

# Seachanges Journal - 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, 2013

## *Editorial*

Welcome to this special edition of the *Seachanges* Journal. The e-journal which began with its first issue in 2001, came out of the work that had begun some nine years before with the formation of the *Women Scholars of Religion and Theology*, a network of women scholars across the Asia-Pacific region who were exploring the experiences of women across theological, religious, feminist, post-colonial and ecological perspectives. These perspectives were informed by our lived conditions, and we had gathered to share our experiences in a series of pan-Pacific conferences from 1992. The launching of *Seachanges* added a much needed depth to our thinking and networking capacities, and addressed some of the isolation women were experiencing in trying to write about religion and theology from women-centred and feminist perspectives. Such perspectives, often ignored or under-valued in the academy, were crucial to constructing accounts of lived experience with theoretical frameworks to create meaningful discourse and open channels for dialogue and change. Peer-reviewed essays in an open-access journal explored the diversity of women's experiences and scholarly interests across a wide geographical and cultural terrain. It was a very welcome engagement that provided us with much material for thought and discussion.

Between 2001 and 2005 there were five issues of *Seachanges*. These issues are currently available on the WSRT website (<http://www.wsrt.asn.au>). In 2011 it was suggested that we might undertake a special edition of the journal, to celebrate and remember the Women Scholars of Religion and Theology network and the work this group had undertaken. Knowing how easy it is for such histories to be lost, an editorial group consisting of Angela Coco, Anita Monroe, Elaine Wainwright and Kathleen McPhillips, was established and papers were called for. We received a number of enquiries, eight abstracts were forwarded and six essays now appear in the anniversary volume. The essays have been peer reviewed and edited.

The essays cover a diversity of themes and issues and in the best tradition of *Seachanges* bring the reader to new understandings of the experiences of women as

religious actors, and in religious organizations. In every essay the agency of women is clearly enunciated challenging ideas that women are not active in their own construction of life choices around religious and spiritual concerns. The authors come from various academic disciplines – sociology, theology, politics, philosophy, history, and religious studies, providing us with grounded evidence and complex analysis of the experiences of women across the Asia-Pacific realm. It is a rich feast and I congratulate the authors on their excellent work, and thank them for their patience with the editing process.

I hope that you as a reader can bring your own experience to bear on the themes of the essays, and find in them, inspiration for your own work and solidarity between us for the work of social change in which we constantly engage.

Kathleen McPhillips

On behalf of the Editorial Team