

## An Amazing Journey from the Netherlands to WATAC.

**M**y life has been like a long journey with many forks and twisty bends and some hair-raising events on the way and the journey is not yet finished. I came to Australia aged 12 with my family from The Netherlands. Those early days were not the easiest, everything was so different compared to what I had been used to in my homeland. Shortly after we arrived my Mother was diagnosed with breast cancer and died 2 years later. Life sure was not easy for our family, as the eldest I was taken from school to take care of the family and do the housekeeping.



I found work in a factory in a country town when I reached my teens. My self-image was very low and my outlook on life was probably even lower. It was during this time that our Parish Priest asked me to join the YCW group in our parish and become one of the leaders. I can remember saying to him that I wasn't good enough, after all, I was only a factory girl. His reply was: "Anna, just think of the good you can do in that factory." It was one of those defining moments that sometimes happen in people's lives and I will always be thankful that priest and YCW came into my life.

Marriage followed, raising children, involvement in parish life and working part time, helping to make ends meet; they were busy years. In 1986 I commenced work with the Mission and Justice Program and was introduced to WATAC. It was during that time that the very first WATAC gathering was held at my home in Gynea. There was still so much I didn't know and was so keen to learn and WATAC provided me with that learning. I can remember our first Conference, the wonderful speakers, the singing, being together with other like-minded women, to listen and be listened to, to hug and be hugged, the laughter, the tears, the sharing of our stories. To me it felt that I had at long last come home and now all these years later the feeling is still with me, I belong to WATAC and WATAC belongs to me.

When I was 53 years old I was accepted to University as a mature age student. It was a daunting time. However, I do believe I managed to cope with study and complete my degree because of the challenging support I received from other WATAC women.

**I** now live on the South Coast of NSW and one of the first things I wanted most was to get a WATAC Group established in my area. It took some time and effort but before I knew it I had found some other like-minded women and we starting meeting. Our group is very special, it is alive, where I feel at home and can be just who I am, accepted and acceptable. Our meetings are thought-provoking, our discussions deep, our liturgies meaningful and our questioning continues. We support each other in good times and in bad and I truly believe it is a reflection of what a Christian community can be.

In December 2006 with the wonderful assistance of one of the Sydney WATAC members my book "From Tulips To Gum Trees" was published and it was launched at the Christmas meeting of our WATAC group.

When I look back on my life and remember all that has happened over the years, I can only marvel at how far I have come and the blessings of the experience of YCW and WATAC. It has been and still is an amazing journey.

-Anna Flynn-