

ANGLICAN MOTHERS UNION AUSTRALIA



Our Vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

Our Mission is to share Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.

The Purpose of Mothers' Union is to be especially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life.

Its **Aim** is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

Its **Five Objects** are:

1. to uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding;
2. to encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church;
3. to maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service;
4. to promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children and
5. to help those whose family life has met with adversity.

WORLDWIDE MOTHERS' UNION

Mrs Sheran Harper from Guyana, became the Worldwide President in 2019 and was recently elected for a second three-year term. The Trustee on the Board of Mothers Union, for Zone C (which includes Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, a total of over 40,000 members), Rev'd Canon Libbie Crossman, completed her six-year term, and the new Trustee is Mrs Pamela Abana from the Solomon Islands.

Staff numbers at Mary Sumner House in London, our worldwide headquarters, have been reduced by one-third due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and all remaining staff have accepted furlough for varying times over the last two years. The Executive have also accepted significant pay reductions, all displaying loyalty and confidence in our movement's ability to survive and recover to fulfil the vision and mission of Mothers' Union Worldwide. Members globally contributed to a Special Appeal and raised over £800,000 to support staff as they continued to implement and oversee humanitarian projects internationally.

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AMUA is voluntarily led by the Provincial President, Revd. Anne Kennedy (Melbourne) and the AMUA Executive Committee: Mrs Christine Jensen OAM (Senior Vice President, Sydney); Mrs Elaine Longford (Junior Vice President, Melbourne); Mrs Lyn Middleton (Secretary, Riverina); Mrs Marilyn Robey (Treasurer, Bathurst); Dr Robin Ray (Overseas and

Northern Outreach Convenor, Brisbane); Mrs Susan Skowronski (Social Issues and Action Convenor, Brisbane); Revd. Dr. Lesley McLean (Prayer and Spirituality Convenor, Willochra); Mrs Christine Brain (Mia Mia Editor, Perth); Mr Rob Kennedy (Publication Manager, Melbourne); and Ms Denise Lay (Promotion and Development Convenor, Ballarat). The Australian Council is made up of the Executive Committee and Diocesan Presidents from all 23 Dioceses.

We have around 4,000 members who have, despite the Pandemic, continued to meet in a variety of ways – as groups in church halls, at coffee shops, member's homes, through Zoom meetings, through correspondence if they are Lone Members, or confined to their homes – all praying, worshipping and working together. Many members learned new technologies to help them keep in touch, and national, diocesan and branch meetings have been streamed online for the benefit of members and others. MU Sydney's annual Seminar has been streamed for the past two years, and has had over 1,000 people on each occasion participating. Annual Lady Day Services, Festival Services and Mary Sumner Day Services have also been streamed, and it has been great to be able to open up these times of worship to those who were unable to attend in person.

Reflecting the age demographic of most Australian Churches, our membership is aging. Some AMUA branches have closed or merged with others, but new groups have also emerged, and AMUA welcomes new members each year who have caught the MU vision of Christian care for families.

We value our relationship with Clergy whose support for our branches, groups and individuals is vital. Prayer is our main focus, and AMUA members are committed to prayer, Bible Study and attending Church wherever possible. In our Midday Prayers we pray for MU work and, in our Wave of Prayer, we remember dioceses around the world. We encourage clergy to ask for prayer, either personal or for particular situations, and clergy can be assured that they are being prayed for regularly. We are grateful for the support of Archbishops, Bishops and Cathedral Deans and their staff for their willingness to assist AMUA to provide Services recognising special events in the life of MU. We have been particularly grateful for the assistance with online streaming in the past couple of years. We give thanks to God for local Rectors and Vicars who encourage our members in their work.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST GENERAL SYNOD

AMUA has raised \$30,000 in support of the MU Parenting Course to be held in Papua New Guinea over a period of three years, to help mothers and families combat child abuse and family neglect and to help bring peace and safety to families in dangerous situations. Unfortunately, the Course has yet to start, because of Covid-19 restrictions, but the money has been set aside to cover expenses when it can be conducted. The MU Parenting Course, specifically designed for local use in many countries has been very successful in giving parents resources to help them raise their families, through practical education for parenting, based on Christian principles. This is available in some dioceses in Australia.

We continue to support the Overseas Fund, which supports MU Community Development Workers in countries where financial assistance is needed. With self-sustainability the goal for MU based projects, it was good to hear that members in Rwanda had informed MU that they no longer needed such assistance, as they were now able to pay the CDC's from their own funds. In this country alone, over 26,000 women have participated in the MU Savings and Loans initiative. Self-sustainability is the goal for projects in all MU Dioceses.

In Australia, MU members in some dioceses have supported through our MU Disaster Relief Fund 'Away From It All' holidays for families in need (recommended by clergy and/or Church agencies) recovering from the effects of bushfires. This year grants, to be overseen by the Bishops of the dioceses involved, will be offered to areas devastated by floods as well.

Through our Northern Outreach Grants, AMUA members raise funds to support the three northern-most dioceses. These grants have helped clergy and their families to gather at a conference in North West Australia and enabled the Pilbara Women's Conference to fly their key-note speaker into the area, as well as being able to subsidise fuel costs for those who drove from Onslow and Exmouth to attend (round trips of over 500/1,000kms respectively).

MU was able to provide funding to support diocesan trainers travelling to remote areas for Safe Church training in the Northern Territory. Members' contributions also gave funding for MU leaders to travel widely to support and train Indigenous and Torres Strait Island MU groups at Yarning Workshops. These sessions, held in North Queensland, Mer (Murray Island), Thursday Island and Yarrabah, included Bible teaching and program development.

In the dioceses where our 'Coffee & Care Stations' presence in Children's Courts has been stopped due to the Pandemic, we are hopeful that as the country begins to open up again, these will soon be back in operation, along with Hospital visits to new mothers. But even though our practical work has been somewhat curtailed, our prayer for the people who we serve in so many ways has not ceased. In fact, in some instances, our work has increased – being forced to stay at home has given our knitters and crochet workers extra time to produce grieving clothes for babies who die before there are born, beanies and scarves for the Mission to Seafarers, rugs for Aged Care facilities, and for the homeless, and of course, masks for wearing during Covid-19, among many other beautiful things.

AMUA members, along with members from all over the world, have been challenging domestic violence through the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. Many branches and dioceses have campaigned in their local communities in a variety of ways. Church bells have been rung, special Services conducted, prayers have been said and care packages given to Women's Shelters. In November, 2021, in a global action undertaken by members all over the world, photos were posted to social media of groups of three women, one obscured by a purple scarf, to remind the world that one in three women in the world have experienced sexual abuse during their lifetime. We will continue supporting this campaign to encourage greater respect in our communities.

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Our Worldwide Mothers' Union continues to grow in many countries and members are helping to provide resources and training to meet the need for women's education in literacy, health, microfinance, spirituality and well-being of the family is increasing. Self-sufficiency of MU around the world is vital for it to survive and this is very challenging in places where women's rights are negligible and poverty is the way of life. AMUA continues to generate funds to enable MU members globally and locally, to initiate projects where they are needed and to provide support for communities until they can eventually adopt the projects as their own responsibility.

The biennial Provincial President's Global Gatherings have not been held in person since 2019 when we met in Rwanda. But we gathered on Zoom weekly as the Pandemic took hold, sharing our concerns, our 'Covid-19 numbers', and the difficulties facing some countries such as water shortages, health system collapses, and vaccine-hesitancy. As the Pandemic continued to spread, we met fortnightly, and now monthly, as we listen to stories of encouragement and inspiration, pray together and share our hopes for the future. The

commitment of members of this group is truly extraordinary – our sisters in South America are up before 5am, and our New Zealand sisters come online at 11pm in order to participate.

As we in the Eastern States are released from our 'Covid-19 Cocoon', we are slowly rebuilding our branches. The challenge for us is to inspire younger women to catch the vision of the Worldwide Mothers' Union and its passion for Christian family life. Without fresh input this movement, which celebrates 130 years of prayer and service in Australia this year, will struggle to remain relevant in today's world.

Each year we choose a theme on which to base our work. The theme for 2022 is "**Transformation – Now!**" This applies to us as individuals, as members of a branch or group of AMUA, as members of the local Church, and as members of the local community. We are *Praying Globally – Serving Locally*.

So how can AMUA support you in your work? I encourage you to visit our websites, both local and international, to find out more about Mothers' Union. But also, talk to members and find out what it is that gives them the passion and vision to serve God through AMUA, sharing God's love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life.

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Facebook: MU Australia

We are an international Christian membership movement supporting families and communities in need of support in Australia since 1887 and worldwide since 1876. Our members are active in 84 countries and work tirelessly to serve their communities whilst offering Christian care for families, regardless of faith or background.

Ending violence, ending poverty, ending injustice.

We are a truly worldwide Christian movement.