



CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE AUSTRALIA INC.

Member Organisation of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)

NGO in consultative (Roster) status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The Mid Term Meeting was held in late August at the Monastery in Adelaide which is a beautiful setting, so peaceful and those in attendance were able to visit the Stations of the Cross in the garden setting. This meeting was very successful with everyone coming together in a very harmonious way. We would specially like to thank Sisters Kerry and Liz for their input for our liturgies and to Fr. John for offering Mass for us. We enjoyed the company and beautiful singing voice of Sr. Majella at the Mass and after dinner on the second night.

Congratulations to Mrs Moya Potts, President CWLA NSW who has been bestowed with the Honour of Dame of St Gregory the Great for distinguished services to the Church in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Moya will be presented with this honour at a formal ceremony on Thursday, 22nd December at Cathedral House, in Sydney. This is a great honour for Moya after receiving an AM in the Australia Day Awards earlier this year. It is wonderful that Moya has received this honour and shows that her work as a member of Catholic Women's League has been recognised.

During the past few months I have been privileged to visit Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia for their conferences. These have been wonderful experiences as I have been able to meet so many more members throughout Australia and to hear the reports of the wonderful work which each state performs and to realise that while we all do so many things the same i.e.; church linen and cleaning, liturgy, catering and offering support for the bereaved and supporting our religious, we have different interests and concerns in each state as well.

I was very pleased to hear that Ann Pereira has accepted the role of President of CWLA NSW after there were very great concerns that this position was not going to be filled. Ann will commence her role 1st January, 2017. Deirdre Reid has taken on the position of President in Tasmania, congratulations to these ladies and I hope you enjoy your time of office.

Please could each Member Organisation please update your lists of office bearers and their details and forward to Joan Young — young.joan@bigpond.com

We are facing very challenging times currently with the push for Marriage Equality, the Safe Schools Programme, Euthanasia, and the extension to times when abortions can be carried out. Unfortunately as people continue to see religion/faith as unnecessary in their lives, the value that is placed on life is being seen as expendable. We must continue to promote the worth of all human beings even though we are being told to forget about our beliefs as we shouldn't use our faith to guide what we say. They don't seem to realise that our beliefs are essential to our faith and we cannot just discard them to agree to what their opinions are. Prayer is very important at this time as we fight these insidious issues.

It is unbelievable that we have nearly completed 12 months of our time in office, and I thank everyone for support of our committee.

I wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas.



Anne Marie

National President:
president@cwla.org.au

FROM THE NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

The review theme for CSW61 (Commission on the Status of Women) “**Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls (agreed conclusions of the fifty-eighth session).**” This is not the main theme, but will influence the deliberations, in New York, next March.

In last year’s Human Rights Watch World Report 2015, Kenneth Roth stated in a section called “**Tyranny’s False Comfort: Why Rights Aren’t Wrong in Tough Times,**”

Human rights violations played a major role in spawning or aggravating most of today’s crises. Protecting human rights and enabling people to have a say in how their governments address the crises will be key to their resolution. Particularly in periods of challenges and difficult choices, human rights are an essential compass for political action.

Roth applies this statement to countries in the turmoil of war, but it could equally be applied to countries, organisations and corporations attempting to solve global problems, without recognition of the value of the people whose lives will be affected by their decisions.

The Beijing Platform of Action was the outcome statement of the Beijing Conference held in 1996. It states, “*The social significance of maternity, motherhood and the role of parents in the family*

and in the upbringing of children should be acknowledged. The upbringing of children requires shared responsibility of parents, women and men and society as a whole. Maternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation must not be the basis for discrimination nor restrict the full participation of women in society.”

In spite of these strong statements the Commission on the Status of Women continues to promote an agenda which, on one hand, undermines the well-being of women, at the same time as elevates some causes which benefit women.

As League members we need to be aware of these and speak out in condemnation or praise. There is a great need for comprehensive, honest information, in the following areas, to be given to women, at UN Conferences, to enable informed human rights action.

- UN documents repeatedly state that access to abortion reduces the rate of Maternal Deaths. However, a recent study, conducted by the MELISA Institute, in 32 Mexican states and published in the [open access version of the British Medical Journal \(BMJ Open\)](#) challenges this notion. It found that Mexican states with less permissive abortion laws had 23 percent lower overall maternal mortality, and up to 47 percent lower mortality from complications of abortion. Further study is long overdue.

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*Believe in the
whisperings of God
to your own heart.*

- Mary Mackillop

FROM THE NATIONAL INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

- Lack of information, given to women, about the immediate and long term effects of oral contraceptives is a problem. Several forms of emergency contraception – the Morning After Pill, RU 486 are known to have serious adverse side effects. These side effects can and do alter the environment within the human body, increasing the risk of cancer of the uterus, breast, endometrium, cervix, liver and bladder. Oral contraception was classed as a Class 1 carcinogen by the World Health Organisation, in 2005. Blood clots formed when using oral contraceptives increase the risk of strokes and heart attacks. Evidence has emerged that the use of oral contraceptives, especially Depo-provera, which is recommended by WHO, increases susceptibility to (HIV) Human Immunodeficient Virus.
- Surrogacy is another area of violence against women and the result of unethical decisions. Ambivalence towards surrogacy has been my experience at the UN. Both the surrogate mother and the children are treated as commodities. Ovarian hyper-stimulation causes health issues, including death, cysts, and cancer. Encouraging the donation of eggs – often by young women as a means of making money – is irresponsible. Donors are not alerted to the long term health implications, so informed consent is a sham. Outsourcing motherhood has become big business.
- Tying international aid to fertility reduction programs, such as the mass sterilization camps of India, is unethical and needs to stop.
- According to data from Planned Parenthood, medical/chemical abortions made up 43% of all abortions in the US, in 2014. This is hailed as a victory for women, but can actually be more traumatic, as women often see their aborted baby
- Pornography and sex tourism undermine women by treating them as commodities to be bought and sold. Corruption is endemic in the industry. Prostitution, sex trafficking and sex-work have the same outcome.
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education encourages children to engage in sexual experimentation and high-risk sexual behaviours, often instructing children without the knowledge or consent of their parents. We have seen its disgusting off-shoot, in Australia, with the so-called Safe Schools Coalition program.

I have deliberately provided a list of non life-affirming/'culture of death' outcomes of previous CSW Conferences, you can easily access the other outcomes, such as campaigns against human trafficking and violence against women, in our secular media.

Remember to keep praying, keep alert and be 'as shrewd as serpents' (Matt 10:16)!



Jane Munro
National International Secretary



Advent is a time to prepare our hearts to receive Christ, our Saviour and hope.

4th December 2016

Pope Francis @Pontifex

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES REPORT

"Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members"

Pearl Buck, My Several Worlds: A Personal Record (1954)

THE AILING HEALTH OF OUR AGED PENSION

In September, the Australian Catholic Bishops released their Social Justice Statement for 2016-2017: A Place At the Table: Social Justice in an Ageing Society. It reminds us that the number of Australians over the age of 65 will more than double by the middle of the century, and argues for "a higher level of care for older people who are frail and vulnerable."

Sadly, the aged pension - a central pillar of care for older Australians - is in many cases inadequate to provide for a home, health care and the means to participate in family and community life. The following points throw further light on this unacceptable situation:

- 1.5 million Australians receive the aged pension, the base amount of which is just \$749.80 per fortnight. The minimum wage is almost double the aged pension at \$1345 per fortnight.
- Australia is enormously wealthy - the 5th richest of all OECD countries - but is ranked 31st out of 33 OECD countries on social equity rankings with 36% of our pensioners living below the poverty line.
- Research shows that dental care, heating and medication are often sacrificed by pensioners to make ends meet
- The adequacy of the pension often depends on whether recipients own their home, enjoy good health and/or have a partner receiving some form of income.
- Women who are aged pensioners are especially vulnerable to poverty because of the financial

disadvantages they've suffered in their working lives. 34% of single women over 60 live in permanent income poverty compared to 27% of single older men and 24% of couples

Pope Francis reminds us, "Just as God asks us to be his means of hearing the cry of the poor, so too he wants us to hear the cry of the elderly."

Advocates for reform such as the think tank, Per Capita, suggest the following:

- An independent tribunal - to assess the base rate of the pension and determine the best mechanism for annual review and revision
- An increase in the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) - to reduce the gap between age pensioners who are home owners and those who are renters
- Indexing the CRA to housing costs instead of CPI - to more accurately reflect changes in rent costs in specific geographical areas, for example, Sydney vs. Albury-Wodonga

As Catholics, those who are marginalized, invisible and powerless through the unavoidable reality of old age are at the forefront of our hearts and minds as we raise our voices in calling for change. CWLA and its members are well placed to forward submissions and written appeals for reform in this area given their contact with older people through parishes and charitable works. Long-term persistence will nevertheless be critical to bring about the changes needed.

“Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members”

Pearl Buck, My Several Worlds: A Personal Record (1954)

NATIONAL ROUND UP

Welfare Reform

The Federal Government is to allocate \$96 million into its Try, Test and Learn Fund to trial interventions to reduce the number of welfare recipients – students, young carers and parents in particular. From December, academics, state governments and not-for-profit groups will put forward projects to assist the unemployed to enter the workforce. The good news is that Catholic Social Services Australia acknowledges real potential in this initiative. However, they warn that programs will also need to target people's overall well-being rather than just their employment status to avoid new problems being created.

Domestic Violence and the Indigenous Community

At the National Press Club prominent Indigenous leaders have called for a national taskforce to respond to the shocking rates of violence against Indigenous women who are 34 times more likely to be hospitalized than non-Indigenous women. Professor Langton was particularly critical of the Prime Minister's Third National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, arguing the tone of its language is too exculpatory in regards to the perpetrators and insufficiently proactive when it comes to invoking the criminal justice system to protect Indigenous women and children.

NT Youth Detention - Don Dale Correction Facility

The Royal Commission into Northern Territory's youth detention and child protection commenced in mid-October and will continue until the end of the year. The Commission's final report is due for release on March 31 next year.

The Right to Family Life: Impact of the Life-ban on 'Boat Arrival' Refugees

On 8 November the ALP's party room unanimously agreed to block the bill introduced by the Coalition to amend the Migration Act so as to ban all asylum seekers and refugees arriving by boat from July 2013 from ever entering Australia. On 10 November 2016, the Senate referred an inquiry into this legislation to the **Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee** for inquiry and report by **22 November 2016**.

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”
(Romans 8:31)

The Government has admitted that families could be permanently separated under the proposed legislation. This is a serious contravention of the right to family life and an issue warranting sustained appeals from the CWLA and its members to Federal MPs.

On a related matter, on 13 November the Turnbull Government gave hope to 1616 refugees on Manus Island and Nauru by announcing a resettlement deal with the United States. Specific details are yet to be released.

Last but not least, Wicked Campers and those painted slogans...

Technically this is a Victorian issue, but given that Wicked Holiday campers are driven all over the country it resonates nationally. The Victorian Government this week announced it would introduce legislation to crackdown on sexist advertising, including the often sexually explicit and offensive slogans painted across Wicked campers. The Queensland Government is planning to take similar action.



God bless,

Helen Freidman

National Social Issues Convenor

FROM THE BIOETHICS CONVENOR

'Proclaim the message and, in season and out, and insist upon it!' 2 Tim 4:2

'Thinking with the Church'

Archbishop Julian Porteous has written of the Streams of Grace flowing through the Church. Grace for the times we live in can be traced throughout the spiritual history of people of faith, from Pentecost right up to this moment. His writing commences with Ezekiel 47:1:

'I saw water flowing beneath the threshold of the temple to the east'

When we enter difficult situations of personal suffering or of collective suffering as in times of persecution, we can look to the rich history and teachings of the Church for support, and to the Word of God to breathe new life into our tired souls. Our 'meagre confidence and scattered minds' that Thomas A Kempis identified are realigned and reassured in the streams of grace Jesus offers to and through His Church. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are within us to tackle the temptation to walk the easy road and speak the easy words. Knowing and loving the teachings of the Church will be the protection and surety, the strength and the inspiration to hold firm and minister to a broken culture. Pope Francis has called the Church the 'field hospital' of the modern times. Working within that hospital will need the two loves we seek in the hymn:

*Jesus in your heart we find
Love of the father and mankind
These two loves to us impart:
Divine love in a human heart.*

The 'field hospital' was present in the recent euthanasia debate in South Australia. It was a narrow win, evidencing the damaged culture to which we are ministering. The lost sense of the meaning of true dignity and its re-framing as a state of health, vigor and independence was the deepest wound which needed healing attention. The intention to kill was the atrocity that needed unbandaging and exposing to sunlight and fresh air. Revealing the home of dignity in the mind, heart and soul was first line

treatment.

Not only did South Australia protect its society from euthanasia, but the AMA last week issued a position statement not supporting euthanasia. So much to thank God for.

Euthanasia will need our Spirit-filled response many times in the years ahead. One of the outstanding features of the last debate was the demand for Catholics to be silent and to stand aside. This trend has also emerged in abortion discussions and is finding its way into scientific fields, with authors on occasion discredited for their Christianity and Catholicity as having a 'conflict of interest'. A previous Fairfax journalist has recently called anti-Catholicism the new anti-Semitism. A 'subterranean movement of Catholics' and of Catholic thinking was blamed for the social ill of holding back euthanasia. Were it not for Catholics we would have had the benefit of euthanasia. Anti-Semitism has historically followed similar trails. Jewish people were sidelined from democratic processes as their rights were eroded and removed. The woes of 1930s Germany were attributed to Jewish people in their midst and to their alleged conspiratorial movements.

More serious than the fanning of bigotry was the fanning of hopelessness. In the demand for suicide by prescribed pills and injections the very sick are seen to have no further worth. They are encouraged to think they no longer possess their dignity, that their illness has made them undignified. 'Who would want to live without dignity?' The old 'Life Education' vans used to distribute work sheets to children claiming 'happiness = health + good diet', failing to acknowledge happiness in ill health. The same blindness to our human spirituality characterizes euthanasia. Spirituality has been replaced by memories and letter-writing and photographs - all good things in themselves but none of them acknowledging our spiritual presence or the essence of our eternal souls.

Euthanasia also embodies a value judgment on the person who would carry on living in a clearly undignified body. They must be able to be killed when 'losing dignity' demands the euthanasia movement. The exit from life is somehow more dignified via some shiny bought pills with the drug company logo on them. Euthanasia movements deny persons their true dignity, focusing on perceived indignity and on the dying process rather than the beauty of their God-given souls' living passage. Palliative care medicine and its practice are always downplayed as deficient and somehow partnering this indignity. Since palliative care does not prescribe death it doesn't solve the problem of the broken body. Lovelessness and the projection of degradation characterize euthanasia thinking.

Slippery slopes become waterfalls. The Netherlands cabinet is proposing legislation to expand its death offers to those who feel their lives are complete, without further meaning. Lost loved ones, decreased mobility, aloneness, are to be sufficient reason for Dutch doctors to kill them with no age restrictions. The Dutch bishops have responded:

'When elderly people have the option to relatively easily stop living and when this would become a trend, it is not unimaginable that they would feel pressured to then make use of the option. When one becomes an 'expense' for the health care system, one would almost feel guilty for continuing living regardless'. Meanwhile, persons in California whose mental illness is so severe they require mandatory hospitalization (known as 'scheduling' in Australia) can be released, if they have a

terminal diagnosis, to a death facility. They have lost their right to competent informed consent. Other seriously ill mental health patients will see this death release as a solution, and suicide as an acceptable example of state care.

To succeed against this we need prayer. As well as silent prayer and the prayer which accompanies life and its moments Pope Francis has said, 'we do not pray in order to be comfortable with our conscience, or in order to enjoy a purely aesthetic harmony. When we pray we are fighting for our people'



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WOMEN'S VOICE

Women's Voice is the Official Magazine of World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO). An annual subscription is \$22.00

League Members should contact their State International Secretaries if they would like to subscribe to Women's Voice.

VICTORIA & WAGGA WAGGA

On Sunday 2nd October CWL Vic Wagga members and families and friends gathered to celebrate our centenary. Our day began with Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, celebrated by Archbishop Dennis Hart. Concelebrants were Fr. John Salvano and Fr. Peter Ferwerda of Myrtleford.

The Archbishop encouraged members to continue their League journey in Faith, Hope and Love.

The memory of being together with some 175 other members and friends, as part of the Cathedral congregation on this occasion will be treasured I am sure.

Following Mass we shared lunch at ACU (Australian Catholic University) a short distance from the Cathedral. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet new friends as well as catch-up with friends from afar.

Brenda Finlayson DSG, a former WUCWO Board member, travelled from W. A. and Angela Sannen, a former Melbourne Archdiocesan president, came from Queensland. Angela and Brenda and a few other members shared some of their "League" memories.

Our Horizon magazine committee, under the leadership of Jane Munro, presented our "centenary book", to mark the occasion. Articles taken from the Horizon over the 100 years make great reading.

The Horizon is also celebrating its centenary- a wonderful achievement indeed.

Souvenir coffee mugs and pens were also available.

In the ACU complex a museum is being established to promote the life and legacy of Dr Sr. Mary Glowrey, to the wider public. Dr . Sr.

Mary Glowrey was our first president in 1916. She travelled to India in 1920 and served the people there until her death in 1957. She was raised to Servant of God

in 2013 and her Cause for sainthood is continuing.

The opening of this museum is planned for May 2017.

In early December Rev. Dr. Mathew Abraham CSsR MD to attend the celebration of the launch of the Sr. Dr. Mary Glowrey Scholars Program, which is an initiative of University of Melbourne and St. Vincent's Hospital. Rev Dr. Mathew is the Director General of CHAI, Catholic Health Association of India, established by Mary Glowrey in 1943 This will enable Health Workers from CHAI to participate in courses which will be of benefit to their work for the people of India

There will be the opportunity for League members to meet Rev. Dr. Mathew in Melbourne.

Our task of encouraging branches to continue their valuable work, even when they experience difficulty in attracting new members, is on-going.

On behalf of members in Vic Wagga, may I wish members everywhere a Blessed Christmas with their families and friends, and every good wish for 2017.

Until next time,



Anita Toner
President Victoria & Wagga
Wagga

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

"Let us be renewed by God's Mercy"

The Catholic Women's League of WA has maintained a steady membership of 250 ladies within fourteen branches throughout WA – nine in the Bunbury Diocese, four in the Perth Archdiocese and a branch in Geraldton and for those members who do not have easy access to a branch or who find it difficult or inconvenient to attend meetings we extend Associate membership. All branches come under the umbrella of the CWLWA State Council which has an elected Executive body and elected delegates who are allocated branches and members to communicate with and subsequently report to State Council meetings. Also on State Council we have a Social Issues Convenor, a State International Secretary, a representative to the World Day of Prayer Committee and representatives to the National Council of Women and Australian Church Women bodies. State Council meets bi-monthly and on most occasions, the Executive group will also meet prior to the State meeting. I am most grateful to all the women on our State Council for their continued commitment and dedication to attending meetings, for the excellent reports which are submitted by all for consideration and discussion and importantly for their ongoing action and interaction with members and branches. We can all rightly know that it is for this reason that our members can feel connected and informed. As State President I am humbled by the support of these wonderful ladies.

Attadale, Leschenault and Morley branches proudly celebrated their 30th birthdays this year and together with the branches which have longer ongoing histories we proudly say "well done and keep it up". Publicising these milestones brings about a renewed knowledge of Catholic Women's League in our parish communities and with it the hope of building membership. CWL was established in WA in 1937 following the example of South Australia where the league was first established in Australia in 1914. The Nedlands branch, which is still in operation, was the home of WA's first

branch and eagerly looks forward to celebrating 80 years in 2017.

I was very pleased to attend the National mid-term conference in Adelaide in August. In readiness for WA taking up office in 2018 and 2019, our state council financed the opportunity for two alternate delegates to accompany me and our second delegate to this conference. To have four of our people in this forum enabled a greater shared perspective and understanding of what it means to be part of a National body something which cannot be attained from written reports. I thank Valma, Fran and Sharon for travelling this journey with me and also say a special thankyou to National President Anne Marie and her executive for providing an excellent agenda and in particular for the wonderful atmosphere of solidarity, friendship and hospitality which prevailed throughout.

At this latter stage of the year our State Treasurer is receiving donations from branches to be forwarded to various causes - to Linda's House of Hope which has been receiving our support for many years now; to the Sisters House in Fremantle (which provides accommodation for homeless women) some financial assistance to install a very necessary security door; to Pregnancy Assistance and now for the first time we will offer some support to a branch of Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren to enable the grandparents to give the children in their care some holiday cheer by way of entertainment and fast food vouchers and as well we will provide a donation towards the upgrade of their computer. Our Notre Dame Scholarship will enter its 5th year in 2017 – this scholarship has been a very heartwarming opportunity to assist with further education of young women and to date the recipients have been amazing. This year for the second time, and in keeping with our aim to support youth, we will donate to the Embrace the Grace Youth Retreat – to provide some support for those young people who otherwise may not be able to attend. These are just some of the many ways in which branches contribute as they also continue to offer increasing support in their parishes and local communities. Any parish with a CWL branch therein is a fortunate, well-resourced parish!

In the social issues area most of our focus this year has been on national concerns, notably the debate over the possible redefinition of marriage and the ongoing concerns over the Safe Schools Coalition. In the latter area we are relieved to note that there is no evidence of widespread use of the resources in WA schools, though this may alter if there is a change of government. Our approach to the marriage debate has been very much influenced by the wise pastoral leadership of our bishops.

We have also monitored the situation regarding asylum seekers held in offshore detention, and were fortunate enough to gain a wider perspective on the issue at our recent State Conference.

As part of our commitment to promoting the strength of the natural family we have been encouraged to study Pope Francis' Amoris Laetitia in greater depth.

And, at state level we have noted recent trends in abortion provision, including increasing use of medical abortion, and we are waiting with some anxiety to see whether euthanasia will become an issue in the forthcoming state election.

place we may now call our new 'home away from home' when having state gatherings.



We were pleased to welcome National President, Anne Marie to our State Conference in October. Some 60 members attended the day where we were joined by Guest Speaker Frank Pelusey from the St Vincent de Paul Migrant and Refugee Committee. Frank shared some graphic insights into the plight of refugees in our country and their everyday fears and needs. The day was facilitated at St Catherine's House of Hospitality run by the Mercy Sisters; a warm welcoming



As the Extraordinary Year of Mercy draws to an end we are encouraged to be always the Face of Christ in the midst of much that is unjust and difficult to comprehend. Pope Francis said that "We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy" and again in the words of Pope Francis – our theme for this year almost complete "Let us be renewed in God's Mercy". We can all be agents for change and in a spirit of love and co-operation, may we know that we have been renewed in all we have accomplished and all that is yet to come.

In Charity, Work and Loyalty



Maria Parkinson
State President CWLWA (Inc.)

QUEENSLAND

September sixty members attended our State Conference held in Brisbane. The Opening Mass at the Cathedral of St Stephen was celebrated by Archbishop Mark Coleridge, with State Chaplain Father Peter Luton and Ipswich Branch chaplain Father Stephen Bliss concelebrating. We were honoured to have National President Anne Marie present for the three days of the conference. The Archbishop, in his homily, referred to CWL as "God's work of art in progress".

There was a wide variety of excellent speakers. On the first day we heard Gabrielle Quilliam, the driving force behind Hummingbird House Hospice for children, and then Briannon Stevens of Neurodiversity, who spoke on "Creating a World where Autistic Children Can Thrive". Both organisations were presented with a donation.

On the second day, referring to the Year of Mercy, our State Chaplain Father Peter Luton gave an address based on Luke 6:29-38, telling us that loving those close to us comes naturally, but loving those who hurt us or those we just don't like, takes an effort, and as true followers of Christ we must make that effort to act with mercy, and love all God's people. Sister Kari Hatherell of Evangelisation Brisbane gave the Keynote

Address, "Witnessing to Living Mercy in the Joy of Gospel," which was the theme of the conference. Sister Kari, in her very down to earth way, combined the many facets of meaning of the Year of Mercy with the call the Pope makes to us to be joyful witnesses to the resurrection. Our State Project for 2015-16 was to support Mercy Works in its efforts to help asylum seekers and refugees in Queensland to adjust to their new homes. We presented the Executive Director of Mercy Works Sister Ailsa Mackinnon rsm with a cheque for \$6500 which was raised by the branches.

On the final day, Rob Cosgrove of Evangelisation Brisbane took us through the main points of the Pope's Encyclical, *Laudate Si* with a presentation entitled "Mercy for the Earth: Caring For Our Common Home. This was followed by our Archbishop who gave an enlightening and often humorous talk on the Apostolic Exhortation "The Joy of Love." He spoke honestly about sexuality, passion and emotions. Following his talk the Archbishop joined us for lunch.

This year we have had branch closures in each diocese, but still remain hopeful for the future of CWL in Queensland. Townsville Diocese have been very proactive, organising two successful "enlightening" events with Dr Deirdre Little and Sonia di Mezza as guest speakers.

As there were no nominations for State President, I will be continuing in the position for 2017-18. May we all continue to love and support one another as we work for the Honour and Glory of God.

Blessings.

Veronica Box
President CWL State of Queensland.

TASMANIA

25 delegates were present at the 60th Tasmanian State Conference. National President Anne-Marie Clark was welcomed. As well there were about four observers and four husbands.

Many ladies stayed with friends or relatives. Some stayed in hotels and about eight stayed in "Aulington" – the former convent and novitiate of the Presentation Order. It was a three storey

mansion, with a beautiful garden, view, three lovely balconies & a lift. As it was close to the conference centre so we were able to walk there. *We began with Registrations and floral arrangements were given to all those Life Members who were present. Excellent guest speakers were provided -:

Michael Dunphy on Church of Apostles 150th celebrations to be held next month - the history of the church in Launceston & the building of Church of Apostles. He has written a book which will be launched in Nov at a special dinner. (it was just 12 days since he had had hip surgery). He assisted his talk with slides which made it interesting.

Vyv Allchin 5 years working with St V de Paul – said there are homeless people living up in the Launceston City Gorge. The old Star Picture Theatre is Vinnies main headquarters. They have an office there where people can get help with filling out forms and so on, a clothing store, household goods. They take a soup & sandwich van at weekends & Wednesdays around the city. A lot of homeless come to enjoy the food, but some just come along to chat. One young man arrived in the middle of winter - a frosty night, just wearing a T shirt. He was sent off wearing someone's coat and clutching their business card eager to visit the headquarters the following Monday.

A wonderful "Handcraft Exhibition" was enjoyed the first evening after the opening speeches and welcoming of distinguished guests, the Lord Mayor of the City of Launceston Mayor Ald Albert and his wife the Lady Mayoress, the Hon Helen Polley and Archbishop Julian Porteous, Bishop of Hobart. .

Sandra Harvey, State President blew in like a breath of fresh air, very organised & confident (slightly late but not flustered), and welcomed dignitaries & all others and then proceeded to deliver a most amazing report on the work & life of CWL Tasmania over the past 12 months. She was very impressive.

The mayor welcomed everyone and told us how and why Launceston is the best city. His Grace spoke at length about his concerns for the changes that are being attempted on families. A marriage should be between a man and a woman. He worries that children will not know who their biological parent or even parents are. If

marriage breaks down, society is affected. He was great and inspiring.

The Lady Mayoress presented Guilford Young perpetual award to Wendy Fittler. Entries needed to have produced four different things. Wendy had a lot of very lovely entries as well, including two quilts.

On the Saturday proceedings began with prayers. A prayer booklet had been prepared and members shared the readings about God's mercy.

Motions were presented, spoken about & voted upon. All were recommended without argument. Annual Meeting was held. Reports given. New office bearers were chosen.

A list of Past members who had died since last AGM was read...it was quite extensive.

Pat Gartlan spoke about the Memorial for Unborn Babies to be erected in church grounds at Richmond. It is her hope that no one less than the POPE should do the blessing when it is done!

Key note speaker – Ms Robyn Fahy from Melbourne spoke about the life of Dr. Mary Glowrey. & her preparation in getting ready for her possible canonisation. Australia's second Saint. Awesome!

Denise Talbot on "Days for Girls". Another amazing person who gave us many samples and hand outs.

Mark Brown from Australian Christian Lobby was introduced by Pat Gartlan. She couldn't praise his work enough. He works with all Church groups. putting forth the Christian thoughts and leanings. In particular with the government leaders, journalists etc. He has a wife and four growing up children and came from N.Z.

The morning teas, afternoon teas, & suppers were varied and delicious.

Wendy Fittler provided hot pumpkin soup & bread rolls for the first evening's meal for the Aulington boarders. Wendy was so thoughtful and organised.

On the Saturday evening a dinner was attended when a talk from the National President was to have been given. Unfortunately due to the noisy

atmosphere this was not able to happen. We are hoping that Anne Marie will put her words into writing for us to read .

There was one Life Membership presented to an amazing Tasmanian lady, Betty Roberts. She has been a role model for us all with her contribution to society.

Sunday morning Mass was said in the Church of Apostles, members joining in with the lovely local parishioners.

It was an inspiring, uplifting time, especially enjoyable as I felt that we were all a "like-minded family"....there for the Lord, struggling to keep strong in a world that seems to be falling apart.



NEW OFFICER BEARERS FOR THE COMING YEAR ARE AS FOLLOWS:

State President	Mrs Deirdre Reid
Southern Vice-President	Mrs Rosanne Way
Northern Vice-President	Mrs Wendy Fittler
State Treasurer	Mrs Jan Lawler
State Secretary	Mrs Judy Gibbens

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us all in our new CWL roles.

May God be glorified in all we do.

Judy Gibbens

State Secretary

New South Wales

Greeting to Members of Catholic Women's League Australia. As the year is drawing to a close and the Holy Season of Christmas is fast approaching I extend the best wishes of the CWLA-NSW Inc.

Executive members and all members from New South Wales for a Joyous and Holy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This year has been a "Caretaker" year for myself and executive and it has been a joy to share time with the members of CWLA-NSW Inc. at various Diocesan functions, symposiums, and Interfaith events.

2017 brings a new President of CWLA-NSW Inc. Ann Pereira from Lismore Diocese was elected State President at the recent State Council Meeting of CWLA-NSW Inc.

All members and the current Executive welcome Ann to the position and offer her every good wish as she undertakes the leadership of CWLA-NSW Inc.

It is always difficult to say goodbye or leave something that has been a big part of your life, and the opportunity I have had to lead this wonderful State organisation is difficult to leave. How fortunate I have been to have had such a wonderful team of women walking this journey with me. I remind you of your executive, Sandra Kijko, Denise McCaffery, Sue Halliday, Peg McEntee OAM, Patricia Banister, Beth Stewart, Margo Nancarrow, and Michelle Pedersen. These women have worked diligently alongside me in the various portfolio positions they have held. Each one bringing their own special gift and talent to the State Executive.

I also extend thanks to our State Chaplain, Fr. Don Richardson who has been a great support to the executive and I appreciate his insightful comments at meetings and spiritual reflections at State Council Meetings, our Conference and in the State newsletter.

Recently CWLA-NSW Inc. had the pleasure of nominating Dr. Deirdre Little for the Inaugural Pregnancy Support Awards. The awards, were presented to recognise the outstanding work undertaken by individuals and organisations across New South Wales providing support and care for women and families facing unplanned pregnancy. The awards dinner was hosted by Greg Donnelly MLC at NSW Parliament House. Deirdre was nominated in the category of Best Pregnancy Support in Regional, Rural and Remote NSW. Though Deirdre was not the recipient of the award on the evening it was a privilege and an honour to acknowledge the work undertaken by Deirdre in supporting women. Deirdre has established Project Life in Bellingen. Deirdre has always acknowledged the initial work undertaken by Helen Wyborn from the Lismore diocese who has been a great assistance to her in her work.

How fortunate we are as members of CWLA to have such an inspirational woman within our organisation and as the National Bioethics Convenor.

Submissions to Government have been presented on behalf of CWLA-NSW Inc.

Most recently the submission presented was on Childhood Obesity and Overweight. I acknowledge the research undertaken by State Bioethics Convenor Margo Nancarrow and appreciate the assistance from the National Research Officer Sonia Di Mezza. Submissions to Government have also been the Abortion Law Reform (Miscellaneous Acts Amendments) Bill and Elder Abuse.

As the year concludes all dioceses have held AGM's and planning is in place for 2017. Membership continues to be a concern as initiatives to invite women to join our wonderful organisation have not been fruitful. In saying that though the wonderful commitment of the members is outstanding, they never tire of keeping the best interest of others at the forefront of all they do.

Our affiliation with the National Council of

Women continues and once again in January 2017 CWLA-NSW Inc. will sponsor a young woman for the Celebrate Being Australian Award. The nominee is a young woman presented to the State Executive for consideration from the Wollongong Diocese. Bridget Haywood will be the recipient of our sponsorship in 2017. This year NCW NSW celebrated 120 years and many celebrations have been held throughout the year. CWLA-NSW Inc. Development/Protocol Officer Peg McEntee OAM was awarded Life membership. Peg is a Past President of NCW-NSW.

On behalf of the Executive and members of CWLA-NSW Inc. I extend thanks to National President Anne Marie Clark and the National Executive for their leadership throughout the year. I thank all members of CWLA for their friendship during this term of office.

Peace and Joy



Moya Potts
AM President CWLA- NSW Inc.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As I reflect on the past three months of my role as President of this one hundred year old organisation in South Australia, I am indeed humbled and in awe of the amazing women who have given hours of their time to supporting each other and addressing issues involving women and children in their areas, parishes and in the wider community. As I complete my first twelve months as State President I am both excited and committed to continue the wonderful work of my predecessors for CWL in SA.

After consultation with members of the Executive, at our State Council meeting in May, it was decided to ask each branch in SA to choose the most significant resolution from the National Conference in Parramatta in 2015 and send their result into the State office by October when these results would be collated and one would be our focus for the next twelve months. We had responses from seventeen branches and a tie between Domestic Violence and Youth Suicide. We have decided to work with both resolutions and to look at suicide on a wider scale. At our November meeting each member of the executive was asked to choose one of these significant issues and begin to investigate what is already available for people to access when these circumstances present and then put together our own strategies in support. We understand that it will mean a cultural change and that this will not be a quick fix, but one that will need time and energy to support these vulnerable people.

Our East Terrace property which is leased by Christian Brothers College to operate as a Community Childcare Centre continues to flourish and to be a wonderful investment for the South Australian CWL. Joan Young has been a long time 'go between' for us and the CBC school. Many improvements have been completed by us as well as the CBC community. The final payment for the improvements will be made by us in June 2017.

I have been able to attend three branch meetings since September and have thoroughly enjoyed meeting members and hearing about the work that they have undertaken. My aim is to attend a meeting with each branch in the coming twelve months – city as well as country! I know that Carol Ganley, new Archdiocesan President is hoping to attend branch meetings as well, so communication will be paramount to us all! Fifty and twenty five year certificates have been presented to many CWL members this year. What an amazing feat this is for women who have volunteered their time and energy for so many others less fortunate than they! Congratulations!

As we begin our 2016 Advent season, may God's richest blessings be with you all as we celebrate the birth of Jesus and may you be blessed with a happy and holy Christmas and New Year.



Cecilia Quigley
State President

“For it is in giving that we receive”

St. Francis of Assisi



FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

Since the Mid-Term Council Meeting of Catholic Women's League Australia Inc held in Adelaide, August, 2016 the time has passed very quickly. There has been so much going on in the WUCWO world. I left Sydney for Bari Italy on 17 October for the Second Conference of the Women of the Middle East and Mediterranean area which was then followed by 2016 WUCWO Board Meeting. Both meetings were held at a venue situated about fifty kilometres from the city. We visited the city on two occasions but did not see any of it. Firstly, we went to the University of Bari, where the bus dropped us and picked us up right at the venue. Secondly, we were to have free time after visiting St Nicholas Shrine but it rained so much we could not venture out in it so I returned to Australia on the night of 29 October, 2016 without seeing the city of Bari which is on the Mediterranean Sea and was a step off point for the Crusaders many centuries ago.

The theme of this Conference was: Women workers of Peace towards a culture of meeting and Dialogue. There were 120 attendees at the conference of the Women from the Middle East and Mediterranean Area. Countries represented were Albania, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Italy, Spain, Tonga, South Korea, Philippines, Australia, Argentina, Venezuela, France, Iraq, Gabon, Senegal, Malawi, Mali, Abu Dhabi, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Ghana, Holy Land, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Syria, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, and United States of America. As you can see 40 countries were represented and each person introduced themselves. I thank CWLA Inc for giving me this opportunity to be present at such a conference. A copy of the Declaration of this conference for your information and interest is available on the web page wucwo.org

There was a Public Meeting at University of Bari when local Councillors and dignitaries from the area spoke and the Archbishop of Bari, Francesco Cacucci opened the conference and presented a telegram of congratulations with prayers and well wishes from Pope Francis via

Secretary of State for the Holy See Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

This conference was a chance for the women from these areas to be together and to enlighten those of us from WUCWO as to the situation in their countries. We might think we hear the truth from our Television news and newspapers but we do not hear how bad everything is from the people who are in those zones. How the men go to war or are killed leaving the women without any money for food for their children, nowhere to live which then forces the women to do things that they do not want to do to get money to feed, house and clothe themselves and children. Housing and food is very expensive as a result of war. Women without husbands have no standing in the community. Women with education are really no better off as there is no work for them either.

Trafficking and prostitution and all types of injustices are suffered. Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) is also on the increase mainly in young women who find it difficult to get work as a result of the war. Their cities are in ruin, their churches destroyed or they cannot attend services. We broke into smaller groups and discussed topics which are WUCWO priorities Family; Youth and Suffering Women. The women from these areas could relate to all of those topics.

There were panels with representatives from various countries who explained their differences as well as similar things. There are two common points 1. Faith and 2. Peace. We had open discussions which were discussed in the language you felt most comfortable so in that instance I attended English speaking groups.

We all took part in an Ecumenical Service at the Shrine of St Nicholas as well as making a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St Peitro Pio and were able to visit the Holy Door during this special time of Jubilee of Mercy.

These days were very long and very busy but we thank God for this opportunity to be among such loving and caring women.

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

As this Conference concluded the members of the WUCWO Board regrouped in order to begin the Board meeting for 2016. Like the Conference, Mass was celebrated each day. If the day began with Mass the evening ended with a prayer service or vice versa. This Board Meeting was quite spiritual and with our Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr. Gerry Whelan SJ we delved deeper into SEE-JUDGE-ACT so we as Women of WUCWO can go about our mission with this attitude. We explored, in depth, the Pope's letters of Laudate Si and Amoris Laetitia.

The Board selected the title of the next WUCWO General Assembly, which will take place in Dakar, Senegal from 15-22 October, 2018. The title is WUCWO Women, carriers of the "living water" to a world which thirsts for Peace. I hope some of you will join with me at this General Assembly.

This year has been so busy with WUCWO Asia Pacific Region Conference in May, Mid-Term Council Meeting of CWLA Inc in August, and the Conference and Meeting of which I am writing. This may also give you an insight into my role. You are all aware that nothing happens without adequate preparation so it does take time prior to the meetings to prepare and afterwards there are Reports to be written and give sufficient time to think about, appreciate and remember what was done and discussed during that meeting time.

I thank you for your prayers and support throughout this year and wish you all the Peace of the Child Jesus this Christmas time.



Catherine V McGrath

WUCWO V/P Asia Pacific Region

WUCWO Board Member Australia

WUCWO BOARD MEETING

23-26 OCTOBER, 2016

It gives me pleasure to present this Report, to you National President, Anne Marie. This Report is without the benefit of Minutes and is from my hand written notes. I trust it meets with approval of CWLA Inc. I thank you for the opportunity, prayerful and financial support to attend this Board Meeting which is required by the WUCWO Statutes and By-laws.

World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) held the Board Meeting for 2016 at Park Hotel Elizabeth, Bari, Italy from 23-26 October, 2016. President General, Maria Giovanna Ruggieri welcomed all to the meeting then called the Board to order and we began the meeting with a spiritual reflection "Veni, Creator Spiritus". Roll was called and apologies from four Board Members were noted. Adoption of the Agenda, Adoption of Rules of Procedure and the Adoption of the Minutes of the last Board Meeting held in Rome, April, 2015. Changes/Additions to the Agenda, Point 5 Geneva Representation moved President General (PG) seconded Vice President General (V/P G) – carried unanimously.

PG presented her opening speech commenting that forty (40) countries had been represented at the Middle East and Mediterranean Area Meeting. She also told the meeting that we would use the Synodal method at this Board Meeting and that we as a Board cannot forget what is happening in this world – there is more slavery now in the world than when it was legal. Family life is distorted in today's society – like to build without God – sterile like over exploited land that then becomes desert. We, the women of WUCWO, are women of Hope in this year of Mercy and the doors are open. Our Catholic Church is considered a credible institution in the eyes of the world and must be a place of Mercy and we are able to overcome evil with good and be more active in our beliefs. There has been a meeting of great spirituality and the women of the Middle East and Mediterranean area are organising to join WUCWO.

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

Ecclesiastical Assistant (EA) Fr. Gerry Whelan gave a lecture on Amoris Laetitia, he said that this document is very real and is for everyone in the Church. Fr. Gerry asked us this question Do we as volunteers of WUCWO and our National Organisations really commit ourselves? We need to make more commitment as do our Organisations. We can change the world by justice, which is built in the world by communication. We cannot communicate with others unless you can communicate with yourselves. Discernment is a peaceful heart with a feeling of OK, feelings you can trust. We all have bad days so on these days do not do anything, do not make decisions. There is the Cross and Resurrection in all our lives, let us become more aware of each other. We all experienced the willingness of the women from the Middle East and Mediterranean Area to share with us their deepest feelings.

Secretary General (SG) asked all Board Members to use the Synodal procedure and spiritual approach to this Board Meeting and this was agreed by all. Each member was then asked to evaluate the Conference of the Middle East and Mediterranean Area women – go into the heart and remember something which was important to each of us.

Angelus was said in French after which we had lunch and returned to the next session that began with a Merciful prayer – an African song in English.

PG then reported on all the activities and events at which she has represented WUCWO since the last Board Meeting held in Rome in April, 2015.

- Visited Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on many occasions for discussion
- Visited Pontifical Council for Laity on many occasions for discussion
- Contacted and conducted meetings with Ambassadors to the Holy See
- She was able; through her contact at Council for Justice and Peace ask for Flaminia to attend the Conference in Bari. Flaminia is the under secretary in that

diacastery. PG has committed WUCWO to work closer with that Pontifical Council in relation to human trafficking.

- Some WUCWO members were present at Synod of the Family Pontifical Council for Family, Laity and Life has recently been set up under Archbishop Kevin Farrell – Irish born American
- Spoken with some Religious Orders about our priority YOUTH and in what capacity are we of WUCWO able to work.
- The commission responsible for Latin America asked for WUCWO to be in attendance at Mercy celebrations in Bogotá, Colombia to celebrate the anniversaries of the Americas
- WUCWO co sponsored “A Minute for Peace” in June Women in the Church – Women theologians , hopefully one from each Region but not one from Asia Pacific Region as yet
- She attended Conferences in the Regions
- International Audit is very costly. Can anyone do it as a gift for WUCWO?

V/P G reported:

- Prayed and thought about WUCWO daily
- Reviewed our WUCWO going forward plan with PG Worked on Synod questions – women have innate talents that differ from men. Allow women to be involved in all aspects of Church apart from those of the priesthood
- Attended session of United Nations in New York. Added the voice of WUCWO to discussions at UN New York
- delighted to represent WUCWO at the anniversaries of the Americas in Colombia and she had WUCWO brochures printed in three (3) languages for distribution
- Handles the Bank Account in USA and transfers money when requested by Secretariat and Treasurer General (TG) Great collaboration with V/P North America and was present at a lovely Region Conference.

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

TG reported

- The role of the Bursar is to make sure all is in order for WUCWO
- Staff member Virginia, helps every day. Management of Bank account now much easier
- 30 September is end of financial year
- Bank in Paris is in Euros and Bank in USA is in US\$
- Bari Conference should break even
- Fees same as in 2010. Some fees and Women's Voice subscriptions have not been paid
- How can we promote Endowment Funds or such fund raising schemes?
- Every Region has to cover costs of Region Conference. There is no money from WUCWO for these Conferences
- We cannot use legacy money for anything other than what it is intended for such as Ecumenism can be used only for that purpose. It cannot be used for day to day running costs

Endowment Funds

V/P North America Region, Velma, reported that these funds have halved over the last five years. Interest from Canadian fund this year is only C\$8,000. The interest rate is now so low because in 2011 C\$38,000 was contributed to WUCWO. V/P G reported that the American fund is administered by former TG Joann Hillebrand and a group of ladies and the Interest for this year is only US\$200. An effort is being made to find a secure higher interest bearing fund.

EA explained his role for WUCWO

- He was appointed from three (3) names submitted to the Holy See – Pontifical Council for Laity
- Encourage all to live by your Statutes
- Offers support at Spiritual level – vision for WUCWO
- EA lasts for the same period of time as PG

- Frequent and informal visits to the WUCWO office
- Writes articles for "Women's Voice"
- Attends Vatican with PG
- He believes women should have spoken more at the Synod of Family
- Theology for women, we will be reporting at grass roots level but also by theologians-arrows go both ways. The structure is informal at this time.
- It is not clear thinking if theology is not accompanied by philosophy

SC raised a point that when she thinks of Fr Gerry and how he interacts with us WUCWO members she believes he is an example for all other priests to follow. Thank you Fr. Other members expressed gratitude to Fr Gerry.

SG spoke about her role in WUCWO

- Only 7 responses to survey questions
- Communication each day with Vatican Offices, Member Organisations, other organisations, different individuals – about 40-50 emails
- Daily communication with PG, V/PG, TG, EA, and speak daily with PG and frequently with other Executive
- Web page updated regularly – it could reach 10million women if everything received in three (3) languages
- Vatican Radio "Minute for Peace" in 20 Languages
- Ex officio on International Committee, supervise the International Group in Geneva and forum of Catholic NGO's
- In charge of Secretariat and Staff – Virginia helps TG and translates, Giacomo is a professional translator and understands four (4) languages
- Good to be in Rome. The hours are longer compared to Paris but no increase in wages. SG and Virginia are full time and Giacomo four (4) hours
- Some items such as visits and events have already been mentioned by PG

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

- Meetings with Cardinals Rylko, Baldisseri, Parolin, Clemens, Turkson, Paglia, and Flaminia and many more
- Jubilee of Mercy – many contacts with Holy See, Voices of Faith, Caritas, Coatnet
- Biggest difficulty is working in three (3) languages at the same time
- Communication between all needs to be improved
- Great honour to be working for WUCWO women

All reports carried a unanimous vote.

V/PG is investigating moving WUCWO office to Rome

The next two (2) sessions were dedicated to Working Groups and reporting back. As Magda was not present and is finding things difficult I have been given the role of YOUTH co-ordinator.

TG led us in a form of Meditation that she and her group have found useful. It is similar to Lectio Divina. This was followed by EA who gave a lecture on Laudate Si – sustainable development call to Action for WUCWO. Ecology in the world – what can we do as Catholics? Laudate Si shows us a beautiful way.

All Board Members are members of Committees – Statutes, Finance, International and CIPS (which relates to communication). Once again the next two sessions were devoted to working in our groups and reporting back. Statutes group has discovered that there is a discrepancy in where WUCWO is registered and this requires more work. The Angelus was said in Spanish and after lunch a prayer was said to the Merciful Cross (African song in French). The other committees then reported back – Finance plan to have a motion at the General Assembly to increase fees by a small percentage. CIP'S a motion was moved to upgrade the Web page to an amount of 12,000 Euros; International - Danielle was voted to be a representative at Geneva.

The Rosary was said in English after which we moved to Region groups to work with the same method as we had for Working Groups and

Committees. We were asked to discover what we had done in the Region as to the priorities and what we had not done and write a prayer apologising to the Lord for our lack of work and commitment. We then moved to the Chapel for prayers followed by Mass at 7.30pm after which dinner was served.

This day Mass was prepared by Asia Pacific Region and was celebrated at 7.30am after breakfast then we began work for the day. We began with a reading and shared Reflection of a Gospel passage of Jesus and a woman.

An overview of the work of the previous day was held and discussed. It was an enriching meeting with the Holy Spirit present among us. Fr Gerry mentioned that Laudate Si is at the heart of the Social Doctrine of the Church. The two (2) documents Laudate Si and Evangelii Gaudium show how the Church reaches out to its people. Vatican II is the basis for these documents and it inspired the Church to open itself up. Angelus today said in English.

After lunch we began the session with the Divine Mercy Chaplet. We now look towards the General Assembly of 2018. Monique from Senegal was asked for an update to us all on what has happened so far. **The dates for the General Assembly are 15-22 October, 2018.** The consensus was that there is still two years to prepare and save for this Assembly as some thought it would be more expensive to travel on the weekend in order to be there to start on 15 October which is a Monday. Nothing has been booked yet as she waited for the Board Meeting. A unanimous vote was taken for TG spoke about General Assembly that it is a compulsory activity and has to support itself. WUCWO will manage the Registration for this Assembly. Monique is to go ahead and book a venue. Not exactly sure of the cost of Registration but it must cover speakers' costs, their accommodation and travel and translators. There will be NO travel Agent this time as there has been for the last two Assemblies. Monique said that accommodation in Africa does not cost much. Member Organisations should be fund raising and putting away funds so that members can travel to the General Assembly.

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

It has been suggested that we have only three (3) resolutions at the General Assembly so that we can really focus on them. Please advise your Organisations of this matter. Focus on a few and achieve a lot rather than have maybe twelve (12) and achieve NIL. PG suggested we have a speaker from each Region at GA 18. The speakers must speak to the Topic. The theme for the GA 18 was chosen from a list of suggestions that had been sent to the Secretariat. After much discussion the theme chosen for GA18 is – WUCWO Women, Carriers of “Living Water” to a world which thirsts for Peace.

We began the next session, really the last session for the Board Members, with the prayer to Mary, Queen of Peace, Patroness of WUCWO. To conclude this meeting a written evaluation by each Board Member was completed. Drawing the Board Meeting to a conclusion PG said that it was a meeting with Harmony and that comes from each of us being different like an orchestra with different instruments but making some beautiful music. It has been a Reflective Meeting and she is grateful to all of us in the spirit of Mercy. An extra daily task is given to all of us to pray for Peace in the Middle East and all humanitarian disasters going on in other parts of the world. We need courage to carry our WUCWO commitment. Do not forget your commitment when you go home. We adjourned to the Chapel for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament when each of us was asked to light a candle and say a prayer or sing or whatever and give thanks to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Executive meeting took place on 26 October which was the next morning after a beautiful Mass celebrated with the candles from the night before adorning the Altar. The non executive Board Members then left the venue.

It was good to have another face to face meeting at this end of the Board meeting as we have only had electronic previously in this Board. There was discussion as to what had taken place in the Board Meeting and then what happens when there is an electronic meeting when there is a lot of noise. Practice using your computer by

turning the microphone off and with earphones in so you can hear when you need to speak. Hopefully, we will have an electronic meeting before Christmas. It will be in relation to the Web page; domicile and registration for WUCWO; Middle East Meeting update and Social teachings of the Church. There was much more talk and discussion but as we go home from this Board Meeting we will entrust our work to Mary, Queen of Peace to make ourselves at WUCWO better known.



Catherine V McGrath

WUCWO V/P Asia Pacific Region

WUCWO Board Member Australia

CONFERENCE: WOMEN FROM MIDDLE EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN AREA

19-23 OCTOBER, 2016

Tuesday, 18 October, 2016, I arrived in Bari, Italy after leaving Sydney on 17 October via Abu Dhabi, Rome. On arrival at Bari airport I was greeted by a group of women from Lebanon who recognised me from the Conference held in Jordan, 2013. This really set the tone for me of the Conference and the time we would spend together at Park Hotel Elizabeth which was approximately 55Kilometres from the Bari airport. It was great to meet with all of the ladies there for this Conference.

We left the hotel at 4.00pm for a public meeting at Bari University. The Archbishop of Bari was present as were other dignitaries from the University of Bari, the city of Bari and the Region of Puglia as well as the local president of Catholic Action. President General Maria Giovanna Ruggieri gave an address followed by a talk

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

by Ms Flaminia Giovanelli – Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. There was an opportunity for some discussion and questions before we were once again on the buses for the hotel and dinner.

The theme of this 2nd Conference with Women from the Middle East and the Mediterranean Area was “Women, workers of peace towards a culture of meeting and dialogue”.

Each day began with Morning Prayer and this day it was followed by the introduction by Professor Maria Giovanna Ruggieri, President General of World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations (WUCWO). She welcomed all to the conference so many countries represented with diverse problems and cultures but with one Faith. A representative from a supported “Voices of Faith” also expressed greeting to the assembled group. Each person present introduced themselves by name and a little information about themselves.

The main presentation for the day was given by Sr. Anna Maria Sgaramella CMS. This presentation was a biblical and theological reflection on Naomi and Ruth-Merciful like the Father. There was time for questions and some discussion which was taken advantage of and gave the women a chance to speak. The morning session concluded with Mass.

The afternoon session began after lunch with testimonies from the women of the Middle East and Mediterranean. There were four panels with representatives from different countries and cultures speaking of experiences and paths towards peace and reconciliation. This was very interesting as these ladies are very adamant about what they want – PEACE - but how to achieve it is very difficult. They want Western countries to stop supplying arms to the warring countries.

Evening prayer was said before dinner at 8.30pm

after which Round Table talks began. These talks were more on a personal level where questions were asked and answered straight from the heart with much feeling. I attended the session with ladies from the Holy Land – English speaking group. It was a very late night, but quite an interesting session, and perhaps the best of the Conference.

More women had joined the Conference and the morning session was a little late beginning. These ladies were then given the opportunity to introduce themselves. We then worked in smaller groups on the three priorities: Family, Youth and Suffering Women.

I attended an English speaking group on **Suffering Women**. The women suffer the worst of the war – Stop the War- is their request. Women and children are the sufferers as they suffer from poverty, illness, domestic violence and trafficking and all types of injustices. We had a male Syrian Refugee in our group who stated why women are the main sufferers because the husband goes to war, more often than not he is killed therefore she loses her home as she has no money then no food. The women are forced to do bad things (prostitution) to earn money for food for their children – food is very expensive because of war. There has been a huge increase in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) mainly in the young women who find it difficult to get work as a result of war. Underage marriage -9 y.o girls to those in mid 20’s some seem to be married for only one year and then back to their families. There have been some stories of how IS take the son of a family and then give the family money for the son so that they are then able to buy food with that money. When they ask is their son fighting in the war they are told “No you are eating him”- that is the food that they have bought with the money. It does not seem correct to us but this is what we were told!! Another problem, which is an international problem when there is war – there is no one for young women to marry as all the men have gone to war. Many professional women are without work for long periods of time therefore, no money so the same problem for them.

FROM THE WUCWO BOARD MEMBER AUSTRALIA

Families are breaking down – universal problem – everyone in household is leaving messages like “I will be late home; can you leave me some money not home tonight; don’t wait dinner for me – no love mentioned could say I love you even if leaving these messages. Domestic Violence, lack of Communication, Spiritual Poverty, Domestic Church and Society – Family is no longer revered by governments as a part of society; parents are parents 24/7; there is co-responsibility in raising a family. Women’s rights were mentioned and it was acknowledged that they are discussed at UN level at CSW each year in New York. Women’s rights do not always match our Christian values. Networking is a way to communicate with others and work in co-operation with others to achieve a result.

Youth – without youth there are no families. Some challenges are common while others are unique whether Catholic or Muslim. Facing an unknown future, lack of meaning of life, not good work prospects, lack of education, lack of formation in faith, teach how to use social media for good not the hatred that is exposed. There is no social security in some countries; young people are given gifts so that they join political parties or other groups and gangs. As there are so many unemployed young people the employers are able to engage workers for a lower rate so that they have a job. The youth try to travel to other countries for a better chance for education and work and then they do not return to own country. Pope Francis has chosen “YOUTH” as topic for next Synod.

After Lunch we leave by bus again to attend the Ecumenical Meeting for Peace and Reconciliation at the Crypt of St. Nicholas Basilica in Bari. It is situated in the old city of Bari. Maria Giovanna Ruggieri presented a prayer and thanks to the assembled congregation of Catholic and Orthodox Faiths. The Evangelical (Anglican) Representation was not present. Vice Presidents of WUCWO Regions were asked to sit around the altar along with Orthodox representatives; one of the Orthodox ladies also presented a prayer and a welcome. The Archbishop of Bari was present as was the leader of the Orthodox religion and some priests. We visited the Crypt after which we had free time to explore old Bari only to be greeted by heavy rain as we exited the

Basilica. It was impossible to walk very far so I joined some others and waited under an umbrella and had coffee and cake until time for the bus to depart.

The next day we went on pilgrimage to the Tomb of St Padre Pio and the Shrine and Holy Door at San Giovanni Rotondo. We travelled by bus to the Shrine in time for 11.00 am Mass celebrated in Italian in this huge basilica. After Mass we were able to look around visit the tomb of Padre Pio before having a prepacked lunch. There was sufficient time to make pilgrimage to the Holy Door and visit the small church where Padre Pio had spent his working life celebrating Mass and hearing confessions. This is what he is mainly known for as it is believed he could see into your soul. It truly was a blessing to be able to visit the holy places of a saint of our time- he died in 1968 and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

On the return trip from Padre Pio's shrine we were able to attend Works of Mercy by Diocesan Caritas and the shrine of Saints Cosmos and Damian in the town of Bitonto. We walked a considerable distance to see the hospice for terminally ill. There is sufficient accommodation for 20 patients and members of their families. We then walked to the auditorium to see a video on their works and listen to a talk by the Parish Priest, who is also the Director of Diocesan Caritas. They serve many hundreds of meals to disadvantaged people each week; house disadvantaged youths and provide temporary accommodation for women in need. We returned to the hotel for a late 9.00pm dinner. It had been a great day with many highlights and activities.

This Conference with these great women came to a close at 7.30am Mass on Sunday. Goodbyes were exchanged, wondering if we would ever see each other at another conference and a promise to keep in touch. Of the 120 attendees at the Conference only 30 were to remain to prepare ourselves for the WUCWO Board Meeting.



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