

## **Ms Marie-Louise Corkhill**

**Founding Staff Member and Executive Director since 29 September 1997**

**Retirement Speech 26 March 2022**

Before I begin, I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting and celebrating, as well as the lands where we live, the Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri peoples. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region. Indeed, even Karinya's name of 'peaceful home' comes from our Aboriginal heritage.

Dear friends, on such an evening the best adage may 'be less is more.' However, there are a few things that do need to be said in expressing my thoughts, love and gratitude.

The dynamic Karinya team, that is our Volunteers Committee and Staff are Karinya's heart. Your love, care and support for each other creates the ethos that is Karinya; this culture stands us somewhat apart and its essence permeates every aspect of our vision and mission. This extraordinary loyalty and care for each other enables us to sustain Karinya's special work, face the everyday with enthusiasm, including ongoing challenges and indeed sadness's, in a brave and non-judgmental way. Undertaking the little things of each day with great diligence!

This ethos of care informs all our undertakings, whether it be managing external stakeholders, donors, contractual arrangements, choice of corporate and funding partners, and our protocols in the employment of volunteers and staff.

Primarily this ethos of care informs our relationship with the women who pass our way, and we work beside each day. People have asked how I have remained at Karinya for this period. Apart from being a little unhinged, there are two simple reasons:

- You my Karinya colleagues and the many Volunteers, Committee and staff that have walked with me over the past twenty-four ½ years. I tried to think of how many Staff, Committee and volunteers, there have been over this time. I was nearly going to email Jo and Sarah and ask the question this week but thought I would send them over the edge! I suspect it would be possibly 500. But you know how I round things up!

- The other simple reason for being here for this time, is the women we walk with each day, are so incredibly inspirational. As I have reflected so often, I have worked with some of the most remarkable, heroic, and courageous women you could ever meet. From *\*Mary* and her baby *\*James*, Karinya's first residents, to *\*Ruth* and her little family who was the last woman I spoke to this week. Women, with their courage and tenacity have always been the source of my inspiration and passion.

I thank you all my Karinya colleagues, for your support, care and loyalty.

Tonight, I would also especially like to mention our Executive Leadership Team; thank you Catherine O'Halloran, Belinda Munn and Jo Saccasan for your strength and guidance. As we all know so well, these have not been easy times, on so many fronts, however your care and commitment for Karinya, our women and children and the whole team has not waned.

I am so grateful we have such an exceptional new CEO to lead Karinya next year. Lavinia Tyrrel is a strong, compassionate, and humble woman, who we have met with on several occasions. She has demonstrated Karinya's values of care and compassion throughout our encounters. I know you will support and welcome our new CEO, Lavinia, and give her the same loyalty and care that I have been so privileged to receive.

Catherine O'Halloran - I will miss you greatly! I have enjoyed your wonderful support through the many, let's say adventures we have travelled together at Karinya. Our shared humour has helped so many situations, and I thank you for generously embracing the Service's Director position, all it encompasses at the heart of our work, and your amazing devotion to Karinya and the women we walk with.

With a love for our work and generous background as a volunteer at Karinya, in February 2020, Belinda Munn came from working in a challenging professional University background, to Karinya House and the Community Sector. Belinda has worked tirelessly with me since this time as Executive Officer. She wholeheartedly embraces the ethos of all that is Karinya House, and engenders this spirit in all her undertakings, including her extraordinary work driving our strategic planning. I remain so grateful to her for this amazing work and strength, for her personal care and for generously undertaking the Interim CEO position.

I mentioned recently at our planning day that the Karinya Committee is as close and strong as I have experienced. I attribute this strength to all our members but especially our President Sarah Kelly who has been a member of the Committee for 18 years and seen a lot of change in that time. Personally, I thank Sarah for her guidance love and support. I greatly value her integrity, commitment and loyalty, that is always given with gentle warmth and humour that is inspirational.

Margaret O'Donovan. Perhaps we should be celebrating you tonight also. The founder of Karinya; your wise counsel and amazing strength has always been a source of inspiration and hope to me also. I have valued your love, guidance, and bravery as we have navigated quite a journey. I also thank Phil for his quiet presence and strength over these many years.

Jo Saccasan. My dear loyal friend who has travelled with me throughout this Karinya journey and for many years on a previous vocation. (as has Claire Frazer - long term Karinya volunteer & we also remember Rod and Ruth tonight!) Thank you, Claire. Thank you, Jo, my dear friend, for your immense and continuing contribution to Karinya for your love, support and guidance.

A more personal note and reflection. Tonight, cannot pass without mention of who is not here but is with me in spirit... our beautiful Fran. My sister Frances was always here for such events, with dear Simon, and was a long term Karinya volunteer, supporter, and champion.

I am so grateful for the love and blessings so graciously given to me by dear parents Robert and Leonie, my siblings and extended family. I have been blessed indeed, with the gift of such an extraordinary family.

And that leaves my dear husband Sam - thank you, Sam. Our commitment to Karinya has been a joint endeavor for over 14 years. Sam has been involved in all manner of activity, from the high-spirited Santa to Bunnings BBQs, working Bees, gardening, dealing with mouse infestations, to hauling port-a-loos, pickups and deliveries, standing by my side in endless events from Government House to Gala dinners and the myriad of fundraisers and guest appearances; and of course, the afterhours calls and changes of plans; always with those words "you can do this sweetheart". Thank you, Sam!

Thank you my Karinya friends; I remain so grateful and proud of our Karinya Team and remember with amusement Nanna Corkhill's words- *'there is no one like ourselves.'*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie-Louise". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the page.

*\*Names have been changed.*

*These reflections were shared at the recent bi-annual Karinya House Committee, staff and volunteer dinner held on 26 March 2022.*