

Plan now to attend:

**ACW National Conference
20 - 24 September 2009
Heritage Hotel
CANBERRA**



DATES TO REMEMBER

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 10 - 13 April | Easter |
| 25 April | Anzac Day |
| 31 May | Pentecost |
| 8 June | Queens Birthday Holiday |



**Australian
Church Women
Incorporated
National News**

Produced by
National Executive
April—June 2009



'Faith in the Future'

Mission Statement

Australian Church Women Inc. seeks to unite Christian Women across denominational boundaries to promote peace, understanding and unity through faith and love in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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Items for inclusion in the ACW Inc. National Newsletter can be forwarded to :

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Presidents' Greeting

Since I last wrote to you, our country has suffered terrible natural disasters. The floods in North Queensland have left many people stranded, feeling completely deserted and bereft of help. We have all seen the TV pictures of huge expanses of water slowly moving south. Some of that water may eventually reach the Murray / Darling system on which so much of our country depends. The devastating bush fires in Victoria have left those of us who live in other places just stunned at the speed and ferocity with which the fire storms hit and completely razed small towns. Many of us will have relations and friends who have been personally affected, lost homes, livelihood and families. It has been a terrible start to the year for many people. Our prayers are with all those affected.



In ACW we have been humbled and blessed by the prayers and greetings from all over the Asian Church Women's Conference area and beyond. ACWC has sent a most generous donation of US\$500.00 from the Emergency Fund. We have been thankful and humbled by their generosity. We will now have to make a decision as to how the money is best spent. Donna has been keeping in close touch with Shu -Wen (ACWC Executive Secretary) and has a report in this newsletter.

We are in the season of Lent, when we are urged to give something up and send the money saved to a worthy cause. Many of you will be taking part in Lenten studies, probably ecumenical, so I pray that these studies will assist you all in learning more of what God wants for us at this time. Easter is a joyous time when we remember what our Saviour has done for us and I hope that this wonderful, hopeful time will be a blessing to us all.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming National Conference. It will be expensive I know, but we hope Units will do their best to try and raise some money so delegates can attend. There will be highlights, especially the ecumenical service on the Tuesday morning with Rev Professor James Haire as our Preacher. He is the Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, a past President of the Uniting Church, and always an inspiring speaker. Invitations to heads of churches will be sent out in due course.

We have Faith in the Future as all is in God's hands.

Yours

Jean Thomson—National President

Australia's heartbreak—'Black Saturday'

February 7, 2009 is now known as Black Saturday in the State of Victoria, Australia, because of the tragic bushfires that swept across the state on that fateful day. It was always going to be a difficult day with record high temperatures and strong, hot, northerly winds predicted across the southeast of Australia. Perfect conditions for bushfires, so a total fire ban was in place and emergency services were on alert.

However, what unfolded that day is unprecedented in Australia's history. The Victorian bush erupted into an uncontrollable firestorm that raced across the rural areas and engulfed almost everything in its path. The fire was savage and the result was Australia's worst loss of life in a natural disaster, with communities razed to the ground and resembling war zones.

210 people lost their lives, a few people are still missing, and many others have suffered burns and injuries as they battled to defend their property or escape to a safer place. Quite a number of people perished in their cars trying to flee from the flames.

More than 2,000 homes as well as businesses and community buildings were destroyed, and approximately 300,000 hectares of land burnt out. Huge numbers of livestock and wildlife also perished or suffered severe burns, and their pasture and natural habitat has been obliterated.

For nearly a month, thousands of volunteer fire-fighters and other emergency personnel battled to contain the fires as they continued to consume the landscape and wreak devastation. Reinforcement fire fighters came from other states and territories of Australia as well as overseas—New Zealand and the USA, and they worked long and challenging shifts to protect people and property from further loss.

Three and a half weeks after Black Saturday and the fires were still burning across Victoria and other parts of Australia. Then finally some cooler temperatures and even a little rain to help in containing and extinguishing the fires.

Four weeks later and all fires but one are contained. 350 fire-fighters are continuing to fight a fire at Wilson's Promontory in the extreme south of Victoria. This fire has burnt out 25,000 hectares of bush, but no homes are threatened. As a precautionary measure, the huge national park at Wilson's Promontory has been closed to the public until the end of March and much of its natural beauty has been blackened.

Aerial views of southeast Australia show large black scars inflicted upon the landscape in the wake of this devastation. It will be many years before the land heals and for the people who suffered loss, some may never heal from this traumatic experience. The church has been active in providing relief and counselling for those who have suffered, and in some communities their church and outbuildings have gone. Rebuilding homes

and property will also take years, and in the meantime many displaced persons are living in tents supplied by the Defence Forces and waiting for accommodation.

Sunday 22 February was a day of national mourning and many church and civic remembrance services were held across Australia for people to pause and reflect on the events of this tragic day.

Australia is not used to such loss of life and we have been very touched by the prayers and support we have received from around the world, especially from our Asian sisters who have been very generous in their love and care.

Donna Bryan (Captain)

The following greeting was sent to Donna Bryan ACWC Representative.

Greetings from the Korea Church Women United

We have seen that the bushfires in south eastern Australia lasted for two weeks and they brought about many casualties. Our heart bleed for those who are suffering from this disaster.

We pray that our God may comfort and heal the people who have been injured and lost their beloved family members. We, as the prayer partner under the umbrella of the ACWC, will continue to pray that Australia and its people will recover from the effect of the big fire and take back peaceful life.

I like to repeat what you wrote in your email.
"On Christ the solid rock we stand".
With life and peace,

Lee Moon Sook
General Secretary
Korea Church Women United

Matthew 5: 4

Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

We have all been saddened by the loss of life during the recent bushfires in Victoria. Our thoughts and prayers are with all affected. Here are some reflective thoughts from Michael Hansen that may be helpful to you at this time as you reflect on all that has occurred in Victoria.

The Fires ... a Reflection

Our hearts cry out to God! Not with the arithmetic of blame. Not because we think God sends fires. But because God is our way of speaking out of the very depth of our being... and because God is compassionately engaged and knows us. Of course, this is like poetry and far from adequate or accurate. But we want to cry out **to** God and cry out **with** God. We want to believe that God is not disinterested. It is a conversation of the soul, our deep inner being. O God, hear our grief! O God, help these people!

What then moves within us and surges for fulfillment is compassion, the very being of God - an image for our co-humanity. Deep love for other people and for our world flows from within and joins us to each other and to God. God is an ocean of goodness, reaching our shore, yet far beyond our horizon and deeper than our profoundest thought. That surge moves us and we have learned to understand sin as resistance to its life. We see the tide of generosity about us and recognise the life of God.

Summoned to our common frailty we respond with human care. When people are reduced to surviving, our common humanity asserts itself.

Moments of vulnerability give us the opportunity to reconnect to what really matters. Ultimately that is about connecting to God. To do so is to sense a surging passion for good and for change, a refusal to ignore the plight of people beyond ourselves, a willingness to be engaged for all humanity.

Despite the events of recent days being beyond our control, we can still give and we can listen and we can imagine and pray as our fellow Victorians engage the horror and grief of losing their own and seeing the destruction of their homes and communities.

O God, we cry! O God, hear our grief!
O God, help these people! O God, help us!
O God, help our community!
O God, help us care about the world in which we live!

From Michael Hansen
Director of Faith and Ministry
Lavalla Catholic College,
Traralgon, Victoria



Hold our hands, Lord.
Walk us through the pain
and the valley of our sorrows.
Hold on to us when we are too afraid
to think about the future.
Let us lean on you, Lord,
when we're too weary to continue.
Hold our hands, Lord, through the night
until we see the light of dawn.
We ask this through Jesus your Son,
the one who knows what it is to suffer.
Amen

Winifred Kiek News

Christine Ferguson (2009 Scholar)

Christine is now in residence at the Victoria Bible College enjoying her classes. Her subjects are Hermeneutics, John's Gospel, New Testament Survey & Christian Ministry in an Islamic context. She feels that these subjects show promise of being a very interesting and challenging semester. As well as classes, Christine attends Chapel, a support group or prayer meeting, Principal's Forum and Global update every week. She finds the Global update particularly interesting as each week a guest missionary speaker comes to share his or her work details with the students.

Rachel McManus (1997 Scholar)

Now Mrs Rachel Otto and mother of two, Rachel lives in Miles Qld. She has been working at a high school as a teacher of Aboriginal students and she hopes that this experience will enable her to complete her teaching degree at the end of 2009.

JENNY MACKLIN MP

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**ANNIVERSARY OF APOLOGY
SORRY IS MORE THAN JUST A WORD EXHIBITION
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
13 FEBRUARY 2009**

I would like to thank Aunty Matilda for another inspiring Welcome to Country, and to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand.

As you know, the Prime Minister was determined to be here today. But the catastrophic events of the past days mean he is focused on the bushfire emergency.

The first Anniversary of the Apology is immensely important to him. He has asked me to pass on his deep regret that he cannot be here and deliver this speech on his behalf.

Over the last few days the Prime Minister and I have spoken to people affected by the fires – survivors, fire fighters, emergency workers, volunteers.

We've heard some extraordinary stories of escape and heroism. Among them, the story of an Aboriginal mother and her three young children trying to escape the fires.

She drove to a creek bed, grabbed the children and hid in a wombat hole as the fire roared over them. All four survived.

Just as uplifting, the remarkable outpouring of sympathy and generosity uniting our country to do all we can to help.

In the most remote parts of Australia, the Red Cross says people are lining up to give blood.

As I said, the Prime Minister regrets that he cannot be here but his thoughts are here with us.

It's a great privilege to launch this terrific exhibition -- "Sorry – more than just a word" – featuring the work of the celebrated Indigenous photographers, Wayne Quilliam and Merv Bishop.

Merv Bishop is perhaps best known for the iconic photograph of Gough Whitlam pouring soil into the hand of Gurindji traditional owner, Vincent Lingiari, at the handover of the deeds to Gurindji country at Wattie Creek.

Wayne Quilliam, featured in the permanent Bayagul exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

He recently won the 2008 Human Rights Award for Print Media in

partnership with Koori Mail, for the National Apology commemorative lift out.

Their photographs of the Apology in Parliament House one year ago today are a superb record of that momentous day when the Prime Minister made an Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples on behalf of the Government and Parliament of Australia.

Kevin Rudd said sorry for the laws and policies that inflicted such profound grief, suffering and loss on our fellow Australians.

In particular, he said sorry to the Stolen Generations.

Those who suffered the hurt, the humiliation, the cruelty and the sheer brutality of being taken away from their parents, their families and their people.

The Apology was based on an exercise of the imagination that is so simple.

And that is to ask ourselves: How would I feel if it had been done to me? The Australian Government offered this Apology because it was unfinished business for our nation.

Because unless we acknowledge and become fully reconciled to the past, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians cannot come together to build a better future.

Because the past cannot be denied - it is what we inherit, what shapes us, what we live every day -- as individuals, as a people and as a nation. Just this week Reconciliation Australia released the findings of its first Reconciliation Barometer – looking at changes in attitudes since the Apology.

It shows there is still much to be done to build trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

But there is also much cause for hope.

More than three-quarters of Australians say they would like to have more contact with Indigenous people.

However only 20 per cent of Australians say they know what they can do to help disadvantaged Indigenous people.

To me, this shows that although there is much goodwill, we still need to find ways to get to know each other better.

I think the Apology gave us the impetus to make that happen.

But as the Prime Minister said then, the great symbolism of the Apology must be followed by the even greater substance of action.

The practical, determined action to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy, health, housing, education and employment.

In the year since the Apology was delivered in this parliament, we have supported a range of projects for the Stolen Generations:

- National Sorry Day commemorations.
- More Bringing Them Home counsellors and case workers.
- The further collection and publication of Stolen Generations' oral histories; and
- The Indigenous Healing Forum launched here in Canberra in September. This was an important step – a formal recognition of the impact of grieving and trauma on Indigenous people.

Today I am pleased to announce that the Government will establish a Foundation to provide practical and innovative healing services. Including training and research, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially Stolen Generation members and their families. It gives me great pleasure to announce that the establishment of this Foundation will be led by an interim group headed by Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue and Mr Greg Phillips.

Dr O'Donoghue is with us today. She is a senior Stolen Generation member and a former Australian of the Year.

Mr Phillips is also with us today. He has standout expertise in the area of Indigenous peoples' healing and trauma.

These community leaders will bring sensitivity, compassion and direction to this important work.

We hope crucial partnerships will be forged to draw on the important contributions of the Stolen Generations Alliance and National Sorry Day Committee, and others who participated in the Healing forum.

I am also pleased to announce on behalf of Minister Nicola Roxon a further expansion of the Link Up program.

This will create positions for 11 more Link Up Caseworkers and five more Link Up administration staff.

Through this we aim to bring more people together through individual reunions and around 100 'Return to Country' reunions.

I'm also determined that the significance of the apology lives on in our children and their children.

As a start, to commemorate the first anniversary of the Apology and to encourage schools to participate, I have written to every school in Australia and sent them a copy of the Apology Calligraphy Manuscript. Across Australia today, apology breakfasts, school ceremonies, special sporting matches and barbecues are happening to mark the anniversary. This exhibition matters because we need to keep telling the stories of the Stolen Generation and of our history.

This exhibition matters because we need to keep telling the stories of the Stolen Generation and of our history.

They are Australian stories.

They tell us who we have been and who we are.

And how great a people we can be when we make our journey together.

Australian Church Women Incorporated

The question of Incorporation of Australian Church Women has been around for quite a few years. A number of National Executives tried to bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion. Finally, after a lot of hard work by Helen Raymond (and her husband) Australian Church Women is now Incorporated as of the 3 March 2009.

The reasons for Incorporation are as follows:

- Without Incorporation we are not a legal identity.
- Any legal obligations that might arise would fall upon each member of the Executive.
- We could be sued for a non-payment of a bill or if someone had an accident etc.
- Each individual would be liable for a suit.
- If Incorporated the Association - not each individual is liable



Vonnie O'Sullivan, Jean Thomson and Ruth Burmester proudly displaying the Incorporation Certificate.

Social Justice

Captain Judith Brown, Social Issues Convenor, South Australia Unit, has advised me of the Units participation in the “Big Bra” charity event organized by Rotary International - The “Uplift Fiji Programme” to raise female undergarments for indigenous women of Fiji.

In 3 months the Unit collected 250 bras. (12,000 bras in all were collected from South Australia). In high demand were nursing bras with bras for the fuller figure coming a close second.

In Fiji most of these garments cost between \$30 and \$40 – a sum prohibitive to these low paid women.

Those of us of rubenesque proportions could not imagine how uncomfortable it would be not to have the support of a well-fitting bra.

Many of these women suffer from Intertrigo and some develop abscesses. Because these items are second hand they were able to enter the country without incurring import duty.

This “Uplift” Programme has now been extended to women in Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Our TV screens have been flooded recently with graphic scenes of bullying filmed by mobile phone cameras and then posted to Face book and Utube social networks.

However there has been precious little documentation on the new forms of abuse and control such as cyber stalking and cyber surveillance that use digital information and communication technologies (ICTs). These non-physical forms of violence are intimidating and frightening and can have significant and long term effects for women.

Three primary types of cyber stalking have been identified:-

- Email stalking
- Internet stalking
- Computer stalking

Specific acts of email stalking include:

- Unsolicited threatening and/or obscene emails
- Sending viruses
- Spamming (flooding victim’s emails using all of the computer’s memory)

Examples of internet stalking include:

- Impersonating the victim
- Generating a web page about the victim that monitors/slanders the victim

Computer stalking involves the cyber stalker taking unauthorised control over the victim’s computer.

A comprehensive review of Australian legislation concerning domestic violence acts perpetrated with ICTs should be undertaken. (Information obtained from Stakeholder Paper 6—University of NSW.)

Judith-Ann Sjostedt— National Social Justice Convenor

Smile Awhile.....



A couple invited their Church minister to Sunday dinner. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, their 5 year old son was sitting at the table with the minister.

To make conversation, the minister asked the boy: ‘What do you think we are having for dinner?’

‘Goat’ replied the boy

‘Goat?’ repeated the startled minister. ‘Are you sure?’

‘yep’ said the boy. ‘This morning I heard dad say to mum, ‘Might as well have the old goat for dinner today as any other day’.

WOMEN WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Janet Abrahamffy National FLC Convener

Jan considers herself a Canberran from her first breath. Her parents lived in Kingston (ACT) when Jan was born. She was the only one of her four siblings to be born in a hospital and it was in Queanbeyan—just over the ACT border.

Jan was taken to Sunday School at the tender age of one by her sister Dorothy. The family belonged to the Canberra Baptist Church, better known to the locals as the Kingston Baptist. At age 13 she was baptized, and at 14 became a Choir member. Her mother at that time was the Choir conductor. Jan remained a committed Choir member when residing in Canberra until the cessation of the Choir in June 2008.

Jan married Matt when she was 19 and together they raised four children—three boys and one girl. Sadly Matt died suddenly. Jan later married Steve and two boys were added to the family. Steve died of cancer in 2005. Both Jan's husbands were military men. Both had served in Vietnam. Jan has 11 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.



Church life has always been important to Jan. In her younger years, as well as being an active Choir member Jan was a member of the Young Worshippers League, a Sunday School teacher, attended Christian Endeavour, was a Lt. in the first Canberra Girl's Brigade Company and involved with Youth activities.

For over 20 years Jan has been President of the Morling Lodge Aged Care Auxiliary. Why so long?. According to Jan— no one else will do it! She is an Honorary member of the Baptist community services and a Life member of the ACW ACT Unit. Currently Jan is the National ACW Fellowship of the Least Coin Convener.

Jessie Street Women's Library

Generations of interesting and inspirational stories feature as part of the history preserved in the Jessie Street Women's Library. The Library, in Sydney's Ultimo Community Centre, was founded in 1989 by two women disenchanted with the difficulty of finding information on women in Australia.

Run entirely by volunteers the Library—predominantly a research Library— holds fiction and non fiction and is open for the public to do research and for members to borrow books.

There is a substantial collection of literary works by Australian women dating from the mid 19th century to the present day.

The archives includes letters, diaries, journals, papers from women's organizations, posters, photographs and audio recordings. The Library features a collection of biographies—compiled by volunteers— featuring women who have made an impact on Australia...inspiring public figures like Miles Franklin, Dawn Frazer and Joyce Cummings. And then women not well known but inspirational nonetheless.

The library is always looking to expand and add to both the research collection and the stories of inspirational women.

For further information go to www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au