

25th Annual Jean Arnot Memorial Luncheon

On Friday, 12 May, 2017, the silver balloons on the back of the nonagenarians' chairs in the Strangers' dining room in NSW Parliament House reminded the more than 170 guests that this year's Jean Arnot Luncheon was special - the 25th. In attendance was Joan Elliston, a past president of NCW NSW and one of the instigators of the celebration of Jean Arnot's life and dedication to the pursuit of equal pay for equal work. Marlene Arditto, BPW Australia was also present. She assisted Joan in organizing these functions from 2005 (when Joan's co-convenor, Val Buswell passed away) until 2012.

Our parliamentary host, the Hon. Jenny Aitchison MP made everyone feel welcome, particularly the 23 women in their 90th year or older, who attended the presentation of certificates in the Jubilee Room to recognise their contribution to the community. Our guest speaker, Judy Nunn AM, made these presentations, assisted by Jenny. Judy, noted for her roles in a number of iconic Australian television shows, such as *Home and Away*, is better known today as a best-selling novelist. An entertaining raconteur, Judy described her first hand experience of the discriminatory way women were treated in the entertainment industry. The tone of the luncheon was set by Anthony Coyle, a year 11 student from St Mary's College, Maitland, who led us in the singing of the National Anthem and memorably serenaded the 90 year olds with his rendition of 'You Make Me Feel So Young!'

A highlight of proceedings was the announcement of the Jean Arnot Memorial Fellowship, introduced by Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian and presented by Anne Reddacliff from the State Library. Accepting the cheque for \$1,000 was Kristen Twomey, Snowy Valleys Council Librarian who submitted a 5,000 word essay on the need for Local Government to acknowledge the role of public libraries in community building and engagement. Kristen spoke passionately of the vital role libraries play in rural communities and in so doing helped us to better understand the challenges faced with council amalgamations.

NCW NSW and BPW Australia are very grateful to BUPA Aged Care Services for their sponsorship of this event and to the continuing support of the State Library. Gilly Podd, Head of Volunteering, BUPA Aged Care, made a toast to the ladies 90 years old and over, who were recognized for their generous contribution to their communities. Sadly, it will be the last Jean Arnot luncheon that Gilly will attend before her retirement, and return to England.

The guests who attended are to be congratulated on their generosity in supporting the raffle that raised over \$1,500. This will assist in funding the Jean Arnot Fellowship in 2018.

Thanks are due to President Tricia Graham, NCW NSW and Sheila Turnbull, BPW Australia for their organization of the event and also to the members of both organisations who have worked assiduously to make the day such a success. Special thanks go to three ladies from one of our affiliated organisations - the Catholic Women's League who helped with the setting up of the tables in the dining room: Maureen Arrow, June Clarke and Joy Graham.

A reminder that photos of the luncheon and presentation of certificates are available on the website of our dedicated volunteer photographer, Michael Mannington. www.volunteerphotography.org

Cassandra Allan
Vice President of NCW NSW and MC of the luncheon.