

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER – MARCH 2011

It is hard to believe that a month has disappeared since I wrote my first report and what a month it has been for Australia. Our thoughts continue to be with those who have been impacted by natural disasters – flooding, cyclones and fire. The Guiding family around the world has responded with messages of support and comfort.

Our members where possible have demonstrated a genuine commitment for their communities with many pushing up their sleeves to provide much needed assistance. I have heard stories about what it was like to be part of the clean up team giving service after the Brisbane floods. I was also talking to a SES volunteer who had just returned from working in the Mission Beach area. She simply said that the television pictures just couldn't reflect the true scale of the damage caused by cyclone Yasi. At a meeting I attended recently there was a 2 minute discussion and a donation was on its way to Queensland. Providing service is what the Guiding community has done for 100 years and one reason why I am proud to a member.

On Saturday 29 January I attended Girls Rock at the Melbourne Town Hall. At this amazing event I was able to speak about the future direction of Guiding. It was also my pleasure to MC the handover of the Victorian State team. I look forward to working with Margaret Devlin the new Victorian State Commissioner and her assistants Annette Swaffield and Belinda Lacy.

At the end of these proceedings I welcomed my new Assistant Chief Commissioner, Noella Kershaw. Noella was the Victorian State Commissioner between 2008 and January 2011. She trained and worked as teacher for many years before holding other management roles. Noella recently completed a PhD in educational leadership at Deakin University, focusing on women and leadership in the independent education sector in Victoria.

Girl Guides then made a splash in the media with the release of the Australian Guides Say report findings. You may have seen, heard or read the coverage on the tv, radio or internet. I never thought that I would be on talk back radio being the person quizzed by listeners. The community wanted to hear what our girls and young women had to say.

People heard that bullying is not ok; unrelenting messages about how to dress and look are impacting on the self-esteem; looking after the environment is critical to our future and homelessness and poverty are significant global issues that our girls care about. The fantastic part of the survey is that the girls and young women who completed the survey believe they can make difference. To find out more visit the Girl Guides Australia web site. Together we can change the world.

A review of the Promise and Law is about to commence and everyone will be given the opportunity to be informed and involved. Belinda Allen (NSW /ACT State Commissioner) and her review committee will be meeting in early March to start the planning process. More information will be available over the coming months.

Take care

Helen Geard
Chief Commissioner

