

Women Who Mean Business

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...Selling Gippslands Finest

Project Newsletter : Winter Edition : 2005

Omeo shows how to do it



Members of Omeo's Back to Back International Wool Challenge team, Rae Last and Margaret Worcester

The highly successful Back to Back International Wool Challenge, held in Omeo on the Queen's Birthday weekend in June, sets the pace for other WwMB projects taking shape throughout Gippsland.

About 400 people passed through the venue, the Omeo Town Hall, to view the wool challenge and sampled the wonderful array of wares. Out of town visitors provided an income boost for the area and great exposure for local producers.

The International Wool Challenge began many years ago in Scotland with a wager to shear a sheep and knit a jumper in less than a day. The Back to Back (as it is called in Omeo) was first held in Australia in 1994, and has been held in Omeo for about eight years. It is held under the auspices of the Omeo and District Agricultural Society and this year the Women who Mean Business Project also provided assistance and support.

The challenge involved a team shearing a sheep, spinning the fleece and knitting a man's jumper, in as fast a time as possible, and according to strict rules which applied to all participants around the globe.

Although the Omeo team, called the Mountain Maids, didn't rate a place in the top 12 times, they did a magnificent job and were enthusiastically supported by locals and visitors alike. Overall winner was a team in Japan, in six hours, nine minutes and 24 seconds,

The Omeo team provides the following roundup:

A special thankyou must go to our team members: knitters Dorothy Goodman, Margaret Worcester, Rae Last, Anne Kissane; spinners Lyn Lochrie, Margaret Backett, Julie Christianson and especially to Alison Horne, shearer and provider of the sheep!

The sheep were particularly beautiful English Leicesters and seemed quite at home in the Omeo hall. A very special thankyou goes to John Butler who stepped in as MC at short notice and to Jean Jenkins who worked tirelessly to get the event running again this year. An amount of

\$125 was raised for cancer by the auction of last year's jumpers and this will be donated to Rotary House at the Latrobe Valley Hospital.

The day started beautifully with Reverend Barbara Logan presiding over a service celebrating the Blessing of the Sheep.

The many activities, displays and demonstrations included: book signings by authors Barry Heard and Dawn Churchwood; face painting for the children provided by clown, Lisa Batchelor; a 'Taste of the High Country' with stalls showcasing local produce and wares such as bread and pastries, wines, and preserves, and some beautiful finger food.

There were stalls with superb handmade woollen clothing and hats, and superbly scented soaps as well as felting, knitting and blade-shearing demonstrations. The hall was decorated with fantastic drawings and textile work by children of the Omeo and Swifts Creek primary schools. The photographs and memorabilia provided by the Cattlemen's Association helped set the scene and people loved poring over the historic photos. And not to forget the wonderful band The Snapdragons, which entertained everyone superbly.

Many people absolutely loved the blade shearing demonstrations, with one Melbourne woman saying that it was the best event she had been to! She said that if something like this was held in the city it would only showcase one or two aspects, such as felting or knitting, not the whole gamut. Such feedback was great as sometimes we take our achievements for granted.

The Swifts Creek-Omeo Working Group comprises about 30 women from the towns of Benambra, Swifts Creek, Ensay, Cassilis and Omeo.

We come from diverse backgrounds and our project has developed into a rich, multi-faceted one which seeks to celebrate our culture and connect our communities. We hope to achieve this through:

* supporting the 2005 Back To Back International Wool Challenge in Omeo;

* holding a photographic exhibition; and

* developing the first stage of a touring exhibition promoting the High Country and its culture to tour around Gippsland and Melbourne.

Now that the wool challenge is over the



Lisa Batchelor entertained the children with her face painting at the Back to Back.



next aspect of the project, the Photographic Exhibition, involves documenting the Back to Back event using photography. It was quite funny at times to see five or six photographers gathered around a sheep clicking away merrily. Many wonderful photos were taken and there is a great sense of excitement around this upcoming exhibition.

The exhibition will be held at the Swifts Creek Art Gallery from August 29-September 12 as well as the East Gippsland Art Gallery in Bairnsdale from September 29 to October 12. Participants in the project attended a photography workshop held by Daniel Jenkins in February to help develop and consolidate their photographic skills.

We are also developing an exhibition of contemporary artwork by local artists promoting the High Country. The aim of this exhibition is to encourage interest in, and tourism to, the region. The exhibition seeks to explore the connection that artists have with the High Country and to highlight its beauty and rich diversity. This can be explored through painting, photography, textiles, ceramics or other mediums. The exhibition will be launched at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre in Melbourne in October. Part of the project involves preparing the exhibition for tour around Gippsland and Melbourne, sourcing further venues and partnerships and applying for funding to tour - watch this space for more information!

This exciting project has a lot of potential for our region. To be involved, contact Deb Milligan.

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Message from Mary

(Mary Salce is project co-ordinator of Women who Mean Business management committee)

The WwMB project, sponsored by the Community Support Fund, is empowering women both in their personal lives and in community leadership roles.

Stage Two of our project, which has been officially completed, attracted more than 750 participants – above all expectations. Thanks to the project officers at Omeo-Swift's Creek, Buchan, Orbost, Stratford-Maffra, Warragul, Latrobe Valley, Yarram and Leongatha for working so hard towards this achievement.

We held 44 workshops which included two-day Skills Development, Business Planning, How to Manage the Media, Submission Writing, Event Management and Promotion, Photography, Interviewing and Creative Writing. After a lull, the Leongatha group has started its project while continuing with skills development workshops.

We acknowledge the Victorian University for providing and sponsoring the high

quality training workshops. This support reduced costs and enabled our committee to deliver further training when requested by the working groups.

I extend appreciation to Robert Cugno, workshop presenters and everyone in the community who has offered support.

Many of you will remember Jill Gael. We are hoping she will join us early next year when we celebrate the completion of the WWMB project.

Jill has been nominated for the Telstra Business Women's Award (well deserved) and we wish her all the best.

Stage three of our project is about putting theory into practice and, as you will read in the project updates in this newsletter, the ground work is well on the way for all eight projects.

During this ground work stage the groups are still identifying the different skills that are required to complete the project and arranging workshops as necessary.

All these workshops are open to the public.

By doing the hands on work many women are acquiring amazing new skills and accomplishments.

They are making clay tiles, wood carving, cementing, drawing and planning to scale. They are mastering photography, marketing, lobbying, submission writing, reporting, media, creative writing, testing food recipes, seeking work quotes, artistic designing, advertising and booking exhibition spaces in Melbourne to promote their region.

They are gardening, sculpturing, painting, arranging meetings with local shires to discuss inkind support and seeking sponsorship. All this and more is happening as individually and collectively women

head down journeys of self and community discovery.

Outcomes to date vary from setting up new businesses to someone gaining the self-esteem to join in with local the community.

We will start sharing outcomes in our Spring newsletter (see details in June's message).

The evaluation process has begun and a brain storm will take place at the next WWMB project meeting on July 19 at Maffra. For the project evaluation we have the support of the Victorian Rural Women's Network and the project evaluator, Jenny O Neil, employed by WwMB.

This newsletter is a great way for women throughout Gippsland to keep up to date with what is happening throughout Gippsland. All up, 1000 copies of the newsletter are distributed around Gippsland. The newsletter also can be down loaded from the project website

www.wwmb.org.au. Beth Harris continues to update the website as monthly reports come in and our e-mail list has grown to 195. To be included please advise Beth,

info@anchorweb.com.au

In this newsletter you will find articles by John Jago and Loretta Leslie, encouraging more women to stand for Local Government election, when many municipalities go to the polls in November this year. Let's encourage and support Gippsland women to take a stand.

Over the years I find that we are being asked more and more to make a choice to give up the right to choose and I always remember a quote from Martin Luther King "Our lives begin to end when we say nothing about the things that matter"

– have a go.

A Message from... Jo McCubbin - WwMB project committee member



Some of the best things I have ever done have followed from a chance meeting with Mary Salce in a supermarket checkout queue.

Since that time, I have been privileged to be involved in helping get various projects from grand ideas (usually dreamed up over a cup of coffee with Mary and others), to reality.

We organised a forum teaching Gippslanders how to get their issues heard by politicians and the media and conferences providing women the information to participate in debates on water issues.

Inspired by the kind of things other women could do, I gained the confidence to call a public meeting when it seemed the community needed answers about activities at Dutson Downs. Out of this was born Wellington Residents Against Toxic Hazards or WRATH. I was then delighted to be asked to teach environmental medicine to our medical students.

After getting to know Mary, it became apparent that she knew many people across all the communities in Gippsland and beyond. Many of these networks had arisen from her involvement in arts projects in the early 1990s.

Art is in my family heritage so this was bound to get my attention eventually. When Mary mentioned the possibility of running a project to use arts to draw women together across communities and to provide the necessary skills to make their creative dreams into business opportunities, I was definitely interested.

In my day job as a paediatrician I worry about the physical and mental well-being of our children. I have long thought that many of their ills are best fixed by changes in their world that will lead to a better environment and better opportunities, changes that are bigger than simply writing a script. It seemed to me that getting mothers and indeed people of all ages, engaged in their communities and working together, will have a positive effect on the well-being of us all.

Since those early days, with a small group of us kicking words around the table, for the early drafts of a submission, the project has grown and taken on a life of its own.

This is probably just as well from my point of view, since my doctoring workload is getting way out of hand. My role now is, unfortunately, less involved and I regret not being able to get out around various meetings across Gippsland to meet all of you and watch the projects unfold. If nothing else, I hope that others will learn from the women they meet during this project and gain the confidence to do things they might not have dreamed of doing otherwise.

Latrobe Valley Roundup

The Latrobe Valley group so far has collected more than 60 life stories for our social history and recipe book, *Tucker n' Tales*. So our project is starting to look like a book which is extremely exciting.

We are working on the book cover and have hired a graphic artist. The photographs are coming from the art competition and several children enjoyed winning art prizes for their contribution of drawings to the book.

We have found a volunteer photographer to take portrait photos to accompany the stories.

We are still pursuing business partnerships and government grant monies for the printing of the book and are planning for a launch before Christmas.

As for up and coming events we have a meeting on the first Thursday of each month to keep the project rolling and on track. Our group is now incorporated and we'll send out information to participants to explain what this will mean to them. We held a meeting on July 1 to elect board positions.

We encourage all who wish to be involved in building a strong women's network that

is focused on making positive changes within the area to come along to our meetings. There are many new projects developing which look just as much fun as this one.

One of our fun moments evolved from an enthusiastic lunch meeting at Henrietta's in Leongatha when some of our steering committee members had a brilliant idea for a large country style picnic. Such a picnic, we thought, would provide us with an ideal setting to take beautiful photographs for the front cover of *Tucker n' Tales*.

We discussed the matter in earnest on the drive home to Morwell, throwing ideas around on how we envisaged it: a long table covered in red and white checks, with an array of food, and our families enjoying a fun day out at Cowwarr Weir.

We pictured native flowers as a centre piece and a few bottles of wine to stave off the chill. Within just two weeks we made all this happen: we found that by each of us concentrating on our own parts, everything ran smoothly. We found a wonderful spot at the weir, everyone we wanted to invite was available, we obtained a photographer, organised the food, tables, table cloths,

and so on. Six trestles were donated for the day as well as 20 red chairs and these arrived in a tandem trailer.

Cars began to arrive and an array of white china dinner settings, glass bowls, wine glasses, and people began to emerge from the cars. Within 30 minutes the photographer had captured the essence of our vision, took a couple of group shots and we sat down to enjoy an amazing spread of foods.

Everyone bought their favourite foods, and some wine. It was food grown from our own yards and prepared in our kitchens the day before. It was a magical day with geese visiting the tables well as the dog that lives at the weir. The children went in for a swim despite the temperature of the water and the adults had a great time relaxing and getting to know each other. We decided to pack up as the afternoon turned cold and headed home about 5pm. It was one of those amazing days that just flowed like poetry with no arguing and not really a lot of planning. The best surprise came when we received a disk of the photos a week later.

– Michelle Tisdale.



The Latrobe Valley project team organised a picnic to share a taste of their upcoming book with family and friends.



Latrobe Valley project officer, Michelle Tisdale, dreams of *Tucker 'n Tales*



Jenny Richmond's delicious orange cake (see recipe this page)

Recipes to try

Orange Cake

Ingredients

- 2 Vitamised oranges
- 360 g melted butter
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 cups SR flour

Method

Remove pips from orange, then puree until liquid. Add all other ingredients to a large bowl and mix well. Place in a well-greased 25cm cake tin. Cook in a moderate oven 180 °C for 80-90 minutes. Test with a skewer and turn out onto rack to cool.

Jenny Richmond, a member of the Latrobe Valley team, shares two of her delicious recipes with you: Jenny's

Jenny's Chicken and Bacon Casserole

Ingredients

- 60g butter
- 6-8 chicken pieces
- 2 large onions cut into rings
- 4 rashers bacon, derided and roughly chopped
- 2tbs brandy
- ½ bottle dry red wine
- 1¼ cups chicken stock
- Seasoning, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic crushed
- 30 g butter
- 30g plain flour
- 250g button mushrooms

Method

- 1) Melt the butter in a frying pan and fry the chicken, onion and bacon until lightly golden brown.
- 2) Warm the brandy and pour into the fry pan, ignite and flame transfer to a casserole dish.
- 3) Add the red wine, stock, seasoning and garlic, cover and cook in a moderate oven 180 °C for 1 hour.
- 4) Blend the butter and the flour together and stir into the casserole. Add the mushrooms and return to the oven for approximately ½ hour.
- 5) Serve with hot steamed rice.



Some of the women inside the Buchan Post Office that will become the Buchan Gallery.

Buchan Roundup

A direct result of the Women Who Mean Business Project in Buchan has been the formation of the Buchan Gallery Inc. The women are busy obtaining extra funding, signing their lease on the Old Post Office in Buchan and preparing for a September opening.

The group is thrilled with the response from local artists and craft workers who want to place their work in the Gallery. The abundance of talent in the area is fantastic.

They are excited about the project and would be happy to have new members come on board.

For details of meeting times, contact Kate Earle on 0408178179 or katedoc2@hotmail.com or Sue at Buchan Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

Stratford/Maffra Roundup

Our group's dream to develop a *Garden for Humanity* in Stratford is taking shape in a very "concrete" way. This contemplative peaceful place, with seating, art, sculpture and indigenous plantings, that attract birds and a healthy ecology, is also an area to celebrate local European history and indigenous culture. We have started working on the sculptures with the assistance of group member and local sculptor, Amanda Goodge. More women are joining us and learning about sculpture making in a range of mediums.

One of the sculptural works is a semi circular seat, a "yarning circle", which is intended as a "meeting place". It is made of concrete blocks (compliments of Selkirk Stratford), bagged and rendered into a pleasing organic shape and covered in hand made ceramic tiles. The tiles have been made by the participants and are quite beautiful with many different shapes, textures and images. The garden is located at the site of the Straight Ford, and the original bridge over the river. Stories relating to the area will be documented in a story telling area at the site. This has provided us with another opportunity to strengthen links within the community, and the

Stratford and District Historical Society is researching stories for this area. Sculptures in this area will be suitable for children to sit and climb on. We are hoping the *Garden for Humanity* will become part of the historic walking trail being planned around the town. It will be a focus point for visitors who use the Maffra/Stratford Rail Trail, due to open on October 1 this year.

The garden is being developed in partnership with Avon Landcare and in close consultation with other key stakeholders such as Wellington Shire Council, the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Ramahyuck Aboriginal Co Op, Stratford and District Historical Society, the Rail Trail, the Stratford Caravan Park, other local businesses, local artists and many others. The main section of the garden will be completed by the end of September, 2005.

There are ongoing dates for working on the sculptures, working bees to develop the site, as well as behind-the-scenes work in managing and marketing a project such as this. We welcome your participation in this inspiring project. Details: Beth Ripper.



The Stratford-Maffra team, working on a sculptural work, a semi circular seat or a "yarning circle".

Yarram Roundup

The Spring Into Art Festival planning at Yarram is moving on rapidly driven by a small group of dedicated members forming the steering committee.

The group is meeting almost every fortnight to delegate tasks, report back on progress and make decisions on the next steps to make.

Some intensive working bees were held to put together the invitations to artists to participate with exhibition material. A meeting early in the year decided on some really unusual and eye catching invitations, layers of transparent and brightly colored paper, containing printed information about the festival and how to participate— bound with ribbon. Wonderful idea – disaster to produce! Labor intensive, precision cutting, hard on the hands punching holes – enough to make us give up the whole idea. We persisted with extensive working sessions and the feedback from artists made it all worth while.

Comments included:

"Many thanks for the Invitation and its beautiful presentation."

"Thanks for the invitation. I was thrilled to be considered."

"I wish you well with the project it sounds exciting, positive and innovative."

So far 25 artists have responded, wishing to exhibit a variety of mediums.

The task for the committee is matching venues, exhibition requirements, insurance and risk management. So much to think through, but we are learning fast and using the experience of whoever we can. We have also managed to gain some much needed sponsorship from the Alberton Project, Wellington Shire and Tarra Valley Rainforest Retreat.

We are thrilled to have Marina Prior accept an engagement on Saturday, October 29 as part of the fine food and music component of the festival. Yarram's Regent Theatre will be the focus for an evening of delights. More details later. Meanwhile it's back to the many tasks to tackle to bring the event together.

We are looking for all those women who joined us at the Jill Gael workshop, to volunteer to assist us as the date draws near. We especially need help in the last week or so leading up to the Festival.

Contact: Tina Hambleton, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 5183 9123. On other days: 51841 258.

Warragul Roundup

Mosaic, mosaic, mosaic! Here at the Warragul group, we didn't realise what artists we all are! In just one month, we've created 24 mosaic tiles set in concrete blocks to put along the walking track later this winter.

Our tutor Maery Gabriel was just brilliant, and guided us all to heights of artistic achievement that we never knew we could reach! It was a very intensive project, as Maery tried to teach some basic design and colour principles as well as the actual mosaic techniques.

However, it was so much fun that several of us have made mad plans to create mosaics for our gardens, and hope to get together and work with Maery again soon.

Our theme for the mosaic tiles turned out to be the environment, as all of us naturally gravitated to designs of plants and animals. Without any real plan, we stumbled on a very fitting theme for the walking track. Now we are sorting out how and where we will place them. We've also returned to thinking about the large compass design in mosaic that we had originally dreamed about. Maery suggested that we try the tiles first, as a way to learn the technique before embarking on our ambitious compass plan, and this turned out to be wise advice. Our idea for the compass along the walking track is quite large, and I'm glad we didn't just jump into it without really knowing anything about mosaic first.

Other than learning to mix concrete and cut tiles, the group has been busy planning for next year by applying for funding now.

As far as the Seats of Distinction project goes, things are not flowing quite as smoothly as we had planned with the schools and the shire council.

One school has finally admitted they can't take on the seating project this year, and another has been tossing our project from one teacher to the next like a bean bag, but nonetheless, we have finished three seating designs, with one more to come.

The Shire has brought up a few new issues regarding disability access, so that means some redesigning, but with some luck, we'll get some great seats in the end.

Things are a bit behind schedule, but we're hoping to sort it out by the end of June and start the seat building in Term Three.

We're now fully incorporated as The Women's Compass Network, and we have successfully applied for an ABN. Doing it on-line was quite easy, and quick, too. We're still working out the insurance side of things, however. So far, this aspect hasn't been either easy or quick!

– Lara Whitehead.



Maery Gabriel (right) shows Warragul's Patricia Clynes learns how to do it.



Building the concrete formwork for the mosaic tiles are, left to right: Kim Mullen, Marg Rehorn, Lesley Anderson, Maery Gabriel, Ingrid Thomas, Anne Napier, Yvonne Maygar, Christina Rasmussen and Marree Wallace.



Orbost women will continue their mosaic work in their special garden..



Plans are on the way to create the above seat for the garden..

Orbost Roundup

The Magical Garden Community Pathway Project being developed by the Orbost group of WwMB has reached the stage where work is about to begin at the site.

This site is situated opposite the Orbost Exhibition Centre/Slub Hut leading to the Snowy Wilderness Discovery Centre (formerly known as Orbost Rainforest Centre).

The pathway will link local tourist attractions and the area will be landscaped and planted with indigenous plants as well as having mosaic work and sculptures. It is hoped the pathway will become part of the local attractions and enhance the area.

The project members will be involving cluster schools and all community members/groups interested in doing mosaic work on cement circles which will be placed in the pathway. These concrete circles, depicting the mythical heritage of our cultures, uniting our diverse communities, are made at Steedies and come in three sizes, ranging from 28cm to 45cm. Group members will provide help with the mosaic work if required. All materials will be supplied.

If you are interested in completing one of these circles for your community/group, or, becoming involved in the work 'on site' the group is keen for new members to join in.

Meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month at 2 pm at the Snowy Wilderness Discovery Centre. Come along and join us or contact Kate Earle on 0408 178179, or Sandy and Sandra on 51541491.

This project is funded by the State Government Community Support Fund and auspiced by Arts Network East Gippsland (ANEG) on behalf of the Gippsland Women's Network. The project has received 'in kind' support from East Gippsland Shire Council, Orbost Community Health Centre, Dept. of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Orbost Exhibition Centre and Bill Killick to date. We look forward to others joining us to improve this area for the whole community.

We hope to launch this stage of the project at the end of September.

– Kate Earle

Profile...

Maya Fraser (Morwell) shares her global childhood



Maya Fraser, her husband Gerard and their four children: Brandon 11, twins Celeste and Estelle, eight, and Yolanda, three.

I arrived from WA in the Latrobe Valley with a suitcase, my little silky terrier and my husband to be, Gerard. We initially stayed in Yinnar and I proceeded to try and find my way in this new place that I found myself in.

This was not the first time that I had undergone a change in home. My travels began when I was two-and-a-half years old. I was born in Perth to parents who migrated to Perth from The Netherlands leaving, their family behind. At this point two of my father's brothers lived in Perth, but when they left to go back my parents became home sick and this began our journey.

We migrated to South Africa as there was work there and my parents could not afford to go straight back to Holland. Our residences consisted of hotels and then we progressed to living in a group of flats in Pretoria, where we made some close friends. During this period I started school, first in a private school and then in a convent boarding school. My father found work in a variety of jobs, and eventually worked on the railways. This meant more shifts, first to a caravan park and then to a place called Oogies which seemed to be in the middle of nowhere.

There we lived in a caravan with annexe, one water tap between several people, and a memorable fibre glass igloo shaped smelly portable toilet. The coupe de etat was a rusted gallon drum sitting on top of a rusted tin shed that served the men as a shower, once a week. Due to the politics of the time the blacks lived in a series of tents some distance from us and we had

a night watch man called Piccaninny who I would sit and talk to for hours, not the done thing at the time.

The next stage saw us in Holland where I got to know some of our family from both sides of the family. My mum and I went first and were left at an old run down farm house that my parents had bought off Oom Willem who had returned to Australia with his son, sight unseen. The place had roof tiles missing and the grass was almost as tall as me. How my Mum coped I have no idea because we knew nobody and the place was barely fit to live in. Mum started cleaning the place to make it liveable. There was no bathroom and no proper kitchen as this was in part of the stables where cows normally spend the winter. While there I started school in a two teacher country school in Siegerswoude; this was another huge adjustment in language and culture. We lived there until strong winds made the walls move and it was colder in the house than in the VW that was our car. We moved on to Drachten and back to living in a flat and of course another shift of schools.

Mum got homesick for Australia and my parents no longer felt that they fitted in; this meant we were returning to WA and another change in language, culture and schools. Once we got back to my birth place it meant that my peers no longer saw me as Australian and this caused me much pain as this was my home.

Much of my childhood has been filled with a deep sense of being different and the feeling of not fitting in. On the other side of the coin I have married into the most amazing welcoming family who have accepted me as one of them, giving me an extended family support system that never ceases to fill me with wonder and appreciation.

Gerard and I now have four precious children, Brandon 11, twins Celeste and Estelle, eight, and Yolanda, three. While being busy raising our beautiful children I have slowly made a niche for myself in the Latrobe Valley. Participating in community activities has helped me to feel connected to where I live.

The Gippsland Women who Mean Business project has increased my confidence by extending my personal networks and by allowing me to apply my skills. It has given me a means to become more involved in the community, too look at ways that I can help to contribute in a positive manner, to help make a difference.

As a result of WwMB, I have taken up opportunities to speak on Gippsland FM

and attend networking breakfasts. I have met wonderful people whose skills and abilities leave me feeling humble. The support I have received has inspired me to take up my pencil and start drawing.

I have lived in the Valley for about 14 years, and feel I've finally found "home". Besides community, my husband's family has played an important part in helping to create a sense of belonging. A place where I can belong.

Suzanne Davies, tells how she has created a fulfilling life at Buchan



Where do I start my story?! I was born in Melbourne and grew up in a small country town in the Dandenong's called Tecoma.

I have such wonderful memories of growing up in this small close knit community that when I left to live and work in Melbourne at the age of 17, I missed the sense of community and belonging.

I worked in Melbourne for four years as a secretary, then went travelling around Australia for a year, meeting many amazing people.

When I returned to Melbourne the thought of living back in the "rat race" did not appeal to me at all.

So from then on I have always lived out of the city but commuted for my working commitments. Over many years in Melbourne I worked in jobs which included secretarial, hospitality and driving trucks.

My first husband and I bought our first home in Millgrove and had two beautiful children, now 23 and 18 years old.

One Easter 17 years ago we came to visit friends that had moved to a place called W Tree north of a place called Buchan.

Both of us fell in love with the area and decided to relocate our family. We bought a property north of Buchan in a smaller

remote farming community at Murrindal.

My marriage ended after 20 years and I found myself a sole parent until I met my soul mate who has three beautiful children of his own, our blended family are so close and get on so well we could not wish for better.

I was employed as the kindergarten assistant in Buchan and worked there for 10 years. This was a wonderful and rewarding experience and with volunteering on different committees I got to know my community and district very well.

For the past six years I have been employed as the coordinator of the Buchan Neighbourhood House and Outreach Arts Officer for Buchan and District through (ANEG) Arts Network East Gippsland. This has been an amazing, rewarding and often challenging position but never mundane.

We offer many differing services for our community and district to access here. They range from courses, classes or workshops under Adult Education, to art based experiences through my ANEG hat in music, drama, art, craft, singing and exhibitions. We have also produced four Buchan Foothills Festivals that I coordinated with the assistance of Ev Schmidt, Drew Beaven, Buchan Arts Council and many volunteers from our community.

When I first heard about the Women who Mean Business – Selling Gippsland's Finest – through the Gippsland Women's Network and ANEG I was so excited as I knew other women in our area would love to have the opportunity to participate in this wonderful project.

I presented a power point presentation at the February, 2004 launch announcement of the CSF Grant by John Thwaites MP at Sale. This was a fantastic day, meeting so many dynamic women and sharing our stories.

Since then the Buchan and District women have been busy with workshops and meetings and are working towards opening a Gallery here in Buchan for talented artists and craftspeople to showcase and sell their beautiful creations.

This project is providing our local women with opportunities to develop skills, to enhance their self esteem and confidence and network. This fantastic tourism opportunity, when up and running, will increase business opportunities as well as promote our district.

I thank the State Government's Community Support Fund and Art's Network East Gippsland for their support and all the local

talented women who are involved in this project for their time, enthusiasm, energy and friendship as well as our project officer Kate Earle. We plan to open the Gallery in September 2005 and will advertise our grand opening. We hope you will come and celebrate with us on this big day.

Patricia Clynes finds new direction in the country



One of eight siblings, Patricia Clynes was born in Port Melbourne. Times were tough, but she remembers fondly the weekend trips to the country and visits to the local beach after school.

Patricia left school at 14 and her first job was as a junior in a dress shop for four years, followed by office work until her marriage at 23.

Patricia's husband, Geoff, soon accepted a career move to Sydney. With two little toddlers under the age of two and no family support, Patricia established a babysitter's club.

They lived in Sydney for 12 years and their third child was born there.

During this time, Patricia's life revolved around her husband's career and her children. She worked in the tuckshop and on school committees.

Regretting her lack of formal education, Patricia constantly strove to improve herself. Over the years, she has enrolled in various courses at community centres, including flower arranging, oil painting classes and a literature course.

Nearing retirement age, the couple made the big decision to move to Warragul three years ago.

Patricia chased up various organisations to meet new people. "I was looking for a new direction in life and when I read about the two day leadership workshop, I saw it as a great opportunity to meet women from various walks of life and to do something

for the community," says Patricia.

Enjoying the connection and networking, Patricia has enthusiastically embraced the Warragul 'Seats of Distinction' project. "I'm delighted with the decision to take on the Linear Park Trail. It's an exciting project which could go on indefinitely. It is an opportunity for our youth to become involved in our community, to be creative and to have a sense of ownership," she says.

Patricia says the benefits have been three-fold.

"Our small group meets regularly over coffee to discuss the progress of the project and new friendships have been formed. With the support of the other dynamic women and my husband, my confidence has grown and I am able to utilise new skills such as research on the internet, record keeping, liaising with the Shire, forming goals and planning timelines," Patricia says.

She has walked the walk numerous times and has actually spoken to people who use the trail regularly to gauge what improvements they would like. She has also taken photographs of possible sites for the seats and used these in a package to present to the Shire.

"The project has given me a purpose in life," she smiles.

– submitted by Maree Wallace

It's on the Web

We recently conducted a survey to find out what people think of the Women who Mean Business website. All of the feedback was encouraging and indicated that people really love reading the Participant Profiles. The website was established when the project began and visitors to the site have increased every month with an average of around 50 visitors every day and around 10,000 hits a month.

This month we have added a section to the website called "Your Voice" where you can "have your say". You can submit articles about how the Women who Mean Business project has affected your life or about current local and regional issues. Log on and have your say!

Our website contains lots of information about the project, updates on what's going on with each group and lots of photos. The website is at www.wwmb.org.au Explore it now!

Profile...



"Walking the talk" or "talking the walk" with **Lorraine Craigie**, Marlo

I have always been interested in community activities. My first experience was helping to run an art and craft fair in Eltham for the local kindergarten that my children attended. I loved working together to achieve a goal for everyone.

Life passes, time and circumstances change, and my partner Dave and I reached the point where we had to decide to stay in Melbourne close to our children or follow our personal dreams, and move.

Dave wanted to be near the sea and boats and, as long as I could have a veggie patch and bush around me, I would be fine so, facing redundancy and work that Dave didn't like in the city, we decided we could provide a great holiday place for children and grandchildren, let them get on with their lives, and follow our dreams at the same time.

We had spent 20 years camping at Cape Conran, our kids loved it here, so with our youngest son Daniel we came to live in a shed on our 2ha property in Marlo.

We thought we might have to eat possum pie and wallaby stew, but 10 years later, I still haven't had either. Dan went to school at Orbost High, and Dave and I both got work, while building our house at the same time. We worked at the local Protea Farm, and also a friend told me about some work in the Marlo Hotel in the kitchen. So we had hardly been here a week and I had two jobs, and Dave one.

One of our ideas was, before we came was that we would get to know everyone by going to the hotel on a Friday night and that would be our family night out. Well, I went to the pub every Friday night, but under different circumstances to what we thought. Dave was the one meeting the locals, while I was the aquatic engineer, washing their dishes. Fortunately I like washing dishes--water therapy. Dave worked at the Protea Farm, the Ostrich Farm and the local small timber mill,

and we both became involved on the committee of the Marlo Ocean Rescue. Dave was elected to the committee and dragged me along as his pencil. I became secretary treasurer for eight years.

Next I became involved with the Women of the Snowy River. This was the beginning of something wonderful for me, and the Uniting Our Rural Community Project. It enabled us to build a mosaic pathway in the Forest Park in Orbost. This pathway was inspired by the mighty Snowy River, a pathway flowing through time.

This was a wonderful experience of how you all work together and each small tile laid is the foundation of a united story a united community. I look at the pathway now and am proud of what we have all achieved.

After this I went on to be involved with other projects, including the carving of a flood maker which also stands in Forest Park and the creating of banners to hang over McKillops Bridge, another project bringing people together.

Because of my involvement in these programmes and the people I met, I was asked to join a committee trying to fund and build a Community Exhibition Centre.

This has been the best experience. This project has involved so many people, from every area of the community. You walk into this building and it has spirit. A building where everyone can share and enjoy the benefits it will bring to all the community.

The latest project I am involved with is the Magical Garden Community Pathway Project being undertaken by the WwWB to unite the rainforest centre to the main street, with sculptures and secret places to explore. This project is just beginning, and I am sure it will be as rewarding as the mosaic pathway.

This is my story, it may seem to be about buildings, projects and community, and I do have other parts of me, but I have gained many personal skills and self esteem from all of these projects and most of all, met some great people and found my place. It does my heart good to feel that maybe I have helped in some small way to make this a better, closer and more co-operative community.

I know without the involvement of everyone – none of these projects would have been possible, but there is someone who stands out. I would like to thank **Ruth Hanson**. Ruth is one of the most impressive, unselfish people I have met. She has shared her skills in teaching others, given her time tirelessly, struggled against adversity; she had a vision and has realised that vision in this building.

No cliques – no prejudice – each person being appreciated for what they are, can and do give.

Beth Ripper, Stratford-Maffra, loves to colour her world with art...

My life at present revolves around caring for my four year old grand daughter Tilly and working passionately in several community organisations - as artistic director of the Shakespeare on the River Festival and as project co-ordinator of the Blackall Creek restoration project with the Avon Landcare group. Along with this I am attempting to market my home-based business, "Tranquil B&B" in Stratford.

I have always had an ability to see the "big picture" and that tends to lead me to see the connections between "projects" and consequently the endless potential for participation and both personal and community development.

I tend to see the positive elements in situations before I see the problems. I love working with others, I love research and organisation, I love a good discussion and I love getting down and getting mucky!

I have never been bored in my whole life. I love singing, I love thinking and being creative, I love friends, I love being a Willing Worker on Organic Farms (WWOOF) host, I love growing my own food, I love living in the Stratford community and I love living in my fabulous house.

I am part of the WwMB garden project in Stratford. This project has a link to the Blackall Creek Avon Landcare vision - "Blackall Dreaming" project.

I was also active in the Uniting Our Rural Communities Project - the building of seats, two of which are located in the area being developed as the WwMB contemplative sculpture garden in Stratford. I also participated in the Moving the posts exhibition that came about as a result of that group.

** Beth Ripper is sharing the project officer job for Stratford-Maffra group with Hilda Rhodes. Deb Milligan, who previously held this position, has stood down for personal reasons but remains project officer for Omeo and is actively involved in the Maffra group.*

Profile...

Judy Modra

moves to Omeo and postpones hitting the road with van and boat...

We (Mike and I) moved to Omeo in October 2003 having just bought a shearing shed to renovate and turn into a house. After six months of hard work we moved into our home. We anticipated that soon we would be on the road several months at a time with our van and boat and have Omeo as a base but...

I read an article in the local newspaper about WwMB and with an interest in women's groups I thought it would be good to meet the locals and do some 'up skilling' with the courses on offer.

I met Marijs Last from Omeo District Health at several sessions and she said "You look like someone who likes to work with people and can organise things: come and see me tomorrow you need a job!"

Now I am the health promotion worker with Omeo District Health and part of my work includes women's health.

We've held two successful consultation/education nights (60 women attended over two evenings from the Omeo region) on women's health. Programs now in place include mental health, first aid, women's lifestyle skills, negotiation skills and more women's evenings where we can share information.

Tourism is another interest to me as I have worked and studied tourism over the more recent past and have been employed in SA and NT.

I am the recently appointed secretary of the Omeo Regional Business and Tourism Association.

A focus on development from governing bodies has just come about. It is still in the consultative stage and I look forward to the community workshops to assist with the region's development.

I have been involved in business and community development in my home town in Goolwa SA for many years (near the Mouth of the River Murray, The Coorong and Kangaroo Island).

But my first career was as an Enrolled Nurse, for 13 years, during which I married a builder and had two children.

I served on committees to establish child day care, a kindergarten, play groups, student special needs assessment in rural

primary schools, literacy programs and parent participation in schools. I also served on many school and regional committees.

Business development for me during this time was buying equipment for concrete work, bricklaying, trenching equipment, and finally, literally building a concrete plant.

Yes, I was a great labourer in my day, book keeper and project coordinator.

I prepared and presented several "Introduction to small business management" workshops for "skill share" for unemployed people interested in starting up their own businesses.

When the children left home so did I.

Tourism was a new field and I needed a change of direction so after education and volunteering I managed the Goolwa TIC. I was then employed as a weekend manager of Signal Point, Murray River Interpretive Centre. Tour guiding was a favourite and I moved to Alice Springs where I met Mike. We had our own tour business (Desert Dreams, touring Ayres Rock and Kings Canyon). I also worked in a jewellery store in Alice Springs selling opals and diamonds to tourists.

Then Mike retired and we moved south to be near family, retire in Omeo and travel at leisure. I guess one day we'll be on the road with our van and boat

Mariama Kamara,

Venus Bay, tells how she climbed a mountain (of bureaucracy) for her



Foday and Mariama Kamara

On January 14, 2005, a very ordinary brown envelope arrived in the mail. Inside was the announcement from the Immigration Department that my husband Foday (pronounced "4day") Kamara had been granted his Permanent Residency Visa.

After the initial eruptions of disbelief, we both settled into silence as we pondered the news.

It was over....it was finally over....we had

done it!

We could get on with our lives, and begin the joyous task of deleting the huge immigration file taking up so much room in our heads...not forgetting the folders of emails, personal letters, evidence of co-habitation, phone bills, police clearances, photographs, letters of support from family and friends, passports, copies of house deeds, so on and so on.

We had made a well beaten path to the local J.P. as all documentation had to be copied and certified and there were endless amounts of "stuff" in every corner of the house.

All the time we would worry and wonder if we had supplied enough information to satisfy the stranger who would examine it and decide our future.

During the times I felt frustrated and overwhelmed, I would think of Foday having to deal with African bureaucracy and these thoughts would help me refocus for immigrations next "challenge".

When Foday and I met in Ghana 1999, we had no idea about what lay on the road ahead, but we did know that to be apart was emotionally painful, isolating and no longer an option.

Our fifth caseworker in Nairobi was Teresia Mwangi and I thank her for courteously responding to my email inquiries. Immigration advised us that contact with the department could further delay our visa.

Mistakes cost time, and time is so precious under these circumstances. To have someone to discuss your thoughts/ideas with who understands the language of immigration is a blessing.

After five years, three marriages, a microscopic examination of our relationship/life and lots of money later – for example, an application for a spouse visa is \$1125 -- Foday and I won the right to be together.

If you think it you create it, and never give in.

The Gippsland migrant resource centre in Morwell was comfortingly supportive and knowledgeable.

The Department of Immigration demanded that all information had to be exact – for example any names or dates out of place could jeopardise your visa chances, but as I looked at the name on the envelope and at the top of the letter sent to us in January, I shook my head and smiled. They had addressed it to Mr Foraday Kamara....

Howz that?!

Leongatha Roundup

The South Gippsland project, based at Leongatha, aims to develop a set of town and district specific resident information brochures and kits.

Still in the consultation phase, this project co-ordination has been taken on by South Gippsland Shire Councils Community Strengthening staff.

Participants have been encouraged to consider what information should be included, and on locating groups that can contribute to the project.

Two key networks that have been consulted are the Councils Community Development Advisory Committee and the South Gippsland Town and Districts Associations network. This discussion phase has been essential to establish what information publications already exist, or have existed in recent times.

It is clear that a range of products will be important, and at this stage the preference is for publications that assist residents, both new and long term, rather than concentrate on visitors.

Already some valuable unexpected outcomes have occurred through this low key consultation approach, with some informal but long standing community support networks contributing ideas. These groups have heard about the WwMB project either via the other more formal district associations or via the stories that have appeared in the local press about the project. One such group is a social support network that developed from a rural primary school parents club when the school closed due to lack of students some 20 years ago.

The project now moves into a more formal stage, with a series of skills workshops being presented over the next five weeks that are co-sponsored by South Gippsland Shire Council and WwMB. These workshops include sessions on using your local media, practical digital photography and sessions on community event management. Details of these activities are on the WwMB and www.southgippslandlive.info websites.

A series of practical sessions for the communities that want to develop new or update existing information publications begin on Thursday, July 28 at Leongatha, and will run from 10.30am to 2.30pm.

This session will concentrate on analysing some of the existing publications and assessing what key information needs to be added, and on the critical issue of avoiding duplication. Anyone wishing to attend this session can contact Ned Dennis at South Gippsland Shire Council on 5662 9288; e-mail nedd@sgsc.vic.gov.au

Event management workshop

Event management facilitator, Misha Prusa, will hold a workshop in Leongatha on Wednesday and Thursday, July 20 and 21.

The workshop will focus on learning skills to manage projects and will identify resources such as grants, media and community groups.

Experiences with problems, solutions and emotions before, during and after events will be shared and advice will be given on writing grant reports.

Misha Prusa has played a major role in managing events such as L'Oreal Fashion Week, the Methven celebrity launch hosted by Jamie Durie and a fundraising dinner for the Starlight Children's Foundation.

Supported by South Gippsland Shire Council and Women Who Mean Business, the event management workshop will be held at South Gippsland Shire Council Chambers, 9 Smith St, Leongatha on July 20 and 21. Cost: \$10 (includes refreshments). Booking deadline: July 4. Contact: Alycia, phone 5662 9271 or email alycias@sgsc.vic.gov.au



A small group gathered in Leongatha in June to participate in a media workshop run by station manager of Life FM Gippsland, Debbie Bye. The workshop, "Becoming Media Savvy", aims at assisting groups to write effective media releases and to develop confidence in knowing what to expect if being interviewed by the media about their event. Participants became actively involved in the practical aspects of the workshop and hidden talents were discovered! From left to right: Kerena McLaren, Pat McGill, Syd Whyte, Diana Zlatic, Birgit Pawlaczyk and presenter, Deb Bye.

Project Evaluation...

It's easy, useful AND can be fun

By Margo Northey, Rural Women's Network Coordination Unit

Projects such as Gippsland Women Who Mean Business (WwMB), usually have an evaluation component, providing regular progress reports and a detailed report at the project's completion. Project evaluation doesn't have to be complicated or too time consuming.

A really valuable project report shows what was achieved (what are the tangible differences you have made) and how it happened (what strategies worked and what didn't). It also identifies some of the unintended consequences – both positive and negative – and a discussion about how they came about. These can be really useful – both to you and for others thinking about similar ventures. It also helps funding bodies know about the value of their community investments.

Evaluation is all about asking questions. Who to ask, what to ask and how to ask it depends on many factors: what you want to know and why, who has the information, is it enough, who else might know, etc.

The local WwMB groups have therefore been observing their activities and processes and evaluating them in a variety of interesting and informative ways such as diaries, journals, questionnaires, feedback forms and photographs. You can help them by thinking about the questions that will appear in the upcoming newsletters and by providing feedback about their events and activities. You don't have to wait to be asked, but in case you need a prompt, a question for your consideration will be in each of the upcoming newsletters.

It's not a test, there are no right or wrong answers, nor do the answers have to be detailed. General feedback is welcome too. In fact, all of the questions will be deliberately open and quite broad.

The question for today is:

What have you learnt from Gippsland Women Who Mean Business?

Your responses can be forwarded to the local contacts on the back cover or via the web at www.wwmb.org.au.

* For details on participatory evaluation strategies, contact Margo on Margo. Northey@dvc.vic.gov.au or 03 9208 3662. Margo will facilitate an evaluation session at the WwMB meeting on July 19.

DANGER! WOMEN AT WORK!

By Cr John Jago



Wanted: Women – to make careers in Local Government, as councillors, CEOs, managers, consultants and contractors.

Local Government is highly important business. Women need to get their fair share of it.

Local Government is about building, strengthening and developing local communities.

The most urgent need for women in local government in Gippsland is as councillors, where at present women are nearly invisible. The voice of women, and particularly of business women, needs very much to be raised.

In the final analysis, all politics is local. In many respects, local government is the most important sphere of politics and government. It certainly is the one where local people can have the greatest say in influencing the outcomes in the affairs of their community.

But be warned! The hours may be long, the pay is pitiful, the media may be negative and there is little glamour in the job. Given all that, the councillor role is very satisfying.

Women who are seriously considering standing for election as councillors should be preparing your campaigns right now. Why? Because the system of postal voting means that there is little room to get your message across after the end of October – which is only four months away.

Nominations close on Wednesday, October 26 for elections in all Gippsland Councils (Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland, Wellington) with Election Day on Saturday, November 26.

There are several steps that you can take to help mount an effective campaign. I suggest that the most important one is

to get in touch with the group known as 'Womens' Participation in Local Government, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton. WPILG has published two books on the role and tasks of the councillor and will be running at least one training workshop in Gippsland, probably in August.

You can also talk with women who are currently councillors and those who have recently served. I am available to help if I can (contact details below).

To contact WPILG, telephone Linda Bennett at 03 9347 2233.

Apart from the councillor role, it is vital that many more competent women see Local Government as a career. The range of work in Local Government is immense, from engineering to horticulture, to strategic and environmental and community planning, to financial control and top level administration.

There is enormous scope for women to be chiefs rather than Indians in local government. You could consider making Local Government your career of choice. Good hunting!

Councillor John Jago
10 Willow Court, Sale 3850
Tel: 03 5144 7098
E-mail: jago@net-tech.com.au

Politics still a man's world



Cr Loretta Leslie

With municipal elections due in November, discussion is brewing on who will stand and who will best represent the interests of the community in Local Government.

Women, who comprise more than half the population but less than 30 per cent on council, are being encouraged to consider standing for election.

The mayor of South Gippsland Shire, Cr Diane Casbolt, said recently the government system seems tailored for men more than women. "To change it, women first need to infiltrate it by gaining selection," Diane said.

"It's a case of which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

"We need more women on council to increase our vote."

Cr Loretta Leslie, the only female councillor on Bass Coast Shire Council, agrees that much is to be

gained by having a more balanced gender ratio. She has contributed the following article as an insight to her experiences:

Why is it important for women to be represented in all decision making processes and in particular Local Government? I will begin with two brief anecdotes.

My niece is 12 years old. The family is watching the news. The PM is speaking. My brother-in-law says 'Look Charlotte, you could be Prime Minister one day!' Charlotte replies 'No, I couldn't Daddy!' 'Why not?' he asks. 'Because I am not a man.'

My second story: I am out with the EO of an organisation of which I am a Board Member. Technically I am his boss. We stop for lunch at a corner store and while we are waiting two of the locals say 'We are trying to guess what you do!' 'Well?' I ask. They reply 'We think he is in politics'.

'And me?' I ask. 'You are the secretary.' We all laugh when I say 'Actually, I am his boss and I am the politician!'

We talk about role models in sport. We need them in government as well.

Women bring skills and experience which are uniquely their own. When women are present the dialogue over issues changes. I used to think it was trite when people said 'Women think differently' but I have learnt from experience it is true.

The comparison between my two terms on Council is evident. Being the only female present has presented challenges I had not expected.

While most would agree that social values are important the way women approach achieving outcomes is significantly different. Women don't tend to push themselves forward over an issue. Most are content to achieve the outcome and not seek the glory.

Often this is to our detriment. It is not about right or wrong, it is about the diversity of opinion and views shared. Greater diversity of representation provides a wider range of views, improved democratic inclusion and, hopefully, better decision making.

It is not about having to stand up in front of crowds to speak; it is about being a conduit for the opinions and issues of a community; it is about finding the mechanisms to make things happen. Women are good at that.

Women open opportunities for others. I encourage anyone interested in standing for Local Government to find out more; women, young people, family builders, and business people. Healthy democracy is underpinned by strong debate.

A Message from June

Hi Everybody,

I am sure you will agree that this newsletter is packed with interesting roundups and inspiring tales of personal journeys.

I extend my appreciation to the wonderful women across Gippsland who have opened their hearts and taken the time to share their thoughts and feelings with us.

One of the things I really like about Women who Mean Business is that it encourages us to think of Gippsland as a "whole" region. Not "East", "West", "Central", "South" or "The Latrobe Valley", but simply, "Gippsland".

The overall feeling is one of unity, and in unity, there is strength.

Women have their own strengths, including the ability to listen, discuss, negotiate, organise – and to do several things at once.

Hold your heads high, and walk tall!

In preparation for the content of our Spring Newsletter, I encourage you to reflect and ponder the following question:

What have you achieved for yourself and for your community since you became involved in the Gippsland Women who Mean Business project?

Express your thoughts in no more than 200 words, and post them to June Alexander, PO Box 465, Leongatha, Vic 3953 or e-mail them to junealex@bigpond.com by August 15.

I look forward to your responses.

With warmest wishes to you all,

June Alexander

(Newsletter editor)



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WwMB

C/o RMB 7395

Clydebank

Victoria 3851

PP300038\0020

SURFACE
MAIL

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AUSTRALIA

Project Officers

Kate Earle

Katedoc2@hotmail.com

Orbost – m: 0408-178179

Tina Hambleton

alberton@dcsi.net.au

Yarram – b: 5183 9123

Michelle Tisdale

michelle.tisdale@gmail.com

Latrobe Valley – p: 5134 3223

Deb Milligan

littlemilligan@ozemail.com.au

Omeo/Swifts Creek – p: 5145 5240

Lara Whitehead

sandl@dcsi.net.au

Warragul – p: 5626 1271

Beth Ripper & Hilda Rhodes

director@stratfordshakespeare.com.au

Maffra/Stratford Beth – p: 5145 6094

Hilda – p: 5147 1891

Website and Media

Beth Harris

info@anchorweb.com.au

m: 0418-596392

Deb Bye

deb@lifefm.com.au

m: 0408-499046

Project Administration

ANEG

ANEG@a1.com.au

Contact person

Eileen Thurgood

p: 5153 1988

Project Management Committee

Di Deppeler TAFE

ddeppeler@egtafe.vic.edu.au

h: 5157 9333

b: 5152 0763

Jo McCubbin

jomccubbin@wizardtechs.net

p: 5144 7042

Mary Salce

masal@netspace.net.au

p: 5149 8366

Administration assistant

Kalinda Wade

kaimat@netspace.net.au

p: 5145 6618

Newsletter

June Alexander

junealex@bigpond.com

m: 0419-502111

p: 5662 5958

Project worksite for WwMB:

www.wwmb.org.au