

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND TE ROPU WAHINE KATORIKA O AOTEAROA



National Newsletter

February 2020

There is a saying about a week being a long time in politics. I wonder if there has been a year before in NZ politics where three decisions are to be put to the public and parliament that have the power to change our society forever. It worries me that we risk losing sight of other very real and pressing social issues over the coming months in the lead-up to the election.

We have the proposed abortion legislation that will, if passed, remove abortion from criminal law and allow abortion on demand up to twenty weeks gestation. The statutory test after twenty weeks appears so broad that we can expect few abortions to be refused.

National MP, Agnes Loheni, is proposing an amendment which would strengthen the post twenty-week test, "This amendment allows Members who support removing abortion from the Crimes Act to do so, while also maintaining important safeguards for post 20-week abortions as is currently allowed in a small number of important cases."

A conscience vote of MPs will be held when this bill returns to parliament.

Passing the End of Life Choice Bill seems to me to be a step from which there will be no return. The belief and practice around the devaluing of human life once embedded into the national psyche will be seared there forever. Critics of this bill, even some who favour euthanasia, are concerned at the lack of safeguards and oversights. Tens of thousands of Select Committee submissions made this very point. Submitters believed that it is not possible to safeguard against abuse of a euthanasia law. I am dismayed to see that there appears to be very little effort in the Bill to even try. For more detail see the Euthanasia Free NZ website, www.euthanasiadebate.org.nz.

There will be two referendums run alongside the general election. One, acceptance of the End of Life Bill and a non-binding question on legalising recreational cannabis. The government has promised an extensive education programme of what each referendum means. New Zealand voters certainly need unbiased information.

It is clear to me that most of us have little understanding of the complexities around cannabis use. It would be easy to let ourselves be blinded to the negative effects of cannabis by emotional responses to medical cannabis use. We need to know what a liberalised cannabis New Zealand would look like then we can make up our minds.

We must continue to speak up and fight for what is right.

Susan Dickson National President

Catholic Women's League of Aotearoa New Zealand
"Women Welcoming Change"
NATIONAL CONFERENCE 22ND TO 25TH JULY 2020
Will be held at the Rydges Hotel, Fenton Street, Rotorua
Hosted by the Hamilton Diocesan Branches

FELLOWSHIP, RENEWING FRIENDSHIPS, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKERS, SCENIC BUS TRIP AND HISTORIC TOUR
GOOD FOOD - GOOD TIMES - ACCOMMODATION LINK FOR RYDGES HOTEL
REGISTRATIONS OPEN NEW YEAR 2020

**Hamilton Diocese welcomes all members
to Rotorua
for the first Conference of a new decade.
Come to enjoy solidarity, information
and social companionship with members
from all over New Zealand.**

**It's a challenging world out there.
Be prepared to meet the challenge.**

WOMEN WELCOMING CHANGE

Women have had to welcome huge changes in their lives. Some changes have come because of circumstances and age. Many have found that they have had to move from their homes into retirement villages or rest homes, losing the familiarity of their surroundings and their neighbours. Their living spaces, being smaller, are not the size they had previously had, so lots of their possessions and treasures have had to be sold or given away to accommodate their living areas. Sometimes it is a sad time for them, not only losing their independence but also their life time memories.

Churches in the parishes have been combined recently due to the lack of priests and also the need to upgrade some of the buildings. This was not always a popular decision but women have accepted this change and have continued doing what they were doing before. They are still involved in the churches by working as part of the parish team – working in the office, cleaning the church and doing the flowers, as well as being Eucharistic Ministers and Lay Readers and working with bereaved families, families of First Communicants and other groups.

As people age different kinds of support are needed and we need to recognise this change in people. One group does this by keeping in touch with members, making sure they are well and sometimes just being a friendly caller. They drive them to appointments, help them get their shopping, run errands for them and generally take them wherever they want to go.

By supporting other groups in our church, we are recognising change for the better. Monetary donations have been given to support a youth group and food is provided for a community dinner where people from different cultures and different circumstances come together. While doing this we are meeting people whom we would not normally meet in our everyday lives. We have also supported a Young Mothers' group with a monetary donation, recognising that we are now the senior women in the parish and need to help in any way we can. The change in our society towards reducing waste, reusing and recycling has seen an emphasis on second hand shops and members give their time freely to working in opportunity shops.

Finally, even though we are welcoming change, we must not forget those members who have gone before us and who worked hard to keep the CWL alive.

Pat O'Connor Palmerston North Diocesan President

MISSION REPORT

At this year's National Conference I finish my term as National Mission Secretary. It has been a pleasure to hold this role. I'm planning to go to Tonga on a Mission trip before National Conference.

The National Mission Project of \$2,131 went to the Catholic Mission at Natovi, Fiji. The boarding hostel needs repairs after the last cyclone. Susan Lloyd and I visited this community on a Mission trip several years ago.

The Jubilee Fund of \$384 was allocated to the John Paul 11 Centre, Christchurch. They are dedicated to promoting a culture of life, marriage and family.

Once again, an amazing amount was collected for the At Home Appeal last year. It was 'Tourettes' and we received \$12,466. This will go a long way to help with camps etc.

Please remember that the Mission Education Fund is there to help your Mission Communities with up to \$200 available to each Branch per year.

Thank you for filling in the Mission survey. We received 46 replies from 53 branches, which was a great response. It appears that your donation mainly goes to Religious Orders or Dioceses. It's used for education of children and training of adults.

Jenny Muschamp

The 49th National Biennial Conference of Catholic Women's League Australia (CWLA) in Bunbury WA, September 10th – 12th 2019

from the Closing Address by Jan Bowen Geraldton WA , script abridged by Christine Paterson, Wellington NZ.

With Shona Cobham are *Christine Paterson, Kathleen Emmerson, Diane Glynan*



So, what have we 3 CWLANZ members learned at the Australian National Conference, 2019? We have learned that CWLA liaises with many other organisations and faith communities in creating awareness about social justice and ethical issues, promoting and supporting vocations to the priesthood, religious life, single life as well as Christian marriage and family. CWLA are dedicated to Mission Communities, building a culture of respect for human rights, with a particular focus on women, children and the vulnerable, upholding the dignity of women through education encouraging participation in social and public life, especially within the Church. CWLA and CWLANZ are sisters in Faith and Service and action.

Through our discussions, our reflections, our prayers and our time together, we have been helped to encounter the “Miracle of Creation”; everything in creation is inter-connected and we are challenged to care for and transform our world.

Young people take their roots from their elders in their community. I have been reminded that parents are the first educators of their children in life and in faith. Our parishes can assist with faith formation and our Catholic schools can contribute to the mission of the Church but we need to remember that our young people are still seeking, still looking for faith experiences. They are the “Now” of God. Let us use the past as a strong foundation and allow our Church to be renewed by our young people. Let us help and support them to find a place in life where they are valued and let us accompany them, walk beside them, as they encounter Christ.

“Faith is caught, rather than taught,” passed on from one person to another, just as we light a candle and pass it on. Our service to others often becomes something else, something more, if we are living out the Beatitudes, something within us is re-ignited. We have heard sad facts about the Domestic Worker Slave Trade, Female Genital Mutilation, Family and Domestic Violence, Child and Forced Marriages, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. Learned about ethical challenges regarding Euthanasia and Assisted Dying, Gender Re-assignment and Dysphoria, Restorative Reproductive Medicine and Falling Fertility Rates. We must safeguard the young; making their protection paramount to reputations and institutions.

We cannot change the world if we cannot change ourselves. We need to build “Belonging” into our communities, our suburbs, our parishes and our families. Our role is to influence by our actions, not compel by our words because the words that soak into our ears are whispered, not yelled. We need to be the change we want to see.

A delight for me personally was for us all to be honoured and welcomed by the Local Aboriginal tribe. This was a first for me, a wonderful acknowledgment of the Indigenous Noongar Aboriginal tribe from the South of Western Australia.

We have an amazing group of women who work for the Catholic Women's League at an International, National, State, Diocesan and Branch level - women living ordinary lives filled with extraordinary love and generosity, truly a blessing to all.

With Shona Cobham are *Christine Paterson, Kathleen Emmerson, Diane Glynan*

Anne McRandle, President of Dunedin Diocese reports that on the weekend 21th February 2020 5 members of St Patrick's CWL, Invercargill went to Queenstown for the weekend. Part of

the weekend was set aside to meet our CWL members from the Queenstown area. We had done a similar trip in June 2019. Thanks to our member, Hari-Priya Day who arranged accommodation. A very enjoyable afternoon. Maybe a yearly event, in summer.

From left, Jenny Health, Dawn Andrews, Tui Pasco, Fae Robertson, Anne McRandle, Judith Thompson, Marg Young, Christine Te Moananui, Hari-Priya Day with Tracey Cole, the photographer.



Women Welcoming Change Sylvia Mellish Christchurch Diocesan President

Our present theme, 'Women Welcoming Change' is coming to a close and in a few months we will be choosing a new theme for the ensuing two years.

I don't mind admitting that at times I have struggled with this theme. There have certainly been changes in my life in the last few years that I have not and could not ever have welcomed.

And so, I decided to take my thoughts back to times when I have experienced and have welcomed change as a woman in the church.

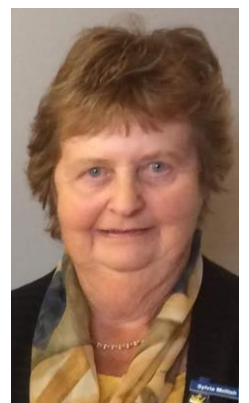
My first thoughts that come to mind are those as a teenager in a Catholic School pre, during and post Vatican II. The changes that affected all of us at that time were quite challenging for some but I believe, all were welcomed. Even going to Mass changed. I remember a new altar being built and moved closer to the people. (The old altar, which still incorporated the tabernacle, remained at the back of the sanctuary as a reminder of how it used to be.) The priest now faced us as he said Mass - in English. We all welcomed this change unreservedly. As I played the pipe organ in the choir loft, I could now see the priest in 'the rear vision mirror' above the organ - a decided advantage. Women welcoming change

My sister, a nun, who had not been able to visit us at home since entering the convent was now able to come and go quite freely - a change that my parents were overjoyed with. The chancel where she and her sisters had sat behind bars to watch family weddings and public masses soon became obsolete. The long black, serge habits and veils were gradually replaced with shorter, blue habits of a much more user-friendly fabric and short veils. (We were amazed to see that nuns had hair under their veils.) In due course habits were later replaced with 'normal' clothes. The changes were not always welcomed by the sisters, however, and some orders of sisters still wear a traditional habit. Many of the sisters also reverted to their baptismal names. They were able to move about almost 'at will' in the community and even started to drive cars as they and other religious orders adapted to the modern world. Communities outside the convent were formed so that the sisters could live in the communities they worked in. -Women welcoming change.

No longer did women have to wear a hat or cover their hair when inside the church. The lace mantillas which had become quite the 'in thing' were no longer seen and the clean handkerchief that we had to don if we didn't have a hat or scarf, also disappeared. - Women welcoming change.

Women began to take a part in the proceedings at Mass. We were permitted to go into the sanctuary! We were able to become readers and, more importantly, to read from the lectern. Altar girls slowly appeared. We were now able to receive the body and blood of Jesus under both forms. We were commissioned as extraordinary ministers of communion. What an enormous privilege. - Women welcoming change.

Lay teachers were employed in Catholic schools. In the seventies I became the first lay teacher in a Catholic school in our area - quite a daunting task! Then with the integration



of Catholic Schools into the state system, I became the first lay principal in our area. I well remember a statement made to me by a small five-year-old who, on his first day at school, looked up at me and said, "I know what you are. You're not a nun, you're a real teacher!"

Women were now able to attend services and celebrations at churches of other religions. Ecumenism was welcomed. - Women welcoming change.

Nowadays women are very much part of the church, its proceedings and protocols, but the Catholic Faith itself has never changed.

My favourite reading from Vatican II is, when asked why all these changes were necessary, Pope John XXIII walked across to a window and simply, opened it!

The Catholic Women's League is a committed body of women dedicated to faith and service. Maybe the metaphor of the opening of a window is the catalyst of - Women Welcoming Change!

Community News

Tribute to

FR. GRAEME ALEXANDER 1930-2020

Hamilton Diocese lost a beloved priest and former chaplain last week.

Father Graeme celebrated his 'First Mass' at the church of San Alfonso in Rome on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception December 8th 1954.

He is remembered by members as being present at the Inaugural Hamilton Diocesan Conference in Taupo, though maybe at that time the Chaplain.

Life member, Dame Terry Scott MNZM. JP., who was President from 1988-92, likes to think she had a hand in his appointment to that position when offered choices by Bishop Edward Gaines,

Her comments are: "I had great respect for Fr Graeme. He used to make such profound statements and impressed me so much. He was an absolute blessing to the League and so faithful in attendances both at Council meetings and Conferences."

She remembers particularly his involvement with the Gisborne branch and his travel by bus with them to conferences, including a National one in Auckland.



Feb 22 the Methven CWL hosted a "Morning Tea on the Lawn, " for the ladies of our church community. A very enjoyable time was had by all. We took the opportunity to share a little of the branch's plans for 2020.

CWL members, Julie Middleton, Zella McGirr, Bernie McCloy and Colleen Gorman. Partially obscured is another member.



While Susan Dickson and her husband Bruce were in Cambodia, running a half marathon and meeting with HAGAR members they had the opportunity to accompany a 28-year-old doctor who was running a free mobile clinic in the slums of Phenom Penh. With the others of their Christchurch group they also met a woman who works as an emergency foster mother.



Conference in comfort Our Conference Venue Rydges Hotel is absolutely lovely. Built originally to be an upmarket retirement home the Hotel has extra wide corridors, lifts to all floors and ramps to make for easy access. Rydges on site Restaurant has a soaring Glass Atrium Ceiling and serves a full and varied Menu. The Hotel offers CWL Guests a discounted (\$20.00). Cooked Breakfast daily or an alternative Continental breakfast is available at (\$19.00) a non-discounted price. Many rooms have

spa baths and many overlook Rotorua's racecourse so the view is great. Rydges is located right next door to the Racecourse where the fit can walk or run. On Fenton street, Rotorua's "Motel Mile", the Hotel is reasonably close to Saint Mary's Church, across the road from the Urbano Restaurant which offers an alternative dining experience, and only a 2 block walk to an award-winning fish and chip shop, Ollies. The centre of town, the Lake Front and Eat Street are only a short car trip away. **Now how can anyone possible not be tempted????**

The Final Word from this newsletter from the National President Susan Dickson.

It is too late for Waitangi Day this year but is still relevant

As I began to work on this newsletter yesterday, the prime minister, Maori leaders, dignitaries, politicians, and people were gathering at the Treaty grounds at Waitangi for the commemorative ceremonies.

I was thinking of the image from earlier in the week of Jacinda Ardern unveiling a statue of Dame Whina Cooper. It is forty-five years since a particular photo had a profound effect on me. A photo of a frail looking, elderly kuia holding the hand of her young granddaughter while setting off to walk to parliament. It was this image that first brought home to me the reality of the injustices of colonisation upon the Maori people. Dame Whina lead a hikoi, The Land March. The protest at Ihumatao continues Whina's legacy. On the marae at the Treaty Grounds yesterday was another Maori woman, Pania Newton still fighting for justice.

Many of us are unaware that The Treaty had a dramatic negative impact on Maori women. At the time of the signing of the treaty there were women chieftains within Maoridom. You will not find any of their signatures on any of the documents. The British authorities did not consider women suitable to hold leadership roles. The Treaty disenfranchised Maori women. The imposition of British law took away rights held by Maori women for generations. It would not be until Universal Suffrage in 1893 that Maori women began to regain these rights.

Many of us struggle to understand what is meant by colonisation and how something that began around two hundred years ago could be negatively impacting our society today. Here is an internet link address to an article that came into my Facebook feed this morning. It is written by Emma Espiner, a final year medical student at Auckland university. It would be a good place to start or to add to your deeper understanding. In honour of Waitangi Day, check out this great article from [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/.../the-treaty-of-waitangi-was-forged-to-exclude-maori-women-we-must-right-that-wrong? ...) discussing the impact of te tiriti on wahine Māori.

<https://www.theguardian.com/.../the-treaty-of-waitangi-was-forged-to-exclude-maori-women-we-must-right-that-wrong? ...>



CWLANZ Board Members

Left to right; Kathy Bell National Treasurer; Colleen Petricevich Auckland Diocesan President; Jenny Muschamp National Mission Secretary; Susan Dickson National President; Kathleen Emerson Wellington; Zella McGirr National Secretary; Anne McRandle Dunedin Diocesan President; Pat O'Connor Palmerston North Diocesan President; Colleen McMurphy WUCWO International Secretary; Tricia Stevenson National Chaplain; Dawn Mullins Social Issues; Sylvia Mellish Christchurch Diocesan President. Absent Margaret Brownsey Hamilton Diocesan President.

The Catholic Women's Board members began the new year and decade by meeting at the Home of Compassion in Wellington in January.