



AMSSA

AUSTRALASIAN MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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Congratulations and heartfelt thanks to all involved in the wonderful 10th Biennial Conference: to Conference Officer Rosa Speranza and the Planning Committee from the Perth Mercy Schools; to the staffs and students of the WA Mercy Schools: Santa Maria College, Mercedes College, Aranmore Catholic College, Ursula Frayne Catholic College, St Brigid's College, Mercy College and Bunbury Catholic College; and to the Perth Mercy Sisters.

Thank you to the outgoing AMSSA Executive members for their generous contribution to the Association: Christine Simpson (South Australia), Loretta Wholley (Western Australia), and Kathleen Park (Queensland).

Welcome to new Executive members John Konopka (SA), Rosa Speranza (WA) and Lee-Ann Perry (Qld).

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The Western Australian Mercy Schools and the Western Australian Sisters of Mercy Congregations welcomed delegates to the Tenth Biennial AMSSA Conference.

One hundred and fifty Mercy educators and forty students gathered at Santa Maria College for the Opening Ceremony led in ritual, dance, song and story by Elder Noel Nannup and members of the Nyoongar People. The Conference theme, of the flowing on us of the spirit of Mercy, was captured in his story and in prayer that the life-giving spirit of Christ may flow to all. Keynote speakers Sr Mary Duffy, Sr Sophie McGrath and Anne Kelleher developed the theme, and Conference weaver Anne Fox engaged participants in reflection and in deepth of the theme.

Sr Mary Duffy rsm broke open the charism of Catherine McAuley, reminding us of how a charism impacts on others in varied ways, and how Catherine's personal vision to do something good for the poor impelled her to action and to empower others. The challenge for us is to embody Catherine's vision and courage, her practicality, compassion, good humour, hospitality and prayerful trust in providence. It is these that we need to place at the service of others. The text of her address can be accessed on the AMSSA website, amssa@mercy.org.au, under NEWS.



Keynote Speakers Sr Mary Duffy (left) and Dr Sophie McGrath with Conference Weaver, Anne Fox (far right).

Dr Sophie McGrath rsm asked "Can women have it all?" She drew on the history of women in Australia and New Zealand to conclude that they can, but not at the same time. The challenge for us is to affirm women in their various public and family roles, and to articulate to staffs and students that society needs to look to mature-aged women to take on public roles, and for women from an early age to look to this responsibility.

The text of her address can be accessed on the AMSSA website, amssa@mercy.org.au, under NEWS.



Anne Kelleher, CEO of CEIST, (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust), addressed the Conference theme by asking provocatively: Can we say that Mercy education is, for our students and staffs, an experience of care and of the attractiveness of the Christ of the gospels? Our school mottos call us to something beyond ourselves - is ours a purposeful ministry, moving people beyond their potential, fostering their personal and social well-being, developing their gifts and talents in the service of others? Do we rely on the measured evidence of so much current educational agenda or on discerned

evidence, which looks not so much at what we do but why we do it - for the glory of God and to bring people closer to God. Are we educating for justice? Are all our students, teachers, parents, support staff, treated justly?

The texts of Anne's addresses will be available on the AMSSA website in due course.

Sister Ursula Frayne and her band of founding Mercy Sisters were brought to life when delegates became pilgrims on a boat cruise up the Swan River retracing the journey of the first Sisters, and in scenes from the early history of Mercy in Perth reenacted by the staff and students of Mercedes College. The afternoon concluded with the Conference Eucharist, celebrated by Archbishop Hickey in the newly restored St Mary's Cathedral.

The Conference dinner speaker was Professor Celia Hammond, Vice Chancellor of Notre Dame University. Celia asked us to reflect on the adequacy of the ways we engage the young people of today's world of social media and social networking.

Day 2 of the Conference included the staffs of the Western Australian Mercy schools, who heard Anne Kelleher's second keynote address, which further challenged us to look to our own dispositions and aspirations as leaders, asking us to consider the sacramental consciousness of the leader. All present then took part in one of the forty forums which offered spiritual nourishment and inspiration for the work of Mercy educators. A hypothetical panel discussion concluded the day, with Conference weaver Anne Fox leading the three keynote speakers and Tim McDonald, Assistant Director of Catholic Education WA, Elena Douglas, Convenor, Centre for Social Impact at UWA, and Michelle Carrick, from the staff of Santa Maria College, in considering what Mercy Education might look like in 2031, two hundred years after the beginning of the Mercy Congregation.

The Conference closed with another ritual centring on the flowing, life-giving water of Christ, with students presenting in dramatic form the qualities of Mercy, and the indigenous Elder presenting each participant with a message stick depicting the growing unity among people and races in Australia. The New Zealand students and staff received the mandate of the group to take the next Conference to their homeland.

A parallel conference for students enabled them to take part both in some AMSSA Conference sessions and in workshops designed specifically for them. An ongoing project was work with two indigenous artists, Maureen Foster and Gloria Bliss, to represent the Conference theme in collage. The collaboration resulted in three pictures which were used in the closing liturgy. The inclusion of the students in the Conference was a first for AMSSA, and we are very pleased that their own Conference was a success, and that their contributions to the AMSSA Conference were such an enriching part on the Conference proceedings.

All participants were asked to evaluate the Conference, and the feedback from the evaluations has been passed on to the planning group for the New Zealand Conference in 2013.

The 2011 Biennial General Meeting was held during the Conference. The Executive members for 2012-2013 are:

President: Jane Holloway; Western Australia: Rosa Speranza; South Australia: John Konopka; Victoria: Sr Mary Moloney; New South Wales: Kitty Guerin; Queensland: Lee-Ann Perry; New Zealand: Kathleen Deady.

At the Biennial General Meeting it was decided to raise the annual levy to \$650 in 2012 and \$700 in 2013. You may wish to revisit the agenda papers for the meeting which are in the May 2011 AMSSA newsletter for detail about the rationale for these increases.



Staffs from the Western Australian Mercy Schools join Conference delegates for Anne Kelleher's Keynote Address.

PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF CATHERINE MCAULEY

Loving God, you chose Catherine McCauley for the service of your people who are poor, sick and uneducated.

You inspired her to found the Sisters of Mercy so that these good works might endure.

Give to each of us an ardent desire to serve your suffering people.

Graciously hear our prayers for Catherine and by granting the favours we ask though her intercession, hasten the day when her sanctity will be celebrated by all the Church. Amen

