

Associate Professor Karen Flegg Inauguration speech

Date: October 28,2023

Thank you

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

I'd like to acknowledge the indigenous traditional owners of the land we are on, the land I was born on, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay tribute to the elders past and present and to the children who will become the elders of the future. On this Green Day for our conference, I acknowledge the land care expertise of the traditional custodians of the many nations in this large island continent. We have a lot to learn from 65000 years of expertise.

### **Thank you Dr Anna Stavdal**

I thank you for the honour of being your new president.

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr Anna Stavdal on behalf of all WONCA members and friends, for the way in which she has conducted her presidency of WONCA. She has served with courage and dedication, has taken on tough jobs. She has supported our Secretariat through an ongoing transition and uncertain times. I am grateful that she has worked on two things that are dear to my heart and which I will progress further – strategic planning and strengthening governance.

Anna, my congratulations and appreciation to you on behalf of all the people in this room and absent friends around the world.

I now have the privilege of presenting Dr Anna Stavdal with her Honorary Life Direct Membership Award for service to WONCA and family medicine around the world.

Our wonderful secretariat team has also put together a photographic memory book for Anna to keep her thinking of the wonderful times she has had and will continue to have by her involvement in WONCA.

There was a tradition in WONCA many years ago, thanks to HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh. He misunderstood the name of WONCA and thought it was “wombat”- an Australian marsupial.

Since then, outgoing presidents of WONCA were presented with some sort of WONCA souvenir that resembled a wombat. I call to the stage Adjunct

Professor Karen Price (HOC Chair) and eminent cartoonist Dr Craig Hilton also known as “Jenner”, to make a very Australian presentation of a wombat cartoon, to Anna Stavdal.

Let’s show our thanks to retiring President Anna Stavdal and wish her well in the future.

### **More thank yous and reflections**

I thank you for being here to see me take up the chain of office - the fourth Australian to do so, and to follow fellow Australians, in order, Monty Kent Hughes the first WONCA president, David Game, and Michael Kidd, who is well known to all of you.

I thank my family group for coming along today and in fact coming along on my journey in life. I wish my parents could have shared this day as well.

And ... if you are from overseas then I’m particularly grateful that you’ve chosen to visit my country, the city where I was born, and my college’s conference. Thank you all.

As you know this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of WONCA in Melbourne in 1972 (delayed by a year due to COVID). Then 18 countries were represented. WONCA now has 132 Member Organisations representing over 500,000 family doctors in over 130 countries and territories around the world

And we have 1014 Direct members before the conference but now its more!

### **My WONCA journey.**

WONCA for me has been about meeting colleagues, making connections and enjoying friendships. I think of the first WONCA conference I attended, in 1998, in Ireland. I represented New Zealand at the WONCA Asia Pacific Council and then the world council in Killarney.

I think of the people that were there at that Asia Pacific Council in particular. Zorayda Leopando, who we call Dada, chaired the meeting. Dada joins us today. At that meeting, I already knew Geoff Martin, who represented Australia, and was a previous chair of the RACGP Board and later a WONCA Executive Committee member. Geoff, my long-time friend, you are in the audience today. Thank you for being here for 33 years of my journey.

I also remember two colleagues in the Asia Pacific regional Council meeting in Ireland. Their names were so long I had to find out what I should call them.

Those two people became friends at that WONCA conference and they are still my dear friends today - 25 years later. One was Carlos Manuel Nogueira da Canhota, then representing Macau. Carlos has intended to be here but for personal reasons has had to cancel.

The other person was Sharifa Sorayya Mahmoud Jamalullail, representing Malaysia, who now lives in Adelaide, Australia. Sorayya who married Geoff Martin is also here today.

I want to mention Steve Tsai who was also in that Asia Pacific Council meeting, Killarney, and so many conferences since that meeting.

In 25 years, I have made many more friends in WONCA and been to numerous conferences.

Acknowledging the past would be incomplete if I did not mention having been the WONCA editor for 10 years. I started the role of WONCA editor at the conference in Cancun Mexico in 2010. Alfred Loh was the CEO of WONCA – I believe Alfred is at the conference.

I also had the joy to work eight years with Garth Manning as the CEO of WONCA. And I'd like to pay tribute to Garth who is also here today and has been on the organising committee for this conference. Thank you Garth.

While we talk of CEOs I must acknowledge Wes Fabb who was the first WONCA CEO who with his wife Marion formed a Secretariat in Australia and then Hong Kong. Thank you for being here today, Wes and Marion. A very special treat for all of us to see you again. Of course we now have a new CEO and a new Secretariat in Brussels and I look forward to working with Harris and his team in this new role as WONCA president.

A final acknowledgement to John Murtagh - yes the man who wrote the book *General Practice* - thank you to you and your wife Jill for joining us today.

### **What do I want to achieve as your president?**

In short its **Governance Greening Growth**

#### **GOVERNANCE**

Firstly to have strong internal governance and processes is a must to be accountable to members. Governance includes processes for regions and

Working Parties and Special Interest groups. Governance includes moving forward with our new strategic plan.

I want to always remember equity and inclusivity regardless of gender language region, to continue to develop our young doctors movement – giving us the leaders of the future.

## GREENING

On ‘green day’ in this conference I want to talk a little more about greening WONCA. I want WONCA to be recognised as a “green” leader.

We have a very strong working party on the environment now called the Working Party On Planetary Health. They are outward looking developing statements and for example leading our current initiative to secure a just and equitable transition to sustainable energy and safeguard health from the climate emergency. To date we have 40 organisations’ signatures representing three million people. I encourage you all to go to this link and sign the petition.

Also, the Working Party On Planetary Health responded to my call for internal strategies by developing sustainable conference guidelines, which we will now be able to use at all WONCA conferences.

I intend to look at the carbon footprint of the internal workings of WONCA. Our Secretariat office in Brussels is already a Green leader. Our next WONCA executive needs to follow greener processes – we need to consider who should attend when we are invited to conferences and meetings and in considering pay attention to the carbon footprint. It is particularly important that I consider the carbon footprint which is always large from Australia.

The time is right for WONCA to lead on the environment.

## EXTERNAL ACTION FOR GROWTH

In our external world, I would love WONCA to be the ‘go to’ organization for the WHO and other International medico-political organizations to seek input on Primary Care policy. To do this we must work on a political level to change health systems and to support our member organizations to locally enhance the role and recognition of Family Medicine and Family Doctors.

We must maintain and build on our relationships with the WHO and other collaborative PHC organisations to expand our global influence.

It is important to support research in Primary Care to promote our value to health systems. And Work to achieve high quality postgraduate training in family medicine and Continuing Professional Development in all countries

### **Final thoughts**

I was reminded by Michael Kidd of the words of our first WONCA president, another Australian, Dr Monty Kent Hughes, speaking to the first WONCA meeting in 1972: “the future of our professional discipline will depend on our ability to work together in the service of humanity.”

I look forward to working together constructively with new friends and old, those in this room and those unable to be here, over the next two years.

I hope we finally achieve 'a family doctor for every family'

### **The new WONCA Executive committee**

So who will be coming on the WONCA Executive journey with me for the next two years?

**Anna Stavdal** - Past President

**Vivana Martinez Bianchi** - President Elect

**Karen Price** - Member at Large

**María Pilar Astier Peña** - Member at Large

**Steve Mowle** - Member at Large

**Jane Namatovu** - Regional President, WONCA Africa

**Brian Chang** - Regional President, WONCA Asia Pacific

**Shlomo Vinker** - Regional President, WONCA Europe

**Abdelaziz Al-Mahrezi** - Regional President, WONCA East Mediterranean

**Dora Bernal** - Regional President, WONCA Iberoamericana - CIMF

**Victor Ng** - Regional President, WONCA North America

**Kanapathipillai Sri Ranjan** - Regional President, WONCA South Asia

**Chan Yuen Ching (Cheryl) - YDM Representative**

**Harris Lygidakis - CEO**