



Greetings from Australia to Camino Friends everywhere,

I'm writing to let you know that Australian Friends of the Camino (AFOTC) is planning a national conference, entitled "*El Camino - The Way Ahead*", over the weekend 11-13 October, 2019. The venue will be Nunyara Conference Centre in Belair, South Australia.

AFOTC will be close to completing its first decade of promoting the Camino at the end of this year. Therefore, the goals of this first national conference will be:

- *To share learning, fun and friendship in the Camino spirit.*
- *To identify how Australian Friends of the Camino, and other Australian support groups can foster, coordinate and resource the promotion, awareness and facilitation of the Camino within Australia for the next ten years.*

Planning is well under way with a program of presentations and other activities, including book launches and displays with a focus on the theme: *The Way Ahead*. There will also be workshops enabling all participants to explore issues and strategies for the future of Australian Friends of the Camino during its second decade.

We are delighted to have two international speakers who will give keynote presentations:

- Dr Francisco Singul, Head of the Department of Culture in Galicia, Spain
- John Brierley, author of popular Camino guide books

The focus will be on what we can do within Australia to bring together all those with an interest in the Camino to develop a stronger national identity. But we also recognise that the conference could provide opportunities to link more closely with Friends' organisations in other countries, to share ideas and support one another.

We would welcome any ideas or experience your Camino Association might have regarding planning and hosting a national conference or pilgrim get-together. In Australia, we have a loosely-affiliated network of Pilgrim Groups and individual members in all States, but there are limited opportunities to bring people together on account of distance and travel costs. Communication with members is maintained via our website: www.afotc.org and our quarterly newsletter, the Camino Chronicle, past copies of which can be viewed on the website. The concept of a national conference has stimulated much interest and we are anticipating all places will be filled.

It would be wonderful to develop an ongoing link with your organisation, and possibly plan reciprocal visits in future, along with the ongoing sharing of ideas. We invite you to advise your members of the conference, and encourage them to make contact if they will be in Australia at the time.

We regret that AFotC is unable to offer any payment or subsidy to assist people to travel to Australia, but we sincerely hope that you will consider this opportunity to contribute to sharing your passion and experience of the Camino with other pilgrims, far and wide.

Buen Camino

Janet Leitch

Chair, Australian Friends of the Camino (and Conference Committee)

