty and you are only responsible for 6 months for fees once you move out. Compare a strata title unit which you DO own, but where you are responsible for all fees till the unit sells once you move out (sometimes years). Avoid serviced apartments. Choose desirable (i.e. more re-sellable) units - location in village? Noise? etc.
3. Fees and exit - Ingoing contribution, recurrent charges and exit fee (deferred management fee, **DMF**). And beware other hidden fees in complex contracts. Onus is on consumer. Each state has different Retirement Villages Acts (cf nursing homes which are federal).

DMF is usually capped at 10 years payment, typically 3% pa of residence, but others are cumulative and variable. Need to calculate total dollars cost of DMF for several scenarios of projected residence. Note there will also be a refurbishment cost on departure; need in writing what that entails (to avoid marble and gold). Victoria especially has poor consumer protection on this. 80% of retirement villagers leave (e.g. to go to nursing home, or follow family interstate). If to a nursing home, you face State DMF followed by Federal entry fees. On exit, capital gains will be divided between you and village - how? - and buying into a new unit will cost the inflated price too. So moving between villages is expensive, and the best value is when you stay longer than 10 years.

Recurrent charges - the fancier the place, the higher these charges. Beware "personal service". Must be paid monthly, not deferred. Note ongoing costs will rise faster than pension will.

Need to take contract to an entry specialist lawyer, and an exit specialist. Get checklist (being emailed to me). Pay \$20 to retirementvillageinfo.com.au for heaps of info.



The deadline for the April Newsletter is 27th March, 2015.

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