



Susan Brennan, World YWCA President

Susan began her life in the YWCA as a young woman leader on the board of her local association in Melbourne, Australia. She was recruited to the National Executive Committee at age 24 and was active in the development of a national policy framework to guide the advocacy of the YWCA of Australia, attended the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing as a young woman delegate for the YWCA of Australia and represented the YWCA in the drafting of an Optional Protocol to the Women's Convention at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

In 1997, she and Lynda Poke were elected Joint Presidents of the YWCA of Australia, the first time in its hundred-year history that young women had served in the role. Together, they led the Australian delegation to World Council in Cairo; presided over a period of unprecedented growth in young women's leadership; participated in important Australian policy debates including tax reform, reconciliation with indigenous Australians, constitutional reform for a new head of state; expanded the resource base of the national association; promoted a commitment to cultural diversity within the YWCA movement; managed a process of change in recruiting a new Executive Director; and were instrumental in building a coalition of varied women's organisations in a climate of declining public funding and increasing demands on NGOs.

At the international level, Susan led workshops focused on the elimination of violence against women at the World YWCA Asia Pacific regional meeting in Taiwan in 1997. Through the YWCA Middle Eastern Encounter in Jerusalem in 1999, she learnt about the resilience of the Palestine people in the face of dispossession and disadvantage and their commitment to peace with justice. As a volunteer in 2001, Susan supported the capacity building programmes of Oxfam International in East Timor after the vote for independence. In Vietnam she participated in high-level discussions on poverty, religious tolerance and corruption with leaders in the South East Asian region convened by the St James Ethics Centre. She participated in the Global Forum in Guadalajara, Mexico organised by the Association of Women in Development in 2002 with over 1200 participants from 131 countries.

A barrister by profession, Susan has well developed legal skills, enabling her to understand concepts quickly, to advocate and persuade and to work with diverse teams to achieve success. In her work, she is focussed on sound and collaborative processes and on productive and sustainable outcomes; specialising in town planning and environmental law.

Her professional work is focussed on the environment and the development of sustainable, liveable cities. As a graduate of the Vincent Fairfax Fellowship programme, Susan is one of a select group of young Australians to have participated in a unique ethics in leadership programme. This programme challenges participants intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually in exploring aspects of their own integrity. It is conducted over an 18-month period in remote areas of Australia, in the national Parliament and in South East Asian countries.

About the World YWCA

The World YWCA is a global network of women and young women leading social and economic change in 125 countries. It advocates for peace, justice, human rights and care of the environment, and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women for over 150 years. The World YWCA develops women's leadership to find local solutions to the global inequalities women face. www.worldywca.org