

Celebrating WATAC at Parliament House in 2011

On Wednesday 22nd June WATAC members and friends gathered at Parliament House to enjoy our annual Luncheon – it was the 15th WATAC Luncheon and its theme this year was ‘A Voice We Need to Hear’. It was a marvellous celebration, as all who were present will agree, I am sure. The weather favoured us with sunshine, the food was superb and the staff, as usual, were a delight to deal with. Our guest speaker Ilona Lee’s input was the highlight of the afternoon and we are very pleased to be able to include her talk in this Newsletter, thanks to Ilona’s kindness in giving us a copy.

This year Sophie Cotsis MLC was our Parliamentary host and it was really great that she was able to join us for much of the Luncheon. Sophie and her staff have been very supportive of WATAC since taking on the role of hosting our events in Parliament House. It was also wonderful to have Marie Andrews present at the Luncheon as our guest as she had been our Parliamentary Host for many years until she retired from Parliament at the last State election. Professor Larissa Behrendt who was our speaker at last year’s Luncheon was also present this year as our guest. WATAC *extended the invitation* to Larissa to be part of this year’s celebration to thank her and support her commitment to Indigenous issues. Larissa is also a great role model for the Indigenous students who attend our Luncheon.

As ever, the presence of students from various schools, enriched the event greatly. Noelene Marika and Martika Walford, Indigenous students from St Scholastica’s proclaimed a very beautiful Acknowledgement of Country and Rhea D'Souza from Mount St Joseph Milperra led us in a Blessing of our meal.

2011 WATAC Luncheon Acknowledgement of Country

People who have come from afar, I see all of you.
Aboriginal people camped here at this place long ago.
We embrace all of you; we open the door to all of you.
We lend this place to all of you to come together to share this meal today and to listen and learn.
We stand together, united as one people;
Proud of our ability to work together;
Grateful for our gifts; nourished by our diversity and our harmony
Guided by the wisdom of the elders past and present.

Noelene Marika & Martika Walford
St Scholastica's College Glebe

Blessing - WATAC Luncheon 2011

Rhea D'Souza - Mount St Joseph College, Milperra

Creator God,
Source of comfort, love, protection and providence.
We gather today safe in the knowledge that we have been called
by you as daughters & sons,
sisters & brothers, mothers & fathers.

We give thanks for the occasion of the Annual WATAC luncheon
that brings us together.
United in our quest to search for ways that bring equity and justice to the service of you
Our Father,
we are mindful of the women who have gone before us in service.

Women whose courage, passion and fortitude
were the cornerstone of our group's conception.

Women who sought to make a difference not by being extraordinary
but just by being true to themselves.

Women who recognised and read the needs of their time
and responded with faith.

Women of poverty and persuasion.
Valiant Indigenous women, women who live on the fringe,
Rural women and women who live in the cities,
the defiant and those that would not be denied.
Women all - called by you into being.

May we, inspired by each of them, seek to be women and men of our time,
called to respond to you in ways that enrich and nourish ourselves as members of your
Australian Church.

We give thanks for the banquet set before us
and ask that you bless each one here.
Bless those who have prepared our meal.
Bless those who have worked the land to produce this bounty.
Bless those who are unable to be with us and
those whom you have called home.

May we be mindful of those who will go without today
and in gratitude for all we have been given
for all we have been called to be,
we offer our humble thanks to you.

We pray this through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

Would it ever be possible to adequately thank our gifted donors of the beautiful artworks that were the prizes for our very popular raffle. Hard to imagine a WATAC event without the legendary raffle moment! As she so often does Sheila Quonoey donated a beautiful hand-quilted rug – the winner of which told us she has bought many tickets in raffles in the hope of winning one of Sheila’s quilting works! Our sincere thanks to Sheila and to Sr Jean Gates who gifted us with some of her pottery and one of her very beautiful paintings. There was much excitement as three of the young men, students from Riverview College, drew tickets and winners were declared.

Following the conclusion of the Luncheon WATAC held its annual General Meeting in the nearby Waratah Room. It was well attended and we all enjoyed the interview on YouTube of Jules Hart talking about her documentary ‘Pink Smoke Over the Vatican’. This year’s WATAC Inc Committee was elected and the Annual Report and Financial Statement were endorsed at the meeting. We all owe the committee a great debt of gratitude and also Maureen Watterson and Helen Coles because they are the ‘engine room’ of WATAC’s on-going life. This year’s committee includes Lynette Allen, Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Alma Madden, Bernice Moore, Helen O’Brien and Judi Powe. Thank you all so much. The Annual Report is printed in this Newsletter for everyone’s information.