

# NSW SLOVENIAN COMMUNITY AWARDS 2019

**Slovenian Outstanding Volunteer for 2018  
St. Raphael's Slovenian Mission Merrylands**

## VESNA DONA MARIA POCH



Vesna Dona Maria Poch je bila rojena v Fairfieldu v družini Marije in Mirka Lukežiča, dveh slovenskih priseljencev. Njen oče Mirko je doma iz Semiča v Beli krajini, Vesnina mati, Maria, rojena Verzel je bila iz Maribora, Štajerska in se je preselila v Avstralijo leta 1957 skupaj s svojimi tremi sestrami in starši. 19-letni Mirko je prišel v Avstralijo leta 1963. Z Marijo sta se srečala v Sydneyu na slovenskem plesu in sta bila prvi par, ki se je poročil v slovenski cerkvi, ustanovljeni leta 1970 v Merrylandsu. Vesna je bila rojena 14. aprila 1974 kot starejša od dvojčkov z bratom Karlom in oba imata še starejšega brata Paula, roj. 1971.

The Lukežic children grew up engrossed in the Slovenian culture since birth, attending mass at St Raphael's Slovenian Catholic Church in Merrylands on Sundays, joining the Slovensko Drustvo National Dancing Group in the early 1980's & later joining the Triglav Club Slovenian National Dancing Group – with whom she performed at the

Opera House in 1986 representing Slovenian cultural dance in Australia. Vesna attended Slomskova sola at St Raphael's Slovenian Catholic Church during her primary school years to learn the Slovenian language & culture, later attending the Saturday School of Languages at Bankstown Girls High from Years 7-12, graduating in 1991.

Vesna's parents instilled a great love for Slovenia in her from birth. A passion for the beauty of Slovenia's landscape, culture, & people was embedded in her even more so on her first travels to Slovenia with her family in 1980 as a 6yo child. In 1995 while on her third holiday to her beloved homeland, Vesna fell in love with a beautiful boy from her father's hometown – Semic, Bela Krajina – her now husband of 20 years, Igor Poch.

Since becoming a qualified florist in 1999 & to date, Vesna has often volunteered to create flower arrangements & decorations for St Raphael's Church on most special occasions, such as Christmas, Easter, special holy days, jubilees, etc. a number of times each year. She has also been a member of various Slovenian Youth choirs since 1984 such as Zarja, Juzne Zvezde & also the current Slovenian Senior Choir. Vesna was also a part of the Slovenian Drama Group from 2005-2007, which included acting in a lead role in the Slovenian play, Dve Nevesti.

Vesna taught scripture in 2018 to Holy Communion students at St Raphael's Church (also introducing non-Slovenian children to our church). She has taught how to make butarice – a traditional Slovenian Palm Sunday craft, a number of times over the last few years, which she herself was taught at Merrylands during her youth. This year there were 30 participants from toddlers to grandparents who loved to learn this gorgeous Slovenian tradition. She has often baked for the Slovenian Church Sunday morning tea, along with her extended family to sell as a fundraiser for the community church. She constantly promotes Slovenia on social media, including sharing photos & doing live videos which have inspired many friends of various backgrounds to list Slovenia as a must visit country on their next trip to Europe. Vesna hopes to continue inspiring her fellow Australians to fall completely in love with the beautiful & unique country & culture that is Slovenia!