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## PROFILE

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# Jennifer Knight

## Dialogue with a State Government Consultant in Australia

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**J**ennifer Anne Elizabeth Knight was born into a Seventh-day Adventist medical family in Sydney,

Australia. Her undergraduate work was completed at the University of New South Wales, along with teacher certification accomplished in the State of Western Australia. She studied in the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University, California, and earned her Ph.D. at Macquarie University in Sydney. In 1988 she married James Smith, an administrative officer in the Department of Corrective Services for the State of New South Wales.

Jennifer is a cheerful person whose vibrant enthusiasm for life and people has given her a wide group of friends. She has exceptional organizational skills and enjoys using these in her professional work and in her zestful

involvement with church activities. She is proud of being a woman, and gives energetic support to the Association of Adventist Women.

Friends testify to her loving warmth evidenced in her spontaneous Christian actions. She may arrive unannounced, early one morning, to bring breakfast for a person in distress.

Whether she is lecturing on nutrition to couples, experiencing Sabbath worship, planning a retreat for women, fellowshiping with family and friends, or researching for her consultative work for the state government, Jenny Knight is relishing the challenge of using her energies for the glory of God.

**Jenny, please share with us a little of your background.**

I am a fourth-generation Adventist, with a rich heritage of Adventism on both sides of my family. Several in the family were denominationally employed—one of my grandfathers, Pastor A. W. Knight, was hospital chaplain at the Sydney Sanitarium and Hospital for more than 25 years.

**What was it like for you to move from an Adventist high school to the state university?**

Sydney Adventist High School had about 350 students when I was there. It was a huge shock to move from a classroom of 24 to lecture theatres for more than 1,000 students at the University of New South Wales.

**What did you study there?**

I took a three-year arts degree program, but I interrupted it in the last year and went as a student missionary to Indonesia. I worked in Manado on the island of Sulawesi, where I taught in the English Language School sponsored by the Far Eastern Division. I taught there for one academic

year and completed my university work upon my return to Australia.

**Later you spent two years in the U.S.A. Right?**

Yes, I studied a Master's of Public Health at Loma Linda University and enjoyed the time I spent in that community. Then I returned to Australia and lectured in health education for 18 months. However, I realized that I needed to upgrade my qualification so that I would be accepted in the Australian system.

**What was the topic of your dissertation?**

My thesis examined education throughout Asia and the Pacific. In particular, I looked at the policies of educational systems and analyzed them for a variety of factors.

**After the university, where did you work?**

I completed my studies in 1987 and worked as a consultant with the Australian Federal Aid Agency—an arm of the Australian government responsible for giving aid to developing countries. I travelled extensively through the

South Pacific region, and my reports had an impact on Australia's funding in the area. Then I picked up a consultancy with the Ministry of Transport and after one year there, I commenced work in the New South Wales State Parliament, in the Upper House. I am one of two consultants on a task force looking at state development. We are given inquiries by Parliament and it is my responsibility to prepare reports and policy recommendations in response to them. It is fascinating to be involved at this level of government and to see changes that have occurred because of our work.

**For an Adventist in Australia, your position is unique.**

Yes, I do not know of any other Adventists involved in parliamentary work.

**Your research skills are invaluable in the work you have been doing. What about your endeavors for the church?**

The South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has established a series of task for-

ces that are looking at various practical ways that the Adventist message can be presented to secular people. They are recognizing that traditional evangelism hasn't always been successful, particularly with the secular mind. The task force that I am heading is looking at the ways Adventist business and professional women can effectively minister to their non-Christian colleagues. We have defined the word "minister" in a very broad way and in fact it may not always be in a purely religious sense.

**Not necessarily giving Bible studies?**

Initially it may not be giving studies, but it may lead to giving Bible studies. As part of our work we have surveyed 430 Adventist business and professional women in both Australia and New Zealand. We have received a very good response. Many of the women have given practical suggestions for ways in which they want to be involved. They have also identified the resources they need to be able to accomplish their goals.

**And this is something you are doing in your spare time.**

Yes. When I was studying for my doctoral degree I was very conscious of God's leading in my life. To be able to use my training in support of the work of the church brings a lot of satisfaction.

**What about your involvement in the Association of Adventist Women?**

AAW has been running for about four years in Australia. With a group of very close friends I have been involved in it from its inception. I have expanded my circle of friends through AAW and I have gotten to know many capable women of all ages.

**Jenny, do you preach an occasional sermon?**

Yes, whenever I am asked to do so. I feel strongly about women having the opportunity to present the gospel. I think we do that in a slightly different way than men because we see things from a dif-

ferent perspective. I am always nurtured and encouraged when I listen to women preach.

**How does your husband relate to your heavy involvement both in your professional life and in the church?**

I am very fortunate that James is particularly supportive; I guess I wouldn't have married him if he hadn't been! When I am asked to do something in church, we look for ways that he can be involved and try to make it a team effort. He is often the one behind the scenes and he makes an invaluable contribution. In terms of his professional life he is also a public servant and is very involved with his own work. He appreciates what it means to work long hours. We don't see a lot of each other during the week, but we do endeavor to have at least one week night to ourselves.

**What do you see as your professional future?**

I am still undecided. Working with politics has opened up some opportunities that I wasn't fully expecting. However, it would be extremely difficult in my circumstances to go into politics as a politician and remain a committed Adventist, and so I don't think I'm interested in that. But I would like to remain working within the political structure; I find it very challenging and rewarding. The other alternative I would like to pursue is to work for or in developing countries. I have a very soft spot for their people. Having lived in Indonesia and travelled throughout the Pacific, I would really enjoy working in such places again.

**What helped you to remain an Adventist while attending a university?**

I was quite fortunate that there was a very strong core of Adventist students at quite a number of state universities throughout Australia. An Adventist society of university students had been established, and that society at my university was particularly strong. There were about 50 Adventists

on campus. We met at least once a week for Bible study and very often to have lunch together. A large group of students in their senior years of university did a marvelous job watching over the first-year students. They "mothered and fathered" us not just socially but also spiritually, and that was really important. We would do things together on weekends, on Sabbath afternoons and Saturday evenings. We gravitated toward one church and found our fellowship together there. The Adventist society was a very nurturing and supportive group for me on that large campus. It was that society that kept me an Adventist, for those years of my study were years when I was really testing and wondering.

**What would you say to Adventist young people who are still studying at colleges or universities, particularly to young women?**

I've seen many young women at universities become quite disillusioned with the role assigned to women in our church. I would urge those women to channel their energies into working for positive change within the system. In general, however, I would urge students to just hang in there, despite everything. It is definitely worth standing by and cherishing both Christianity and Adventism, even though there will be times when not everything makes sense. Look for worship settings where the gospel is presented in a format that is relevant to you; take up the challenge to search continually for a Christianity within Adventism that is relevant and meaningful to you as a professional of the 1990s.

**Thomas H. Ludowici**

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*Thomas H. Ludowici (D. Min., Andrews University) and his wife Pam are both chaplains at Sydney Adventist Hospital, in New South Wales, Australia.*