



Sr Anne Gardiner
Diocese of Darwin

As a twenty two year old member of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Sr Anne Gardiner was asked to move to Bathurst Island to live among the Tiwi people. Sr Anne recalls, "I was very fearful so I went to ask somebody who'd been there". She went to Bishop Gsell, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Darwin and a man who had lived among the Tiwi people for many years as a priest, learning to speak the Tiwi language and understand the Tiwi culture. "Bishop, I'm being sent to Bathurst Island – what will I do?" she asked. Bishop Gsell looked straight through her and replied, "Love them".

Since then Sr Anne has spent forty eight years out of her fifty seven in the Northern Territory at Bathurst Island.

Some of Sr Anne's contributions to life on Bathurst Island include:

- Being a teacher, principal and religious education coordinator (including writing a religious education program that empowered teachers to teach religious education through Tiwi culture)
- Creating the Patakijiyali museum (with Sr Tess Ward) that contains three galleries and includes a reading corner. Currently the museum is being extended to include an Interactive Room where people can view historical photographs of life on the island
- Setting up a Mother's Club and a Mother's Club Eisteddfod
- Developing 'Little Athletics'
- Establishing a weekly prayer group
- Opening an 'Op Shop' (for funds to go to the local Catholic school)
- Restoring Bima Wear (a local company to make clothing in Tiwi designs) when the company collapsed.

In recognition of her contribution to education and preservation of the Tiwi culture, Sr Anne has received the Australia Medal and in 2006 received the 'True Blue' Pride of Australia Medal. In reflecting on her life among the Tiwi people Sr Anne says, "It has been a privilege to be able to remain for so long with the people. I've learnt much more from the people about life than what I've taught them".

With no concept of the word 'retirement', Sr Anne is still living on Bathurst Island today and is soon opening a coffee shop for the people.