

The Soroptimist

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YVONNE SIMPSON

*SI International
President
2015-2017*



a global voice
for women

Soroptimist  International

Federation of the South West Pacific

Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific

(ACN 147 990 627)

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**CHALLENGE THE
FUTURE**
SISWP 2014-2016

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From the Editor

As you can see from the front cover, we celebrate the installation of Yvonne Simpson, President of Soroptimist International 2015-2017, one of our very own SISWP members. Yvonne is a Soroptimist from New Zealand. She is now SI International President for 132 countries/territories, with 80,000 members and more than 3,000 clubs.

Many of us would have come to know and admire Yvonne when she served as President of SI of the South West Pacific (SISWP) 2010-2012. She managed to visit many of the clubs in the 13 countries of our SISWP Federation, to lend us support and get to know us better. She even put together an amazing Conference of Clubs in her small hometown of Hokitika in 2012 when the tragic earthquake flattened the city of Christchurch where the conference was supposed to be held.

I treasure a photo taken with Yvonne during her Singapore visit in 2011.



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SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL A Global Voice for Women

The Soroptimist SWP is the Magazine of Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific.

Soroptimists are business and professional women who work to maintain high ethical standards in their business and professional life and who use their talents and energy in the service of their local and global communities.

Through international partnerships and a global network of members, Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls. Soroptimist International (SI) is a Global Voice for Women working through AWARENESS, ADVOCACY and ACTION.

One of four Federations globally, SI of the South West Pacific (SISWP) is the smallest in terms of membership with 13 member countries. The other federations are SI of the Americas, SI of Europe, and SI Great Britain and Ireland.

An Expanding and Dynamic Federation

Since its Charter as a Federation in its own right in 1978, SI of the South West Pacific has grown from three member countries -- Australia, New Zealand and Fiji -- to include 13 countries including Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands as well as many in Asia, namely Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, and Thailand.

Clubs within the Federation provide service to their local, national and international communities.

Front cover: The new President of Soroptimist International, Yvonne Simpson, who was installed at the handover ceremony during the 20th Soroptimist International Convention in July 2015, Istanbul, Turkey. Photo courtesy of Hafdis Karlottir from Iceland.

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The **deadline** for the November 2015 issue of the SISWP Magazine is **1 October 2015**. If you have club activities that focus on the **SI International President's Appeal for Nepal**, please send me your articles and photos.

SISWP President Carolyn Hudson Reports from Istanbul

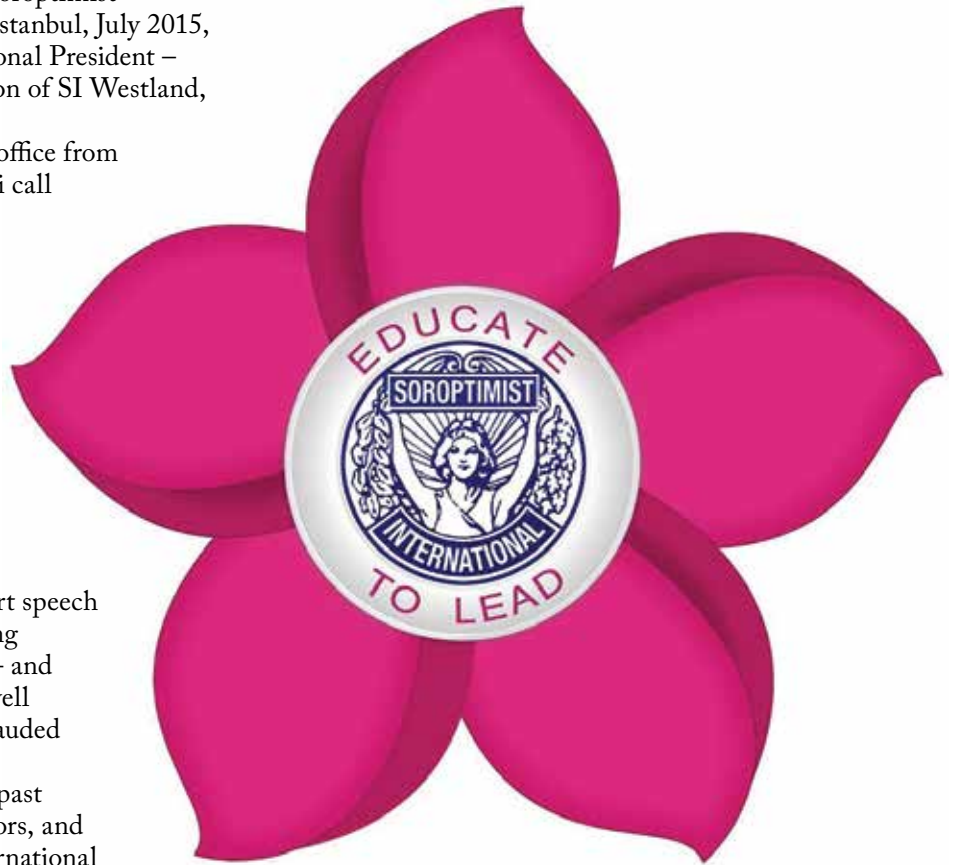
At the conclusion of the 20th Soroptimist International Convention in Istanbul, July 2015, we welcomed a new International President – SISWP's own Yvonne Simpson of SI Westland, New Zealand South.

As Yvonne was receiving the chain of office from outgoing President Ann Garvie, a Maori call drew many New Zealand Soroptimists onto the stage. Led by NZ National Representative Paula Siddle and Thelma Luxton, SINZ's Maori Cloak was placed around President Yvonne's shoulders. The NZ members sang a Waitarta for which the words were put on the screen so the whole convention could join in.

President Yvonne then presented her Vision for Soroptimist International for the coming biennium.

A nice touch, as she started, was a short speech of thanks in **TURKISH** to the organising committee and the SI Union of Turkey – and apparently it was well pronounced and well phrased. All the Turkish members applauded her.

President Yvonne then paid tribute to past International Presidents and other mentors, and in particular to New Zealand's first International President, the late Betty Loughhead Turland, who was also installed as International President in Istanbul at the 1983 Convention.



Yvonne has adopted as her logo a five petalled bright pink flower with a centre of the Soroptimist emblem surrounded by the words "Educate to Lead". The five petals have a variety of meanings. For instance, they stand for the five pillars of our organisation: Advocacy, Programme, Communication, Membership and Leadership. The five petals also stand for the four Federations and SI – or the five federations of the future. She also spoke about the 5 keys to membership and leadership.

And, of course, the centre of the flower is our focus – our Mission and Vision, our commitment to transform the lives of women and girls.

President Yvonne then launched her 10 December President's Appeal. Money raised from the 2015 and 2016 Appeals will go to projects in Nepal with the aim to ensure

that women and girls will have the education they need to rebuild their lives affected by the recent earthquakes. The Appeal will fund measurable, sustainable projects in education and leadership, with a further aim of reducing trafficking of women and girls. President Yvonne hopes to raise A\$655,000 (US\$500,000) over the two years of the appeal. If all members contribute, it will take less than A\$10.00 per head to achieve this!

Carolyn Hudson

President 2014-2016

Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific

President Carolyn Hudson invites you to
Challenge the Future

Featuring a stunning landscape of parklands, ponds and lakes, Waterview in Bicentennial Park presents an enchanting place to make the most of our Conference of Clubs.

Located just a few kilometres away from the central business district with a range of well appointed hotel accommodation, we have selected a perfect location for the 2016 conference.

WATERVIEW
IN BICENTENNIAL PARK

To launch our conference we will be hosting a cocktail party, a full program of exciting speakers and workshops. A variety of exciting friendship events are planned by the clubs for Saturday night and the whole weekend will close with a Gala Dinner at the Waterview.

I am delighted to invite you to the exciting city of Sydney to

CHALLENGE THE FUTURE

29th April - 1st May 2016
Waterview Function Centre, Sydney

Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific
Sydney is the scene for 2016

LET'S MEET IN SYDNEY 2016!

SISWP Conference of Clubs 29 April - 1 May 2016

Soroptimist International of the South West Pacific
Sydney is the scene for 2016

CHALLENGE THE FUTURE

At Conference of Clubs
29th April - 1st May 2016
Waterview Function Centre

OUR EXPERIENCE AT THE 20TH SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, ISTANBUL



(Editor's note: Rose, a teacher, and Yan Ru, a law undergraduate, were selected to represent the SISWP and deliver their speech at the SI Conference in Istanbul.)

TAN YAN RU, SINGAPORE

I was extremely excited when I found out that I had been selected to present my speech at the SI International Convention 2015 in Istanbul. We spent four amazing days soaking in the beauty of Istanbul, in the company of friends from all over the world. I participated in workshops on how to advocate for my community, and dialogue sessions exposed me to the harsh realities of human trafficking. When I gave my speech, I was moved by the fervour of the SI community, as they gave me and my fellow speakers their generous attention, and applauded enthusiastically whenever they agreed with something we said. There was certainly no shortage of inspiration, as speakers and SI groups shared about the projects they were undertaking to elevate the status of women. One striking example was a project by SI Great Britain and Ireland, who had reduced the prevalence of female genital mutilation in their country by equipping them with skills and jobs. I returned home with a new-found respect for non-governmental organizations and their leaders who had contributed so much for a cause greater than themselves. In particular, it made me reflect if I truly wanted to spend my life after graduation plying the corporate world, or if I wanted to dedicate my life to serving my community like so many of my SI sisters have done before me. I am sure that Soroptimism and its vision will continue to play a great role in my life, and I pray that I too can grow up to be a voice for women.

*Tan Yan Ru
Representative of SISWP
SI Public Speaking Event
Istanbul, July 2015*



ROSE PITOI, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Firstly I would like to say a great big thank you to Soroptimist International for this marvellous opportunity. I'd also like to express my appreciation to my home club SI Port Moresby for their help and encouragement during the competition and also to the lovely ladies of SISWP HQ for helping me arrange my travel to Istanbul.

This has been a special experience for me that will definitely stay with me forever. I found the conference extremely informative and eye opening as it addressed global issues affecting women and girls. I've come away with a great appreciation for the work that SI does globally.

I've met many wonderful women from various walks of life, made awesome friends and have been inspired by many of the long-serving SI members. I find it a real privilege and honour to have been selected as one of the speakers for the SISWP region. Cheers!

*Rose Pitoi
Representative of SISWP
SI Public Speaking Event
Istanbul, July 2015*

ODE TO SI

A recently inducted member, Gaylene Timms, an avid poet, shared her thoughts about becoming a member of Soroptimist International. (Submitted by Claire Porteus, Publicity Officer, SI Circular Head, Tasmania, Australia)

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY TEA

*I'm so excited you see I've been invited to tea
with the Soroptimist ladies,
to me, "The Cream of Society".
This group of women have always been admired
and respected by this very humble Farmer's wife,
who writes poetry to calm her nerves
always thought she was never "good enough."
Am I "good enough"? Now let's see
I've been a loyal Farmer's wife
Through life's hurdles, the good and the bad,
He and I have turned the tide.
Our five children are all grown
All valued members of their societies
Each with lives and some with children of their own.
Now with a Medical Disability
My husband cares and strives to look after me
So now I am looking at things
that I can contribute to him and my community
NOW LET'S SEE
I can knit and embroider
Entertain the old and littlies too
With stories and poems, of my every day journey
through life, which I often think of
"whilst sitting on the loo"
Yes, yes this I often do!!
But most of all
I have an ability to LISTEN,
To really hear others, the happy, the sad as they recall.
My old Dad used to say, "you listen but do you hear?"
Which I still remember today
The importance to really listen to what others have to say.
The world is just not about me
So when I read about what others do
Such as the SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
Who give others that opportunity to do
I'm just hoping they have a place
For me too!*

Gaylene M. Timms
SI Circular Head, Tasmania, Australia



SI BA: SOLAR COOKER LAUNCH

Women in the remote area of Ba in Fiji now have access to solar energy following the donation of a solar cooker.

The isolated location and lack of grid electricity and cooking gas have caused hardships for the women in such areas. The communities depend on kerosene and firewood for cooking. The site in Ba was chosen because of the hardworking women who carry out various activities to make a living for their families. The solar cooker provides them with more options to increase their socio-economic status.

SI Ba Soroptimists are helping to monitor the use of the solar cooker and ensure that it is being looked after.

Maria Doton
President, SI Fiji



SI BRISBANE SAUSAGE SIZZLE

Once again SI Brisbane held a successful “sausage sizzle” fund-raiser. This time it was held on 29 May at the Bunnings Hardware Centre in the Brisbane suburb of Stafford. The venue was a new spot for Brisbane Soroptimists. Club President Norah Blunden was the organizer and with members Pam Boag and Gayle Carrick purchased the supplies for the event.

This Bunnings store proved to be an excellent location. It was under cover with plenty of room and a larger layout area than previously experienced. Norah as team leader worked tirelessly the entire day and was ably assisted by enthusiastic Club members (Gayle, Pam, May, Libby and former member Liz) and Club friends (Malcolm, Alistair and Caitlin). Norah, Gayle, Pam, Alistair, Caitlin and Malcolm had to arrive early in the morning to ensure supplies of sausages, bread, soft drinks and cooking utensils, plus other necessities were all set up. The booth was ready by 7.30am, in full view of customers, especially the many early bird “tradies” who were picking up building supplies on their way to an early start to their working day. Throughout the warm day, the team served many hungry customers as they came out of the store.

Money raised has helped top up much needed funding for the Club’s ongoing projects that support women and girls in developing nations and those in need within our own community through education and other practical measures. The venue also provided members with a great opportunity to engage cheerfully with the public and highlight our projects as well as promote the values of Soroptimism to the wider community.

The Club extends grateful thanks to the Management and Staff of Bunnings Stafford for the generous assistance given to SI Brisbane.

*Libby Townley
Publicity Officer
SI Brisbane Inc. Queensland, Australia*

SI OF THE HILLS DISTRICT ATOOSA'S STORY ...

Nineteen-year-old Atoosa Nooralizadeh, a client of Settlement Services International (SSI), is the recipient of an education scholarship awarded by SI of The Hills District.

“When they told me I was going to receive this scholarship, I was so happy I started to cry,” said Atoosa. “I really needed it to continue with my studies.”

Supported by SSI, Atoosa and her family live in the Western Sydney suburb of Fairfield, where she is in Year 12 at Prairiewood High School. Atoosa, her parents and her younger brother are asylum seekers who arrived in Australia three years ago, after fleeing Iran.

“I was going through my half-year exams in Iran when my parents told us we were going on a holiday trip. I didn’t find out what was going on until we reached Malaysia, where they told us we were not returning to Iran. I never got to say goodbye to my friends and family,” she explained.

Despite the massive change experienced in her life, Atoosa continued with her education and quickly adapted to the Australian education system. However, her academic performance suffered a setback last

May when she underwent open-heart surgery, followed by a two-month recovery period. She could not afford the support she needed to help her catch up with her studies.



Atoosa Nooralizadeh (on the right) with her family

“When I returned to school after my operation I felt completely lost and confused. All my classmates were preparing for the HSC exam and I was just trying to catch up on what I had missed,” she said. “With this scholarship I will be able to pay for textbooks and especially for a tutor, who can help me understand what was done in class while I was recovering. I need to prepare very well for my HSC in order to fulfil my dream of going to university to study medicine, and one day become a brain surgeon,” she added.

The scholarship was the result of an ongoing relationship between SI of The Hills District and Nasiba Akram of the SSI, an organization that looks after the well-being of 7,500 refugees under bridging visas. The scholarship presentation took place on 20 July. “Atoosa spoke so beautifully and from the heart,” said Bev Richardson, President, SI of The Hills District. “Her determination and strong spirit shine through.”

Ben Jackson, CEO of Hills Community Aid, guest speaker at the meeting, also invited Atoosa to join a Youth Science Program and expressed their interest in providing further funding to help her go to university next year.

(Adapted from a blog from Settlement Services International website)

*Bev Richardson
President
SI of The Hills District, NSW, Australia*



SI CIRCULAR HEAD HONOUR ROLL OF WOMEN

On 28 March 2015, fifteen members of SI Circular Head travelled to Launceston to celebrate their club's induction to the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women. They were recognized for their service to Health and Human Rights and were commended for demonstrating how small-scale local projects can have a huge impact in transforming the lives of women and girls.

*Claire Porteus
Publicity Officer
SI Circular Head, Tasmania, Australia*



President Anneke Tame of SI George Town, Tasmania, with some of the food boxes ready for distribution

SI GEORGE TOWN "SECOND BITE"

Second Bite is an ongoing programme where unsold fresh food from Coles Supermarket is taken to a distribution point and divided up for various voluntary organizations.

Every Tuesday, Neighbourhood House in George Town is one of the beneficiaries that receives food to be re-distributed in the community for those who are in real need.

The produce is picked up from the distribution point by Rotary of George Town, sorted and divided into boxes ready for collection and delivered by SI George Town. The amount of produce varies, but whatever there is, it is always appreciated.

*Nora Wood
Secretary
SI George Town, Tasmania, Australia*

SI MORNINGTON PENINSULA ESCAPING DOMESTIC ABUSE

To discover that a strong, empowered yet caring female friend was a victim of domestic violence for more than 23 years, you realize that this is a problem that can happen to anyone.

For this is Ruth Cyster-Stuettgen's story and she has written a book *From Misery to Mastery - Journey to Freedom and Empowerment* to help others who may be suffering the kind of torment she went through for so many years.

Ruth, a member of SI Mornington Peninsula Inc, says: "One of my motivations to write the book was to be a voice for people who may never find a voice in the face of abuse, or for those who have come through this struggle and want to move towards a life of peace, love and success for themselves and their family."

Ruth, a former police officer and teacher in Melbourne, now believes that the kind of violence and mental torture she endured was actually going on before she married but she was too naive to spot the initial signs, particularly as her husband-to-be lived in Europe and they had a predominantly long-distance relationship for the first five years.

"I put it down to personality and thought maybe I was to blame. There was some physical violence, such as grabbing my throat and pinning me against walls in arguments, but there was also a lot of psychological and financial abuse. Terrible controlling behaviour. The abuse would stop and start though, and because I was naive and good-hearted I'd let things ride. He was also a rather smooth personality publicly, so no-one else would have thought he was like that."



Eventually, after returning to Australia from their life in Europe, rebellion set in. Ruth adds: "My children were exposed to the mental and verbal abuse for years, but I'd always strategized that it wasn't the right time to leave - as it might disrupt the children's lives because they were doing VCE or moving schools, for instance. Eventually I took the step to get out. I knew I couldn't stay another night with him in that house."

Ruth took the bold step to leave and take the children with her - leaving her now ex-husband in a five-bedroom detached house while she and her children were forced to stay at friend's and family's houses for a while. Years of further wrangles over seeing the children - something Ruth would never refuse - and legal issues have finally resulted in her ex disappearing from his children's lives and she thinks he has now gone back to Europe.

"Writing the book was a catharsis," she adds, "a way of healing myself. The first half is memoirs entitled 'Looking Back' and the second half is about strategies for those in similar situations - called 'Looking Forward'. I want other women to decide that enough is enough and take control of their lives.

To plan a new direction to lead the life they deserve, because they are worthy and capable of doing so."

Ruth launched her book at a glittering event at Peterson's Bookstore in Hastings. Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, was the guest speaker.

Helen Beeby

SI Mornington Peninsula Inc., Victoria, Australia



SI TROPICAL TABLELANDS

An Australia Day Award 2015 – the Lifetime Achievement Award in the Cassowary Coast Region of North Queensland -- went to Connie Riera, a member of SI Tropical

Tablelands. Connie, 91 years old, has seen many changes in her community and helped initiate many of them.

Despite the devastating loss of her husband in an accident in 1958 just 10 years into her marriage -- leaving her with two daughters one aged 4 and the other 4 months, and two cane farms to run -- she has always been ready to lend a helping hand.

Running the farms in those days



meant competing in a man's world. It was an uphill battle for Connie. She relates how it would have been easy to fall into despair, but with two daughters to raise, Connie knew that she had to persevere.

She soon became active in helping others in the community. She was a Charter Member of SI Innisfail, served in Inner Wheel, Toastmasters, Forum Club, Garden Club, local schools, boy scouts, Blue Care and the Red Cross amongst others. Connie has truly dedicated her life to the welfare of others.

Excerpted from The Senior News article by Anne Wilkinson



New member Jane is seated, wearing a pink top

SI NORTH SHORE NEW MEMBER PERSPECTIVE

SI North Shore is pleased to support the Days for Girls (Sewing Bee). Members volunteered their time throughout the day by sewing, overlocking, cutting and gluing attractively assembled, washable feminine hygiene kits. The number of kits made on the one day in June reached 200.

Getting involved in this event is one of our newest members Jane Kim. Jane was impressed with how our efforts help girls who experience such a hard life because they don't have basic sanitary items. The kits are channelled through the New Zealand Chapter of Day for Girls International Feminine Hygiene Program. Some of the kits are also destined for overseas and others for local use by new mothers leaving Middlemore Hospital.

Jane recalls how all the ladies at the Sewing Bee were busy, chatting and laughing while working for a common cause together as Soroptimists. At noon they had lunch and shared many interesting stories. Jane says participating in events like this gives her a happy heart. She is keen to be involved in more such opportunities as a new member of SI North Shore.

*Sylvia Heywood
President Elect & Secretary
SI North Shore, New Zealand*

SI SOUTH PERTH STELLA GILES AWARD

SI South Perth's nomination of Alicia Curtis was successful in winning the 2015 Stella Giles Award. Alicia Curtis was the founder of "100 Women", a giving circle enabling everyday people to be involved in creating a world where women and girls can live safely with access to health, education and economic freedom. The award was presented to Alicia at the SI Western Australia region lunch on 15 August.



"The \$3,000 awarded will allow 100 Women to build and expand. I am absolutely excited to receive this award on behalf of the 100 Women team, which is run by volunteers. Sponsorship like this makes a big difference," Alicia said.

Alicia spoke of how the concept of 100 Women was formed from an idea inspired after reading the book *Half the Sky*, which raises awareness of the continued plight of women and how through investment and empowerment, real change can be achieved.

*Wendy Wiley
SI South Perth, WA, Australia*

SI NEW PLYMOUTH 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Fifty members and guests celebrated SI New Plymouth's 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner this year. Gracing the event were (from left) Paula Siddle, New Zealand National Representative on the SISWP Board; Anne Shipherd, Founder President and still a member 50 years later; and Helen Elder, an esteemed member of our group.

*Karen Eagles
SI New Plymouth, New Zealand*





SI PETALING JAYA: AWARD-WINNING SEED

SI Petaling Jaya's SEED JobsForLife programme to reduce youth unemployment was awarded the Grand Prize for the Social Impact Innovation Challenge in Malaysia from Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (Prime Minister's Office) and Credit Suisse Banking Group on 8 July 2015, beating more than 300 NGO entries.

SEED stands for Soroptimists Educate, Empower, Enable Dream JobsForLife, and was conceived by Dato' Anusha Santhirasthipam as Project Team Leader.

This project tackles youth unemployment through a unique

life transformation skills development and job placement programme. It has enabled 35 youths to secure their dream job after 12 consecutive Saturdays of training and personal coaching.

The prize money will enable SIPJ to create video training modules. Videos will achieve a strong multiplier effect to tackle youth unemployment and address social ills.

Sharon Saw
SI Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

SI NORTH QUEENSLAND: BRAS FOR PNG

We finally have homes for the thousands of bras that SI North Queensland had collected for women and girls in Papua New Guinea. Florence Bunari from SI Port Moresby is the new distribution point.

The bras were kindly transported by Curtain Brothers Townsville for distribution to high school girls and single mothers of teenage daughters. Many were from big families that had more than 4 - 5 girls who had been sharing the few bras they possess.

The remaining 26 bags of bras were distributed to various groups. These included members of the Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network. These women are presidents of women's groups in very remote areas of PNG (see their Facebook page). Some bras will be distributed to women prisoners

and their warders/wardens at the Bomana Prison outside Port Moresby; others will be distributed to teachers and hospital staff.

It was a culture shock for many to see bras with wires, or in different styles and colours, bras with decorations of flowers and hearts and of different sizes. But the tears of joy and delight on their faces said it all.

Wendy Logan
SI North Queensland, Australia



Members of the Advancing PNG: Women Leaders Network checking out the goodies.



21ST SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2019 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Soroptimist International South West Pacific is the Federation to host the next Soroptimist International Convention to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 18-21 July 2019. This will be the first Asian City to host the SI Convention since the inaugural convention in 1934.

The SI Convention Chair for 2019 Siew Yong Gnanalingam, current SISWP Immediate Past President, was at the Istanbul Convention to receive the SI flag from Emine Erdem, the SI Convention Chair for Istanbul at a symbolic handover ceremony and to promote Kuala Lumpur with the theme "Soroptimists Reaching for the Sky in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – All of Asia".

SISWP Magazine in print & online

The printed copy of the *SISWP Magazine* is sent by post to every club for distribution to all their members. In addition, the e-version is available online before the print version reaches clubs.

To access the e-version, simply go to the SISWP website, at <http://www.siswp.org>, and click onto NEWS/MEDIA in the dark-blue menu bar at the top. Click onto PUBLICATIONS in the dropdown menu, and then click the blue word "HERE" at the end of the paragraph about the *SISWP Magazine*.

Please feel free to circulate the e-version to your members and contacts, or print out extra copies if you need them.

Triena Ong
Editor 2014-2016
SISWP Magazine
and Member,
SI (Singapore)
Garden City



GRANT OF FRIENDSHIP - SI NEW ZEALAND SOUTH REGION

This grant is offered to a Soroptimist, two Soroptimists travelling together or a Soroptimist accompanied by her spouse or travelling companion. Travel period hospitality is March 2016 and is offered by clubs for a maximum of 21 days. Return travel to New Zealand and travel between clubs is at your own expense. This grant of friendship only applies to the South Island of New Zealand.

Enquiries to Friendship Grant Coordinator, Maree Gentle, email address: mareegentle@gmail.co.nz
Closing Date: 30 September 2015

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 1 October 2015: Deadline for articles for *SISWP Magazine* (November 2015 issue).
- 29 April-1 May 2016: SISWP CONFERENCE OF CLUBS, Waterview Function Centre, Bicentennial Park, Sydney.
- 2015-2017: SI President's Appeal for Nepal. Funds to be channelled to SISWP HQ labelled with your club name and "Nepal Fund".