

## Australian Church Women

Akin to the NCWA, The Salvation Army is well represented in Australian Church Women Inc. (ACW). Across ACW, the Australia Southern Territory has 12 Salvation Army representatives, including Major Laurel Pearce, national president; and Major Donna Bryan (pictured above, right), publicity convenor and member of the executive committee for ACW of Victoria.

Although each state body of ACW varies in



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its composition, most Christian denominations are represented. The ACW aims to unite these churches, provide opportunities for fellowship together through events such as World Community Day, and to empower women to take 'a more effective place in the total life and mission of the Church'.

'The empowering of women follows The Salvation Army's belief that we're all saints and we're all able to preach,' says Major Bryan, Salvation Army fellowship corps secretary.

To ensure a Christian voice is heard when groups lobby governments and councils, part of ACW's role in society involves affiliation with non-denominational groups such as the NCWA and the Australian Coalition of Women (see below).

With a desire to make an impact on women at an individual level, ACW offers the Winifred Kiek Scholarship to Christian women training in theological studies and/or lay leadership. Further, ACW engages with social justice issues such as housing for low-income earners, trafficking and refugees.

'We write letters and, although it's only a small thing these days, it's amazing what a difference a letter can make to government bodies and advertising councils,' notes Major Bryan.

Internationally, ACW partners with the Fellowship of the Least Coin and the Asian Church Women's Conference. The Fellowship of the Least Coin involves women praying for others and, as a sign of solidarity, donating the least coin of their country (five cents in Australia) to a central body that distributes the funds to various projects for women.

'Australia is one of the largest financial supporters of the Asian Church Women's Conference,' says Major Bryan, who is in a remarkable position and was recently appointed president of the Asian Church Women's Conference, the first time an Australian has been elected president in the group's 53-year history. 'They offer several scholarships each year for the Asian member countries, which assist underprivileged young women with tertiary education.

'My past eight years with ACW has broadened my horizons,' she adds. 'I see how the church operates in other countries, and I experience the unity that is in the wider church.'