

Report of 25th National Conference of ACW



The beautiful Collaroy Centre was the venue for the 25th biennial National Conference of Australian Church Women Inc. from 7-11 September. As the host state, New South Wales had prepared the program, taking into account that this

marked 50 years of Australian Church Women as an organisation. Posters depicting national conference photos were on display, along with photos of past National Presidents and lists of their Executives. Profiles had been collected for all past Presidents and were available for reading. The National Life Members Book was reworked for the occasion.

The Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving saw musical notes placed on a hanging, each note representing a member of ACW who had died since last conference. Members who had received honours were congratulated for their achievement.

Special guest, Devika Ukwatte from Sri Lanka, took advantage of a WKS Fellowship to reinforce the link between Asian Church Women's Conference and ACW. In addition to her contribution to conference, Devika spent time with Queensland, ACT, South Australia and Victoria Units of ACW, sharing insights into the work of ACWC and learning something of Australia.



Bible studies were led by Dr Sylvia Collinson who ably developed the theme of *Living in Harmony*. She engaged us in thinking about *Singing from the Same Song-sheet*, *Harmony Embracing Difference*, and *When there is Disharmony*. Among the many Bible passages mentioned were the story of Ruth and Naomi, Jesus' prayer for unity between his followers, and the problems of disunity in the early church. Using the illustration of the instruments of an orchestra embracing difference to produce harmony, Sylvia spoke of the gifts we bring enriching the church where they are received in an encouraging environment of love. If a sense of belonging is nurtured people will contribute to the good of all.

The Rev Mary Pearson in her sermon at the Ecumenical Service left us with much to ponder, and her notes will be invaluable in this process. As she spoke about building together in harmony, Mary suggested the need for us to build one another up as Jesus did. The ability of women to take a special role as builders of community comes because we can nurture each other, work at fostering good relationships. Above all we can build hope that is engendered by love, which is from God, and is God. Harmony is created as we sing different notes together to resonate and restore the soul.

Our task as National Executive over the two years included updating National Guidelines in line with resolutions from the previous conference in Perth. This was no small order. Apart from changes of a minor nature the Guidelines for Treasurer were rewritten to ensure they meet with current banking practice and the requirements of government departments. We are deeply indebted to Jennifer Peffer for her work as Treasurer.



Open Day attracted a number of visitors. We heard from Sr Helen-Anne on the work of Mums' Cottage near Newcastle which had received an FLC grant, and from Juanita Miller reporting on Messy Church in Launceston which had also received funds.

A lively presentation gave insight into the work of Cana Community's Nagle House which is to receive money as the Special Project nominated for World Community Day in October.



ACWC segment allowed those who had travelled to the Philippines in 2014 to report on their visit to the Assembly.





We enjoyed a concert one evening. Each Unit represented at Conference performed an item, and the entertainment was well received. NSW left the dramatic presen-

tations to others, and tried our hands at timbrel playing. If only we could have seen ourselves! It was really good fun.

A bus trip to Palm Beach on a lovely day was entertainment of a different kind, and our visitors appreciated it.

In recognition of the 50th Anniversary of Australian Church Women we celebrated with a formal dinner and special cake made for the occasion by Martha Noel. The food and company were great, and the musical entertainment by mainly young people was excellent.



The cake was cut by Lee Edwards and Marie McCann, both Past National Presidents.

Devotions prepared by Units all followed the theme of building in harmony. We enjoyed singing and praying together, sharing news, hearing one another's stories, and time at table. Some presentations of reports from Units included visuals that gave a good idea of what was being talked about.



The hand-over to Victoria on Friday morning saw the introduction of the theme for the next two years, *Women Empowering Change*. We enjoyed singing the chorus written by the new National President, Lt Col Lynette Green, and look forward to the leadership of the National Executive from Victoria.

We thank the members of the NSW National Executive for their work over the two years, and particularly for the organisation of National Conference. The support of people beyond the Executive who were ready to lend a helping hand is gratefully acknowledged.