

## Grand opening of Stage One

His Excellency Michael Bryce, Woden Seniors' new Patron and husband of the Governor-General, officially opened the new wing of the club on Friday 12 December 2008.

After the opening ceremony His Excellency stayed on to meet many members, impressing all with his enthusiasm and friendliness.

About 300 people attended.

John Hargreaves, ACT Minister for Aging, and Senator Gary Humphries

### Wishful thinking?

#### We don't think so!

If every member of Woden Seniors were to donate \$20, the club would benefit by \$15,000.

Quite a thought, isn't it?

Already club members have made personal donations.

All members are urged to consider doing so. Cash donations (cash, cheque, or electronic funds transfer) are tax deductible.

also took part, Senator Humphries presenting Federal Government volunteer awards to three members, Robin Brinton, Barry Hogan and Vivienne Sinclair, all of whom have given great service to the club in many



*His Excellency Michael Bryce opens the new wing. Mr Frank Zurer on left, President Anne Murray, and John Hargreaves, ACT Minister for Ageing.*

capacities. A special guest was Frank Zurer, whose 94th birthday it was. Frank was the first member to donate to the club's Building Fund.

Master of ceremonies was television and radio personality Phil Lynch.

President Anne Murray emphasised that the new wing was stage one of a proposed three-stage club development. She said the club's Management Committee would continue to seek Federal and ACT Government grants to help it achieve its long-term plan, and would

continue to organise fund-raising events.

"We have a long way to go to finalise our goal", Anne said. "We have to pay off our Bendigo Community Bank loan and then secure funds for Stages 2 and 3 of the Master Plan".

She said the support and enthusiasm of club members was pivotal to the realisation of the club's plans.

Anne said opening day had been such a resounding success because of what she described as "the faithful backing of so many wonderful people."

"Their work was fantastic: hanging paintings, tidying and setting up rooms, providing and serving food and drinks, managing spaces including the kitchen, contacting the media and managing the office - just some of the work which was carried out with great willingness of spirit and generosity".

Anne said the club's growing network of business "Friends" was also producing a very positive effect. "For example some of the beautiful furniture in the new wing was provided by Mr John Cusack, of Cusacks; and four workstations and a meeting table were donated by Mr John Gasson of Construction Control", she said.



*The club's impressive new wing.*

## ACT Government grant to help furnish new wing

The ACT Government has made an \$8500 grant to the club to more than match \$8050 raised by the club for floor-covering and blinds for the new sitting room.

The sitting-room - spacious, comfortable, and tastefully-furnished - is available for members to meet friends, talk, read the newspaper, choose a book from the club's library, or play an informal game, perhaps of scrabble or bridge.

The sitting room also now has a television set, and consideration is being given to providing earphones so that viewers can watch without disturbing other members. The set was donated by club member Barry Runnstrom.

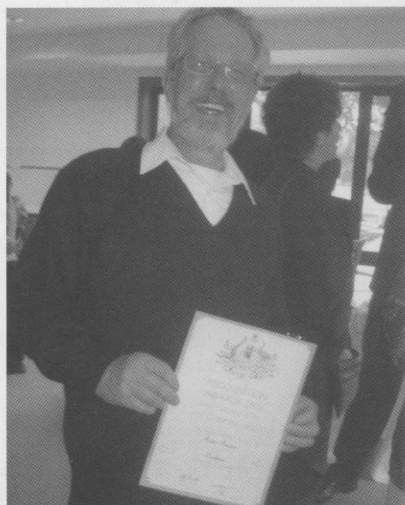
Tea and coffee is available from either the kitchen in the sitting room, or the main kitchen off Hall No 1, for a *gold coin* donation.

The sitting-room is also regarded as a potential earner for the club, being available for hire.

## Profitable partnership with "Friends"

The club's partnership with its "Friends" is proving valuable. For example, the club has been receiving more than \$100 each month from Office Essential, which represents commission paid to the club on purchases made by club members.

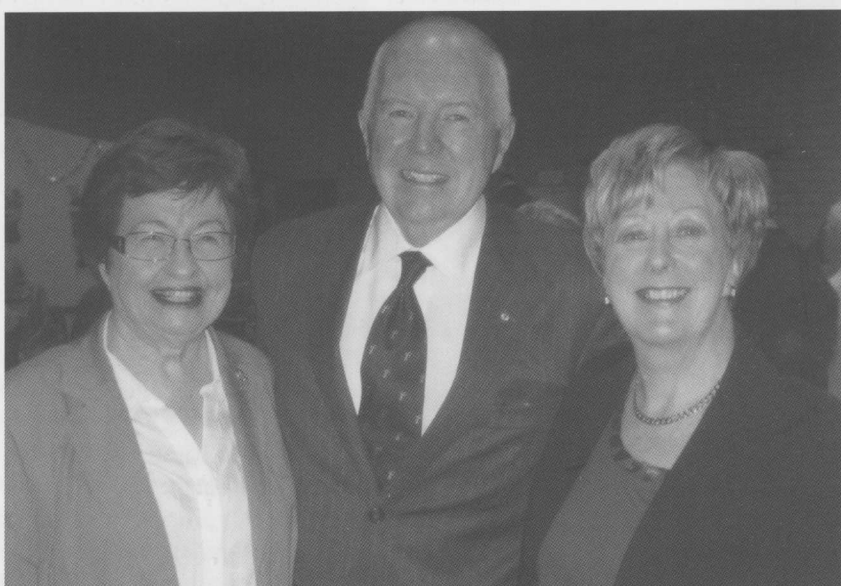
Office Essential (17-19 Aintree Court, Phillip) specialises in stationery, home office supplies and photocopying.



*Robin Brinton, one of three recipients of Recognition Awards.*



*Gary Humphreys, Ian Cleaver, John Hargreaves and Michael Bryce at opening.*



*Anne Murray, Michael Bryce and Iris Blewett.*



*Helen Sahhar, whose paintings in the new wing were greatly admired.*

# Members' response to survey positive; support for proposed new activities

By Margaret Kennedy

The response to the Activities Questionnaire distributed to members late last year was overwhelmingly positive, with 83% saying they were "very happy" with activities they participated in.

Activities most frequently mentioned were bowls (14%), bridge (11%), tai chi (11%) and choir (8%). Frequency of attendance for the majority was once or twice a week. 76% of respondents were female. A geographical profile indicated that, predictably, respondents were clustered in suburbs close to the club.

Comments related to activities

## Rapid response

*Decisions have already been taken to go ahead with new activities that won support in the survey ( see excursions by community bus, page 6, and bridge classes, page 4). An announcement on growing Australian native plants is expected shortly. Members are advised to register their interest in these, and other activities, at the office. - Dennis Blewett*

having welcoming, friendly participants, with interesting content and excellent, committed course leaders. One respondent summed up what appeared to be the general feeling: *The atmosphere is friendly and the instruction first class. Our instructors have taken us from being mere beginners to being reasonably competent in what promises to be a life-long activity.*

86% of respondents said they had benefited "very much" from participation in activities, 8% said "moderately", and the remainder did not answer this question.

Benefits mentioned most often as being "very" or "fairly" relevant were mental stimulation (65%), new friends (63%), benefits to health (53%), new knowledge (46%) and emotional support (32%).

11% reported that they were only "fairly happy" with their activity. Comments included disturbance due to building alterations, from people walking through classes and tea room

chatter. Most conceded that changes to the building would solve the noise problem and inconvenience.

Of particular interest was the response to activities presented in the survey to elicit member interest with a view to possible future implementation, with 81% responding enthusiastically, generally ticking multiple categories.

Most popular were: use of community bus for tours and cultural excursions (39%), computer classes (20%), growing Australian native plants and grasses (11%), guest speakers (7%) and use of the new sitting room for film hire and socialisation (6%).

Other popular activities that gained support included scrabble, genealogy, social dancing with a live band, book club discussion, bridge lessons, sing-alongs, and yoga.

One respondent suggested bike riding, and offered to be leader. Another respondent offered to lead an Australian plant group.

The total response was disappointing, but it was clear that respondents who chose to answer the questionnaire were skewed towards a higher educational level, and the choices in proposed new activities reflected this. Therefore caution is advised in implementing any of the popular choices without first ascertaining the inclinations of the larger membership.

*Note: Members who wish to see the full report, including tabulated data, should ask at the office.*

## Alan Hodges to chair Council on Ageing

New chair of the 2009-12 ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing will be Alan Hodges, AM, well-known to members of Woden Seniors. Alan was a key member of the committee that examined options when considering extending the club - considerations which led to adoption of the plan for three-stage development.

ACT Minister for Ageing John Hargreaves announced membership of the Council recently.

"This body provides vital input into the Government's policies and

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR A Christmas Carol (or a tale of \$20)

I rarely visit the club these days and had no part in the current building program. When visiting the club before Christmas, I was pleasantly surprised by the spacious new extension with its furnishings and other improvements to the club premises. One can only admire the efforts of those members and our indefatigable President who made it all happen. At the same time, I felt a twinge of conscience that others had done so much whereas I had contributed so little.

Like old Ebenezer, I do not give happily to charities as they can never show me where my donation will be spent. In my narrow world, charity begins at home. Then I remembered that the whole purpose of the club is to provide a "second home" where members can meet and interact with like-minded people in pleasant surroundings. So, without more ado, I handed over \$20 on the spot!

Every time I drive past the club now, I can say to myself that I helped to pay for that extension. It is a good feeling. Indeed I need to have more of it and another \$20 is on its way to the Treasurer. If all members who can afford to do likewise were also to contribute \$20, they would make a sizeable dent in the club's borrowings. Further, the degree to which such projects are self-funded can stimulate Government to provide matching funds. As your contribution may also qualify for a tax deduction, the venture has been viewed as a win-win situation.

See you down at the workhouse!

A TIGHT-FISTED MEMBER

initiatives on positive ageing, and on issues that impact on older Canberra's", he said.

"The reality is that we have an ageing population. This council has a key role in assisting Government to develop policies and programs that ensure that older people remain active and visible within our community.

"We know that the areas of health, housing and accommodation - along with transport, life-long learning, work and retirement - and support services are of keen interest to older people".



## Woden Seniors bowlers ready for the big-time Opportunity to learn to play bridge



After six instructive, and enjoyable, training sessions late last year at the Yamba Sports Club, in Phillip, the 16-strong Woden Seniors' lawn bowls team is almost ready to tackle the big-time.

Early this year two more Saturday coaching sessions are planned, together with two theory (rules and protocol) classes.

By March regular mid-week intra-team games will have commenced,

*Barrie Clarke and Wenda Brown at the Yamba Sports Club.* and later in the year we will endeavour to enter the fiercely-competitive world of championship bowling.

New members are most welcome.

No previous bowls experience is necessary. Our top-class coaching staff is equal to any challenge. So, come and join us.

Enquiries can be made at the club (6282 2573), or by talking to Barrie Clarke on 6288 4466.

Bridge is the most popular of cards games. It is stimulating, and challenging, and many members would like to take part, both in bridge sessions at the club and at other venues throughout Canberra.

However, they may be deterred by the perceived complexity of the game, and wish for an instructive, friendly entrée to the wonderful world of bridge.

*Have we got news for you?!!!*

Val Hopwood, an experienced teacher and player, has agreed to commence lessons beginning in March. She will cater for beginners (no experience), players with some experience, and "improvers". Bridge will be explained in easy-to-understand steps, before pupils play "supervised" bridge - that is, Val will move from table to table, advising pupils on "bids" and cards to play as situations develop.

From there pupils will gain additional experience playing amongst themselves, and then join experienced players at the club's regular sessions when, or if, they decide to do so.

Register your interest, and degree of experience, at the office.



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## Membership renewals

If your membership subscription (and parking permit if you have one) expired at the end of January 2009 or is due to expire at the end of February, March, or April 2009 you will have received a membership renewal form with this edition of *Meridian*. Renewal forms for memberships expiring at later times will be sent to the members concerned closer to their respective expiry dates. Your membership expiry date is printed on your *Meridian* address label in the form *mm/yyyy* where *mm* indicates the month of expiry and *yyyy* the year of expiry.

To use the club facilities and participate in club activities you must be a financial member (and have a current parking permit if you want to use the car park). You can renew your membership for either one or three years at a cost of \$10 per year. You can also apply for a new parking permit if you need one valid for one or three years at a cost of \$10 per year.

To renew your membership subscription and apply for a new parking permit:

(a) complete the membership renewal form;

(b) enclose the completed form in an envelope, endorsed with your name, together with your payment; and



*A view of the splendid new sitting room, a feature of the new wing.*

(c) leave the envelope in the membership renewals box at the office or mail to the club.

Your receipt and parking permit will be available for collection from the office one week later. If you require your receipt and parking permit to be sent to you by mail you should include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your renewal form.

### *Changes to membership details*

If, during your membership year, your postal address, e-mail address, telephone number, or vehicle registration number(s) change please notify the office so your membership record can be updated.

## New computer room and classes

The new computer room is now fully operational. It is located where the back office used to be.

It has been set up as a training room with desks facing the instructor and the whiteboard, which should be much easier and more comfortable for all participants.

Computer classes will resume in February. We have some very keen professionally trained teachers ready to take classes. As in the past classes will be offered at a range of levels and will focus on email, internet and word processing programs. So whether you are a complete beginner or someone who wants to brush up your skills there will be a course for you.

Details of the courses and times are on the computer class notice board outside the new computer room. So sign up now!!

At this stage we anticipate that there will be two or three classes per week. As in the past the room will be available to members who want to use a computer at any time when there are no classes. Class times will be listed on the whiteboard in the computer room and on the club's website.

If you would like to discuss the classes offered contact Judy Henderson on 6286 8693.

## Two-liners

When you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall.

You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.



*Congratulations! Ted Burke (right) toasts Enid Niven and Arnold Nordin on the buffet lunch provided at the opening of the new wing. Arnold, a master chef, has catered for previous club lunches, including Christmas in July.*

## Trips to theatre, other forms of entertainment on community bus?

The club is considering making greater use of its Woden Community Services bus, by organising visits to the theatre, cinema and other entertainment venues for groups of 10 members.

Members would board the bus at the club, and would be set

down at the club at the end of the evening out.

The bus would be driven by Stephanie Tolson, a staff member of Woden Community Services.

Details will be provided as they become available. Check out the website, notice board and emails.

## Cards and games day, with lunch at club to celebrate Seniors Week

The club will celebrate Seniors Week 2009 (15-22 March) with a "cards and games day" at the club on Tuesday 17 March (10am-2.30pm).

Bridge, solo and mahjong will be amongst the games played.

Lunch, with wine and soft drinks will be provided - all for \$15.

Seniors Week is co-ordinated by the ACT Council on the Ageing, and sponsored by the ACT Government. COTA compiled 120 events last year, and activities give seniors the opportunity to participate in varied events in and around Canberra.

Seniors Week also provides opportunity for representatives of

seniors' groups to talk to providers of health care and government services, and to take up issues with them.

### Line dancing is fun

Is line dancing for you? Line dancing takes place at the club on Mondays (10am).

It is great exercise, to stimulating music, and also an opportunity to meet other members and make friends. Steps and dance routines are fully explained.

Another activity for members to consider.

Details can be obtained by phoning the club, or visiting the office.

## Share a parking spot with a buddy

Parking at the club at busy times can be a problem. Wednesdays are probably the worst day. Members attending activities are encouraged to share cars with other members attending the same activities or, by agreement, park behind cars they know will not need to be moved until an activity finishes.

This system of sharing a parking spot with a buddy is being suggested to members on the club's website and by email.

### I-C-E (for emergency)

Paramedics attending people who have collapsed or been injured look to see if they are carrying a mobile phone. They then scroll through the addresses hoping to find ICE (in case of emergency) for the person to call in just such an emergency.

So, it is a good idea to make such an entry into your mobile. If you want to list more than one contact name, enter ICE1, ICE2, ICE3.

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# Cruising the Mediterranean

with Dennis Blewett

GUESTS aboard Holland-America's *Noordam* were mostly North Americans when we cruised the Mediterranean recently, and it appeared that most of them had spent more time at sea than James Cook.

"My twenty-fifth cruise", one lady confided, "and I am going again over Christmas". I was reminded of Hendrick van der Zee, in *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, whose fate was to cruise around the world for eternity.

Cruising is big business, and will inevitably become even bigger. The *Noordam* was one of seven cruise liners at Civitavecchia, taking on board guests, almost all of whom had been shuttled down from Rome, forty-five minutes' drive away.

The attraction of cruising is obvious. Accommodation is spacious, comfortable, and attentively serviced. Dining is formal, or casual, according to taste, and one can eat all day if one chooses to - a not inconsiderable attraction to many guests. On the *Noordam* there is a multiplicity of bars; there is dancing and disco, the casino, the gymnasium, swimming pools and sauna, live theatre and cinema. There is karaoke, and cooking classes, bridge, and deck games. There is the library, and the media room.

Almost every morning one awakes to another port, and a rich choice of tours. Livorno today, so do we go to Florence or (as we did) visit the Cinque Terre? Monte Carlo tomorrow; Barcelona the day after. There are tours for the more active guests - we, for instance, toured Mallorca by bicycle, not having ridden a bicycle for years, and dinner companions kayaked. Alternative tours are recommended for less active guests.

The Mediterranean in August is hot - nowhere more so than when we went to Tunis (where we visited Carthage) and Olympia. Everywhere was crowded, perhaps most noticeably Naples (from where we went to Sorrento and Pompeii) and Santorini. All rewarding, but perhaps most of all we enjoyed the Cinque Terre, Dubrovnik and Kusadasi (from

where we visited the ancient cities of Priene, Didyma and Miletus).

Every day maps and information sheets on the following day's stop are delivered to state rooms (not "cabins", just as passengers are guests not "passengers"). One tries to be prepared, if only to appear knowledgeable to other guests, although I was reminded of a number from *Kiss Me Kate* as I mused on where I had been today and where I was going tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow:

*We open in Venice,  
We next play Verona,  
Then on to Cremona.  
Lotsa laughs in Cremona.  
Our next jump is Parma,  
That stingy, dingy menace,  
Then Mantua, then Padua,  
Then we open again, where?*

Ashore, bargaining is a feature, of course, taken seriously by the ladies, while for the most part their menfolk shuffle their feet and seek to appear otherwise occupied.

"For you, madam, a very good price. Only fifty Euros"

"Fifty? No way".

"Fifty is a very good price, madam".

"Much too much".

"Madam! Too much? Well, what will you give me?"

"Seven".

"Seven Euros, madam!!! Seven!!! I have a wife and five children . . ."

A few random observations:

- We found the best "serious" shopping - leatherwear and jewellery - was at Kusadasi. Visa, Amex . . .

- Holland-America's embarkation / disembarkation procedures and shuttle service to and from quayside to airport/Rome of highest standard. Passengers and their luggage handled with utmost care, and courtesy

- In Mediterranean countries traffic lights and pedestrian crossings are purely street decoration. In Italy, we were told, motor cyclists are valued as potential organ donors! Not one car in twenty is undamaged; most have dents at all four corners.

- Scottish comedian Billy Connolly advises that, when one reaches sixty, never pass a toilet. In Europe it is unnecessary advice, because when one *does* chance to come across one it is not a moment too soon. On more than one occasion I observed ladies desperately shoul-

dering their way into men's toilets!

- Never "give way" to another pedestrian. Rather than graciously acknowledging such unaccustomed consideration, the fortunate recipient can scarcely refrain from uttering "sucker", or whatever "sucker" is in French or Italian.

- Americans use as many words as possible, without necessarily saying much: "Say, tell me then, you got ham on this ship? So, you *got* ham, uh? That's good. *Real* good. Now, tell me, what sort of bread you got? You *got* rye bread? That there? Let me have a look. That *sure* looks like rye to me. You got cheese? What *sort* of cheese? *That* sort, uh? Well, I'll tell you what - I'll have ham - and *heavy* on the ham - and a couple of slices of that cheese of yours on that rye bread. That's looking good. You got ketchup? You *don't* have ketchup? What sort of goddam ship is this then? All right, you got *pickle*? *Mustard* pickle? . . ."

- Check your insurance. A friend we made, feeling unwell, went to see the ship's doctor. The cost of the consultation? \$US500. "I *think* I'm covered", he said doubtfully.

- Everyone has a digital camera, or two. Sightseeing has been superseded by "image" recording. An etiquette has developed, too. One seeks to avoid spoiling the "images" of others by not walking into shot, and hopes for similar consideration when focusing on one's own shot.

- Questions asked by guests: "Will this elevator take me to the front of the ship?" "Do we dock in the centre of town?" "Do you have cable TV?" "Does the ship generate its own power?" "Does the crew sleep on board?"

- *Noordam's* captain, a New Zealander, told us that one of his first commands was of a live sheep transporter between Australia and the Middle East. I doubt he wore his immaculate white uniform in those days.

- Security at airports remains an irritant. At Canberra my shoes were identified as potentially dangerous, and I had to take them off; at Sydney I had to take off my belt, and at Hong Kong a key was confidently identified as having activated a beeper. It follows, of course, that the shoes, belt and key each passed muster twice.

# Frequently asked questions

answered by *Grahame Hellyer*

We didn't get any feed back from our previous FAQs, but in the hope that readers found the answers helpful, here are more. This edition I have restricted coverage to one topic because I believe it is quite important, and because there is little information available for the average person.

*Q.: What do I replace my VCR (video cassette recorder) with? Do I need to if it hasn't broken down?*

*A.:* The video recorders found in almost every home, often called VCRs, used a tape cassette and they had an in-built analogue TV tuner. That means that when the analogue TV transmissions are turned off in about 2 years they will stop recording. (You will, however, still be able to play back your old tapes.) Only equipment with a digital tuner will record.

Many people have already changed to digital recorders because:

- they are easier to use,
- they give a better picture, and
- they can also be used to get digital programs on your existing TV without buying a separate set top box.

Digital recorders have had little publicity and the information available is confusing. You have a number of choices:

- DVD recorders recording onto DVD discs (usually with only an analogue tuner, so not a good idea!),
- DVD recorders with a hard disk drive (HDD) as well, (usually with one digital tuner),
- PVR (Personal video recorders) which have two digital tuners and a HDD.

Most recorders advertised widely are those which record onto DVD. This sounds good, but usually they only have one tuner. You need to ask yourself: are you mainly using the recorder to catch up with programs you missed because you were out, or they were on too late, or they clashed with something else; or do you want to record programs onto a disc to put away and watch in years to come?

The other type, the Personal Video Recorders (PVR), record onto a hard

disk drive (HDD). They have two digital tuners so that you can record two programs simultaneously, or two programs whose times overlap. You can also start a recording, come in a few minutes later and watch from the beginning while it is still recording. You can then skip forward, or fast forward, past the ads when you come to any ad break!

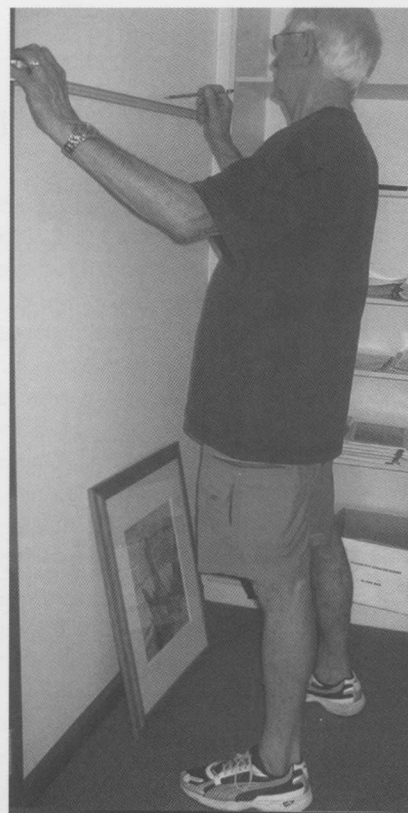
You can bring up a list of the programs you have recorded on the TV screen and, with the press of a button, start the one you want. No more running through tapes trying to find a particular program. They will record at least 40, and sometimes over 100, hours of programs, so eventually you will have to delete programs, but 40 hours is quite a lot of TV! You can also delete programs with a press of a button so it is quite easy to set the recorder to automatically record your favourite programs every week and then delete them if you actually watched them.

In my opinion the advantages of having two tuners outweighs the benefit of being able to store permanently on disc. I have old VCR tapes which I made years ago, and never watched again, just taking up space.

One reason most people don't know about PVRs is that they are not, or until now have not been, made by the big, well-known brands with the big advertising budgets. The most popular PVR brands are Beyonwiz and Topfield, but there are other satisfactory brands like Mediastar (which I have), Humax and Strong. You can buy a Standard Definition (SD) PVR for about \$300 - \$500, or a High definition (HD) for \$600-800. A SD PVR would suit most people. Of course, if you want to spend a lot of money you can buy a recorder with DVD, HDD and two tuners!

Finally, remember, as with most electronic gear, the shops are prepared to sell them well below the list price if you ask! You should get 10% - 30% off the list price.

*If you have any queries just call me, Grahame Hellyer, on 62302480.*



*Werner Friedrich who, with Iris Blewett, was responsible for hanging paintings in the club's new wing.*

## Macklin visits club

On Monday 8 December, Jenny Macklin, Federal Minister for Community Services, visited Woden Seniors, where she met many members in the club's new wing.

She came to speak with members regarding the one-off payment that pensioners, carers and all holders of the Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card subsequently received in time for Christmas.

The media was present to report what the Minister, and members, had to say.

Ms Macklin's discussions with members brought forth interesting, serious and humorous replies.

She asked members how they would spend the grants (\$1400 for singles, \$2000 for couples). The replies included such things as "have my hair done", new dentures, new washing machine, paying the bills, household repairs, holidays, trips, and Christmas gifts for the family.

One member suggested that if the grants were to serve the Federal Government's purpose - that is to stimulate the economy - they should be spent on things that were Australian-made, thereby keeping Australians in employment.