Catholic Women's League

Aotearoa New Zealand Inc – CWLANZ

Women of Hope - Nga Wahine Tumanako

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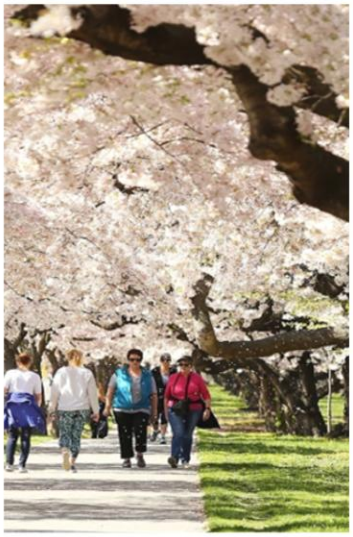


September 2026

Dear Members and friends of CWL

" I wandered lonely as a cloud when all at once I saw a crowd - a host of golden daffodils."

This poem by Keats 'springs' to mind every time I see the first of the season's daffodils blooming around me. It certainly is wonderful to see the daffodils and blossoms around Christchurch, at the moment, especially around Hagley Park. What a blessing to be able to walk through these beautiful trees looking up at the resplendent view above us as well as the ground below us. What a marvelous canvas God has painted for us, new life and beauty is all around us.



In this newsletter I would like share with you some of the events and addresses given by guest speakers and at the Australian Queensland State Conference I attended last month in Benowa, south of Brisbane. What a pleasure and privilege this was. I believe it is very important that we share our faith and friendship with our sister members in CWL as far and as wide as possible. We are all working to the same purpose, with the same ideals and we are all serving God and providing support for those who need us.

Congratulations to those of you who have now completed your Regional meetings and are now onto your AGMs. I always enjoy attending these meetings as they give me a chance to catch up with members from around the regions of the diocese. Thank you for posting photos of your meetings around the country. It is amazing to see the work that is being done in all branches. I wish you every success in attaining your executives as you continue on your journey in CWL. Remember you are leading the way for Catholic women in New Zealand. You are all vital, visible and vibrant just by being yourselves.

Together in Faith and Service, **Sylvia**



October:
The month of the Holy Rosary



A 'crowd' of Daffodils in the Christchurch Botanical Gardens

CWLA Reports from Social Issues, Bioethics and WUCWO



Social Issues Convenor, Jill Arnold. spoke on highlighted issues from her report which were:- **Respect and Safety** – confronting domestic abuse and violence against women and children. **The Sanctity of life at all stages**: Protecting the unborn and the vulnerable across all stages of life **Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery** - Safeguarding Human dignity – raising awareness and campaigning against this reality. **The common Good,** Economic Justice, Care for Creation and Poverty and Housing. Addressing poverty, helping shortage for homeless women and children and many other vulnerable groups.**Youth Crime**: Mentoring programmes that have been set up for disengaged students to prevent school suspensions and exclusion and the pairing of Vulnerable young people with positive adult role models, to build self esteem and life skills and if necessary, to access youth mental health support. These issues, unsurprisingly, are also very relevant to those we face in NZ and Jill's report was most interesting. I was particularly interested in the above mentioned mentoring programme. As we do here in NZ, CWLA work with supporing groups such as St Vincent de Paul and others. I hadn't heard of Roses or Angel Flight. They assist their parishes with sending youth to 'Ignite'. Jill thanked members for sharing the social Issues projects that they are working on in their own communties. In closing she shared the following prayer from Pope Leo - For the dignity of Women and Human Life.

> *Lord, God of all life, we thank you for the gift of humanity and reflecting your holiness. We ask for the grace to recognise and protect the unique value of every human being, to welcome life unconditionally and to care for the vulnerable.*
> *We extend our prayers and solidarity, especially to women across the world who are facing discrimination and justice at various forms of violence. Forgive us when we fail to see in others a being worthy of love. Give us a new heart, always already to choose life, and generous hands that protect it.*
> *Help your Church to become an open home where dignity is always honoured. Amen*

Bioethics: This report was presented by Ronaldah Gorring. The work in Australia is very similar to that of the Nathaniel Centre here in NZ. A forth coming presentation from Dr Deirdre Little was mentioned in which she will present a pre-natal testing imformation document, containing 1. Necessary information for the gravity of discussions being made about parental genetic screen testing. 2. A regulary updated online evidence based medicine resource, and 3. Data and analysis grounded in a Christian Anthropology. Previously the only resource available was one that recognised that 'Abortion is Health care.' Her report is too lengthy to publish here but two newspaper articles were also mentioned 1. 'Stem Cells world First' in connection with Parkinsons disease, and 2, 'Big Breakthrough for the Tiniest Patients - are well worth reading. Please let me know if you are interested and I will forward them to you.

WUCWO- Margaret Butler, the Australian International Secretary spoke about WUCWO, This was presented in an interview format. Margaret gave a comprehensive report on the activities of her work. She reminded us about 'Women's Voice' which is now available in the electronic form and talked about the 'fragile planet' projects the planting of one tree a year for four years. As we know the next General Assembly is in Spain in 2027. We are very grateful to Liz for having told us all about this in our own branches and the board. Anyone interested in going to the General Assembly must register through me as CWLANZ National President.

Ann Pereira, Australian's National President then addressed the conferees. Ann started by urging us all to pray for the men in our families. She noted 'modern slavery' as a practice within employment agencies. She believes the restructure of the national body of CWLA is required and people need to start thinking outside the box to fill the executive positions. If there is a concern about Government policies members should write a physical *letter* to the politicians as e-mails can be ignored. The CWLA website was discussed. It is in the process of being updated and a representative from each member body is to be responsible for their input.

Following a lovely lunch the guest speaker was Kelsey Bootle from QIMR which is the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. Kelsey outlined the history of the QIMR since its inception. It was the brainchild of Doctor Edward Derek. The purpose of the institute is 'better health and well-being' through impactful medical research. The institute's vision is to lead the way to significant innovation and health. The research explores the connection between genetics and environmental factors and the goal is to give way for improved diagnosis and care before and following procedures.

Later in the afternoon we had the diocesan reports from Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville. The theme was My gift to God-God's gift to me. Reports were presented in innovative ways. A presentation to the country western music 'God's Gift' - Being good to me, was presented by Brisbane in poetic form. Rockhampton produced the Rocky Rap of CWL and Townsville gave a video presentation on the country and western gods being good to us. Cairns fundraising effort was taken up very well.



Just before afternoon tea Shona spoke and gave her report as State President. She presented some of the highlights of activities from the beginning of her presidency in 2025. Shona will continue as president for the next two years. She and her team were Thanked and congratulated on arranging a wonderful conference.

Mid Afternoon a liturgy for the deceased was prayed. The names of all members who had passed away since the previous conference, were read by the diocesan presidents who also lit a candle for them. The song 'Welcome Home' was sung by all.

Then it was my turn. I had been asked to speak about the structure of our CWL, communication (Website and Facebook Pages), and our Mission Communities which I presented in a power point presentation. This was well received with many members talking to me afterwards. I then presented a short video on 'What to do In Christchurch" and extended a warm invitation to all to join us for our National Conference in July 2027. With the interest expressed, this may well happen.



With a short respite, it was soon time for the conference dinner. The room had been decorated beautifully, with much input from Shona. A lovely time of sistership and fine dining with dancing, ensued late into the night.



Thursday dawned as another beautiful day with the temperature rising to 27 degrees. We were privileged to have the Archbishop of Brisbane, Archbishop Shane McKinley, assisted by Monsignor Peter Menally from Runaway Bay, celebrate the Mass with us. Archbishop Shane asked us to think of times when God has asked us to take another step, to trust Him and to follow Him. We then had the opportunity to talk to Archbishop Shane and Msgr Peter during morning tea.

The South Australian president's address informed us that there are two dioceses in SA. Adelaide has 21 branches with 245 members, with 11 members on their state executive. Each branch is a community on its own. They recognise wisdom that is in all areas of life and act with love towards each other and others in their parishes. NSW have six dioceses with CWL representation. 30 branches with 526 members. President Sally stated that they have a voice and it is important that it is used. One of their initiatives is a programme to keep women from returning to prison. A new branch has been established which is comprised of Fijian women who support CWL and Fiji. Faith, Service and Social Justice are their ideals as well as supporting and encouraging one another. The conference then concluded with farewells. We, the members from CWLANZ, Carmel, Lorraine, Diane, Kathleen and myself, were asked to come to the front and sing 'Now is the Hour' and 'Te Aroha'. Shona and Ann joined us. A fitting finale.







Take Aways / Highlights

A very friendly and all encompassing conference. Sister Liz Keane thanked CWL QLD for the opportunity to speak and urged us to be '**wandering gossips and galloping gals'** spreading the Word, and in the spirit of the Loretto Sisters to be proud, to 'hang on' and 'keep going'. Sister offered a closing prayer of prayerful courage.





The Opening Mass in the beautiful little white chapel on the grounds of the resort was a wonderful start to the conference. Preceded by the welcome which was – short, inclusive, emotional, meaningful and appropriate, before a lovely Mass celebrated with beautiful music, provided reverence and an inclusive atmosphere. the similarities and variances in our work for CWL. In our Faith and our Service to God we are ONE. It is so important to use our gifts, to work for the common good, to continue to care for each other and others, and to be welcoming to all. The social Issues, although similar to our own, were more particular to each state. Great work is being done in Australia to address some of these issues with various programmes such as Mercy Works, providing shelter and accommodation for the Homeless, mentoring programmes for youth, former prisoners etc. The mere size of Australia struck me more so than ever before. When I displayed the map of Australasia in my presentation, I became very aware that New Zealand would fit easily into the Sydney area. (*A little, slightly amusing, anecdote- the 'A' from CWLANZ had been removed from our registrations etc – why?- because it looked as if were representing Australia and New Zealand. - Fair Point I have to say.)* The vastness of Australia causes many problems for travel and communication. Australia CWL has a tiered system of executive members which they are finding hard to fill and are seriously considering downsizing. However, it is all relevant. In CWL no matter how small our branches are we are all reading from the same book. Change is inevitable but not always necessary. CWL is the same no matter where you go in the world

CWA Reports



The conference was held at the Royal Pines Resort at Benowa. Shona and her team had prepared a wonderful venue and a very informative and interesting programme. I was delighted that there were five us from New Zealand able to attend. Lorraine, Carmel and I from the Christchurch Diocese and Diane and Katheen from Wellington. We flew into Brisbane and took the one and a half hour trip on the air train from Brisbane Airport to Nerang, then taking a taxi to the resort at Benowa.



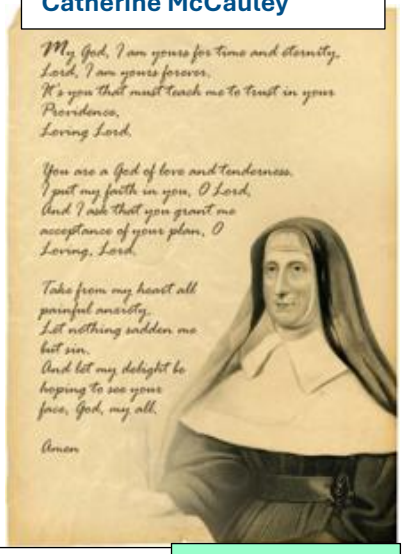
The conference began on Tuesday evening with Mass in the beautiful white Chaple in the grounds of the resort. Before Mass began, an elder of the Kombumerri clan welcomed us. This tradtional welcome serves as a profound fusion of Catholic Liturgy and traditional indigenous Australian culture. The boomerang holds a deeply sacred role in aboriginal ceremonies as a sacred musical instrument and as such, a pair of ceremonial boomerangs were clicked together to function as clapsticks. The rythm of the hollow resonance of the sticks set a reverent tone, calling the congregation together to focus their spirits before the formal liturgy begins. This was a spiritual and emotional welcome which was very well received by all. The leaders of the League from Australia and NewZealand CWL leaders then processed in with the clergy for the Mass. A Lovely Mass with beautiful music and full particiaption by members. The Celebrant Fr Paul Kelly spoke about the love that is ours.

The conference proper began at 9am the following morning. The first Keynote speaker was Sister Liz Keane, 60 years as a Loretto Sister, who is the chaplain of CWL Queensland. Sr Liz was a teacher and mentor who then moved to Parish Ministry. She branched into prison ministry which she has been doing for the past 18 In Her grassroot ministry she follows Jesus and reaches out to the poor and marginalized, inspired by Pope Francis. She has moved into hospital chaplaincy and visits aged care wards. Sr Liz believes everything happens for a purpose and nothing happens by chance. She talked about life being like a packet of biscuits – each one a gift that just happens. She gave examples of her own packet of biscuits when she just happened to be in the right place at the right time.



She asked us to think about times when <u>we</u> took a biscuit out of <u>our packet of</u> biscuits to make time for others, giving comfort or encouragement or just a listening ear, - displaying love for one another.

The Suscipe of Catherine McCauley



The next keynote speaker was Sr Sally Bradley RSM, who has been the executive director of Mercy works since 2019. Mercy Works is the relief and community work charity owned by the Sisters of mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea. They depend on donations and grants to carry out their mission. Sr Sally has a team of collaborative staff and is responsible for the day to day management decisions and furthering the vision and administration of Mercy Works. Sr Sally describes Mercy as Walking Together, changing lives, seeking to support refugees and indigenous communities. Sister showed us a pdf image *(below)* of pictures we could choose to be in our lives. Is our cup half full or half empty? She proposed that we practice being 'live wires' as Catherine McCauley was - tightly sprung, as a conduit of God's grace and mercy. She says 'You are likely be drawn to people who have a lot of energy.' Catherine was a social mystic, she practiced humanity, to use humour, to treat heavy things, lightly, she asked God to take sorrow and anxiety from her heart. Her suscipe is an example to us all. How can we be an example to others in CWL? How can I share my gifts with others? How can I be a live wire? *As an ex Mercy pupil I have heard this beautiful hymn often and love it. It is available of You tube. The Mercy Works site is also available on the web.*





Is your glass half empty or half full?

Are you a lively person?

Do you attract others?

How do you see a broken pot? =Useless or fixable.