

# WI NEWS TE PĀNUI

Issue 8 December 2025

**Founder:** Miss A.E. Jerome Spencer  
OBE, Homemaking, Co-operation  
and Citizenship.

**Patron:** Her Excellency the Rt Hon.  
Dame Cindy Kiro, GNZM, QSO,  
Governor General of New Zealand.

**President:** Jude Vaughan

Chair – Mealing Estate Trust, Chair  
– Barbara Wood Memorial Trust

**Adrienne Allen**

Co-Lead Promotions & Operations  
Committee, Finance Committee

**Jessie Hopkinson**

Lead Social Issues Committee,  
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**Theme: Softening the Hard Times**

**Project: Nourish the Nation**

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WI News - Te Pānui

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**Committee Members**

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### Meaning behind Te Pānui

To announce, notify, advertise,  
publish, proclaim.

### Important Dates

2026

January 5<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> – Financial sent  
to National office

February 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> - Challenge  
Trophy, Ashburton

February 21<sup>st</sup> – Founder's Day

May 26<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> – AGM  
Christchurch



Supporting the conservation of our  
history

## President's Report

Message from the foothills.

Kia ora koutou. Hello members.

The start of December means that summer has arrived in the southern hemisphere and that the "Big Day" is on the horizon. Christmas and the New Year brings a gamut of emotions, doesn't it? Lists of things to do are drawn up. Shopping is purchased either online or locally is squirreled away in cupboards. (How many presents have you found that you "mislaid" last year). Menus are planned and tins are filled with threats of "no eating...it's for Christmas".



**"Christmas is doing a little something extra for someone."**—

Charles M.  
Schulz

I wonder why we put ourselves through this stress only to be exhausted and emotionally drained. Memories are precious, I know, but how about making new memories? Our families are surviving this hectic modern life need an oasis of calm and tranquility. We know, when the

weekly regimented schedules take a rest for a couple of days, that our lives seem more peaceful and relaxed.

We are delighted to welcome Chartered Accountant Frances Turrall to the NZFWI. Employed as contractor accountant, Frances' role will be to assist all W.I. and Federation Treasurers with their financial reporting to streamline the required procedure the accountants and auditors need for our CPR.

This recruitment has not only been exciting but a lengthy process and many, many hours of volunteer service. The NZFWI have been incredibly fortunate to have had the exceptional skills of Annemarie de Castro who has worked as Director of Human Resources at both Victoria University of Wellington and Massey University to provide much needed support in this project. Her professional experience enabled us to work the minefield of employment lawyers and eventually produced a comprehensive Contract for Services. Annemarie's time supporting the NZFWI has been generously given voluntarily for which I unreservedly thank her.

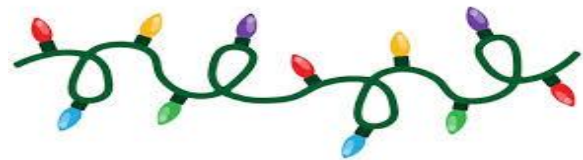
For those of us, who may find this Christmas unhappy as you celebrate the first Christmas without a loved one, know that your fellow members are there. Hold fast to their friendship when it is extended to you. Accept the invitation to share a meal or a cuppa and a Christmas slice – you don't have to stay too long – but go and feel that kindness that is offered – it may be just what you need.

As Christmas preparations are in full swing, perhaps Maya Angelou humorous quote will resonate with a few of you?

**“I’ve learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights.”**

Mā te wā. Meri Kirihimete

Jude. National President



### Some Christmas funnies:

How does a snow globe stay in shape? It does a lot of shaking.

What songs does Santa like? Wrap music

What did Santa do when his sleigh broke-down? He got it mistle-toed

Why is Santa so good at karate? He's got a black belt

Why do real Christmas trees smell so good? They use pine-scented cologne

What did the Christmas tree say to the grumpy tree? Lighten up

What do Christmas trees get when they are sick? Tinselitus!

Did you know one of Santa's reindeer has a side-hustle? He's a door dasher

What do you call an annoying Christmas tree? A Pine in the neck

What's another name for an artificial Christmas tree? Faux fir

What is a Christmas tree's favorite lolly? Orna-mints

What do elves post on social media? Elf-ies



## EO Report

Not much to report in this December edition. I have updated some content on our website. It would be great if all W.I.s had a contact email or phone number on our website, for women who are interested in joining the W.I. Even if it is one contact who covers all for your federation. Dates, times and venues of your meetings are also helpful to have, to promote your W.I. in your community. Certainly, some already have this information – check out the Locations page on our website.

There has been work on financial reporting. The Honorary Finance Officer has outlined the updated data form which is to be sent to an email address rather than an online survey address. This will make it easier for data to be collated in the preparation of our Consolidated Performance Report.

Talking of finances – several members have asked what the affiliation fee is for 2026...it is the same as last year. That is \$50, of which \$35 is sent to the national federation. A list of members from 2025 will be sent to all federations or W.I.s this month in preparation for your membership lists for 2026.

Our Medical Research Scholarship is available in 2026. Please give some thought and investigation into what your members might consider a worthy research project. The nomination form is on the Members' page under Resources and downloads. The closing date to get them into the national office is 9 February 2026, so the NEC may consider them at their February meeting.

Also due at the national office on that date are nominations for a Gold Honours award. Please ensure that the citations are no more than 400 words and include all facets of the nominees W.I. and community work.

To date we have no Remits for the 105th Annual General Meeting. Please take time to think whether there are any messages your members would like discussed at the AGM.

I would like to wish all members and their whanau, a peaceful holiday break. The office will be closed on Monday 22 December 2025 through to Monday 5 January 2026.

Until next time, ka kite ano and Meri Kirihimete, Colleen Dryden, Executive Officer

## Financial Report

Hello members, it is wonderful to be in the last month of the year ...before we know it Christmas will be here and it will be time to gather your finances for reporting early in January.

As Jude mentioned, we have engaged a contractor accountant who will assist in collecting our financial data to send to our accountants. Treasures and members no longer need to fill in the survey monkey online, but have a similar form to fill in excel or to print and hand write the figures in - check all is correct - and send in to our finance email which is [nzfwf.finance@gmail.com](mailto:nzfwf.finance@gmail.com).

All finance information needs to be sent to this email address by 15 January 2026 (earlier if you can) Including :-

- your data form
- bank statements for 31 December 2025
- invoice of your highest paid item
- receipt of your highest income earned for the year

This information is required for every WI and federation so it can all be collated and centralized for viewing by our accountants and our auditors alike.

We are looking forward to meeting all treasures via Zoom this coming week to introduce you to Frances our contract accountant and please bring any questions you have or email us so that we can iron out any issues before 15 January.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a relaxing family time.

Yours in WI friendship  
Honorary Finance Officer  
Adrienne Allen

## Meri Kirihimete

Christmas is just around the corner. The lights are twinkling, the shops are getting busier, and Tamariki everywhere are beginning to dream about what might appear under the tree. For many families, this is usually a season filled with excitement, laughter, and togetherness.

But this year, the cost-of-living pressures continue to hit hard across Aotearoa. Food prices, rent, petrol, power everything has climbed. Parents are stretching every dollar, working long days and late nights, doing everything they can to keep their whānau warm, fed, and cared for. For some, even one small gift under the Christmas tree feels like an impossible extra.

It's a heavy reality, and it can make the season feel overwhelming instead of joyful. And yet even in the middle of this strain Christmas has a way of bringing out the very best in us.

Across the motu, communities are stepping up with incredible kindness. One example is the Kmart and Salvation Army Wishing Tree Appeal a beautiful campaign that helps make sure no child wakes up on Christmas morning without something to smile about. Every year, generous New Zealanders place gifts under the Wishing Trees in Kmart stores or donate online, sending a message that no one is forgotten, and no one is alone.

These acts of generosity whether big or small create real magic. A simple gift can light up a child's face, ease the stress on a parent, and remind a struggling family that their community cares. It's aroha in action. It's manaakitanga woven into everyday life. It's the true heart of Christmas.

If you would like to donate, you can place a gift under the Wishing Tree at your local Kmart or contribute online through the Salvation Army. Even the smallest act of kindness can ripple outwards and change someone's whole holiday.

This Christmas, may we hold onto hope, look out for one another, and remember that the spirit of the season isn't found in the gifts we buy it's found in the kindness we share.

As we head into the festive season, I want to wish all our members a warm, joyful, and restful Christmas — Meri Kirihimete ki a koutou katoa.

May your homes be filled with katakata (laughter), aroha (love), and good company.

Thank you for everything you've contributed this year your kindness, your time, your wairua, and your support for one another. Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini our strength comes from each other.

I hope you all have a wonderful Tau Hou (New Year), and I truly look forward to what next year brings for all of us. Here's to a bright, hopeful 2026 - filled with hononga (connection), hāpori (community), and new opportunities.

<https://kmartwishingtree.salvationarmy.org.nz>

Ngā mihi  
Jess Hopkinson

### **We want you.... To Entertain us**

**Lights camera, action! At the 105th AGM, the NEC is inviting WI's and Federations to put on a show with our theme **Hollywood Nights**. Bring the galmour, the excitement, and the magic of the movies. This is your moment to shine. To sign up please get in touch through the office.**

### **Origami Christmas Tree Card**

1. Use the template or measure and draw squares in these sizes: 10 x 10 cm, 8 x 8 cm, 6 x 6 cm, and 4 x 4 cm. Cut them out from printed paper.
2. Take one square and fold it in half, then unfold.
3. Fold the square diagonally in one direction and unfold. Then fold it diagonally in the opposite direction.
4. Pinch the edges along the straight fold lines to start forming the shape. Repeat steps 2–4 for all four squares.
5. Stack the folded squares from largest to smallest and glue them onto your card, leaving space at the bottom for a pot. Space the layers out so they resemble a tree shape.
6. Attach a pot at the base and decorate the card with gold dots and a star to complete your festive design!



<https://www.bakerross.co.uk/craft-ideas/kids/origami-christmas-tree-cards>



## National President nominee – I aim to...

Suzanne Bannister, Wainuioru W.I., Wairarapa Federation

If elected I aim to lead our organisation into the future with open two-way communication between all levels, from NEC to Federations and W.I.s thus ensuring all members remain informed and involved.

Continue the service we provide to our communities, including a national project. This will help to raise W.I. through more publicity and promotion of the work we undertake. Further to embrace technology to allow our members to remain updated and connected.

Look at the long-term financial sustainability to ensure that we don't just survive but that we thrive as a vibrant organisation.



## National Executive Nominees – I aim to

Lynnette Beirne, Kokatahi-Kowhitirangi W.I., West Coast area

If elected I aim to help support the promotion and awareness of NZ Federation of Women's Institute as I know membership numbers have been dwindling but there is a definite need in our country for more people to learn home skills and crafts due to the economic climate and life pressures. Institutes provided such an important role in our communities when I was growing up, and I think a revival is what is needed even if we need to revisit how things are promoted to support all women in the wider communities.





### **Kay Brabender, Papatawa W.I., Tararua Federation**

I'm passionate about W.I. and proud of the 44 years I have been supporting the community I live in. If we want W.I. to survive, we all need to live by the Aspirations, as they form the foundation of our organisation. My aims are to bring good communication skills, which form good relationships with the members. A listening ear which is just as important. Have trust in others, work together as a team, but most importantly have respect for the members.



### **Helen Cameron, Riverlea W.I., South Taranaki Federation**

If elected I aim to.... endeavour to find the magic wand that will entice more women to join our great organization. We need to show them that W.I. has more than what you can find on Google.com. We must be inviting and give them the need to want to be part of our organization that has spades of friendship and compassion. We must connect more with our members, as they are our life source, as without them we have no Women's Institute. We need to find a form of media that every member can read, with or without a computer.



### **Sue Clark, Waiareka W.I., North Otago Federation**

I am married to Murray, we have two daughters, a son-in-law, two grandchildren, a grand-dog and two grand-cats. I am a third generation W.I. member (on my mother's side). My late mother, Evelyn Clark, was a Gold Honours recipient. Having grown up with W.I. I am passionate about



what we represent and do in the community. At present, I am working on ideas of promoting our organisation through the local high schools. If elected I aim to continue promoting W.I. in my area and am looking forward to a new challenge and growth within this great organisation.

**Mavis Wilkins, Lowcliffe W.I., Mid Canterbury Federation**

In my 56 years as a member of W.I. the organisation has given me so much! By standing for NEC, I aim to promote W.I. as a fun, skill learning, confidence building organisation - locally and nationally. To encourage all women, to join us in supporting women in their communities. I have always volunteered to build the community, by lending my skills any way I can. I feel that I am approachable and a good listener. I am prepared to be forward thinking to help the NZFWI on towards a positive future.



Poverty Bay Wairoa Celebrating Malta

Poverty Bay Wairoa celebrated Malta for our Showtime meeting. Members came wearing citrus colours of orange and yellow.

Floral competitions of yellow and orange that could include fruit made a lovely display.

Our Gold Honours member Judy Cathcart opened the meeting and was presented with a gift and thanks to Margret Hayes for supporting us.

Marcus from Civil Defence was our speaker showing what areas to get away from and what to put in your grab bags reminding us not to make them too heavy, the headband torches are the best as they keep your hands free. Marcus was thanked and presented with a bag of biscuits to take back to base.



In keeping with the theme lunch was served with peaches, lemon and orange jelly and ice cream.

- Alison Crawford

## Waimate Happenings

Many WI members were welcomed into the Studholme Hall recently by our hosts for the day, Studholme WI for our Half Yearly meeting. Gradually the competition tables were covered with handcrafts, sewing, flowers, photos ready for the judges, Mr A Boot and P Proudfoot. The raffles were well supported and there were many goods donated for the sales table, egg plants, jam, marmite, flowers, to mention a few tempting items. After our Aspirations were recited, our Institute Song was sung, our Federation President, Mrs Lyn Wratt, welcomed the mayor, members from Mid-Canterbury, Nth Otago and all local members.

The Mayor, Mr Craig Rowley was invited to officially open the meeting. He briefly mentioned the coming election and encouraged everyone who hadn't voted to do so, then spoke about the new clean water supply for Glenavy and surrounding areas that is going through resource consent at present. He also explained that the repairs to the Event Centre damaged by fire about a year ago were finally nearing completion and the centre would be re-opening very soon. He thanked us for our continued support in the Community and declared the meeting open.

The Roll Call was well supported with 21 scarves counted on the day and more already delivered to Community Link for the "Wrapped in Remembrance" project. These will be delivered to the RSA to be given to return service personnel to show they have not been forgotten. There was even more knitting including Peggy squares, premature baby outfits, fish 'n' chip jerseys, beanies, tv slippers.

Congratulations to Sandra Halkett who received her 40-year service badge. Well done, Sandra. Congratulations also to all competition winners, President, Lyn Wratt explained more about the Buddy Dolls, and had a couple of dolls for everyone to look at. We have been donated repurposed hotel sheets from AlSCO Uniforms and have priced the fibrefill that they are stuffed with, plus we've been given some fill that has been washed, also suitable to use. A workshop/craft day was arranged to begin this project. To date we have made about 50 dolls plus sleeping bags. A marvellous effort. Some have been delivered to the children's ward and ED at Timaru Hospital, where they were well received.

November was International Month in our organisation, so we try to have a



speaker to inform us about the chosen country and have a supper using the local recipes. This year the chosen country is Malta. As we couldn't find a speaker, we decided that each WI would research a different subject (e.g. customs, diet etc) and give a summary on the night. This was held on Friday 21st November and we learned more about another country and their food. Fund raising was discussed, and some great ideas were suggested. We had a very successful raffle at New World, Waimate, the proceeds to be used for our Buddy Doll project and to boost our Federation account. We are investigating a possible quiz night in the New Year. Our next event is our annual stall at the Strawberry Faire in Waimate on Saturday 13th December, where we will sell baking, jams, pickles, produce, plants etc, so come along to see what's available!

You might find a very nice wee Xmas cake if you're quick!

Sent from Lyn Wratt, President Waimate Federation

### **A little Island with a big heart – Malta and a touch of New Zealand**

Ladies, today I'd like to take you on a brief journey to a small but remarkable island far across the world — Malta.

Malta may be tiny — less than half the size of Stewart Island but with 570,000 people. Situated in the Mediterranean Sea.

It has a history stretching back more than seven thousand years. It's home to some of the world's oldest stone temples, built long before Stonehenge or the Egyptian pyramids. Through the ages, everyone seemed to want Malta: Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Knights of St John, the French, and finally the British. And yet, the Maltese people have always kept their own language, customs, and cheerful resilience

One of Malta's best-known symbols is the **Maltese Cross**, once worn by the Knights of St John — the Knights began as a hospital order, caring for the sick and the poor. Each of its eight points of the Cross stands for a noble quality: truth, faith, repentance, humility, justice, mercy, sincerity, and endurance. It reminds us that true courage combines strength with kindness — a message that fits beautifully with the spirit of the Women's Institute.

English is one of Malta's official languages, a legacy of the British years, and with more than 300 sunny days a year, the islands glow golden under the

Mediterranean sun. The famous **Blue Lagoon** looks so clear and bright it almost seems lit from within.

But beyond the beauty, Malta offers quiet inspiration. It's a story of **resilience** — a small community that has faced sieges, bombings, and hardship, yet always rebuilt with hope. It's a story of **service**, beginning with the Knights who cared for the sick and poor. It's a story of **resourcefulness**, carving beauty and life from bare limestone rock.

In that way, Malta's story isn't so different from ours in New Zealand. We too live on islands — small but large in heart. We know about pulling together when challenges come, about caring for neighbours, and about making the most of what we have.

And like the Maltese, we add colour to our lives — perhaps not with their bright fishing boats painted with protective eyes, but with our gardens, our art, our crafts, and our gatherings at WI meetings.

So perhaps Malta reminds us to face life's trials with courage, to care for others with compassion, and to live brightly — as the Maltese do — with gratitude and joy.

Add here is a tidbit **Maltese rabbit stew** (*Stuffat tal-Fenek*) is one of Malta's most famous national dishes. It's a **slow-cooked, rich stew** made with rabbit pieces browned in olive oil, simmered in red wine, tomato, garlic, bay leaves, and herbs — often served with crusty bread or spaghetti. It's considered a real “Sunday family meal” or a dish to share on feast days.

It has an interesting backstory too: during the rule of the Knights of St John, hunting rabbits was banned for the common people, as the knights reserved it for sport. When the ban was lifted in the late 18th century, Maltese families celebrated by cooking rabbit, and it became a symbol of **freedom, resilience, and local pride** — a meal that says, “*We've made it through hard times.*”



### And what about New Zealand?

Yes — we've had our own versions of **rabbit stew** in New Zealand, especially in rural areas and in the early and mid-1900s. When rabbits became pests here



(particularly in the South Island), many farming families made good use of them in the kitchen rather than let them go to waste.

Old New Zealand cookbooks have recipes for **rabbit pie**, **rabbit casserole**, or **jugged rabbit**, usually cooked much like a mutton stew — with onions, herbs, vegetables, and sometimes a splash of red wine or vinegar. During hard times, like the Depression or wartime rationing, rabbit was an affordable source of protein and often shared among neighbours.

- Mary Ellen Warren

### Child Cancer Foundation

Child Cancer Foundation are inviting W.I.s and Federations across the country to support their annual Street Appeal on 13-14 March 2026 by adopting a collection site for a day. New Zealand Federation of Women's Institutes has a proud tradition of community service, and this is a great opportunity for institutes to make a meaningful impact for kiwi kids with cancer. By adopting a site, members can help raise vital funds that go directly toward providing practical and emotional support to families navigating a childhood cancer diagnosis. If you and your W.I. would like to get involved please contact the Street Appeal team at [appeal.coordinator@childcancer.org.nz](mailto:appeal.coordinator@childcancer.org.nz). Every hour volunteered helps make a real difference.

- Megan Rees

### Maunu WI Half Yearly

At the recent Half Yearly Meeting of the Whangarei District Federation of Women's Institute Jill Gover and Heather Ware were presented with their 60 year service badges.

Left to right Vice President Dawn Leader, Jill Gover and Heather Ware

Sue McKinney, Maunu WI



## Ninety Years Poem

In the depths of the Great Depression  
When all was gloomy and dark  
A movement came to South Otago  
Its message uplifting but stark  
Ladies! Enough of the dreary  
It's time for a bit of a lark  
And a chance to show off your talents  
With flowers, baking, needles and art  
Get away from the house and the family  
Leave the kids and the dishes with Mark (or Ron or Don or Phil or Bill...)  
Join WI have a chat and make friends,  
Share a moment that's special - we won't narc  
It spread all over the district  
Women gathered in old country halls  
They chatted; they laughed and helped the needy  
By baking and selling at stalls.  
The years trundled by, then the decades  
The forties were tragic with war  
The fifties filled with hope and with babies  
'Dear God, please don't send any more!'  
Then the sixties swung into action  
Some ladies wore minis and swore!!!!  
On with the 70s, when women's lib hit  
Mrs Bill Blogs became Eleanor  
In the 80s and 90s with new-fangled tech  
We mastered keyboards and mouses and more  
When a brand new millennium hit us  
We took it all in our stride  
We stayed true to our ode and aspirations  
Well... most of us definitely tried  
A pandemic tried to derail us  
But we followed the rules so (thankfully) few died  
Now, 90 years is upon us  
And our district has had a great ride  
South Otago looks back at its history  
And we have nothing to hide  
We have baked, we have danced, we have loved, we have cared  
We have welcomed new friends and farewelled the old  
We are so grateful for all we've received  
South Otago WI we did it! We did it because we were BOLD.

- Jan Johnstone, Romahapa WI

## Manawatu Competitions

Tiritea WI was successful in the recent Manawatu Federation WI Competitions. Cheryl Wood won the culinary cup for cooking, Brenda Marshall was first with her Japanese Sashiko Needle Book and Pam Grapes won the Craft cup with her doyley and knitted teddy bear. Tiritea was also second overall in points total with Milson WI first in Competitions and Glen Oroua WI third. A lovely day was had by all.



Left to Right Cheryl Wood, Brenda Marshall, Pam Grapes

- Cheryl Wood

## Waimate International Month Celebration

Federation president Lyn welcomed a small number of members plus some husbands who arrived at the Senior citizens rooms, all bearing yummy-smelling food. The table was set up with a red and a white tablecloth depicting the Malta flag (minus the King George Cross), and with a small vase of Centaurea, the national flower. Then a member from each WI gave a summary of the subjects they'd been given to research.

- Sandra from Blue Cliffs spoke about the food and told us the national dish was stuff at tap- Venet or rabbit stew. (Is there an export opportunity here we wondered?!) Fresh seafood, pasta dishes also featured, and sweets with dates and almonds to mention a few.

- Suzanne from Glenavy was next with a brief outline of the history, both past and present, well researched by Nola. There was a British Naval Base stationed there for several years, an asset for the allies in WW2.
- Diana from Hunter gave us brief a geography lesson showing where Malta is situated. The Grand Harbour is an asset with many enormous cruise ships bringing tourists to soak up the culture and view the many churches, mainly Catholic.
- Judy from Morven/Makikihi had researched the culture and customs. They are devout Catholics and have many festivals throughout the year when the villages are lavishly decorated and often have spectacular fireworks displays. The people play Bocci, a game played with different sized wooden balls. There are numerous courts all around the Islands, here's even a National League which different clubs fiercely contest.

And so, to supper..... everyone explained their dishes all based on the Maltese cuisine. Stuff at tal- fenet or rabbit stew (made with chicken!), Lolly Cake (made with Malt biscuits!), nougat (from the supermarket bin!.....someone wanted the recipe.....had to confess!). Some very delicious food to sample, stuffed slices of beef, flatbread flavoured with tomatoes, olives, capers and tuna, sweets flavoured with dates, almonds orange, just to mention a few.

Everyone enjoyed the evening, learning about this tiny country and said it was fun doing the research President Lyn thanked everyone for their attendance, for doing the research, for the time spent making their dishes and wished them a safe journey home. – Lyn, Waimate

### **Women Supporting Women**

“There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish,” said Michelle Obama. “And our members of Te Aroha West Institute (W.I.) certainly agree with this”, said the branch president, Ngaire Young. Recently their special focus was on doing something constructive for Women’s Refuge in the Waikato - Te Whakaruruhau.

Consequently, over the past months, members were busy collecting much needed toiletries and other such personal items. At a recent meeting of this busy W. I. which celebrated its 78th birthday this year, the guest speakers, Nancy and Steph, were from Waikato Women’s Refuge. They gave an excellent outline of the work



of this vital organisation, whose aims and philosophy of ‘creating positive pathways to healing, resilience and empowerment for whanau impacted by violence is key to breaking cycles of intergenerational violence and preventing intimate partner and family violence from occurring and reoccurring at a community level.

Sadly New Zealand has one of the highest rates of domestic violence with nearly half of all homicides and violent crimes being family violence-related and the highest rates of family violence among OECD countries. Statistics show one in three women experience abuse in their lifetime, and a 2019 study found 55% of women experienced some form of abuse from intimate partners. Around 67% of family violence episodes go unreported, and a 2023 Ministry of Justice survey indicates that 24% of women experienced one or more intimate partner violence offences in their lifetimes.

Because of these statistics the members wanted to do something positive for the women in these sad situations on a local level so asked how they could help, even in a small way. Donating toiletries and such personal items were suggested and so members started collecting and over a couple of months a table full of items were donated by members and these were presented to Nancy and Steph for Women’s Refuge together with a donation of \$100.00.

Members of this active W.I. also donate items for the local Foodbank and make financial donations to KidsCan every month as well as financially supporting a variety of charities such as Pink Ribbon Day, Waikato Dementia and the local Te Aroha College Prize Day.

However, their focus isn’t all about raising funds for such causes, they also enjoy their monthly and Federation competitions, celebrating members





birthdays and special occasions. November was international month, and the country chosen to celebrate was Malta so some of the monthly competitions were based on that country. Speaker for the month was secretary, Karen Williams, who spoke about the trip she and her husband Grant made to Malta some years ago.

Consequently, the recent Waikato East Federation W. I. meeting also had Malta as its theme for the court competitions. Vilma Schrieber, the talented treasurer of Te Aroha West W. I. coordinated the entire court which included a variety of crafts including handcraft, baking, sewing and her floral entry was a real masterpiece. Mrs Schrieber is also the Waikato East Executive treasurer as well as being a local farmer so certainly keeps busy.



Members are now looking forward to their Christmas meeting in December to celebrate yet another successful and enjoyable year of friendship and fun under the national W.I Theme and Project of ‘Softening the Hard Times’, and ‘Nourish the Nation.’

- Wanda M Brittain

### **The aging process – depending on point of view**

This year marked some milestones on the fabulous West Coast, like the demise of some old buildings and a resurgence of the mining industry. However, not the least of these events was a change in ‘management’ for our WI fraternity. We no longer have a Federation, and the number of Institutes has reduced considerably.

But we do have a small group of dedicated ladies who are meeting and forming a plan of action to retain and make our events calendar more relevant to the changes.

As with perhaps some other Institutes around the country, we are facing the aging process, but you know what they say about underestimating older people. Somehow, we just can’t lie down, or not for long anyway. Probably just long enough to drink the obligatory cup of tea!! And competitions and conversations are still lively with opinions on (just about) everything!

Our big milestone this year was that Paroa WI celebrated 76 years since its establishment. We are fortunate to have a good cross section of ages in our membership which keeps ideas and involvement pretty near the top of our personal agendas. Our year has been punctuated with various members travelling or having some major family events so we elected to keep our celebrations to a fairly low key and those that could went to lunch at our local Honey Bee Café, (so named for the bee hive that previously inhabited the window and was naturally a 'hive of activity' (sorry)!! Sadly, no longer so as the Queen departed.) But I'm sure you understand when I say that the section of the café allotted to us was by far the noisiest in the whole seating area.... from chat to the constant movement as ladies moved round the table to enhance their conversational skills!



We have decided that long tables need to become square so that nobody is isolated by distance from the laughs! As we made a not-so-discreet getaway and thanked the staff for their due diligence we were acknowledged as being a lot of fun to serve....and they will square up the tables next time!

- Val Bowater



Photograph provided by Judy Cathcart GH

Meri Kirihimete ki a koutou ko  
te whānau!

Merry Christmas to you and  
your whānau!