

WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles (Victoria) Report January 2019 – December 2021)

The past couple of years have been difficult for everyone with restrictions on meeting with people but, as I look back over what WCTU in Victoria has achieved since our last National Convention, I am encouraged that much worthwhile activity has taken place.

Unfortunately, membership numbers at all levels have continued to decrease and it is very difficult to find younger women who are willing to take an active part in WCTU. We are praying for new members.

Much of our Outreach has involved prevention of FASD:

We still have some sticky note pads, and band-aid packs with their message, “Babies and booze don’t mix. No alcohol is the best fix.” We hand these out where we can.

We have tried to make a special promotion effort for **FASD Day** and in 2020 Anne and Rhona wrote short letters to the Melbourne newspapers and one was published in The Age. Our letters to the papers were not published in 2021 but Dawn Stark sent an email to the ABC and had a good radio talk-back.

Bus ads have proved to be the best and easiest way to get our FASD message out to the community. Near the end of 2018 we signed a contract with Go Transit for the message, “For baby’s sake THINK-



DON’T DRINK! ESPECIALLY IF PREGNANT OR HOPING TO BE PREGNANT” on the side of bus in Geelong. This ran through 2019, and for 2020 we replaced it with one in Bendigo. For 2021 we used the same message on the back of 3 buses – around Frankston, Pakenham, and Tullamarine. Several people we know contacted us to say that they had seen this ad. In October 2021, we signed an agreement to have the ad on the back of the buses around Pakenham, Tullamarine continued, plus a new one in Ballarat, for 12 months from November.

In October 2019 we signed an agreement with SWIFT to have a **20 second advertisement running constantly in a loop in three doctors waiting rooms around Dandenong**. Our contract allows us to change our video several times per year if we wish so, near the end of 2021, we upgraded it in line with the ad that WCTU Australia has but with our contact details at the end.

By the end of 2021, Motio had taken over from SWIFT and gave us a better deal to compensate for COVID interruptions. At the end of 2021 they reported that we are currently live now across 6 screens in 5 locations around Dandenong, three of them for free.

In total it is estimated that we have received 67,637 total impressions across these venues in 2021.

Literature – Literature has traditionally been an important outreach tool and in Victoria it is regularly updated.

Near the end of 2019 we updated our fruit drink leaflets, one for adults and one for teenagers, and had planned to launch them at a luncheon function early in 2020 which students from several nearby schools were planning to attend. Unfortunately, COVID lockdown prevented this happening.

Our meeting in February 2021 was partly a retreat which was held at Wellspring in Ashburton. One result of this meeting was the decision for Anne to produce an up-to-date introductory leaflet, “Introducing WCTU Drug-Free Lifestyles”. This was done but there has been little opportunity to use it yet.

Our annual Functions help us to promote our work. In 2019 our theme was “Be the Change – Your Choice”. The main speaker, retired police officer Sergeant Deb Rowe from Newcastle, spoke about how being a Christian changed her approach to helping people who had been drug addicts. Some organizations with which we had an affinity were invited to set up displays and speak briefly about their work.

In 2020 and 2021 nothing was possible.

Children

Colouring Competition



In 2021, we decided to try a **colour-in competition in primary schools** using our good picture with the message, “Don’t get hooked on Drugs”. Entries were received from only two schools - Traralgon South, Grades 4 and 5, and Olivet Christian College, Grade 6. The Olivet entries were of a very good standard, and we awarded First Prize \$50, 2nd Prize \$40, and 3rd Prize \$30 for Grade 6. All other entries were awarded a certificate and \$10.

Drug Ed – Victoria’s Drug-Free Lifestyles Drug Ed Programs in schools aim to reach as many students as possible each year with important information about the dangers of using alcohol and other drugs. Each student receives a pack of well-presented information leaflets to follow up and the school gets a library pack.

Presentations are interactive and make use of videos, power-point, medical models, experiments, questions, and using “beer goggles” to simulate how alcohol affects sensations and the ability to drive.

The focus is on alcohol and tobacco but basic information about other drugs is also given. The program aims to present the facts as well as to give students techniques to help them to say “No” when offered alcohol or other drugs. The presentations are given mainly to Grades 5, 6 students as well as those in Years 7 and 8 and later years when opportunity arises.

In 2019 Dawn spoke to 1339 students in a total of 21 schools in the Ballarat region and Latrobe Valley as well as the metropolitan area. Around 102 of these students were Secondary students from Years 7-12. She also did two Parent/student presentations to 27 parents & 25 students in 2 different schools.

Drug Free Lifestyles was able to utilize financial support from Drug Free Australia for two schools in 2019, the criteria being a new school not previously reached. MTAS (Melbourne Total Abstinence Society) has helped with finance for many years.

All feedback received endorses the program as positive & engaging with variety that keeps students interested, and an important message that students need to hear.

2020 -2021 – Dawn kept contact with our schools but because of COVID it was only possible to do 3 programs in schools with 278 students in 2021.

YouthWise magazine is a biannual magazine presented and published by the Mental Health, Addiction & Community Awareness initiative (MACA) which is sent to all government secondary schools. Its mission is to produce and distribute important information with the aim of helping young Australians affected by substance abuse and issues relating to mental health, through education and awareness with the support of sponsors in the business sector. In May 2021, we were contacted by its editor, Leigh Roberts, and Dawn was invited to write a 2- page article about Drug Ed. I was asked to draw up an advertisement for which we paid. I was also asked for a one-page poster to be published when there is space. The article, advertisement and poster were all in the next edition.

DFK/Youth –At the end of 2021 we only had 1 DFK member and 3 youth on our roll. Cards and literature for birthdays are sent from the office by Jan Inns. DFK papers are also mailed out with the WRS and some members give them to their grandchildren. Glenda Amos has done an amazing job in producing the DFK pages.

Support for good causes – WCTU believes in caring for our environment so, through recent years, with encouragement and support from Jenny Godden, among other things we saved small plastic bottle tops for recycling, as well as postage stamps that go to Sammy Stamp. We have continued to bring lentils for the Asylum Seeker Centre in Dandenong and to donate to the biggest morning tea for Cancer research. Executive and Bayside Union regularly donate to a Christian organization that drills clean water wells in Africa and in 2019 we donated \$300 to Laurentine, WCTU president in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for toys for children who attended a WCTU Christmas party. We saw pictures of the event. Several years previously we had sent toys.

Letters – We objected to the building of a huge Dan Murphy store in Darwin near an aboriginal dry area. Others, such as FARE objected too, and it was not approved.

We have written our objections to the Victorian Government about proposed legislation to extend the hours for home delivery of alcoholic drinks which was dropped, and to Aldi regarding its inappropriate advertising at Christmas 2020.

We have added our voices via petitions and/or letters to various other campaigns. For example: At our June meeting in 2019 we agreed to donate \$300 each to FARE, Collective Shout and Prison Network. Later in the year we also donated to Teen Challenge which had been seriously impacted by the lockdown of its fund-raising opportunity shop. We give an annual \$250 donation to National Council of Women Victoria for a book prize for student winners of their My Vote My Voice student speech competition in memory of Marie Kirk, founding secretary of WCTU Vic.

Working with other organizations – Some of our members regularly support email campaigns organised by organizations seeking to protect our Christian values.

While there are other organisations that are now concerned about the social and moral issues that WCTU agitated about in the early years, and other organisations that are concerned about alcohol and other drugs, there is still a unique place for WCTU with **our Christian and total abstinence stand** for membership. However, we can and must, work with other like-minded organisations where appropriate to make the most impact on government legislation.

We have continued our links with the other organizations at which we have representation. World Day of Prayer, National Council of Women Victoria, Family Council, Melbourne Total Abstinence Society (MTAS), DACA (Drug Advisory Council of Australia), League of Women Voters, Travellers Aid, and Dalgarno which has its office in our building.

Anne Bergen (President)