



• • Marion Stokes, settled down for a talk on the radio.

CB radio opens new world for women

WHEN people around the State hear the call sign Bunbury Radio 369 they know its Margaret Holden looking for the chance to meet someone new.

Marion Stokes, Bunbury Radio 75, is equally recognisable, usually answering a call for help or simply looking for a chat.

Margaret is blind and Marion is incapacitated, something they both cope well with in everyday life but on the radio they are just a voice the same as any other voice.

Margaret joined the Bunbury Radio Club three years ago.

The day after her radio was installed she swallowed her nerves and decided to try and call someone.

"I haven't stopped talking since," she laughed.

The radio has changed the routine of her life.

She spends at least two hours a day on air, more if she can pick up people long distances away on what radio people call "skip".

"I used to drag my time out so I would have things to do," Margaret said.

"Now I hurry through things to get time to spend on the radio."

Margaret refers to Marion, who has been in the club eight years, as "an old hand".

Her call sign 75 is one of the lowest numbers in the club.

Curiosity drew her towards CB radio. Bored with the races on her kitchen radio Margaret unknowingly tuned in to shortwave and heard people talking to each other.

"I thought something had happened at sea," she said.

Later she heard the repair man, who was at her house, talking on the radio in the back yard. It was her introduction to CB.

Like Margaret, Marion was nervous with her new radio.

"I used to listen, then phone people up to tell

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them there was a call on the radio for them," she said.

Margaret enjoys talking to people from all over the country.

When the skip comes in she can spend twice as much time on the radio talking to her son in Darwin, friends she has made interstate and new contacts who happen to be on the radio at the time.

"The skip is exciting because one minute you have got someone, and then you have lost them," she said.

"I think I've been talking for 20 minutes, but when I look at the clock its two hours.

"I have to tell the other person to talk while I get a drink because my mouth gets dry from talking constantly."

When Margaret does not feel like talking, the radio stays on and she can hear others talk.

"There is always someone to talk to if you need them," she said.

"It is better than a silent day on your own."

Margaret has talked to many other people on the radio who have disabilities.

She has shared the air waves with an elderly blind man in Townsville and a club of visually impaired people from Victoria.

She has also spoken to a man who suffered from cancer of the throat and had his voice box removed.

"He has an artificial voice box and sounds like a robot when he speaks," she said.

"It makes me realise that I'm not so bad off after all."

Margaret gets a range of reactions when she

tells people over the radio that she cannot see.

"Some say, 'sweetheart I wouldn't have a clue', but others say they're sorry," she said.

"They don't have to feel bad because I don't."

Marion believes CB radio plays an important part in helping with police inquiries and emergency situations.

"I would like to see the police involved with us more because CB operators are out and about all the time and always see things," she said.

Marion has answered a number of mayday calls, most recently when a basketball player suffered serious head injuries during a game and again when a vehicle became stuck in sand at a Busselton beach.

"I love helping people, and the majority of people on CB are the same," she said.

Marion said the radio club had also played a major role in bringing visitors to the area.

"You talk to people from all over the country and they say they'll come and see you without even knowing anything about Bunbury until they get here," she said.

The CB provides Marion with company and someone to talk to but she wants to get away from the image of lonely people with nothing else to do.

She said it was a fun way of communicating, particularly when she was restricted in her movements.

"I'd go round the bend with no one to talk to," Marion said.

"The radio can be wonderful therapy."

Margaret agrees with her.

"I'd never do away with it," she said.

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