



Catholic Women's League Australia Inc

Member Organisation of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)
NGO Consultant (roster) status with the Economics and Social Council of the United Nations

National newsletter

Issue 3
December 2018

Behold the miracle of creation



All Correspondence to Catholic Women's League Australia (Inc)
PO Box 458, Australind, WA 6233

President: Valma Ivory
Ph: 08 9758 8658 M: 0428 760784
Email: wdandvmivory@westnet.com.au

Secretary: Maria Parkinson
Ph: 08 9751 1936 M: 0428 771140
Email: maria.parkinson@westnet.com.au

Treasurer: Fran Mulcahy
M: 0429 011564
Email: franmulcahy23@outlook.com

A note from our chaplain

Fr Jess Sargado Navarra

The liturgical or Church year begins on the first Sunday of Advent; the Season of Advent which has four weeks. During this time the Christian people recall in joyful expectation the two comings of Jesus Christ into the world. The first of these comings happened when he became incarnate into the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and was born on Christmas Day.

The second coming will take place on the last day when he comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. The biblical readings and the prefaces of the Mass initially commemorate the second coming of Christ and then gradually shift the focus onto his first coming by recalling the roles played by the John the Baptist, his precursor, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, his mother.

Advent is not as strongly penitential in character as Lent. However, the proximity of Christmas joy should not eliminate the penitential spirit of Advent.

Amidst our busy preparation for Christmas we should find time to pause and interiorise the meaning of Advent through prayer, self-denial, and works of generosity; especially toward the poor.

The season of Christmas begins on 25 December and concludes with the feast of Christ's baptism. It celebrates the extraordinary and joyful event when the Son of God was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary and dwelt among us, becoming like us in all things except sin.

Christmas is the story of God's humility, of Christ's descent among us, so that on Easter Day we could ascend with him to his heavenly kingdom.

Several other feasts during the Christmas season relate to the celebration of Christ's birth. These are the Holy Family, Mary: Mother of God, Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord.

During the Christmas Season, the biblical readings, opening prayers and prefaces expound the meaning of Our Lord's birth: though He took our humble human nature, he remains the immortal God; thus His mother is Mother of God; he became a member of a human family, subject to the authority of his parents; he was persecuted even as a child.

He was revealed not only to the chosen people but to the entire world. At his baptism in the River Jordan the Holy Spirit anointed him and sent him on his mission into the world as Saviour.





The president's report

Valma Ivory

It's been a year of learning, praying and travelling to meet with many members of Catholic Women's League in Australia, New Zealand and beyond. I am grateful to all who welcomed me warmly and for the growth in my knowledge of the breadth and depth of the work done by branches. I recently returned from Senegal, Africa after attending the 7 day World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) General Assembly in Dakar.

The theme for this Assembly was WUCWO Women, Carriers of "Living water" to a world which thirsts for Peace." All member organisations reported on ways their members achieved the resolutions set at the Fatima 2014 GA and then set about forming statements for the way forward.

Africa has the largest growing Christian population in the world and the Catholic women of Africa embraced the opportunity to come together and share their own faith within their cultural identity with other Catholic women from 27 countries with 460 delegates and 16 clergy headed by Fr Gerard Whelan SJ, the Ecclesiastical Assistant to WUCWO, attending. The Asia Pacific Region was represented by India, South Korea, Australia and (newly ratified) Lebanon.

Highlights were the Opening Mass at Dakar's Cathedral, the six keynote speakers who challenged us in readiness for our working language groups with the task of prioritising the work of WUCWO, the pilgrimage to Goree Island the slave trading transportation port, and the closing Mass at the Marian Shrine of Popenguine.

English, French and Spanish working groups were formed so all participants could share their experiences and reflect on being women of hope in the reality of their lives. Topics discussed were around family issues.

A strong family based on faith can mitigate many problems; credible witnesses, spiritual formation, improving environment, family breakdowns, curbing corruption, migration, trafficking, radicalisation, homelessness, equipping women to be leaders, training to take on roles within the parish. Corruption at all levels dominated our group discussions but when reporting back to the full assembly the need to develop holiness was the most common theme.



A Youth Group was formed with young women from each of the four WUCWO regions represented including Madeleine Banister our National International Secretary. The outcome from their side meetings and discussions was the announcement that a Committee of Youth within WUCWO will be formed but it was up to them to do the job of developing issues and actions that will engage other young women.

The new President General is Argentine, Maria Lia Zervino and the WUCWO theme adopted at the Assembly was "Women called to Holiness to Sanctify the World for a Holistic Development". The next General Assembly will be in either Assisi, Italy or Lourdes, France in 2022.

Reports on the main challenges facing the Church today and our actions as carriers of living water from Regional Meetings were collated and delegates voted on the final four resolutions that will take us through the next four years. These are; 1. A Healthy Planet Depends on all of Us, 2. Let Us take Care of the Family in difficult Situations, especially its Most Vulnerable Members, 3. Let us Eliminate Discrimination and Violence Against Women, 4. Let us Educate to Respond to the Call to Holiness.

We congratulate Catherine McGrath who continues as WUCWO Board member and as the Asia Pacific Vice President. The regional women put the same faith in her as we do. Catherine has worked hard in her role and we are blessed.

We are now in the season of Advent and Saint Paul's letter to the Thessalonians rings just as true to us today. It's time for us to take a breath and reflect on our year past but also to use the experiences both positive and negative to prepare for the year ahead.

The coming of the Christ Child fills us with renewed energy so seize this opportunity as women of hope, love and determination to use our gifts to build a youthful membership.

I wish everyone a blessed Christmas with family and friends. I pray that all who travel will arrive safely home and that the joy of celebrating together lives with you through the New Year.

"May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may He confirm in your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of God and Father when Jesus Christ comes with all his saints."

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Remember the date!

Catholic Women's League of Australia National Council Meeting and Biennial Conference takes place on 9-12 September 2019 in Bunbury, at the Hotel Lord Forrest.

Come, see, hear.

Bunbury is a two-hour drive from Perth and the venue, set between the Leschenault Inlet and Back Beach, is 3.7 km from Bunbury station.

Tasmania

Deirdre Reid

Our wonderful 61st State Conference was held on the last three days in August, at the Travelodge in Hobart. We were so thrilled to welcome national President, Valma Ivory and our two amazing speakers Dr Deirdre Little and Sonia Di Mezza. All attendees were most impressed by these three lovely ladies, who gave us fresh ideas and vigour from their most informative talks. We so enjoyed getting to know them better as we lived together for those days.

Our Archbishop, Julian Porteous said Mass for us at Conference and was ably assisted by our Chaplain, Fr Jaison Kuzhiyl. When he sat among us to give his homily, it made his sermon more meaningful and special.

Our conference dinner was a highlight, when Archbishop Julian and Fr Terry Rush, who is parish priest of Richmond, presented our State Treasurer, Jan Lawler, with Life Membership. Jan was in shock, but truly deserved the recognition. She has been treasurer for six years and CWL member for over twenty years and willingly helps with all activities without complaint. She had a huge job in collecting all the money for the cost of our Baby Memorial, in memory of babies lost to abortion.

There are only two changes to our executive. Both vice presidents have retired – Wendy Fittler from the north—after an amazing six years of dedication, and Roseanne Way after two years. Roseanne is an accomplished poet and has recently published her second book. She had a pleasant surprise when she was presented with our Marie Dunn Award for her achievement. Wendy happened to mention, in passing, that both she and her husband have been supporting a young girl in Cambodia since Childhood. She is now in Teacher's College. What an amazing effort from a wonderful couple! We have two new lovely ladies who have become the new vice-presidents: Pam Clark, for the South, and Jenny Smith, for the North. The other executive members remain the same for another two years.

Fr Jaison's participation in our conference, and at other times, is so very helpful and special. He suggested we speak at Masses about CWL and following that, we received several interested enquiries. We remain hopeful about getting a few new members and are holding a luncheon for all catholic ladies with this endeavor in mind; at the same time, we enjoy a lovely social occasion.

Recently our bio-ethics team put together a submission relating to the proposed Criminal Code and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 222018. It ended with the words "We claim the Confessional as our 'sacred space' into which no government has the authority or the right to intrude". We are blessed to have these women, who are inspired by the Holy Spirit and become our public voice. We pray for the submission's success and ask for wisdom and guidance for not only our government, but our Tasmanian CWL executive and all branch members as the future unfolds.

May God be glorified in all we do!



Life Membership awarded to Jan Lawler

Victoria and Wagga Wagga

Jane Munro

Our General Conference, held over the 22-23 August, was well attended and, judging by comments received afterwards, was much appreciated. It was held in Sandhurst Diocese this year, in the city of Bendigo. Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Sandhurst, the Most Rev Leslie Tomlinson, and concelebrated by several Spiritual Directors of the League.

Since the first day of the Conference coincided with the Feast day of the Queenship of Mary, a short ceremony of crowning the statue of Our Lady of Fatima was held after Mass.



Members of the League were welcomed to Bendigo by the Mayor, Margaret O'Rourke. Mayor O'Rourke is also a member of the Aspire Precinct Committee, which is connected with Sacred Heart Cathedral and aims to honour the religious history of the city of Bendigo.

The Director of Mission Integration, St John of God Hospital, Phil Bretherton, spoke about the amazing outreach programs organised by the Hospital.

Founded in Perth, Western Australia, by Bishop Matthew Gibney; League members across Australia might be familiar with their work, which is a credit to their enterprise and energy.

The history of North-East Victoria is fascinating, reaching back to the very early days of settlement.

Before Sandhurst Diocese was formed in 1874, there already existed five missions –Sandhurst, Beechworth, Wangaratta, Heathcote and Echuca. Dr Donna Bailey the Sandhurst Diocesan Archivist presented an aspect of history easily overlooked—the meticulous detective work required to piece together the minute and elusive clues!

Bendigo is blessed to have a strong, hardworking team of caring people associated with the Gianna Centre, which offers assistance to pregnant mothers – particularly young single mothers and to young families. Catherine Holmes outlined some of their work and expressed thanks to League branches which have contributed financial support.

As mentioned in my last Report, the Anima Women's Network ran a Rosary Challenge throughout the month of October. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with Anima. Many League members took part in the challenge. It was a lot of work contacting 20 different women to write about each decade of the Rosary and presenting it beautifully on their website. Monica Russell rose to that challenge herself. We are really grateful to Monica and her team. It was a pleasure to be challenged in that way!

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI), which was formed by our first President Dr Sr Mary Glowrey. Several members of the Mary Glowrey Museum team will be travelling to India for the celebrations.

We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mary Glowrey Heritage Limited, which runs the Museum.

Located a short walk from St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, the Museum is well worth a visit, if you happen to be visiting Melbourne.

Our Mary Glowrey Prayer Group continues to pray for all sorts of causes. Dawn Shaw who runs this apostolate receives some beautiful messages of thanks for answers to prayers and for the comfort of knowing that others care enough to pray for friends and strangers in need.

As I write this today we give grateful thanks for the acquittal, from blasphemy charges, of Asia Bibi in Pakistan.

All of us in Victoria and Wagga Wagga wish members of CWLA a very happy and holy Christmas.

May your remembrance of Christ's birth bring you joy and blessing. Also may 2019 be a year of fulfillment of Our Lord's desires for us all.



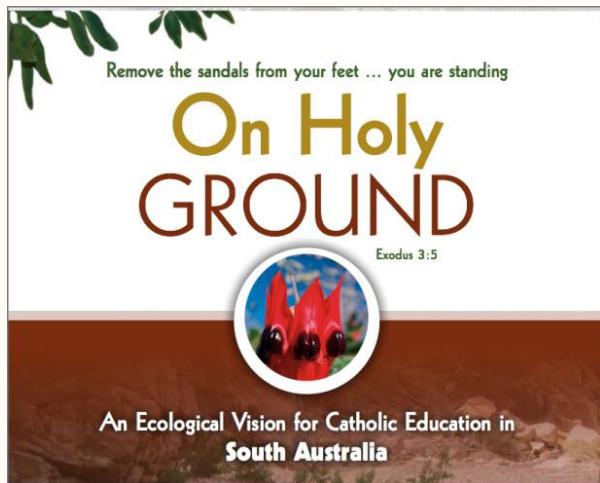
South Australia

Cecilia Quigley

Since our last gathering for the midterm National CWL meeting in August, we have had a very successful State Conference with the Theme "Laudato Si." In my understanding SA CWL has not had a State Conference for ten years; our small group of four working together was a great celebration. We actually began the Conference with a dinner the previous night at a local hotel which was enjoyed by twenty-two diners a good way to start, but the numbers were indicative of our aging CWL membership who are reluctant to travel at night.

Seventy-three people attended the one-day conference at The Otherway Centre at St Peter's the next day.

Our first Guest speaker was Julian Kluge, a Religious Education Consultant for Catholic Education SA who unpacked the document theologically and environmentally. He interspersed his presentation with video clips from Earthcare and other environmentally astute organisations.



Alice Cooper was our next speaker. Her company is called Little Earthies. She helped us share in small groups what we are already doing in our homes and parishes with family and friends in supporting our call to take responsibility for Care of our Earth.

Light weight gardening pots with bare twigs, yellow tags and green leaves were assembled on each pot. Much discussion was held and many initiatives demonstrated that we can all do something more as Pope Francis has called us to do.

Our guest after lunch on a Friday, which is known as a big ask when scheduling conference speakers, was Sophie Thomson, a nationally and internationally acclaimed gardening media personality in South Australia, who lives on Sophie's Patch at Mount Barker in the Adelaide Hills. She was dyna mic, sprouting the benefits of gardening for health and exercise fitness. She was captivating, dynamic, enthusiastic, challenging and an absolute delight to finish our day! The atmosphere on the day was one of being 'we're in this together'.

The Conference was open to all people, not only CWL members, so there was certainly a feeling of conviviality. We concluded the day with mass celebrated by our Archdiocesan Chaplain, Fr John Herd.

One of the very exciting initiatives that have taken place in the Kingswood CWL is that a young group of Catholic women have formed a 'new' CWL group!

Unfortunately, I was unable to go to their meeting last Friday evening, so my knowledge of this group is a little scant—I'll try again early next year!

Three of these women were able to come to our State conference so I have had the opportunity to chat with them. I see this group in formation as a stepping stone in moving forward in other parish centres. It all came about because one of these families had a very sick child and the Kingswood older members held a prayer vigil for this young person. The family were so thankful for this gesture that the young members of the Kingswood parish came together and bingo!

Something like this is so breathtaking and celebratory! It almost feels like rebirth is happening. Thanks be to God!

In October we held our AGM at Kadina, hosted by our Copper Coast CWL branch members. Fifty people attended, twenty-two of us travelling by bus from Adelaide, an early start at 7.15 from the Cathedral! Unfortunately, we still do not have a Secretary, but I do have an offer from a Glenelg member to come and give me some time each week in this role.

Our next meeting is in the middle of November, so we will see what happens during this time. At our AGM, five motions were passed, those being,

- Distribution of Government funds for drought relief to include a significant allocation for mental health.
- An invitation for two CWL members in each diocese of SA to be invited to participate in the Plenary Council discussions in Adelaide in October 20.
- That State and Federal Governments stop discrimination against those in our community whose health and safety may be compromised if they do not have access to social media and computers.
- That SA CWL change to a calendar year system rather than the financial year one that we are using at this time and that AGM's take place between February 1 and March 31.
- That CWL SA moves that the annual subscription to CWLA increase from \$10 to \$20 as from the beginning of 2019.

We will address these motions at our next meeting and write to the appropriate members of the Federal, State and Catholic CWL branches.

May the joy of the birth of Jesus bring to you and your families, a sense of peace and goodwill and know that the joy of our motto, Charity, Work and Loyalty will carry us well into 2019.



Queensland

Veronica Box

Our very successful State Conference was held over the weekend of 15-16 September in the North Queensland town of Ayr with an attendance of almost 150. The theme of the Conference was—What is My Catholic Identity?

Guests included Bishop of Townsville Tim Harris, National President Valma Ivory, Safeguarding Coordinator for Townsville Diocese Craig Brereton, Keynote speaker Sister Carmel Pattinson sgs, National International Secretary Madeleine Banister, principal of Southern Cross P-12 Catholic College, Louise Vella-Cox, and Pastoral Worker and Torres Strait Islander elder, Dolly Hankin of Mt Isa.

The after dinner speaker was Karen Gravener, wife and mother, who inspired all of us with her presentation on living a normal life as a disabled person.

Sister Carmel Pattinson's Keynote Address was most inspiring. In the Introduction she reminded us that Jesus had told the wavering disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them.... and teaching them...", and that the most important part, the Great Commission, was to make disciples.

In our churches we should be making disciples. To do that we must be disciples ourselves.

The decision to hold the Conference in the country was a good one, as the whole community was behind the event, with some thirty-five local businesses and the Burdekin Shire Council as sponsors. Local Catholic Schools were also involved, providing the venue free of charge, with young people and teachers involved in the serving and preparation of food. A special "thank you" to the husbands who were on hand when needed.

The business of 2018 is almost at an end and we look forward to continuing our great work. We have some disappointments to bear, like the failure to stop the Abortion Reform Bill, but such setbacks make us more determined to continue to be a voice for the voiceless.

Love and blessings to all our treasured members.



Western Australia

Bev Macri

Hello to all from the West! Someone mentioned to me this week that it is only 7 weeks until Christmas! Why does this suddenly creep up on us all, every year. Maybe it is a sign of getting older.

On the 14 September we held our State Conference!

Although numbers were down due to illness, it was wonderful to be able to catch up with members for a nice chat. Our Guest Speaker was Rebecca Ward who spoke on "Laudato Si" (some interstate members know her from the Mid-term conference). Once again she gave all a lot of information about recycling and caring for our planet, that can be adapted into our lives. WA has finally banned one off plastic bags in this state. Wonderful reports from our delegates of the work our branches are doing.



Rebecca Ward with Gemma Greaves

Our Chaplain Fr Laurence Murphy SDS celebrated mass and reminded all that our faith is founded on the love of God and our neighbour. Everything else flows from this; also how important the role of women in the church is and to be open with our views during the Plenary Council in our parishes.

Branches continue to be very active in their parishes providing help where needed from Geraldton to Albany and Esperance, and in between. Some donated to "Buy a Bale" of hay for Qld and NSW farmers, which was wonderful. One of our members suggested a Novena to St Mary McKillop for the drought. All agreed to do this in their branches.

I have recently returned from a Pilgrimage trip to "The Holy Land" in Jordan, Israel and Palestine. It was a learning experience geographically and nothing like I envisaged.

I am sure we saw every church, mountain and site of importance and learnt so much about the history. Some involved climbing a lot of stairs! Floating in the Dead Sea was an experience!



Sunset over Nazareth

Seeing the caves where the "Dead Sea Scrolls" were found and the building where they are now housed was great. It was exhausting and I needed to come home for a rest, but grateful that I was able to get that experience.

I wish all a Spiritual and Holy Christmas, and that all are able to spend time with family and friends reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas. It is such a wonderful time. May 2019 be kind to all.

New South Wales

Anne Pereira

Greetings to all from New South Wales. Once again, we are on the road to Christmas with all the excitement, stress, shopping, parties, eating and catching up with friends. Hopefully during all this we will remember the true reason for Christmas and spend some time in prayer and just be with Christ.

The New South Wales Conference was very successful. It has been four years since our previous conference and it was great to see so many old friends enjoying themselves. We were lucky to have NIS Madeleine, National Bio Ethics Convenor Deidre, Research Officer Sonia and WUCWO Board Member Catherine with us for part of the conference and for each of them to bring us up to date with their activities.

Guest speakers included Sr Noelene Simmons from ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking of Humans) whose presentation highlighted how close to us these crimes are: the restaurant in your suburb, the farm up the road or the deli down the street, and the importance of knowing the source of the products we buy.

Frances Rush from the Asylum Seeker Centre provided us with details of the work they do to assist refugees to resettle. With little Government funding the work they do is staggering.

During 2016-2017, they supported over 2,650 people seeking asylum. Of those, 1,170 were new to the Centre and included 330 children.

They came from 80 countries including Iran, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Some of the services provided are: nutrition, education & social support, employment assistance, accommodation, legal & financial support, health.

Our young speakers included Bethany from Wollongong who gave her perspective on her faith journey and Madeleine from Sydney with her story and a video of her 'band'. What wonderful ladies we have in our organisation!

Most branches and Diocese are holding their AGM about this time and we are assisting with whatever structure suits them. Some are maintaining the traditional executive and meeting format whilst others are opting for a more relaxed leadership team and meetings. Some older members are no longer able to attend meetings; some younger ones prefer no meetings, however wish to be kept informed and are willing to assist in whatever area their talents are.

At our recent Council Meeting each Diocese was asked to share fundraising activities. In this way it is hoped that we are able to assist our members with the costs associated with attending conferences, retreats, membership fees etc. We recognise that the social aspect of our organisation is very special, and most members do not wish to lose the friendships they have formed over many years.



May each of us have a holy and joyous Christmas and enter the New Year refreshed and full of confidence for the success of Catholic Women's League!

Social issues

Anne-Marie Ferry

Housing Everyone

Since my September report to you, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference released this year's social justice statement entitled "A Place to Call Home: Making a Home for Everyone in our Land." It analyses the complex causes and effects and the growing incidence among particular groups. I have to admit I was not excited at the prospect of reading this, but you probably feel the same way.

My husband and I have been to America and so here are some of our observations – from our hotel room in the main street of San Francisco. We saw homes like Mrs Doubtfire's; but we also saw confronting scenes of homelessness, worse than anything glimpsed in our regional home town or capital city.

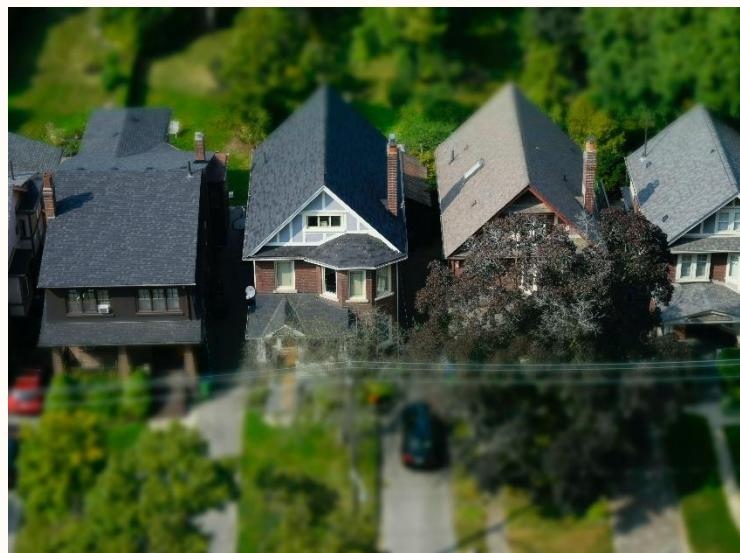
We stayed in a hotel on Market Street, the main thoroughfare, and there were armed guards at the supermarket and our hotel to keep undesirables out. The lift to the subway was patrolled too. The city was divided.

People were sitting or lying in all the town squares, parks and streets. We have both worked for Vinnies and understand at an intellectual level that each person begging is a unique individual and entitled to dignity, but how can this be achieved? It was not safe to talk to anyone on the streets. The only positive we saw in the midst of all this was a Catholic Church which ran a hostel and soup kitchen, had a demountable bathroom, and allowed needy people to sleep in the Church.

We were told there were three subgroups of homeless individuals – the poor, those with health problems (mental illness, disabilities or drug addiction) and criminals (who prey on the other two groups). There were some signs of co-operation and sharing but other evidence of inappropriate behaviour. Two Aussie tourists could not help all these people and it seemed unwise to engage.

Then one night there were cries and shouts of protest, scuffles and sirens until dawn. We saw that the people and their belongings had been moved on and the streets were washed clean. This was possibly in preparation for an international conference on the environment.

Lots of resources were expended on the clearance and the digital light show in the (recently vacated) park. The delegates got a very different impression of San Francisco from us, San Fran possibly got awards—and the homeless probably returned after the show was over.



Soon after we came back to Australia, I read the Social Justice Sunday materials, A Place to Call Home. I started with the prayer, which was no doubt written by a much better person than me, or maybe by a whole committee of good people, but I was not inspired. It was so far removed from the reality of San Francisco, and our own society – and that distance is not something to cloak in piety.

I wondered what people living on the street would ask God for.

The Statement cites examples of how Pope Francis is leading by example, doing practical things. There are initiatives here such as the Australian Catholic Housing Alliance (ACHA) which aims to use un-used church property for affordable housing (Page 16).

Organisations such as Vinnies are active on our behalf, and our donations assist, but it is not really personal as in the parable of the Good Samaritan. I am trying to avoid calling homelessness a problem, despite the increasing numbers and complex situations involved.

Yes, we need systems level responses to provide shelter and affordable housing but it is a mistake to be paternalistic ("we know what's best for you.").

But no, we as individuals cannot be said to be partnering with our brothers on the streets to build bonds of community..." (Page 12). I could find only one person with first-hand experience quoted in the statement and that appears on Page 10:

"Homelessness separates you from society because, or you feel, yeah, really you do become separated from society because you don't live the same as other people. You don't have a home to go to. You don't have something to do with yourself, like a job....your hygiene becomes poor because you don't have access to washing facilities. Your diet, your eating, becomes affected because you don't have access to food the same as you would if you have your own home. ".

Would I talk to this person on the street, welcome them into the parish church, seek them out as a guest speaker?

The kit includes 10 steps to making a home for everyone in our land, but here is an 11th for your consideration. Government policies discourage sharing accommodation. People with disabilities lose their benefits if they admit cohabiting with a working partner, as do single parents.

If both parties are on benefits, the couple's rate is less than two single pensions – and one person might lose their public housing.

If we believe everyone deserves a place to live, could we let them make their own arrangements without financial penalty?



The cost of Centrelink/Human Services continuing to pay a single rate to every adult client has to be less than the \$25,000 pa cost of each homeless person (Page 10), though it is horrible to argue this on economic grounds. State Housing Departments could offer tenants a place at the top of the queue if new arrangements did not work out but meantime would have a home to offer someone else.

If policy changes like these enabled people to live in situations of their own choosing, be included in our society, and free up accommodation for others in need, do you think we should put together a submission?

And so we move to Christmas and contemplate the situation of the Holy Family.

May God bless you and your families, as well as the homeless people everywhere!

Bioethics report

Dr Deidre Little, Convenor

The 'Human Wisdom of Life'

Pope Francis spoke of the 'human wisdom of life' recently and asked what recognition it receives from the natural sciences and political culture. [Address to the Pontifical Academy for Life 24/6/2018]

His address was timely for Australia. The leaked Ruddock Religious Freedom Review Report¹ casts religion as a concession, roped off in small sections tied to antidiscrimination laws. Religious Freedom is cast more as part of our government than part of our humanity. However, concessions bestowed by government can also be removed by government.

Religious Freedom is herein not assumed to be an inherent right of personhood that we are born with in the wording of the leaked report. If religion as an 'allowance' with boundaries is accepted, we will have lost an inherent human right.

Cardinal Pell recently observed regarding modern society in general 'as the social forces against Christian living have intensified, sociological defences have to be strengthened'. Silencing, violence and threats against Christians are gaining acceptability even on university campuses where tolerance and intellectual freedom used to be highly valued. Christians are expected to agree with the prevailing cultural expressions and attitudes. In 2018 we have seen Christian speakers being issued with an invoice for the cost of the police intervention to protect them from aggressive, violent mobs.

However, freedom to think and speak and learn is tied to religious freedom, and is vital to public reason for the growth of human society. Former deputy Prime Minister John Anderson noted: 'secularism is merely one voice in the pluralist crowd' and observed that the submissions to the Ruddock Review favouring religious freedom were overwhelming.

A sad loss of respect, and the lost acceptance of our bodies as God's gift, is seen in the Tasmanian Labour and Greens proposed legislation amendments concerning birth certificates. If their oppressive amendments carry it will be illegal to add gender to birth certificates of Tasmanian children. As Australian Journalist Janet Albrechtsen commented 'stripping people of their gender at birth cements a social experiment aimed at encouraging gender fluidity'.

Also, sad and also surprisingly oppressive was the annual Human Rights Lecture of former Justice Michael Kirby at Curtin University in Perth, September 2018. While paying lip service to Prime Minister Scott Morrison's right to choose a Christian school for his own children, he proceeded to pursue Mr Morrison for '*possible resonances to the old approach to sexual orientation and gender identity in Australia*'. He encouraged his audience to assume that a practicing Christian cannot be a leader: *it has to be said quite bluntly to our new PM that, from national leaders, leadership is expected.*

In contrast, Pope Francis' address to the Academy for Life upholds the dignity of the whole person:

'The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking we enjoy absolute power over creation. Valuing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different.'

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/read-the-full-20-recommendations-from-the-religious-freedom-review-20181011-p50918.html>

National International Secretary

Madeleine Banister

"Do not walk through time without leaving worthy evidence of your passage" - Pope John XXIII

As we come to the end of the year, and I come to the end of my first year as National International Secretary, I find it is rewarding to reflect not only on all that we have done, but also what more we can do in the future. This year as your WUCWO representative, I have been to both the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations and to the WUCWO General Assembly in Dakar, Senegal. I've also been lucky enough to attend the State Conferences of both NSW and QLD and have been a guest at many other CWL events within NSW. Other than making me more well-travelled and better equipped to handle jet lag, attending these events has made me closer to my faith and given me more understanding of the work of CWLA and WUCWO.

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

CSW62 was a real melting pot of ideas. There were ideas I agreed with, there were ideas that I definitely didn't agree with and there were also ideas that opened my mind up to new perspectives. I'm a firm believer that to be the most productive and open members of society that we possibly can be, we must not only be open to hearing what everyone around us is saying but also be open to understanding their perspectives and allowing these perspectives to potentially develop our own. Part of the way I practice my Catholic faith is to be inclusive to all people, and this includes the ideas and experiences that come with these people.

Sometimes it is difficult to stand up for what we believe in, but it is vital. This event affirmed to me that for Catholic values to be upheld throughout the globe, just not in Australia, CWLA must have a seat at every table in order to make sure our voices are heard.

WUCWO General Assembly

Having just returned from Senegal at the time of writing this report, I'm hoping that by the time you read this, I would have distributed my final

comprehensive report on the General Assembly and the experience that was Dakar. To summarise most briefly though, I attended the Assembly with National President Valma Ivory, WUCWO Board Member Catherine McGrath, and three ladies from NSW, Peg McEntee, Margaret Frew and Mary Smith and we had a terrific time. The theme of the Assembly was, 'WUCWO Women, Carriers of 'living water' to a world which thirsts for Peace,' and we heard presentations in relation to this theme and framed most of our discussions around it.

Our Catherine McGrath was re-elected for another 4 years as a WUCWO Board Member and we have a new WUCWO President, María Lía Zervino, who I am sure will continue the work of WUCWO and the Catholic Faith with the same energy that she exuded at the Assembly.



Carriers of 'living water'

It should also be noted that a youth group was also created at the Assembly, with numerous young women from numerous places, all eager to be included and have their voices heard. My main take-away from the Assembly was a new interest in the Papal documents, especially those of Pope Francis, which I plan on making myself more familiar with in the coming months.

To finish up, a lot has been done this year to spread the voice of CWLA, not only through WUCWO and myself travelling about, but also through the submissions that we have submitted and the people that we have helped. As to what we can do in the future, I'm always open to suggestions.