

Speaker for the May Meeting – Ros Otzen

WHO?? Hester Hornbrook and her ladies - creators of Melbourne's first social supports in the 1850s and 1860s



Roslyn Otzen, an educator and former Principal of Korowa AGS, completed her PhD thesis on the early Melbourne City Mission, and served a term on the MCM Board. She became the inaugural Chair of the Hester Hornbrook Academy Board, and continues as a Director. She still studies the MCM's early days, and especially the work of its women, whose own lives have been a closed book, until on-line access to records of the past have enabled their recovery. She has published several histories, including a biography of Dr John Singleton, another founder of the MCM. Other publications include *Grace and Strength: Calisthenics in Australia* (2011) and *To Begin The World Anew: How Particular Nobodies Made Australia* (2022).

The gold rush of the 1850s was a disaster for many - they suffered ill-health, death, a complete lack of family and social support, were orphaned, turned to prostitution. There were no services or assistance for them until a group of women saw the needs and took action to provide help. They are all completely unknown. No historian has mentioned them by name - until I took up the cause! The tale of how I found them, who they were and what they did - it's all extraordinary. They *deserve* to be known.