

## **SUMMARY HISTORY OF THE GRAIL IN AUSTRALIA, 1981 – 2016**

### **TRENDS AND THEMES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Grail in Australia is organised in a number of Regional Groups on the eastern and south-eastern coasts of the country, all with their own networks of connections reaching into other cities and rural areas of this 'wide brown land'. The northernmost centred in Townsville, Queensland, is more than 2500kms from the southernmost in Melbourne, Victoria, and the two groups closest together are still 900kms apart. This has two obvious consequences:

- Regional Groups need to be able to be substantially self-reliant and self-propelling; and
- they need to work consistently at building and maintaining a spirit of national unity and care for one another over the distances that separate them.

Grail Centres in Australia have customarily each fulfilled several purposes:

- being a 'home of values' where Grail women try to give authentic expression to the vision, spirit and mission of the Grail;
- offering to young women a live-in experience of Christian community and spirituality in action with a small number of committed Grail members;
- providing an hospitable venue for events and meetings involving a wider spread of people – women, men and children – attracted by Grail programs and projects;
- housing necessary administration facilities including historical files and artifacts;
- producing sufficient income to support the resident staff.

At the beginning of the 1980s, there were four Grail Centres in Australia – (from south to north) in Melbourne, Sydney, Mackay and Townsville. Each was staffed predominantly by Nucleus members who lived in these Centres, from time to time joined by other Grail members. Most of the communal projects and programs had their base in the Centres. These, combined with the diverse involvements of individual members, constituted the mission of the Grail in Australia. However, in the early years of that decade, there began a trend, which, over a period of twenty years, led to there being only one Grail Centre in Sydney, which then acquired some national responsibilities, and a small dwelling in Melbourne. The primary factor in this loss of Centres was the declining availability of Nucleus members, who had largely maintained the Centres' effective functioning. Some needed to respond to calls to other work and life situations and they could not be replaced by younger members. As well, societal changes were affecting the orientation of young women's lives and their felt needs, as more affluence permitted them more opportunity for more independence. The numbers of those who chose to live communally in a Grail Centre lessened. Their accommodation payments in the Centres, along with the Nucleus members' radical commitment to sharing all their resources, helped to make financially possible the activities of the Grail in each location.

Over the period of this historical overview (1981 – 2016) therefore, substantial changes in orientation, content and methodology of the mission of the Grail are evident. It has been an evolutionary process so that there has also been substantial continuity. From today's perspective it seems to have been a period of both serious loss and notable gain. What follows is a summary account of decisions and events that demonstrate this process concretely.

## **PART 1: CHANGING ROLE OF CENTRES**

### **Withdrawal from Mackay Centre**

At the end of 1984, the Grail team in 'Ballybrac', Mackay, Queensland, withdrew from this Centre and from Mackay. It was just 30 years since the Grail had responded to the invitation of Bishop Tynan to set up a residential centre for young women there. While engaged in this work of adult Christian formation of young women, successive Grail teams were active in the life of the wider community: collaborating with the Catholic community, members of other churches and Mackay citizens in action for social change and social development, in building ecumenical collaboration, in assistance to refugee settlers, in training catechists and in particular roles in secular and church structures. Their departure was greeted with widespread regret, expressed publicly in the secular press, officially by church leaders and personally by friends and colleagues. There remain some enduring friendships with Mackay residents who continue to identify personally with the vision of the Grail and express it in their lives.

### **Reduction in Melbourne Centre – new initiative**

In 1981, 'Hesed', the existing Grail Centre in Melbourne, Victoria, was sold and replaced by another smaller house which retained the same name. A reduced schedule of adult education and formation programs, liturgies, celebrations, meetings for prayer and planning, administration and hospitality continued at this Centre in Kew in the east of the city. But, in 1984, a new project was launched -- the Yarraville Neighbourhood House -- in a multicultural, multi-faith, industrial, inner western suburb. A dedicated group of young university graduates, who had been meeting weekly for three years, now directed their energies, and some of their personal income, into this new enterprise. Older Grail members contributed to this project also. The house, owned by the Footscray municipality, was situated near a secondary girls' college where two of the group were teachers. With the city council's approval, the group developed it into a place of welcome and service to the needs of the surrounding diverse community. Neighbours, in turn, offered their support and friendship and, with the encouragement of the initiating Grail group, a community-based Committee of Management was formed. Every day of the working week the House was open for after-school tutoring, counselling and recreational activities for students; literacy and English language courses for adults; cooking, sewing and craft groups for women; play groups with mothers and children -- and there were occasional weekend events for all. The municipal council's increased financial support over the years and substantial upgrade of the facilities were proof of the perceived value of the House in the district. The Grail group withdrew at the end of 1991, as the lives of its members took them to different places and in different directions, but the House, its founding goals, its governance and activities were well established in the community and Yarraville Neighbourhood House remains an active resource to this day.

We will return to write more of Melbourne. For now, we want to note how the story so far demonstrates the process of change and continuity referred to in the Introduction. What is evident in this account is that a reduction in Centre-based work that relied particularly on the Centre residents was matched by other Grail members' increasing responsibility for initiating and sustaining other projects elsewhere.

### **Withdrawal from St Raphael's College, Townsville**

St Raphael's Women's College, affiliated with the James Cook University of North Queensland, was established in Townsville in 1964 and remained a work of the Grail for 36 years. It was the only women's college in the university and maintaining its independence was a recurring challenge. Here the Grail staff aimed to create a Christian community committed to women's development and

leadership, engaging as fully as possible with other residential colleges, the university itself and relevant organisations in the town. During semester breaks the facilities of the College were made available to movements and groups in the wider society; and some significant Grail international programs took place there, eg, *Women in the Pacific* (1989) and *Health and Wholeness* (1995). Grail personnel withdrew from the College at the end of 1999, when no Grail members were available to lead it. Two diminishments occurred as a result. Within two years, St Raphael's independence was reduced when a decision was made that the College would no longer provide meals and the students would eat in the Catholic men's College nearby. In 2006, the two Colleges were amalgamated. For the Grail in Australia, leaving the College meant a serious loss in our contacts and relationships with young women, which has not been redressed anywhere in the years since. The College was the means by which Grail members and 75 undergraduate and postgraduate students encountered one another and formed a living community together year by year. From 1977, students from St Raphael's and St Paul's participated in the *Know Your Neighbours* Summer Schools for young people in the Pacific, which Grail members in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji initiated in 1973; and some of these became members of the Grail group that developed in Brisbane in the 1980s.

Leaving St Raphael's College in 1999 did not mean the Grail's departure from the city, as occurred in Mackay. As early as 1984 in off-campus rented accommodation in town, Grail members began exploring other work and relationships in Townsville. By 1988, a small local Grail group centred on Townsville had begun to take shape. Other women living in various towns in North Queensland joined with this group which, in 1996, was formally recognised by a National General Assembly as the Regional Group of North Queensland. Over the years, beside the work in the College, significant work was done in:

- youth formation programs;
- friendship and solidarity with members of the aboriginal community;
- accommodation and encouragement of Pacific Island women who came to Townsville for studies;
- actions for social justice and regenerative development;
- consistent involvement in the House of Prayer, a centre for spiritual nourishment available to all comers;
- leadership in the Multicultural Support Group, an agency charged with care for refugees settling in the district;
- continuing relationships with Grail women in Papua New Guinea and with Papua New Guineans settled in North Queensland.

### **Revival in Brisbane**

Only a small minority of students at James Cook University live and work in Townsville after graduation. A substantial number have found their way to the State capital, Brisbane. So it was that, in the early 1980s, a new birth of the Grail in Brisbane occurred when former residents of St Raphael's College – and of 'Ballybrac', Mackay – came together there. (The Grail had its first beginnings in Brisbane in the late 1930s but did not survive in an organised way beyond the 1940s after differences with clerical authorities.)

In 1996, the Brisbane Grail group hosted a National General Assembly which formally acknowledged them as the Regional Group of South-East Queensland. While no Grail Centre has been established in Brisbane, the members there have engaged in a range of formative and practical activities which include:

- children's liturgies and adult faith formation in parishes;

- inter-religious relations with Muslims and Jews;
- involvements with migrants and refugees – English teaching, supporting refugee families, social research;
- ‘Days for girls’ – a women’s project already well-organised in Ethiopia and extending to Uganda, Myanmar and the Solomon Islands providing sanitary products for young girls which enables them to attend school without interruption;
- researching and writing Grail history;
- providing national leadership in the Grail and resource persons in international Grail programs.

### **Further reduction in Melbourne – and some promise**

As mentioned earlier (p.2) the Grail Centre in Melbourne moved to a smaller but adaptable house in 1981 where it continued educational and formative programs in a reduced form through the following decade. A positive consequence of its accommodating fewer Nucleus members was that there was space for one or two young women interested in the Grail to live there while working on Grail projects, such as the Yarraville Neighbourhood House in the 1980s. For one of those years, two South African sons of Grail women stayed in the Centre, as they needed a safe environment to complete their final year of secondary schooling.

In the 1990s the spare bedrooms were occupied by overseas students, which kept the Centre financially viable. In the last years of this decade, the Melbourne Grail group moved into a period of serious decline as a result of increasing ill health and deaths among more than half of its members. In 2002, the Centre was sold and replaced by a small dwelling - cum - secretariate. Grail activities and gatherings occurred less often, but Grail members joined with other like-minded groups in various programs and projects. In solidarity, the Sydney Grail began from this time to share resources, presenting in Melbourne seminars, workshops and reflection sessions on social and spiritual themes that had been successful in Sydney.

In 2014, one of the Grail members, initially involved with the Yarraville Neighbourhood House, decided to retire prematurely from full-time teaching to become a part-time facilitator for the Grail. A generous bequest from a deceased member made it possible to employ her. Already some initiatives have brought signs of new life and hope.

### **Sydney**

This Sydney Centre proved to be particularly adaptable to changing ways of pursuing the Grail mission. Like the other Grail Centres, it ceased to be home to residential programs for young women but, unlike them, was able to remain a viable and effective project, with adequate personnel to carry the work of the Grail forward along different paths with new emphases. As well, each year, enough income has been generated by the local Grail group to meet costs. In recent years, thanks to benefactions received, national Grail funds have made a small helpful contribution annually.

What follows is a brief account of the main areas of action in Sydney over the last 35 years.

#### Focus on women in society and church

Flowing on from a quite intensive period in the 1970s of collaboration with the Australian and New South Wales Councils of Churches in campaigns for social and economic justice, the 1980s brought a similarly strong ecumenical engagement in projects of women for women, which continued through the 1990s. These included:

- a Grail women's group, that met regularly at the Centre for self-education in feminist perspectives on contemporary society and the Christian churches, and on Scriptural texts, theology and church history;
- Women-Church, which met at the Grail Centre, and its regular journal,
- the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW);
- solidarity with Aboriginal women in the inner city facing eviction by a housing development company and in their establishment of a House of Healing outside the city;
- submissions to church authorities on issues of women's equality, eg, inclusive language.

#### Adult education and formation

In the 1970s, the Sydney Centre began offering regular programs taking a Christian humanist perspective, open to all interested adults; and these remain a firm commitment. Forums, workshops, seminars, reflections – whether for a full day or half-day or in the evening -- feature in the annual schedule of activities. These programs range widely over social, cultural, economic, political and ecological matters, interfaith exchange and relations; insights from Scripture and theology, spiritual practices; skills training for particular fields of action.

#### Liturgy, prayer, rituals, celebrations

Liturgical, prayerful and celebratory experiences are an enduring part of the life of the Grail everywhere, marking major seasons and feasts of the Christian year and important anniversaries and events such as the celebration of commitments of new members. Some highlights for the Sydney Grail have been 50 years at 'Avila' (2004); the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Grail in Australia (2011); the 40th anniversary of the Grail Singers (2011); and the 5th centenary of the birth of Teresa of Avila (2015).

The Grail Singers, a choir of women's and men's voices, was convened in 1970 and disbanded in 2014 and, in that time, became well-respected by their peers, winning several awards in the City of Sydney Eisteddfods. The singers practised every Tuesday evening at the Centre, building a beautiful repertoire of religious and secular music from varied cultural sources and periods, from early chant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Each year, they presented seasonal programs, especially for Holy Week – Easter and Advent – Christmas, they were asked to sing for ecumenical and inter-faith celebrations and for personal feasts and memorials. The choir has played an important role in nourishing the religious faith and spirit of people in Sydney.

#### Projects, actions, campaigns

Forming alliances, joining networks and collaborating with other organisations and movements have made the Grail more widely known and appreciated and have helped to increase the impact of Grail members' efforts in the following areas: justice in trade agreements, action against human trafficking, inter-faith collaboration in care of the earth, Christian meditation, promotion of a culture of non-violence, solidarity with aboriginal families, pastoral care for prisoners.

## **PART 2: THEMES AND TRENDS**

Here the focus is on general themes and trends. A number of these have been referred to in the preceding account of the changed role of the Centres but need more particular attention and elaboration.

### **Shifting location of initiatives and responsibilities**

The Yarraville Neighbourhood House was an example of an initiative of a few young people who were given support by others in the Regional Group to advance what became a significant Grail project in Melbourne. This points to a continuing trend in the shaping of the mission of the Grail when the sources of energy in the Centres and their staff decreased. Communal undertakings have

often been sparked and have grown out of the commitments and passions of individual members. These have moved the Grail into a number of fruitful fields of action. some of which have already been mentioned. Here are a few other examples:

- One member's concerns for the Middle East and particularly her involvement with the Free Palestine movement has opened the Brisbane Grail to interactions with Muslim women.
- The commitment of one Sydney member to pastoral work among prisoners inspired the *Personal Journal* for prisoners, which has enriched the lives of over 1000 prisoners and has alerted thousands more people to the needs of prisoners and their families for community care and support.
- Another member's work in complementary therapies was the basis for a series of very successful *Health and Wholeness* programs in Australia and Papua New Guinea.
- Open forums and workshops to raise public awareness of important social, cultural and religious issues, and specific skills-training programs, all of which have been long-running features of the work of the Grail, are often developed out of particular involvements of individual members.

In 1984, Australian Grail members adopted a new structure for national leadership: a National Team of three Grail women equally sharing responsibility. Before this, we had elected a National President (a Nucleus member) who worked with a consultative Council of elected members. The first National Team included one Nucleus member with national and international leadership experience who could bring perspectives helpful to decision-making in the new Team, but during the years since, Grail members generally have acquired the depth of knowledge and experience to fill leadership roles successfully, not only locally and nationally, but also internationally. In 2016, Australian Grail women can be found in international teams guiding formation, managing assistance funding, international exchange and higher education funding, as well as coordinating two International Grail networks, *Theology and Spirituality* and *Justice and Trade Agreements*

### **Migrants and refugees**

As an expression of the Grail's pursuit of justice and equity in our society, helping and supporting newcomers to Australia from other countries has been a thread that can be traced through the Grail's history in Australia for over 60 years since Brigid Huizinga's social work among Dutch migrants which began in the 1950s. Numbers of Grail members have been active in multicultural schools, in English language teaching to adults in government and privately sponsored programs, in building neighbourhood community relations, in refugee support and re-settlement. In 2011, a small Australian team took responsibility for an International Grail publication, *Migration Matters*, a 28-page collection of readable and informative articles and stories aimed at exploring the movements of people in our world and how Grail women are, and could be, constructively involved.

### **Regular publications**

While the national *Newsletter* first appeared in print in 1967 and is currently circulated three times a year, other publications have been added in the period 1981-2016.

*In-House* (1985 - ), an informal members' communication with an emphasis on personal news, is intended to express and strengthen the spirit of community among us, particularly as we are spread over long distances.

*Blessed Be*, (2015 - ) is a four-page collection of poems, prayers, and other short writings from diverse faith sources contributed by Grail women who have found them spiritually enriching. It is sent with the Newsletter to all Australian Newsletter readers.

*Grail leaflets* are always in stock. In 1991, in time for the World Council of Churches Assembly held in Canberra, Australia, a series of leaflets, each presenting the Grail from a different aspect, were designed and printed in large numbers for the Women's Tent at the Assembly. Since then we have continued to print leaflets in a similar, easily reproducible style in quantities for wide circulation.

*The Grail in Australia website* has been designed and twice re-designed in recent decades. Every effort is being made to use it productively, particularly for publicity and outreach purposes but also to facilitate internal communication and organisation.

*Global Justice Bulletins*: In 2004 at an International Grail Networks Forum, two networks concerned with *Justice and Trade Agreements* and *Human Trafficking* decided to produce jointly a monthly Bulletin for circulation to all their members. In 2011, the International General Assembly decided to reduce the Bulletin's schedule to six issues a year. The publication office is in the Sydney Centre, where one of the network coordinators is based. In 2016, a new initiative is being trialled: an additional Bulletin focussed on the Pacific region, especially the small Pacific Island countries (PICs) with whom Australia and New Zealand are particularly engaged. It is expected that the readership of this publication will be drawn primarily from this region.

### **Faith and spirituality**

Seeking an integral life in the Spirit and in the world lies at the heart of what it is to belong to the Grail and is reflected in Grail programs, projects and activities, as the following range of examples from 1981 to 2016 show:

- The Brisbane group, knowing how memorable and formative creative liturgies can be, have put a lot of their energy and imagination into celebrations and rituals with their own and others' children.
- In Sydney from 2007 and Melbourne from 2014, a weekly gathering for *lectio divina* takes place, open to all interested men and women. Participants are finding this regular practice a constant source of personal nourishment.
- Week-long national residential retreats have strengthened our spiritual core. At times when these prove to be too costly they are replaced with shorter versions connected with other national gatherings.
- Seminars and workshops dealing with a wide variety of current issues are always presented in a context of faith and spirituality, explicitly or implicitly.
- Two simple practices have had a marked impact on the regional meetings of Grail women in Sydney. In 2001, benefiting from the gifts of a new member, we began a practice of preceding every meeting with 30 minutes of Tai Chi. The effect was felt immediately in more relaxed discussion of the business agenda; and it is now part of national meetings also. As well, in recent years an hour's quiet reflection and sharing of insights has been inserted into the monthly regional meetings in response to members' desire for more spiritually energising content. This means meeting an hour earlier and returning home more refreshed.
- *Spirituality and healing* was the theme of several very successful programs in all four regions, ranging in length from one day to a residential course of two weeks with international participation.

The 1980s and the years following were marked by an increase – in diversity and frequency – of encounters and engagements with women and men of different faiths in the Australian community, combined with reading of some of their texts and further study of religion and religions by some Grail members. These interfaith connections have been made in all Grail regions and have enriched us spiritually. For example:

- one-day retreats in a Grail Centre directed by a Buddhist nun;

- a series of public evening lectures in a Grail Centre, over several years, by a Jewish woman scholar and friend on Biblical themes;
- some memorable public talks in a Grail Centre by a leading Hindu Swami;
- interactions with Muslim women in interfaith meetings; and multi-faith joint actions for justice and care for the earth.

### **Solidarity with the Grail in Papua New Guinea (PNG)**

In 1971, three Australian Grail women, one in Australia and the other two with long experience of living and working in Papua New Guinea and Fiji respectively, initiated a series of two-week residential Summer Schools for young people from the islands of the Pacific. Held in different island locations from 1973 to 1987 and with the general title, *Know Your Neighbours*, these Schools aimed at building friendships across thousands of kilometres of ocean and challenging the participants to consider their common destiny in the region and their responsibilities as Christian adults in promoting solidarity, justice and peace. After the 5<sup>th</sup> Pacific Summer School in Fiji in 1982, young women from PNG who had been attending these Schools expressed their wish for the Grail to grow in their country.

Thus began a continuing close relationship between Grail women in PNG and Australia. Together they have created a variety of shared experiences in both countries, and participated in international Grail programs around the world. The Grail women in PNG have few material resources; but they are spiritually strong and faithful. Solidarity with PNG has meant for the Grail in Australia uplifting experiences with them of spiritual nourishment and warm friendship along with a commitment to providing the resources they need for their development. Space does not allow an adequate account of this collaborative relationship. Following is a summary overview.

Four Australians lived in Wewak in 1981- 1983 engaged in community development, especially among urban youth, and Grail formation of interested women. A number of these attended an international formation program in Mackay, Queensland, in 1984. After further visits to Wewak from Australia, 20 women made their commitment in the Grail in 1990 and were represented at an International Council meeting in Manila in 1991. Interactive programs and meetings between the PNG and Australian Grail have occurred on average every two years since. As well, a number of PNG women have come to Australia for particular personal resourcing and have been assisted to take part in international programs in the USA, Brazil, East Africa and Europe. In 1999, a founding member of the Grail in Wewak made her dedication in the Nucleus.

In 2016, there are five Grail groups in five provinces in PNG: East Sepik, the National Capital District, Manus Island, Madang and East New Britain.

### **History and archives**

In 1985, Sally Kennedy's Ph.D. thesis was published with the title, *Faith and Feminism*. In it she explored the history of four Australian women's organisations, The Grail among them. Sally's probing of the Grail files and the study of the Grail that resulted were the stimulus to on-going collection and organisation of the Australian Grail archive. A History Group formed in Sydney and, in 1998, a national history workshop was convened and preliminary plans made for future writing of monographs, each concerned with a particular part of the whole history. Only one monograph has reached the stage of final editing. A small team undertook to work regularly on the national archive. The current archive team has produced an agreed policy paper, which they hope may form the basis for future progress.



Other significant developments arising from this renewed attention to Grail history include the production of a number of articles and public talks on the Grail; a dinner attended by over 100 guests to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Grail in Australia; and increased knowledge and understanding of Grail history among Grail members as a whole.

A very important event was a television documentary on The Grail that went to air nationally in 1998. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned it from a small production company of two women, one of whom was the sister – and daughter - of Sydney Grail members. Titled *Inspired Lives*, it engaged with the spirit and life of the Grail in four countries – Australia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Tanzania. Women who contacted the Grail after viewing this documentary became the first participants in a new, on-going series of sessions of *Introduction to the Grail*, which has enriched the movement with a number of gifted, committed members.

### **Alliances and networks**

With the globalisation of communications and as global forces more and more impinge on local living, the Grail in Australia has moved towards acting in networks and alliances with others who have compatible goals and values. Such collective efforts can be more encouraging and stimulating and have a stronger impact than working separately, while allowing participants to stay true to their own identity and vision. Forming alliances is far from new; it has been part of the Grail project in Australia, on and off, since the 1940s. However, this approach, along with networking, has grown in range since the late 1990s in various actions for justice and peace, overcoming poverty, support for migrants and refugees, ecumenical and inter-faith relations and care for planet earth.

### **Outreach and Grail participation**

With the closure and reduction of Centre-based programs and projects that brought young women into contact with the Grail, outreach and numerical growth in the Grail have been much weakened.

The film, *Inspired Lives*, (cf. History and Archives) provoked most interest from women in Sydney, where a plan to develop that interest was implemented without delay. Almost all the growth in membership in Australia since then has come from the programs of introduction, and induction, into the Grail offered from the Sydney Centre. This is still only a small achievement. A small team is currently compiling a full kit of materials and methods used in these programs which will be sent as a resource to all the regional groups. In 2016, outreach and numerical growth in the Grail, particularly among young women, is a most critical area for action and there is no coherent strategy for it.

### **Legal and financial matters**

In 2002-03, a small team, with help from professional advisors, undertook a major revision of Australian Grail structure documents to help secure the Grail's recognition and standing vis-à-vis Federal and State laws regarding property, finances and taxation. The results of this work were three compatible documents:

- the *Constitution of the Grail in Australia* and the *Constitution of the Grail in Australia Property Association Inc.*, a new structural element, both approved by the National General Assembly (NGA) 2003;
- the *Constitution of the Nucleus of the Grail in Australia*, approved by the National Nucleus Assembly 2003;

(Note: In relation to Canon Law (1983), the Grail is listed in the Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia as an 'Association of Christ's Faithful (Private)'.  
)

In 2016, the Grail in Australia has its 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Inevitably then, we have farewelled numerous members and friends who have left this world. They all remain with us in memory and some, with large and small bequests, continue their generous participation in the Grail by their financial enabling of undertakings of present members here and in other countries. Without their gifts, our available income could not have met the demands in the last few years of:

- maintenance of the Sydney Centre and updating office equipment;
- wider participation in international and national meetings and programs;
- employment of paid, part-time staff in Sydney and Melbourne;
- subsidising regional group activities when needed;
- funding programs and projects of the Papua New Guinean Grail; and
- launching new initiatives.

### **National policies**

In 2016, agreed national policy papers on a range of matters were collated and circulated to all members for ready referral. Up until then, they had been recorded only in various reports over several years, difficult for members to find and follow. They include provision for regular review and amendment.

### **Interaction with Grail members in other countries**

Australian Grail members often remark on the extent to which they are enriched by the international and intercultural character of The Grail. Most international resourcing of the Australian Grail occurs via the written word as visits from overseas are infrequent. In the period under discussion, we have been blessed to have Isabel Marujo (Portugal) and Loek Goemans (South Africa) join working teams in Melbourne and Sydney for extended periods and make their own unique contribution to Grail development here. Other resource persons from Canada, Portugal and the United Kingdom have come and contributed generously to short programs that called for their particular gifts and skills.

In the 80 years of the Grail's presence in Australia, there have been three international meetings, all of them in the last 30 years: an 'education into the Grail' consultation (1986) and two International Council meetings (1995 and 2015).

All visits, however short, are welcome opportunities for Australians to have personal contact with Grail members in other countries. Travellers over this period, from Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and India, Canada and the USA, South Africa and Tanzania, the Netherlands and the UK, have brought some of the diversity of the Grail around the world to enlarge our lives.

Meanwhile, there has been increasing movement of Australian Grail women to meet the Grail elsewhere in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North and South America, whether for short visits, to participate in Grail meetings and programs, to play responsible roles in international work teams or to live for extended periods of time to resource projects in East Africa, Papua New Guinea and Thailand.

### **CONCLUSION**

The request for a comprehensive but succinct account of the Grail in Australia over the last 35 years has been both a challenge and a gift. Out of the distilling and reflection needed for the task have emerged insights into the past that also point to future directions.

*(Alison Healey, Sydney, October 2016)*