



The Country Women's Association of Victoria Inc.

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Patron – Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria

State President's Email to Branches 16 April 2020

Good Morning Members

Here is this week's email to Branches. Thank you to the members who replied to me around about the first of April. Your edited responses are included in this letter. There is a long reply from one Branch and another family story from Julie. I hope you enjoy them all.

Kind Regards

Marion

I have dragged out the old portable record player and am wallowing in the past. Everything from John Lennon to albums of classics.

Some members are making their entries for next year's Art and Craft Exhibition (it was meant to be this year). Others are preserving up a storm or making meals from the fruit/vegetables that they grow. They're also taking time out to relax too!

I am the only one with email, I am doing phone catch up with members at least once a week, have set up winter warmers items in local chemist.



Thank you for your supportive email out to all CWA Branches yesterday, and my apologies for being a little slow in my response to your earlier request. It was lovely to read about the many ways other Branches have been keeping in touch with and boosting morale of their members. I particularly enjoyed the beautiful wedding party description and photos shared by Julie. Our secretary, Glenda, has passed your email on to all our members, with some new suggestions about maintaining contact with one another at this time. We decided to cancel our last Branch meeting, scheduled to be held mid-March, and instead sent out the internet sourced links for our intended activity - decorating hard-boiled eggs as a practice for Easter. I also shared a photo of my very first attempt at this activity using homemade natural food dyes. Our growing membership now numbers 15, and we are all very fortunate to be able to access email through internet or smartphone connections. Glenda was able to forward the Letter from the Governor, received late March, and keep all up to date with cancellations of

activities over March and April. We have also been in touch with a number of members by phone call or text messages. As well as our own offers of support, we plan to send out relevant local area notices such as information regarding assistance available, changes to local food services (many of our local farmer stores are now changing to phone and online orders, with delivery or arranged pick up times), and closures of public spaces.

At our February Branch meeting, we were able to approve our intended donation towards computer equipment for our local *headspace*. Our Branch had voted to support this local organisation with the excellent service they have put in place for young people in our area. After meeting with *headspace* staff earlier last year, it was decided our members would collect small personal care items each month and donate these to *headspace* for dispersal as required. They were particularly grateful to have a supply of soap, tissues, etc as items disappeared from our supermarket shelves last month. We held our very first cake stall fundraiser in December last year and were pleased to make our donation recently towards their computers (a photo from our December stall was provided recently with members' permission to our local paper).

Our Branch also has a contribution to make towards CWA's Victorian Bushfire Relief Fund, which we hope to make online. No doubt support in this area will be very much required and hopefully ongoing during the year. My personal intention to visit some of the areas affected and support their local tourism is sadly not possible at the moment.

To keep our members connected over the coming months, I hope to trial a virtual April Branch Meeting using technology we have subscribed to for our small business. This may be joined by invited participants on smartphones, tablets or personal computers with access to the internet. If successful, we hope this will enable at least a quorum of our members to meet over the coming months of social distancing. Three of our members have already joined my husband and myself for shared video socializing with other local friends in our farming community. We all miss the close social contact we have enjoyed over the years. It was a real joy to see a few friendly faces, enjoy a meal and a laugh together over our attempts to access the technology. We feel very fortunate to have this available and also to be able to keep in touch through various forms with our aging parents, adult children and grandchildren, as well as friends and other family members. Hopefully other Branches across Victoria will be able to access technology to support many of their members, or where this is not possible, put measures in place to reduce somewhat the feeling of isolation and to reach out to others in more desperate circumstances.

I am currently in the process of setting up our Branch's Facebook Page, and have personally followed and enjoyed accessing posts from the many Branch Pages already set up. One Branch in our Group is a great inspiration. Our Branch voted previously on this form of social media and set some guidelines around use. I will get our Page running in the meantime, as our members who use Facebook would like to start sharing this way.

We all appreciate the efforts of CWA Victoria in keeping everything running as best as possible, and hope our Branch continues to remain engaged and be able to contribute to this organisation.

I hope you are safe and well.

Our Group held a Luncheon on March 21st. It was a bit hard to converse as the distance rules meant we were spread out which made conversation hard for those of us who have hearing difficulties. We enjoyed a lovely meal and a silly skit reading and quiz pages. Discussion on how to continue CWA in other formats; through email or facebook pages and phone calls.

We left the venue well fed and happy, vowing to keep in touch and keep the branches running to the best of our imaginative abilities.

One Branch has an email discussion going. Members are updating each other on the various activities and projects they have accomplished each day. I have to admit I really look forward to our daily exchange of repartee.

Hope you are getting a little down time.

Thank you for your emails.

We have phoned everyone and all are happy to cancel branch meetings until it is safe to resume. Most members have no electronic connection so I plan to print whatever I receive and make copies available (posted or dropped into mailboxes) to those who are interested. We will phone around regularly to keep contact and make sure all are travelling as well as we can. We have told our wonderful Group President of our decision.

Please make sure you stay safe and share your workload as best you can.

In response to your recent email I would just like to share with you how our Branch is approaching the current Corona Virus situation.

Unfortunately, as is the case with many of us at the moment we have had to indefinitely shut down all face to face activities and other planned fundraising and social events.

We are keeping in touch with regular emails which bring members up to date with incoming correspondence and notices etc. We have a few members who do not have email so we do a post out for them. And of course there is always the phone if something urgent needs attending to or for a quick hello.

Our Group has set up a Face Book page which is proving to be a great means of sharing and communication. Our "crafty" members are busily knitting and crocheting premature baby singlets and blankets for our Group Charity and knee rugs for MND patients. Others have been urgently sewing Scrub Caps for two Hospitals. We hope that all our friends at *Umina* are keeping well.

Stay safe and happy.

That was a brilliant idea having members write in and say what's doing and what's not! Very interesting and one can almost imagine being at a Group Conference and hearing members read out Secretary Reports - fabulous! This is certainly "...Through Country Women For Country Women By Country by Women" and city too. Keep it up ladies.

Thank you, Marion, your communications are appreciated. They will be forwarded to branch members.

Just to let you know what is happening. I have started a monthly Newsletter for all members and the first one went out today. One member has been married 69 years, one member passed away and another lost her husband. Another is celebrating her 80th Birthday in April and any news I get from Head Office will be included. I have asked for members' input to keep everyone up to date. Hope you are well and keeping your distance from everyone.

This is to let you know that we have just made a donation to the local Food Share, an organisation we have supported for several years. We normally take a box of goodies but decided this time to make a monetary contribution.

We are now turning our attention to some craft projects.

We have enjoyed reading what other branches are doing to stay in touch with each other and their local communities.

My son Adrian was 51 yesterday. I visited him with my birthday gift....at the door...so did his two sisters separately another time...This was one of those sister visits!!!!!! Complete with cake.

We are all going to experience this sort of thing coming up, if we haven't already!!!!!! Julie

