

* * INFORMATION PAGE * *

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CONTRIBUTIONS to Newsette are requested from readers and should be sent to the **EDITOR**: Mrs Beryl McLaughlin
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I'm on a Committee

*Oh give me your pity, I'm on a committee
Which means that, from morning to night,
We attend and amend and contend and defend
Without a conclusion in sight.*

*We confer and concur, we defer and demur
And re-iterate all of our thoughts.
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda,
And consider a load of reports.*

*We compose and propose, we suppose and oppose,
And the points of procedure are fun.
But though various notions are brought up as motions,
There's terrible little gets done!*

*We resolve and absolve, but we never dissolve,
Since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our committee
Where else could we make such a fuss?*

(With acknowledgement to PWA SPAN)



NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN - NSW UNIT

A C W seeks:

- ... to unite Australian churchwomen in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- ... to provide opportunities for Christian women of different denominations to worship, study and serve together.

PRESIDENT: Rev Elizabeth Walker Tel: 9415.2603

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

My dear friends,

I have just returned from the ACW National Conference in Brisbane. This Conference is held every two years in a different State or Territory and usually lasts for five days. Between 50 and 60 women attended, representing all ACW Units, our affiliated denominations and special interest groups. We had guests and visitors from overseas, most notably Dr Esther Byu, the Executive Secretary of the International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

It was an inspiring conference, with memorable input from many people. We shared experiences and made decisions about future directions for ACW. It is difficult to confine myself to one outstanding memory, but I have chosen to tell you of the evening with Glynthea Finger. Glynthea is a Churches of Christ minister who has returned to Brisbane after working for some years with the Christian Conference of Asia. She told us in graphic detail about the suffering of many women in Asia. Glynthea brought a red flowering geranium in a pot, which she moved from table to table among us as she spoke - she wanted us to remember the red geranium as a symbol of

hope, reminding us that wherever women gather and share their stories there is hope. The red geranium had first impacted its image on Glynthea when she was visiting Smokey Mountain, the rubbish dump in Manila, where many poor people eke out a living sorting saleable rubbish. There she saw a red geranium struggling to survive, and has used it as her symbol of hope ever since.

At the conference, most of us (even some who confessed they did not like geraniums!) made a commitment to pray for the suffering women of Asia, whenever we see the splash of colour in a red geranium. I invite you all to join us in those prayers. During the Christmas season there will be splashes of red everywhere to remind us.

With my best wishes to you all for a happy and holy Advent and Christmas season,
Elizabeth Walker.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

As I write this report I am still re-living our time at the National Conference in Brisbane. Although the tropical downpours were frequent, the fellowship was warm and it was great to catch up with so many interstate friends.

One of the highlights for me was to spend time with Esther Byu, the international secretary for the FLC. Esther was one of the guest speakers - it was thrilling to listen to the way God has led her life and empowered her to serve him through FLC and in so many other ways.

The International Committee of FLC will be meeting in Jamaica in November (14th-21st), to decide on the allocation of the grants for the year 2000, and they would value our prayers.

The new National FLC Convener, now that the National Executive has moved to South Australia, is Mrs Margaret Greenslade. Margaret was able to meet and talk to the FLC State Conveners.

By the time you are reading this, World Community Day will have come and gone, our Least Coins will have been dedicated and will be on their way to support projects around the world.

Many thanks again for your wonderful support during 1999, and as we look ahead to the year 2000, let us thank God for the privilege of giving and sharing. May you all have a very happy and holy Christmas season.

Shirley Wells, FLC Convener.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

At the recent ACW National Conference we learned that the 1999 Scholar, MAI ZIN ZIN WAH, had arrived in Singapore from Myanmar (Burma) to take up her scholarship on 11th September. There had been some difficulty in obtaining an exit visa for her and she was unable to commence her studies in July as planned. It is hoped that she will be able to extend her stay to complete the course. Please pray for her - she is doing studies for pre-entry Master's Degree at the Trinity Theological College. Past WKS Convener, Mina Whybourne has heard from Norma Dumbrell, whose husband Bill is a lecturer at the College, and she mentioned that she has met Zin Zin, who is a very sweet girl - she has attended the prayer meeting that Norma has in her home - a special prayer needed is that Zin Zin's English is poor and she needs to improve it to manage her studies.

The National Executive, now based in Adelaide, was inducted at the end of the Conference. The new WKS National Convener is Mrs Dorothy Ferrier, one of the WKS Trustees, so the Scholarship remains in good hands. I was pleased to meet the outgoing WKS National Convener, Mrs Ailsa Skippen, who has been so helpful during her term of office.

The Scholar for 2000 was announced at Conference. She is Miss Susanna Nitraj of Hughes in the A.C.T, whose studies will be in Theology at St Mark's College in Canberra. This is the first time that an Australian Scholar has been chosen from a nomination from the ACT Unit and the women there are very excited and looking forward to having her studying in their city. She was able to attend the Fellowship Day Service in July held in Queanbeyan. We congratulate Susanna and wish her well for her studies.

NSW Unit had nominated three young women for the 2000 Scholarship, and although unsuccessful, we are sure that they will do well in their chosen studies - letters thanking them for applying have been sent with our good wishes. The Trustees had an unenviable task in deciding who would be awarded the Scholarship; they congratulated all the applicants on the standard presented to them. However, they said that Susanna's application was outstanding.

We congratulate one of our NSW nominees, Rowena Curtis, who is Pastor at the Baptist Church, Woolloomooloo, where she was ordained on Sept 19 - the first woman minister of the Baptist Church in NSW.
Edith Ridge, WKS Convener.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

The venue and accommodation at Grace College in the University of Queensland were ideal for our gatherings and the hospitality offered by Queensland members of ACW were warm and generous. We were especially inspired by the input from our guests, Mrs Esther Byu (Executive Secretary, International Fellowship of Least Coin Committee), Mrs Diana Manson (Church Women United Aetereo/New Zealand), Rev Jenny Tymms (Preacher at the Ecumenical Service); and our Bible Study Leaders, Rev Janice Hughes, Sister Beryl Amedee and Mrs Gwen Tavener.

On the first evening we had a forum to discuss future directions "ACW 2000 Onwards." This was a useful sharing of ideas and suggestions. We continued to develop the ideas as the conference progressed. Special events for the week were an opening Ecumenical Service in the Albert Street Uniting Church attended by conference members and representatives of local churches; a Reception at the Brisbane City Hall where we were received by the Lord Mayor Jim Soorley; an afternoon outing to the Blackall Ranges stopping at picturesque Montville; and the formal Conference Dinner followed by musical entertainment from the singers "Prime Time."

During the conference Barbara Grealy, a long-time member of ACW in South Australia and a member of the incoming National Executive, was called away to Canberra for the Prime Minister's Awards for the International Year of the Older Person. We were delighted that Barbara won the Award for Community Service from among 400 nominees. We were also pleased to have Mrs Helen Smith representing Australian Baptist Women nationally, present at the conference for the first time.

Two of the issues considered at length were the cost of administration and promotion, and our support for the Fair Wear Campaign. NSW Unit will give further consideration to these matters. In the conference business sessions all the proposals, which NSW had pre-considered and agreed to support, were passed. In addition, three late proposals, submitted by NSW created interest and discussion and were also passed.

The new National Executive from South Australia, under the leadership of president Mrs Marj Dredge was installed at the close of the conference. Following the next National Conference in Adelaide in 2001, the Executive will be based in West Australia. The twelve who attended from NSW were Elizabeth

Walker, Jan Harrison, Marie Majoor, Heather Reid, Eileen Holley, Edith Ridge, Mina Whybourne, Marie McCann, Shirley Wells, Peg Blake, Noelene Roose and Lucelle King. All agreed it was a very worthwhile and inspiring conference.

Reported by Elizabeth Walker.

NEWSETTE EDITOR HONOURED:

Readers will be delighted to know that our Editor, Mrs Beryl McLaughlin, is the recipient of the 1999 National Council of Women NSW "Woman of the Year Award." Beryl was nominated by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union NSW for her voluntary service over many years to church and community groups and particularly for her care for children, including aboriginal children. Her nomination was supported by ACW. There were three other outstanding and well-known nominees. When Beryl received the award at the NCW Foundation Day Luncheon in Parliament House she was complimented as a 'quiet achiever.' Congratulations Beryl, from all your friends in ACW!

Contributed by Elizabeth Walker.

SPECIAL DAYS REPORT:

World Community Day Services were held in 40 centres this year, of which 17 were in country areas. The Theme "Faith In Action" was very inspiring. Some Services were held in late September, most in October, and a few in early November. One half of the offertories from these World Community Day Services are allocated to our ACW NSW commitment to Asian Church Women's Conference and the other half to the Special Project nominated by the National Executive, which for this year is the "Exodus Foundation" at Ashfield Uniting Church, which does such a tremendous service with homeless people but receives NO government funding; more than 300 meals are provided 6 days a week - imagine the preparation, cooking, cleaning and washing up! The Foundation has 5000 names on its list, and 30 tonnes of tinned and packet foods are sorted into parcels and given away each week. As well as this, a Special School is run to assist 11-13 year olds (in Years 6-7) to help them make up the ground in their education, especially with numeracy and literacy skills. Truly a worthwhile project for our support!

At the World Community Day Services, as well as the above, offerings for Fellowship of the Least Coin are dedicated.
Irene Carder, Special Days Convener.

FORUM - NSW COMMITTEE ON THE AGEING:

THEME: "Taking Charge - Decision-Making For Later Life."

This meeting was held to promote discussion about what we, as individuals can do to ensure that our wishes are respected, if a time comes when we are no longer able to make decisions for ourselves. The purpose of the meeting was twofold - to provide information and to give an opportunity for people to make their views known.

One speaker, Dr Willie Molloy was a Canadian expert, who explained the details of Advance Directives.

Mrs Barbara Squires from the Centre For Ageing at the Benevolent Society spoke on the current arrangements for managing decision-making, your money and your health.

Both speakers answered many questions from attendees, then a time of discussion was held and the concerns discussed were noted.

It was highlighted that an important legal principle is that we can only make decisions ahead of time, or appoint someone to make decisions for us, while we still have our mental faculties and can understand the implications of what we are signing. Once we have lost this ability we cannot appoint someone else to make decisions for us.

Heather Badgery, Pastoral Care Convener.

CONGRATULATIONS, PHYL!

We are delighted to have heard that our Past President of ACW NSW, Phyl McKinnirey, has been honoured by being made a Life Vice President by the Catholic Women's League in her Diocese of Parramatta. Apart from her involvement with ACW, we know that this is a well-deserved recognition of her many years of service in her church and her community. Again, our loving congratulations, Phyl!

ADVANCE NOTICE - NSW STATE CONFERENCE:

This is being planned for 10-12th May next year, once again at the very comfortable venue of the Salvation Army Leadership Training Centre at Stanmore - why not put this in your year 2000 diary now!

APPRECIATION, RUTH!

Brigadier Ruth Smith has for many years been one of the Salvation Army delegates on NSW State Council, which she has also represented on the World Day of Prayer Committee. Ruth has now relinquished these appointments and has moved to associate membership of the Council. We express our appreciation of Ruth's long years of fellowship with us in the work of ACW, not the least her musical talents and lively leadership at the piano on many occasions. We are pleased that Ruth will still be with us on special occasions, if not always at the regular Council meetings.

Mrs Bev Elliott, a Presbyterian delegate, past Membership Convener, also representative of the Central Coast Branch of ACW, has accepted election as our new representative to the World Day of Prayer Committee.

OTHER CHANGES OF HATS:

As Jan Harrison is now our President Elect, appointed by the Anglican Church to lead our State Unit for the next two-year term, she has resigned as the State Secretary, a responsibility she has so ably and graciously filled for the past two-and-a-half years.

Major Glenys Holley, who has been the Publicity Convener on the current Executive, has now accepted the office of State Secretary, and we welcome Glenys to this important responsibility and know she will carry it out very ably.

SPECIAL GUEST at NOVEMBER COUNCIL:

At Council meeting on November 15 we will have the opportunity to meet and hear Lisa Jackson, who works with the Ab original & Islander Commission of the National Council of Churches of Australia. Lisa has recently been to Geneva as a Youth Steward at the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches - the first indigenous Australian to be chosen as a Youth Steward. ACW was approached by the NCCA to assist Lisa to get to Geneva and NSW Unit was pleased to be able to support her with \$1000 towards her fare. Lisa has accepted our invitation to report about her experience, and we look forward to having her with us. For readers who do not get to Council, we will include her report in February Newsette.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE:

From the Catholic group of delegates on ACW NSW Council, a suggestion was made that we might plan to have an inter-faith dialogue as part of our program for next year. It was agreed to explore the possibility of undertaking this issue in what is a very sensitive area, recognising the need to proceed slowly, with suitable knowledge of the subject.

As a first step, we hope to have Sister Tric Madigan, who is involved in this ministry with the Catholic Church, to speak to a Council meeting early next year.

P.A.D.D. - PEOPLE AGAINST DRINK DRIVING:

As Social Issues Convener, I have become a member of P.A.D.D. and their Newsletter gives the following results of a survey conducted through the magazine Marie Claire. A total of 664 responses were received from readers around Australia, who had been asked to tick boxes next to the measures which they supported:

1. Mandatory loss of licence for one year for a blood alcohol reading of .05 or above: 76% support;
2. Confiscation of vehicle for 3 months for alcohol reading of .08 or higher: 65% support;
3. Longer gaol terms for drivers convicted of drink-driving causing death: 88% support;
4. Zero blood-alcohol tolerance: 48% support.

P.A.D.D. National Director, Graeme Denholm comments: "When all is said and done, why would any sensible person want to run the risk to themselves, let alone anyone else, of drinking and then driving?"

Heather Reid, Social Issues Convener.

CONTINUING CONCERN RE LANDMINES:

We may think that this problem has been overcome, but this is not so. Landmines target civilians, and the new landmines in Kosovo emphasise this issue well. These mines are not aimed at military targets, who know where they are and can avoid them - victims will be refugees or other entirely innocent persons. PRAY that there will be such global concern for the human damage they cause that their use will be eliminated.

(From S.A. Unit Social Justice Convener Report)

UPDATE on OZ-INDO PROJECT:

Many ACW members have been glad to support Fiona Collins in her 16,500 bicycle ride round Australia to assist the desperately poor people of Indonesia, but may have been concerned recently in the light of the situation in East Timor. The following is a special letter from Fiona on this subject:

"To Our Sponsors and Supporters,

The OzIndo Project deplores and condemns the appalling atrocities being committed in East Timor. The OzIndo Project unreservedly supports the East Timorese people in their struggle for independence and offers heartfelt sympathy to them in their suffering.

In its original planning, the Project had hoped to establish food subsidisation programs across Indonesia, including East Timor, but present conditions in East Timor render this impossible. Instead the OzIndo Project will contribute some of its funds to appropriate emergency relief operations for East Timorese refugees conducted by the Uniting Church, as soon as security conditions permit.

The OzIndo Project's commitment to ordinary Indonesian citizens who continue to suffer the devastating effects of the Indonesian economic crisis remains unaltered. It is earnestly hoped that these people will not be made scapegoats and unfairly targeted because of the actions of the militia and factions of the Indonesian military in East Timor.

The OzIndo Project is confident that fair-minded and compassionate Australians will be able to differentiate between the two and continue to support its humanitarian endeavour as they have since the start of the journey in February 1999."

The OzIndo Bike journey is nearing its final stages - only a few weeks to go. Fiona and her team expect to arrive back in Sydney on Sunday November 21, and a Welcome Function has been scheduled at First Fleet Park, Circular Quay, beginning at 10.30 a.m. to which everybody is invited.

On November 29, the National Council of Women NSW will hold a Luncheon at Parliament House, Macquarie Street Sydney (12 noon for 12.30) to welcome Fiona and her team and hear about their adventures. The cost for this is \$40.00 and bookings are essential. If interested in attending, send name, address and payment to the National Council of Women NSW, GPO Box 4942, Sydney 1044, or phone 9231.5690 for details.

JUBILEE 2000 - ONGOING CONCERN:

The TEAR Fund Campaign for forgiveness of debt for the poorest countries has had some success, and some action is to be taken. However, from the Southern African countries economic summit comes a scathing indictment of the G7 industrialised nations for their timid approach to debt cancellation. The South African Trade Minister said: "For the G7 to be cautious on debt is criminal; they can help, not by preaching, but by taking the debt off the books. In Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, how can we do projects in public/private partnerships when the risk is so massive because of debt?"

Jubilee 2000 has described as 'too little' the proposals to ease the debt crisis but observes that the proposals would never have been made if they had not campaigned for debt cancellation.

The petition presented to the G8 (ie G7 plus Russia) bore more than 17 million signatures. The Heads of Government at the summit pledged to write off US\$17 billion owed by 36 of the most indebted developing countries. But Ann Pettifer, co-founder and director of Jubilee 2000 in UK says: "It's too little - these countries owe \$370 billion. Getting \$70 billion written off is a success, but it's not enough." She said that the campaign would continue and singled out USA and Japan where greater awareness of the debt crisis was needed.

OTHER CONCERNS:

We are alerted to the use of forms of child labour which are intolerable, resulting in unsafe and abusive working situations for children. Consumers can let companies know that they will not buy goods made by child labour or by workers of any age who are exploited. One firm, Rugmark Carpet importers guarantee no children are employed and give a percentage of their profits to provide education for children of workers in India.

Certain baby formulas are exported to poor countries without labels in the local language, out of date or without expiry dates. Formulas are also delivered free to hospitals as promotion. Some labels indicate that the food contains "all vitamins essential for the development of the infant." TEAR asks us to boycott these products and confectionery while this misleading and harmful practice continues. The best-known offending company is Nestles.

INTERESTING SPEAKER at AUGUST COUNCIL:

The Girls' Brigade was the recipient of an FLC Grant in 1999. A most informative address was given to Council members by Mrs Julie Brackenreg, who told of the beginnings of Brigade in Dublin in 1893 and its development into a world-wide organisation. Julie commented that churches with Brigade companies were usually active churches - girls move on into membership and leadership of adult groups, fellowships etc.

Julie, previously Australian President, is now International Vice President with responsibility for the Pacific region. She told of the Conference last year in Africa, where Girls' Brigade is established in 14 countries, and of the difficulties there - East Africa has problems communicating with West Africa; in Nigeria, the north of the country does not talk to the south; Zambia and Namibia are hindered by the fighting over the Tavivi Strip, the disputed 'saucepan-handle' strip between them; in Angola, there is great corruption, they are very much dependent on political/economic conditions - no use planning 'programs' when what girls need is food and clothing. AIDS is enormous - of the 80 women from 9 countries at the Conference, every one had lost many relatives; Christian women in a monogamous relationship and two children are pressured to take 4 or 5 nieces or nephews who are HIV positive and with HIV positive children. Education? What use when they will be dead in 5 years? All medical resources are spent on AIDS - a whole generation of working-age people is being wiped out - Africa will go under.

In the Pacific area, the first need is workers, leaders. The Brigade is established in 5 countries, but companies were founded by missionaries and when they pulled out in the 70's, companies fell apart - the goal now is to develop leadership. Grand titles have been transferred from white culture, but are not understood or the responsibilities carried out. The aim now is to train autonomous leaders.

The second problem is transport-difficult between islands or across islands.

The goal for 2000 is "Beyond Barriers" - beyond boundaries of culture or race - eg Asia has been asked to start Brigade in China, Vietnam, which were enemies; also "Beyond Denomination" - whether long-established or very new.

Girls' Brigade has 40 million members and is seeking NGO recognition to gain input into policies which affect girls.