

Alma Madden a Welcoming WATAC Woman

For many years Alma's home has been a welcoming venue for WATAC gatherings. Engadine WATAC especially appreciates this because if another venue is not available for monthly meetings she always says, "Have it at our place". She hosts a monthly Prayer and Reflection Morning, which is followed by a wonderful home-made morning tea.

On 17th February 2008, Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace (CCJP) presented their 2008 Award to Alma. Over many years Alma has been totally dedicated to the struggle for all and to the aims and activities of CCJP. Alma is a 'hands on' justice and peace person and it is this commitment that CCJP honoured.



Alma has lived with her husband, Phil, in Engadine for over 50 years, where they raised their seven children. She is well known within the area for her ability to quietly lend a hand wherever or whenever she sees need. She has been involved in the local Catholic school from its inception, helping out as much as she could. She was involved in the very active Mother's Club which provided for the needs of the Sisters and the new school. She was famous for her cakes, slices and scones, which were sought after at cake stalls and fetes. At home most of her time was taken up providing for the family, but when her children were in primary school Alma would occasionally answer the call from Boys Town to invite boarding students to visit on a Sunday to allow these boys to experience family life.

At one stage, Alma became involved in the Legion of Mary as she attempted to exercise her sense of social justice in the local community. After returning to part-time work as a legal secretary in the 70's Alma joined the Engadine Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, including a term as President; an association continuing today as she is involved in improving many people's lives and mentoring needy members of the community. Alma has also volunteered at the local high school in the Learning Assistance Program, spending time with 'at risk' children.

Her charity and sense of justice has not been limited to the local community. She has a 'no nonsense' attitude to life and if something unjust is mentioned in conversation Alma's response is usually, "Well why isn't something done about it?" then she proceeds to act by making phone calls or writing letters to the relevant people and often knocking on their door to approach them personally.

She is a great supporter of YOTS (Youth off the Streets), cooking at a refuge one day a month for many years and still knitting etc. to raise money for the homeless. She is also a member of ANTAR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) and, not just a member, she attends the meetings held within the Sutherland Shire and goes to any functions that they have.

Alma has stood up for Women's Rights all her life. Within the parish she has tried to educate the parish priest on the need to use inclusive language and hasn't given up! Each month Alma writes information about the local WATAC meeting for the monthly church newsletter, and she often submits articles sometimes they get published, but if they don't she resubmits them. She leaves WATAC and CCJP pamphlets and information in the foyer of the church, hoping they will help people to act, or at least think, more justly about current issues.

Really this is only part of her story but it is an indication of her total commitment to WATAC and to the work of justice and peace. You could say that Alma Madden is a 'hands, head and heart' Christian totally committed to both CCJP and WATAC.