

WATAC INC. REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MAY 2014 TO MAY 2015

The WATAC AGM was held in May 2014 in the Waratah Room of NSW Parliament House following our 18th Annual WATAC Luncheon. Rachael Kohn was our inspiring keynote speaker at that Luncheon and Rosemary Breen beautifully facilitated the event and spoke with us at the AGM which followed. Rosemary up-dated us on the Water-Tank project which she has undertaken in Myanmar. WATAC as an organisation has financially supported this meaningful project as several individual WATAC-ers have very generously done.

You will be aware of the active presence of some school students at our Luncheon today, as has been the case for many years. The WATAC Luncheon in Parliament House is always much enriched by these students and their teachers who undertake the necessary organisation to enable them to be involved in this event.

WATAC also organises Inter-faith Sessions for senior school students in the Theatre in Parliament House each year. In November 2014 we had one of these sessions – its theme was *'Religion and Peace – What are the Challenges and Implications for us all?'* Students studying for HSC who do the Studies of Religion Course find this seminar very useful. Our speakers were Rabbi Jacki Ninio, Tamkin Ansari, Sr Jan Barnett and Graham Toomey, director of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. Their focus was the meaning of peace within their religious traditions and in particular the position of women in that tradition. They were fantastic speakers and their commitment was obvious and much appreciated by all.

The 'open forum' which always follows involves the students and their teachers in a vital and enthusiastic way. This event commences at 11am and concludes at 2pm and it includes a break for a light lunch provided by Parliament House Catering, this gives an added opportunity for the students to engage with the speakers personally. Another such WATAC Inter-Faith session is planned for November 2015.

These significant events that WATAC organises in NSW Parliament House would not be possible without the support of our Parliamentary host, Sophie Cotsis MLC. We thank Sophie sincerely and also her staff for their assistance in organising all these events and doing all the background work required.

On 26th November 2014 WATAC organised a wonderful evening in Parliament House Theatre with Bishop William Morris as our keynote speaker with Trish Hindmarsh in fascinating dialogue with him, followed by an open Q & A forum for all to join in the conversation. It was a truly significant event much appreciated by all present.

In July 2014 WATAC was invited to be part of a meeting of the National Catholic Lay Movements at Mary Mackillop Place in North Sydney. One representative of each of the various Lay Movements was asked to speak to the meeting regarding their group's vision, activities and future plans. Fr Brian Moloney was the contact person who invited WATAC to be part of this meeting.

WATAC was also invited to speak at a weekend seminar organised by Donella Johnston, today's Luncheon speaker and Andrea Dean at Mount St Benedict's, Pennant Hills on 21st February, 2015. The group of women there were completing their Theological Studies

Course and so they were interested in WATAC's commitment to the participation of women in the Church today and into the future.

WATAC produces four Newsletters each year. These are mailed out nationally and also 20 go internationally. An ever-increasing number of WATAC-ers also receive it by email. For many WATAC-ers beyond NSW this is their main connection with the life of WATAC and they tell us it is much appreciated. A number of the international members regularly write to thank us for the Newsletter.

In April 2015 we also produced an extra mini-Newsletter because WATAC was involved in responding to two surveys: a) Pontifical Church for the Laity Survey: Women in the Church and Society b) WATAC and the Synod on the Family 2015: The WATAC Voice. The mini-Newsletter contained the collated WATAC responses to both these surveys' In 2014 we also sent a collated WATAC response to the Vatican Survey for the first session of the Synod on the Family. The WATAC members who responded did so very effectively, despite short time frames to do so. It was an excellent document that WATAC sent to Rome (all members received a copy).

WATAC networks with several other grassroots groups working for change in the Catholic Church and in particular we are in partnership with ACCCR and Catholics for Ministry and we also network with WOW. In September 2015 WOW is holding an international Conference in Philadelphia and several WATAC members are involved in its organisation and will also be present at the Conference, 'Gender, Gospel and Global Justice' is the theme of this Conference.

The local WATAC groups who meet regularly, and have done for many years, are probably the life-blood of WATAC's on-going life. This was made clear to me when Rosemary Breen invited me to be part of the Inverell WATAC Group meeting on Thursday 16th October 2014. This amazing group meets weekly at Ro's home (whether she is there or not). Their discussion was intelligent, inclusive, passionate and visionary. This is also true of all the groups I am gifted to be able to be connected with personally. Most of the WATAC groups meet monthly or bi-monthly, no matter how often they meet they all take reflection and prayer seriously, inspired by the gospel message: "... they gathered in their homes to break bread together, they shared food gladly and generously..." (Acts 2:46)

WATAC's Administration Officer is Helen Coles and without her it would be impossible for WATAC to do what it does so efficiently. Helen looks after WATAC's presence in cyberspace, liaising with Jason Rhodes of Cube Solutions, to update the WATAC website and so much more. Her every day work defies words. A million thanks to Helen.

The WATAC Working Group is the enabling force behind every event, celebration, Newsletter and gathering. They are Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Alma Madden and Bernice Moore. Maureen Watterson is our voluntary treasurer and Margaret Knowlden is our voluntary Newsletter typesetter. The Working Group meets regularly to plan, discuss and imagine future possibilities and WATAC could not continue without them. Thank you to each of these generous women for sharing their talents with WATAC.

Bernice Moore
WATAC co-ordinator