***The Gap Lions Ladies Auxiliary and its Contribution to Lionism 1968-1988***

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***The Emerging Role of Women in Lionism***

When Lions International was formed at Chicago in 1917, it was conceived as a network of fraternal businessmen’s clubs whose aim was to support and build better local communities through service. In 1975 provision was made for women to join the clubs as Lionesses but only to those branches that had sponsored a Lioness club. They operated under the Lions’ banner and their activities were undertaken with the approval of the host Club. Whilst supporting Lions projects and foundations, they also branched out with fundraisers such as morning teas, fashion parades, and raffles to assist disadvantaged women and children, the elderly and other causes.

By late 1977 the issue of admitting women to Lions clubs was being hotly debated throughout the Districts. It wasn’t until 1987 that Lions International approved the membership of women as fully-fledged Lions members. It was felt thereafter that community-minded women would join the organisation in their own right. In May 2021 Lions International formally disbanded the Lioness Clubs as separate entities and invited the members to apply for membership of existing clubs, thus absorbing the Lionesses into a single Lions movement. Thus, women could be nominated and appointed as board members, opening the way to club presidency. The appointment of Phyllis Stubbin as President of Ashgrove Lions Club 1998/99 was an important milestone, followed two years later by Dawn Bradley 2001/02. Following amalgamation, Dr Joyce Arnold served as President of Ashgrove/The Gap Lions Club 2016/17 and Susie Green in 2020/21.

Interestingly, the issue of sponsoring a Lioness club was raised for discussion at The Gap Board Meetings. Undoubtedly swayed by the auxiliary’s achievements, including its highly successful art shows, the members felt that the club was “operating splendidly under the present arrangement”. Indeed, the auxiliary also convened a special meeting to discuss this issue. After much discussion the women agreed that “We felt our men preferred us to remain as an auxiliary, and – by the end of the night – we knew we also wished it that way”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Ultimately the club decided against the proposal in light of their own and the women’s wishes.

***The Formation of The Gap Lions Ladies Auxiliary, 1968***

However, due to their admiration for the work being done by their husbands and partners as members of the Gap Lions Club, the women wanted to assist in every way they could but on an informal, less structured basis. The idea of forming an auxiliary was not new. Until 1987 it was a widely accepted convention that the wife or partner of a newly-elected Lions president would assume the position of President of the Ladies Auxiliary during his one-year term of office. The Gap wives and partners took their proposal to the board. Not all of the members were supportive of the idea and debated whether the formation of a ladies’ auxiliary was a “good idea or not”. Murray Anderson, President of The Gap Lions at the time, was convinced the ladies would give the club “added support and encouragement with our own projects”. Ron Osborne was also “full of praise for the ladies” and appreciative of their help catering for the Forum he had recently organised. [[2]](#footnote-2) (Ron would become a very committed, active Lion who served as The Gap Lions President in 1971/72 and his wife Jan, an auxiliary leader and seemingly tireless worker for 20 years.) Within a couple of years, all the dissent had evaporated.

**Presidents of the Gap Lions Ladies Auxiliary 1968-1988**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Margaret Walters | 1968-69 | Viv Laing | 1978-79 |
| Laurie Galloway | 1969-70 | Joan Ann Kendall | 1979-80 |
| Joan Anderson | 1970-71 | Laurie Blanch | 1980-81 |
| Jan Osborne | 1971-72 | Viv Laing | 1981-82 |
| Janet Anderson | 1972-73 | Esme Graham | 1982-83 |
| Evaline Lochtie | 1973-74 | Lorraine Rasmussen | 1983-84 |
| Julie O’Brian/Janice Harris | 1974-75 | Norma Trickey | 1984-85 |
| Hazel Napier | 1975-76 | Norma Gow | 1985-86 |
| Rita Gentle | 1976-77 | Glenda Smith | 1986-87 |
| Viv Laing | 1977-78 | Betty Wernham | 1987-88 |

When Ross Walters, was duly installed as inaugural president of The Gap Lions Club in 1968, his wife Margaret was duly appointed inaugural President of the Gap Lions Ladies Auxiliary. The Auxiliary President was expected to organise a group of ‘Lions’ Ladies’, as they were respectfully known, to assist the Lions with fundraising, all manner of needy causes and to play a major role in organising the social life of the club. Margaret’s term was short, as part-way through the year, Ross’s business commitments took him to Sydney. David Galloway succeeded Ross and his wife Laurie took on presidency of the Ladies’ Auxiliary. For two decades, the wives were true helpmates to their husbands, boosting the pool of voluntary workers and making a substantial contribution to the club by increasing its fundraising capacity, community and social activities.

***The Contribution of The Gap Lions’ Ladies’ Auxiliary to the Local Community, Fund-raising and Various Charitable Causes, 1968-1988***

***The Early Years:***

Laurie Galloway, Joan Anderson and Jan Osborne were the pathfinders in establishing the Ladies Auxiliary. The auxiliary was formed in 1968, the very year that the club was chartered. From the outset the ladies assisted with the Gap Lion’s first charitable activities: a ‘Reverse’ Santa Tree to collect gifts donated by the Gap children for Aboriginal children and a ‘Ringathon’ (both introduced in 1968-69) during which the Lions members phoned some 50 Gap residents (increasing into 100s) asking for a donation towards a needy cause. The ‘Ringathon’, which was inaugurated at the Gap, became a widely-adopted Lions’ annual fundraiser throughout Australia. The women provided refreshments, manned the phones and helped to collect donations. They even made and sold hand-made paper flowers in the city, raising $206 in the first of several years. That same year David Galloway was instrumental in starting the Miss Personality Quest to benefit renal research in 1969-70. This in turn drew a lot of women into fundraising efforts for the Miss Personality candidate. By the third major event that year: a progressive dinner that began at the Galloway’s home, the help of the Ladies Auxiliary was fully recognised by the Lions members*.*

Each month, sixteen or so women met informally, generally during the day, at one or another’s home. In the main, they were young mothers who used their talents creatively and productively to assist disadvantaged women, children and the aged. They cooked, sewed, ran or manned fete stalls, organised fundraisers, assisted elderly people with transport, visited children’s homes and hospitals and even, if required, took up a paintbrush at Camp Duckadang (a Lions community project for youth and handicapped persons). Over the years the Lions Ladies undertook increasingly larger projects and contributed substantially to the local charities including Ashgrove Meals on Wheels, various childrens’ causes, hospitals, distressed and bereaved Gap families, struggling migrants, the local schools and other causes.

The 1974 Brisbane flood saw many parts of The Gap inundated with floodwaters and mud. The Lions formed their own ‘mud army’ to help residents who needed a hand clear away the mess. Many of the Gap ladies were entrusted with the task of laundering clothing and other salvageable items; whilst others provided hot food and drinks for those affected and the volunteers. Further afield, the women manned a kitchen near the Regatta Hotel, Coronation Drive, to provide home cooked food for affected families and helpers. “The whole club”, according to an official bulletin, “worked like Trojans to make life easier for flood-affected families.”

The auxiliary also organised a busy round of social activities. In just one year (1970/71) the Auxiliary organised a La Boite theatre night, a boat cruise on the Brisbane River and helped to organise a film evening, a BBQ and Christmas party. They contributed to a Gypsy and a Luau social evening in 1971/72 and organised a progressive dinner. They played squash, collected and sold scrap metal, assisted with the Ringathon and supported Miss Personality. In addition, they and their families hosted Lions exchange students and helped an immigrant Finnish family to settle into their new home at The Gap. Prior to the family’s arrival, the women ensured everything was ready by scrubbing out the house, collecting furniture, gathering utensils and basic provisions.

In return the women made close and enduring friendships - even the children made new playmates - and enjoyed a social life that included progressive dinners at the members’ homes, a Stone Age night, a cryptic version of Shakespeare’s ‘Julius Caesar’, a Polynesian Luau Night with pigs-on-a spit, a Hootenanny Showdown and other fun-filled evenings. They managed to strike a balance between serious fundraising and fun. Over the years, the Lions and their ladies raised many thousands of dollars for charity and the club was acknowledged as one of the best in the district. The major feather in their cap was undoubtedly the Auxiliary’s Art Show.

There were many very capable women in the auxiliary whose talents were matched by their determination to assist disadvantaged people in the community. There is no doubt the group benefitted from an extraordinarily capable leadership at a time when women tended to be dismissed as stay-at-homes. When David Galloway was elected president in 1969, Laurie took over the presidency. Laurie was a capable country girl, born at Roma before moving to Atherton and finally Brisbane. She was educated at St Hilda’s School Southport, before working at Queensland University, then trying her hand in various fields, including photography. After her marriage, Laurie spent some years out of the work-force, then joined David to set up their family business: the highly successful Galloway Art Galleries and Fine Art Centre (which still operates at Brooks St, Bowen Hills). Given Laurie’s experience, it was no coincidence that the Ladies Auxiliary had the confidence and wherewithal to tackle their own art show in 1969, just the second year of the club’s existence.

***The Lions Ladies Auxiliary’s Art Show, 1970-1979:***

The Auxiliary’s first Art Exhibition was held in 1970, during the Lions Club’s third year, and immediately became a highly successful event and the auxiliary’s major annual fundraiser until

1979/80. The exhibition was convened by Evaline Lochtie and held in the rooms of the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society (Deaf Services today), a small building at North Quay. The women raised $1000 which assisted Lifeline to purchase a Chesney caravan for use as temporary accommodation for deserted wives and homeless women.

The following year in 1971 the second Art Show convened by Barbara Perrott “moved a step up” to larger premises at the Master Builders’ Association House, Wickham Terrace. The women, assisted by the men, worked extremely hard to repeat the success of the previous year. However, having to lug everything, including large heavy screens, up and down two flights of stairs proved exhausting for everyone. With 200 paintings on display and demonstrations of copper enamelling and other crafts, the profit of $1024 proved well worth the effort. The beneficiaries were the Hearing Impaired and Nudgee Orphanage. The Art Committee decided then to support two selected charities per year with a substantial donation.

However, it was the third year of the show 1972 (convened by Barbara Perrott) that they “moved into the bigtime”, according to Ron Osborne. Rita Gentle and Janet Anderson took the courageous but risky step of booking the Park Royal Motor Inn (Brisbane CBD) and its caterers for opening night, which meant the expenses ballooned into the $1000s. Some of the Lions feared that women had overreached themselves. Despite this, proceeds of over $1000 were distributed to the Children’s Subnormal Association (renamed Endeavour Foundation) specifically to assist the organisation to cater for disabled children in the western suburbs (in 1977 the profits were donated to Multicap’s Parkhaven centre for older disabled people). It was at this point, with the backing of well-known artists, that the auxiliary decided to make the show an annual event.

After the success of the previous year, the women ran their next Art Exhibition (convened by Rita Gentle) at the Park Royal again in 1973. It was a gala event opened by no less than Sir John Gorton, former Prime Minister of Australia (1968-1971). The women had had the temerity to invite Sir John, thinking it unlikely he would accept their invitation – but he assented, ensuring maximum publicity for the show. That year’s exhibition contained a striking collection of Papuan carvings. Proceeds of $2000 were distributed to the Paraplegic Association’s Spinal Injuries and Rehabilitation Unit, Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) which became a major focus of the women’s support.

Ron Osborne, a long-serving member of The Gap Lions, and his wife Jan were major contributors to the club since its formation in 1968. Ron’s family were copra planters in Papua and, during the Pacific War, Ron served as a coast-watcher for Naval Intelligence, and Jan, who was raised at Ashgrove, worked as a secretary, before their marriage. As a new bride in Papua, her life took a radical, colourful change. The couple ran a trade store on Rossel Island and spent time trading around the islands of the Louisiade Archipelago (at the southern tip of Papua). They were thus uniquely placed to organise the importation of Papuan artwork.

The following Art Show (1974), again at the Park Royal and convened, with wonderful success, by Janet Anderson, featured carvings from Woodlark Isl. Papua, oils from Bali, and the work of well-known local artists and craftsmen (collectively valued at over $20,000). The ladies managed to secure Mrs Lesley Gotto, Director of the Queensland Festival of Arts, to open the exhibition and Rick Everingham, a celebrated artist, donated a painting ‘Sand Castles’ for the raffle which was won by a delighted Joan-Ann Kendall. Proceeds of over $4000 were donated to the Paraplegic Association and Ashgrove Meals on Wheels. The auxiliary used some of the funds to decorate the recreation area at the Spinal Unit, P.A. Hospital. As a measure of their achievement, in just a few years 1971-1974, the auxiliary had donated more than $9000 to local charities.

By 1975 the ladies’ art exhibition (convened by Janet Anderson and opened by John Greenwood MLA) – now known as The Gap Lions Art Show and held again at the Park Royal, was booming, with artworks valued at over $30,000 on display and a valuable painting, ‘Inland Gold’, donated for the raffle by the acclaimed artist Max Boyd. Although the takings were excellent, the costs were heavy, leaving $3657 for distribution to the Multicap Association and Cystic Fibrosis. In a new development, many of the women who were involved in the show volunteered to help out at the Paraplegic Association’s Art Show.

**THE GAP LIONS LADIES AUXILIARY ART SHOWS**

The following year’s show (convened again by Rita Gentle) was opened by Sir Bruce Small, MLA and former Gold Coast Mayor. The committee gave a fresh, new look to the show by introducing an architecturally designed ‘pagoda’, built by the Lions members, and creatively adorned with hanging pot plants. After expenses, proceeds of some $5000 were divided between the Paraplegic Welfare Association and, closer to home, the Marist Accident Appeal. The appeal was established to aid parents who were seriously injured when a partly demolished building collapsed on them during a working bee at Amberley. In a remarkable effort, $640 was single-handedly raised by an Auxiliary member Hazel McCathie specifically for Ashgrove Meals on Wheels. Through the sale of her hand-made cushions, over three years Hazel had made an estimated at 9000 cushions to aid various charities.

Janet Anderson again convened the 1977 Art Show, which was opened by Larry Pickering, the well-known political cartoonist for the *Australian* newspaper. Although, the ladies enjoyed Larry’s company immensely, the work involved in organising the show year after year, began to tell on the women. As Rita Gentle explained in her 1977 Annual Report: “I think to really appreciate the role of the Art Show Convenor, one needs to have been involved in an Art Show and most of us have been completely. Janet this year faced a worry none of us had in the past – spiralling costs.” Boothville Maternity Hospital and Multiple Sclerosis Qld were the beneficiaries of a $1000 donation each and Ashgrove Meals on Wheels received $640 from Hazel’s cushions. However, the tremendous cost increases at the Park Royal meant that the hotel was receiving more in rental and catering charges than the total profits. It was no longer viable. New plans would have to be made and a cheaper venue found.

‘Lifestyle ’78’, as the 9th art show was renamed (convened by Julie Lynch and Kerry Marrone), was relocated to the 29th Floor of the new AMP Building - courtesy of AMP. The innovative makeover included 100,000 worth of art and craftworks and novel furniture displays by Brisbane’s leading interior decorators: James Penny, Adam Interiors and the Nature Design Centre, complemented by Graham’s Indoor Gardens. Jan Wickham, an auxiliary member, tackled the momentous task of catering for the opening night. The Brisbane sculptor Alma Cole prepared and donated six cameo caricatures of six well-known political figures. In another change, Australia’s Test Cricket Captain, Greg Chappell, was invited to open the show but was subsequently unable to make it, and radio personality Barbara Bowers stepped in. Of the record profit of $6000, $1000 was donated to Ashgrove Meals on Wheels, $450 to Microsurgery and the remainder to Montrose Children’s Home.

However, organising the show was becoming increasingly difficult. With escalating costs and paintings not selling as well as previously, it was evident that the Art Show could not continue in its present form. Despite the setbacks, Janet Anderson agreed to convene yet another show (her third) in 1979. Although the committee had invited the Governor, Sir James Ramsay, to open the show, it had neither settled on the venue nor decided on a fresh new format. The ladies selected Bardon Professional Development Centre, decided to cut back on the paintings, and incorporate a musical performance, comprising opera and items by the Gap High School Orchestra. To cut costs, they catered for the opening supper themselves. The show raised a magnificent sum of $6000, which together with $1339 from the Art Union, was distributed to Meals on Wheels and to Lions Camp Duckadang. Hazel McCattie single-handedly raised $1168 for Ashgrove Meals on Wheels, through her cushions.

However, the 10th Art Show in 1979 proved to be the last. It was discontinued due to problems with the venue and the burden of growing costs, on top of the exhausting work of organising a three-day event each year. Bureaucratic problems had arisen from the use of the Bardon Professional Development Centre by a non-educational body, as well as higher than anticipated charges. It was a disheartening experience. Each year, the women imposed great pressure on themselves to expand the show, making it bigger and better each year, raising more funds for charity. It was becoming growingly difficult to repeat the success of previous years and introduce innovative changes. In addition, hoping to emulate the club’s success, other organisations ventured into a similar area thus diminishing the pool of available artists and venues.

The ladies had managed to continue for a decade before accepting that they could not keep up the enormous pressure, year after year. Certainly, they could rest on their laurels for they had raised many thousands of dollars for charity.

As an unexpected outcome, however, contact with the beneficiaries of the Art Shows opened new avenues of service. In return for their assistance, the women were invited to visit the facilities, meet with the patients, handicapped children, the elderly or others in need, and maintain their friendship. Margaret Walters and Laurie Galloway, for instance, spent many long hours decorating the spinal unit at the P.A. for Christmas.

Through their fundraising efforts, the Auxiliary members connected with Multicap, Ashgrove Meals on Wheels, Montrose Home for Crippled Children, the Autistic Children’s Association, the Hearing Impaired and other organisations.

Although the Art Shows were discontinued in 1980, the auxiliary members continued to meet until 1989 when the auxiliary was disbanded. Until then, the members maintained their busy schedule of fundraising and local community assistance. The group was remarkably cohesive during its twenty years existence. The auxiliary’s popular three-course progressive dinners continued, generating funds for autistic children, O.P.A.L. (One People of Australia League) and Lions Renal Research. These three-course dinners held at the homes of three members became large-scale events with up to 100 people attending. Each venue needed a good complement of helpers to prepare and serve each course.

The passage of 40-50 years has diminished the energy of those early days when the women were in their thirties. Today many wives and partners continue to support the activities of the club by helping out at various fundraisers, community activities and social functions.

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1. ‘Lady President’s Report’, in ‘The Gap Lions Club 9th Annual Report, 1976/77, 6th pg. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These comments can be found in a ‘Know Your Club’ brief (Lions Ladies Scrapbook) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)