



THE XXVIII
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BPW International Congress 2014

BPW Australia Report to Members

It's difficult to know where to begin to illustrate the weeks of preparation, endless discussions, back-and-forth emails, anticipation, days of hard work and long hours, friendship, frustration, networking... even performance of different kinds that went into BPW Australia's participation at the 2014 BPW International Congress in Jeju, South Korea.

In a few words: we did a good job! BPW Australia was well prepared, omni-present, professional and persuasive and impressive, and this resulted in excellent outcomes for everyone. This report is a record of BPW Australia's participation; it is also an invitation to be a part of our international work at the next Congress, in Egypt in 2017, and in the years before then.

THE BUSINESS OF CONGRESS

It may well be that most of the memories of Congress for those who attended will centre on the spectacular evening functions, the prestigious lunches, the relaxed side-trips and just spending time with other amazing women at breakfast, in the corridors of the International Convention Centre or on the bus going back to the hotel late at night. But the truth is that in many ways the 'heart' of Congress is the meetings of the General Assembly, which began on the second day of Congress and continued for four long, arduous days of debate and decision-making.

BPW Australia had a solid delegation of 21 members:

- June Kane, National President (BPW Melbourne North-West)
- Freda Miriklis, BPW International President 2011-14 (BPW Melbourne)*
- Andrea Cross, Director of Policy (BPW Coffs Harbour)
- Marilyn Forsythe, Immediate Past President (BPW Cessnock)
- Karen Delvin, Director of Membership (BPW Melbourne)
- Jean Murray, Executive Secretary (BPW Adelaide)*
- Judith van Unen, Oceania Subregional Coordinator (BPW Melbourne)*
- Pat Harrison, Former International President (BPW Central Coast)*
- Susan Jones, Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator (BPW Sydney)*
- Janet McLean (BPW Melbourne North-West)
- Barbara Clancy (BPW Melbourne North-West)
- Carole Shaw (BPW Melbourne)

- Sheila Turnbull (BPW Cessnock)
- Yvonne Todd (BPW Adelaide Hills)
- Val Bonython (BPW Adelaide Hills)
- Judy Tucker (BPW Adelaide Hills)
- Carol Hanlon (BPW Belmont)
- Elizabeth Collins (BPW Sydney)
- Michelle Naylor (BPW Caboolture)
- Sandra D'Souza (BPW Sydney)*
- Roshan Strange (BPW Sydney)*



The members marked * all had a role at international level: International President Freda was everywhere and all things, but really “belongs” to us! Susan, Sandra and Roshan all had International Executive roles; Jean was Resolutions Chair for Congress; Pat was Chief Parliamentarian; June and Andrea are now members of the International Board. Every member of the delegation, though, took on a role of some kind: Marilyn worked tirelessly at the accreditations desk, with Sheila also helping; Judith chaired the Elections Committee; Janet, Michelle and Val were reliable volunteers each day; Karen, Carol and June all gave workshops and the rest of the delegation were on hand at all times to help – from fetching coffee to photocopying and giving out information. And of course, flying the flag for BPW Australia in their eye-catching Aboriginal print jackets, skirts and scarves! We lost count of the koala pins, boomerang key-chains and assorted paraphernalia we gave to BPW friends from across the globe (and of course the wonderful and sometimes weird gifts we received in return – from the rum cake from BPW Cayman Islands to the delicate flower-decorated tissue pack from BPW Japan).

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General Assembly and Resolutions

BPW Australia had worked very hard to prepare our responses to the various resolutions that were put forward, and our three voting (and three alternate) delegates had a clear plan of action, which took into account input from our Clubs.

We had seconded three resolutions put forward by BPW New Zealand on disability and on forced marriage, but in the day before Congress began June and Andrea worked with BPW NZ President Vicky Mee on a Friendly Amendment that we believed closed off a loophole in the resolution on forced marriage that might put some young girls at risk. This was accepted and, with the amendment in place, the General Assembly then voted and passed all three resolutions.



We also worked with BPW Japan on a friendly amendment we proposed to their resolution on women being included in disaster preparedness and management, and that too was accepted. The resolution was passed. We were successful in persuading BPW Germany and BPW Europe to re-draft two more resolutions that we felt did not take into account the specific situation of countries outside Europe and that we would have difficulty implementing. Those resolutions, too, were amended and passed.

Overall, then, BPW Australia was instrumental in improving the content of four of the 14 resolutions put forward to the General Assembly – a great outcome for everyone. June and Andrea

jumped up to the microphone on a number of occasions, frequently to applause from those present! There is no doubt that BPW Australia performed very well and that our BPW colleagues from all over the world left with new respect for us.

This was underscored, also, by the excellent work done by Jean as Resolutions Chair – both in preparing for the resolutions sessions and also in guiding what was often heated debate. Marilyn spoke to two resolutions relating to regional arrangements that had arisen during her presidency (both of these passed too, albeit with some moments when we thought we might have lost one of the battles).

Now we, as BPW Australia, have a responsibility to implement the resolutions passed at Congress. Andrea will be in touch with all Clubs in coming months with information on what is expected of us and how we shall proceed.



Elections and the new Executive

Some of the most difficult and tense moments came when we elected a new International Executive and members to take up other roles over the next three years.



There were two candidates for International President: Huguette Akplogan-Dossa (Benin) and Yasmin Darwich (Mexico), both amazing women with much to offer. In the end, Yasmin Darwich was elected as our new International President and, in the closing session of the General Assembly, was inducted to the office. Other women elected to the Executive were:

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Vice-President UN | Arzu Ozyol, BPW Turkey |
| Vice-President Membership | Amany Asfour, BPW Egypt |
| Executive Secretary | Beatriz Fett, BPW Brazil |
| Finance Officer | Jo Ann Pozzi, BPW USA |
| Young BPW Rep | Ketlin Tackman, BPW Finland |

Regional Coordinators Adenike Adyanju-Osador (BPW Nigeria – Africa), Susan Jones (BPW Australia – Asia-Pacific); Bessie Hironimus (BPW USA – North America); Karin Raguin (BPW France – Europe); Marta Susana Solimano (Latin America).

Standing Committee Chairs Nancy Astone (Agriculture); Pinella Bombaci (Art & Culture); Sara Martins (Business, Trade & Technology); Francesca Burack (Development, Training & Employment); Luisa Monini (Health); Enrichetta Bellini (Legislation); Leisha Wittner (Environment); Guiseppina Seddita (Projects). Our National President June Kane was elected as Chair of the Public Relations Standing Committee.

Workshops and meetings

Karen Delvin participated in a roundtable presentation of what pilot countries are doing to implement the 'WEPS Project'. Australia is one of the seven countries chosen to pilot the initiative and members will be hearing much more about this in coming months. It was clear that we are at the forefront of advocacy to embed the Women's Empowerment Principles into Australian and global business.

Carol Hanlon led a workshop that featured the BPW Business Incubator that is her 'baby' and that offers such amazing opportunities to business women to learn and profit from Carol's experience. The Incubator is regularly mentioned in business and government statements and is a wonderful example of a member's good ideas being used for the benefit of all members.

June participated in a workshop on 'gender training for government' and ended up moderating the workshop when it turned out there was no moderator. All the workshop presentations are now posted on the BPW International website and, while it's not quite as good as being there and having the chance to join in the discussions, they are well worth checking out.



There were many side meetings while the plenaries and workshops were happening – often more than one at the same time! June and Andrea tried to cover these and as a result we were able to support Asia-Pacific Regional Coordinator Susan Jones and Dr Pat Harrison in drafting a new Constitution for our region.

Marilyn accompanied June to her first International Board meeting the day before Congress proper began and was always on hand to mentor and guide June when historical memory was needed. After the end of Congress, a follow-up International Board meeting was attended by June and Andrea and proved to be a heated affair.

The 'serious' side of Congress was hard work but BPW Australia achieved all we had set out to achieve for our members and we were happy with the outcomes.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

At the end of the first full working day, the President's Reception provided the first chance to kick off our shoes and enjoy some time out. It was also the moment when individual women and BPW Federations received recognition for their achievements in the preceding triennium. Here, too, BPW Australia and individual members were privileged to received some of the honours.

Former International President Pat Harrison was honoured with the Lena Madestin Phillips Award, named after our founder, for her long commitment to BPW and her work over many years.

June accepted a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of BPW Adelaide Hills member Viv Hazel, for her support and guidance to Freda over a number of years. While the Kiwis walked away with first prize, BPW Australia won second prize in the Power to Make a Difference (Advocacy) Award for our work on The Global Compact, begun under IPP Marilyn. Having won second prize two Congresses in a row, Marilyn is determined that we shall win first prize in Egypt in 2017, so not only must



worn by women in the BPW Nigeria delegation, which called out “Bring our girls back”, referring to the abduction of schoolgirls by the Boko Haram militia in that country. In Japan, the focus is currently on ensuring that women have a role in disaster management, following the tragic natural disasters the country has experienced in recent years. Women’s health, protection and social welfare continue to feature strongly in parallel to the more business- and workplace-related advocacy initiatives that differentiate BPW from many other women’s organisations.

Meeting so many women with so many ideas from around the world was a wonderful learning experience and is highly recommended!

AND SO TO THE FUN PART...

It goes without saying that the week was also peppered with opportunities to put aside for a moment the serious business of changing the world for women and just chill out and have some fun.

For some of the Australian delegation, that began before Congress with an excursion to a Korean restaurant with BPW New Zealand friends. As in every meal throughout the week, if you like seafood and very hot spices, you would have no problem finding something on the menu. If you are allergic to seafood, like President June, or timid of the hot stuff, then dining was not such an easy matter. This first night, the joint Aussie/Kiwi party discovered that ice-cold beer can solve the hot spice problem and that, when in doubt, it’s easiest to order ‘black pig’ – a Jeju speciality of barbecued pork, rolled with vegetables into lettuce and mint leaves.

President June and Janet McLean attended a civic reception on the night before Congress, hosted by the Mayor of Jeju, and got to enjoy spectacular views from the balcony of the International Conference Centre. The next night was the President's Reception (see above) and day 2 ended with a beach barbecue for Young BPW members and guests or a Livia Ricci Friends and Fellows dinner. Having planned to have a quiet night that night, the Australian delegates not attending either of these events ended up making a foray into the nearby shopping area to try out the restaurants there. More black pig...

The Gala dinner halfway through the week provided an opportunity for us to 'bling up' and finally get out of our 'uniform'. BPW Korea had organised a spectacular display of traditional dances and there was a fabulous fashion show of garments made from a fabric that is dyed in Jeju using organic persimmon dye. The dye produces shades of brown ranging from pale coffee to deep chocolate, depending on how often it is washed and left in the sun in the preliminary stages. Janet McLean went to a fabric dyeing workshop and duly washed and dried her swatch of fabric every night before she went to bed!



For many, however, the real 'event' was the dine-around dinner hosted by BPW Australia. Our reputation had gone before us and the event was a sell-out (there were even some attempted gate-crashers, but Marilyn dealt with them!) Thanks to June's allergy, we had chosen the only non-seafood restaurant on offer, and it turned out to be black pig again (!) but we also found ourselves in what must have been one of the most beautiful locations for a dinner party. A courtyard surrounded by traditional Korean buildings and manicured trees and open to the sky provided a perfect backdrop for traditional Australian entertainment.

Andrea had the bright idea of teaching everyone some useful Aussie sayings at the beginning of the meal, which she kindly translated into English, with June translating into French for the francophone African friends who had taken the risk and joined us, and a member of BPW China translating into Chinese for her group. Accuracy couldn't be tested, fortunately, but it gave us a few laughs.

The talent quest was kicked off by President Freda, who proclaimed Juliet's monologue from Romeo and Juliet, but the tone went down from there, with various raucous songs from Switzerland, New Zealand and Australia, and a mime from Sheila Turnbull that won her the 'Talent Princess' award of sash and tiara.

BPW Australia members on Freda's table discovered the local *aqua vita*, thanks to Freda's husband Andrew, and this may well be the reason why, at the end of the night, the massed Australian BPW members felt an overwhelming need to sing the National Anthem. A fitting end to a truly Australian evening with friends.



At the closing dinner the next day, following a colourful and exotic display of dancing sponsored by BPW Egypt, and decked out in our traditional Korean tunics (a gift of BPW Korea), the BPW Australia delegation took to the stage again and, having part-rehearsed but not-quite-grasped the words and tune of 'I am Australian', sang the National Anthem yet again to celebrate Freda's presidency (photo next page). It may not have been sophisticated, and probably wasn't entirely in tune, but it was sung with gusto and with pride and perfectly passed on the message that we wanted to give to Freda: that we are overwhelmingly proud of what she has achieved as International President and that she has been a worthy successor to the wonderful Australian women who have served in this office before her.



A song for Freda

AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED...

Most of the BPW Australia delegation took the opportunity to spend a few days somewhere in Asia following Congress, flying off to China, Japan, Hong Kong and elsewhere. Most also benefited from the day tours arranged by BPW International that allowed us to learn more about Jeju, “the island of women”. The history of this island is punctuated with the achievements of women, and still today the women divers who earn a living from diving for abalone are a wonderful example of empowered women.

Jeju is also a natural wonder, a green and beautiful example of environmental responsibility and care. It is highly recommended as a place for a holiday!

More photos overleaf...



Andrea, Michelle and Barbara



Val, Judy and Yvonne with Freda



Janet and Sheila with BPW Samoa's Merilee May



Susan and Marilyn



Michelle and Carol



June and BPW NZ President Vicky Mee



June and new BPW International President Yasmin Darwich