



**WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CLUB
INCORPORATED CANBERRA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25 October 2023**

President's Report

It is my pleasure to present my annual report, at the Club's 59th AGM, as President of the Women's International Club of Canberra.

In addition to presenting it, paper copies of the report have been placed on the registration side tables, and it will be posted on the WIC website as well.

Contrary to last year where significant concerns about covid transmission prevailed, this WIC year marked a return to a near normal WIC life.

However, the easing of restrictions on travel meant that many WIC members embarked on long-awaited extended holidays, which resulted in a somewhat lower attendance levels during the winter months.

Generally, this year was enjoyable marked by a strong budget and a large saving in the bank, 47 new members joined WIC mostly internationals, 56 circles, a range of excellent speakers on various topics, cultural programs that involved 7 countries, generous hospitality at Contact Mornings we afforded every month, and also the September annual lunch which was a wonderful event held at one of the best venues in Canberra.

I will now report on the different aspects of WIC.

Membership:

In February 2023, when this year started, we had 286 members, considerably lower than in previous years. Enrolment of Visiting Internationals (IV) was also lower than in previous years.

We speculated then, probably correctly, that this was due to the impact of the pandemic, lockdowns and related border closures which have undoubtedly led to the slower renewal of staff of diplomatic missions and a decreased intake within some missions.

As a result, WIC membership in February 2023 was below the balance ratios of (Australian: International: VI) that existed in previous years.

Enrolment of visiting internationals was therefore a priority this year as it is a requirement of the WIC Constitution that the international character of the Club is to be maintained and that we should endeavour to maintain a balance in membership between Australians and Visiting Internationals.

Thanks to you WIC members, this past WIC year we have welcomed 47 new members, mostly internationals (32 Internationals & 15 Australians). New Internationals were hailing from 28 different countries.

The total number of WIC members at the end of September, that is at the end of this WIC year was 314 (there was a number of end of year resignations). The ratio of Internationals: Australians is now 1:2, and internationals are comprising a 35% of total number, which is well within or somewhat higher than in previous years.

We farewelled 15 members, representing 14 VI and 1 Australian, who have resigned or returned to their home countries

WIC's intake of visiting internationals has been helped a great deal by our Visiting International members, and in particular, by Vice President Naseem Vohra. I would like to sincerely thank Naseem, as well as Marsia Pramono and other VI members for promoting WIC so effectively among the diplomatic community in Canberra.

I would like to thank Di Osborne, our Membership Liaison Officer for her excellent work together with her team: New Members Hostess Eman Alrubae,

Guest Hostess Minal Shah, and Jeannie Chong, who kept the Membership Nomination process on track.

I would also like to thank the dedicated team of WIC volunteers who have always been ready to assist the MLO in the check-in process for each Contact Morning. I also want to wish Cindy Stockbridge, our dedicated volunteer, health and speedy recovery after her recent surgeries.

Registration of Attendance at WIC Contact Mornings

In May this year we trialled for the first time a new online booking system for members to register their attendance at Contact Mornings in advance. This idea has been under consideration since being contemplated by a few of us on the Committee last year. We brought it into the WIC process at the right time, when it became evident that greater clarity was needed on the expected number of attendees for events and contact mornings.

I would like to thank Robyn Tulloh for taking responsibility for researching and selecting an appropriate online system (Trybooking). I would like to thank her for introducing the Trybooking system and for developing it to our needs, which include:

- Registering attendance and apologies for each month's Contact.
- Ticket sales for the annual lunch, also involving the recording of dietary and seating requirements.
- The recording of apologies and proxies for the AGM. The use of Trybooking has made it easy to extract the details required for the quorum and for the AGM (as compared to last year when we had to find out these details manually).

I am so excited about future possibilities for updating and streamlining WIC procedures to reduce the time and effort involved in organising and managing WIC events.

Finances:

The audited financial report has been emailed to you having been returned from the auditor a few days ago. I have left paper copies of this report and the Treasurer's report, on the side registration table. These reports will also be posted on the website.

The Club remains in a strong financial position with funds in the bank at the end of September of \$106,054.

The Committee has also taken cost-saving measures and kept a careful watch on spending, including gifts for guest speakers and presenters. We had the pleasure of hosting our Associate members for a morning tea at an Associate member's house (Marilyn Allen). The function was catered for by the Committee. No reimbursements were sought.

The Annual Lunch was a special one this year as it was held at the Commonwealth Club in Yarralumla (rather than at the Hellenic Club) and the turnout was high. A comfortable WIC budget made it possible for WIC to subsidise the cost of the lunch. All prizes and gifts given to members at the Annual Lunch were donated by the Committee, as were the floral centre pieces (other than the roses).

The level of funds currently held in WIC accounts is necessary to meet the cost of our Contact Mornings if/when a change of venue from the Hellenic Club is necessary. As you by now know that there is uncertainty going forward given the expected redevelopment construction work in the Hellenic Club. It is highly likely that we will be moving to a new venue next year. It is therefore particularly important that WIC finances remain in a strong position.

On behalf of our Treasurer Robyn Tulloh, I thank all those who renewed and paid for their membership promptly. However, a large number of members have not yet made a payment.

Circles:

We had 56 circles operating this year, 12 of which were new and with many circles running to full capacity. The range of circles was quite varied as in previous years and included indoors and outdoors activities. Indoor circles included cultural circles, languages, book reading, poetry, bridge and mahjong,

etc. Then a range of dining out circles, cafes and cooking. Arts, patchwork, quilting, portable craft, music and singing, and photography. And of course, sports, tennis, walking circles, Arboretum, and welcome to Canberra region circles.

I would like to thank all circle leaders for their dedication and for the time and effort they put into the running of their circles.

I am pleased to inform you that the Committee hosted two welcome afternoon tea functions at the Vice President's residence to thank circle leaders on behalf of WIC.

Programs

This year, we delivered a range of programs, with particular emphasis on cultural programs as was done last year. WIC members from India as well as from six Arab countries (Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Saudi Arabia) made presentations about their countries, including their heritage, history, traditions, culture, fashion, arts, music and dance.

There was also a range of speakers on different topics of interest. We had two authors (Moira McAlister and Nida Degutiene) who spoke about their recent publications, and two artists: Jenny Bowker; an Internationally known quilter and textile artist, and Joanna Gilmour; Senior Curator at the National Portrait Gallery who gave presentations about their subjects of the arts. And of course, Professor Michael Ryan (ANU) started the WIC year with a talk about gender inequality.

It was another enjoyable WIC year and I am proud to have been part of a committee that has presented a successful and enriching program for 2023.

Committee

My sincere thanks go to this year's WIC Committee who worked hard to ensure that WIC continues to be the vibrant and friendly place it has always been. I have been fortunate to have worked alongside a group of skilled women – both committee members and ex officios - who have worked well together to

support the operation of the Club and to strengthen cultural understanding among the Club's members.

Thanks also to the 3 photographers who helped at the annual lunch in Lucinda's absence: Julia Roberts, Jeannie Chong & Sherry Lee. extend my thanks and appreciation to **Vice President Naseem Vohra**, who has been a wonderful colleague. Naseem promoted WIC as a friendship and multicultural club among visiting internationals and has enriched WIC with her energy and insight. Naseem is returning to India at the end of this year and I would like to wish her all the best with her return to her home country.

Possible change of venue for WIC's Contact Mornings for 2024:

As I noted at the August Contact Morning, the Hellenic Club is planning a substantial re-development, with the first stage of development involving a reconstruction of the carpark commencing in the early months of next year.

Over the past couple of months, Robyn Tulloh and myself have had meetings with the Hellenic Club who confirmed that the car park reconstruction work may commence as early as February or March 2024. However, the Hellenic Club was not able to confirm a firm date for the start of the reconstruction.

Considering that few alternatives were available, we proceeded with meetings and discussions with the **Canberra Southern Cross Club (CSCC)** in Woden which seemed an obvious alternative venue.

The matter was discussed at length with the Committee, who voted to proceed with the selection of CSCC Woden as the new venue for WIC contact mornings.

The CSCC will be an excellent new venue for us given the availability of 2 newly renovated large rooms complete with good seating capacity, a stage and modern AV system, a multi-storey undercover carparking which will be available for us free of charge, excellent catering, and competitive rates. The Bistro and cafes downstairs present an added bonus.

A decision as to the exact month WIC contacts will move to the CSCC will be made by the incoming committee.

Further details about the new venue will be finalised and announced by the new committee at the November Contact Morning and will be included in the December and February Bulletins. Please make sure to read the bulletin for these announcements.

I trust that you will be very pleased with our new venue.

Final thoughts:

I consider that one of the most significant achievements during my time as your president has been an unwavering commitment to multicultural understanding.

Our organisation's core values have always revolved around diversity and inclusion, and I have made sure to keep these principles at the centre of everything I have done while president. Through our various programs, events, and initiatives, we have fostered deep appreciation for different cultures and traditions.

The friendship initiative that I introduced, where small groups of Australians and VI were invited to get together, succeeded in getting members to get to know each other, to chat and have good time together. It was heartwarming to see friendships being formed between members who may otherwise have not had the chance to properly meet.

This commitment to multicultural understanding has been instrumental, I think, in shaping my 2-year term - especially given my own cultural background. That, together with my identity as an Australian, gave me a strong sense of a hybrid role which I felt quite passionate about.

I am also particularly proud of the annual lunch events we held. At last year's annual lunch, Carl Rafferty, accompanied by his talented soloists, sopranos and tenors, generously presented a wonderful special preview performance from Opera by Candlelight.

Last month's annual lunch, held at one of the best venues in Canberra and featuring the talents of our own members, was also a wonderful event and a splendid celebration of our Club.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as president of this wonderful organisation.

When I started last year, I was still in the midst of some difficult personal circumstances. The role of president was not just an opportunity and responsibility, it was a lifeline, a source of strength, and a testament to the power of human spirit as well as a chance to connect with others. It reminded me of the incredible resilience and capacity for growth that we all have inside us.

My sincere thanks and appreciation go to all of you for your support and encouragement. I have greatly valued your comments of appreciation, input and feedback, whether in emails, messages or in person.

I want to acknowledge the friendships that I have formed with so many of you. I am forever grateful for the meaningful connections we have made.

I wish the new president and new committee all the best in their new roles.

Thank you once again.

Goodbye

Maya Kayali
WIC President 2021-2023