

## WFWP Australia's celebration of the traditions of people from the Pacific Islands

Anne Bellavance  
March 2, 2019



Lysterfield Lake Park was the setting for a wonderful celebration on Saturday March 2nd - a celebration of the culture and traditions of the people from the Pacific islands. This event for which much preparation had taken place was ably organised by Giulia Iacono, Secretary and Pacific Island Project Coordinator and her team of helpers. With the assistance and support from a number of organisations including Parks Victoria, the Victorian Samoan Advisory Council (VicSAC) and the City of Casey, the Pacific Festival and Charity Walk was altogether a great success.

The Festival commenced with the Charity Walk which offered participants three different options – a short walk for children and seniors, a 5 km circuit of the lake or a 7 km hike through the park. After participating in the walk, walkers were then able to enjoy the Pacific Festival which offered entertainment and a range of food and gifts from different parts of the Pacific region.



After opening the Festival with an Acknowledgement of Country, Tofiga Tuigamala, the Secretary of VicSAC invited the Samoan High Chief Muagututia Lemalu Faatau to perform an AVA traditional opening ceremony. This interesting ceremony was followed by a Taupou Samoan Traditional Dance presented by the High Chief's daughter, Adele Faaosofia. Addresses from Cr Rosalie Crestani from the City of Casey and the Hon Luke Donnellan a Local MP were next on the agenda. Besides offering a warm welcome to all those present, they shared their views on the importance of being connected with local communities.

The entertainment continued with performances of a number of traditional Samoan and Hawaiian dances and songs. The highlight of the afternoon was the appearance of Miss Samoa Victoria, Norah Aloiai, who presented certificates of thanks to all the performers and brought the Festival to a close with a traditional Samoan dance.

By the end of the day, we had raised just over \$4 300 for our Pacific Island Projects. This will allow WFWP Australia to offer two young women from the Solomon Islands scholarships to attend university through the Pacific Island Scholarship Fund. While Rose will be studying to gain a nursing degree, Selina aims to gain a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education. Besides contributing to the Scholarship Fund, the money will contribute to our other projects including the Women's Sewing Centre in Honiara in the Solomon Islands.

Much appreciation is owed to all the members of our WFWP team who helped to put up banners, set up our beautiful new marquee, coordinate the setting up of the stalls and perform all the other tasks which contributed to the success of the day. They proved that following our WFWP philosophy of 'living for the sake of others' can definitely contribute to the greater good.



*Tofiga Tuigamala  
Secretary of VicSAC, and Pacific Islands  
Liaison Officer for WFWP Victoria*

#### **Testimony by Tofiga Tuigamala**

As a member of the Samoan community, it was a wonderful privilege to be involved in many different ways with the Charity Walk and the Festival focussing on the Pacific Islands. As a Liaison officer for my community, I was able to promote this event on a regular basis on our two Melbourne Samoan Radio stations and through advertising the event on Facebook as well as personally distributing flyers to a range of my Polynesian friends.

Being able to invite leaders from the Samoan community to conduct a traditional 'Ava Ceremony' was an additional bonus. It was a great honour to have the Samoan High Chief, the Honourable Muagututia Lemalu Faatau open the festival with the 'Ava Ceremony' – a beautiful and inspiring ceremony which helped to share a Samoan tradition with the spectators at the festival.

In addition to being involved with the promotion and organisation of the event, I was the emcee for the festival – a role I thoroughly enjoyed. I was thrilled to introduce the different Samoan rituals during the

festival including a graceful dance performed by Adele Faaosofia, a former Miss Samoa Victoria.

Overall, my family and I enjoyed the festival and feedback from members of my community implied that the festival was a wonderful success which besides providing them with an exciting day offered them an opportunity to support the goals of the Victorian Chapter of WFWP.