

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER – AUGUST 2011

I am writing this report on 17 July 2011 while staying in Glasgow with a friend that I met through Guiding. It is the first opportunity I have had to stop and reflect on the last 2 amazing weeks. Staying at Pax Lodge for the first 3 nights and seeing London again was a great experience. I was then privileged to attend the Commonwealth Chief Commissioners conference at Waddow Hall, a Guiding training facility, in Lancashire England.

Waddow Hall is an historic mansion on a large parcel of land used for camping and adventure activities. I was interested to hear how the management Board are working hard to make the property financially viable using promotion, partnerships and co-ordinating activities with other training providers. It appears many Guiding organisations are reviewing how they manage their properties and assets.

The conference was an opportunity to share and discuss a wide range of issues with 31 other Commissioners from around the world. I have no doubt the friendships formed between us will be of benefit to our organisations in the future. A large camp for girls was being held at the same time and we were able to attend a Scottish Highland Games theme afternoon and camp fire evening – both great fun.

We then traveled to 34th World Conference held at the Heriot Watt University campus in Edinburgh. It was a fully packed fantastic week complete with many buzz moments. Australia was well represented by Renee Bianchi, Natasha Hendrick and Allison Hooper forming the official delegation. Other Australians, wearing different 'hats', were able to attend including Amy Spark who had been selected as a WAGGGS young representative. Working together I believe we made a significant contribution to the conference. Thank you to everyone involved I was genuinely proud to be part of the Australian team.

There was great applause when a 2 year pilot project for a 5th World Centre in Africa concept was approved. It has been a long journey for the African Region as they pursued the development of a World Centre. The pilot project means the concept of providing a World Centre experience in different locations across Africa can be trialed and evaluated.

Another significant item of business was the approval of the WAGGGS vision, strategic plan and associated financial plan. It means that WAGGGS working in collaboration with the Regions and Member Organisations can continue to change the world.

Australia was recognised for our work as a GAT champion; Linden Edgell was presented with a WAGGGS Bronze Medal for her contribution to the Board and the Victorian Eltham Echidna Ranger Guides won a WAGGGS Olave Award for their service work in Vanuatu.

The Girl Guiding UK and WAGGGS teams need to be congratulated on organising such a successful, complex and large scale event.

Live with intention. Walk to the edge. Dare. Practice wellness. Laugh. Continue to Learn. Play with abandon. Appreciate your friends. Do what you love. Live as if this is all there is. - M A Hershey

Helen Geard
Chief Commissioner

