



# AMSSA

AUSTRALASIAN MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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**Newsletter August 2013 No. 03/13**

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## **WELCOME**

### **Welcome to the new AMSSA Executive -**

Sheena Barber, principal of Mercedes College Perth, president  
Gilda Pussich, Our Lady of Mercy College Burraneer  
Deborah Brosnahan, Villa Maria College Christchurch  
Lee-Anne Perry, All Hallows School Brisbane  
Paddy McEvoy, St Aloysius' College Adelaide  
Julie Ryan, Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg,  
Rosa Speranza, Mercedes College Perth.

### **Thanks to the outgoing members of the Executive:**

**Sr Mary Moloney, Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy**  
**Kitty Guerin, our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta**  
**John Konopka, St Aloysius' College Adelaide**  
**Kath Deady, Carmel College Auckland.**



*Clockwise from bottom right: Deborah Stephens, Marilyn Lacey, Sr Anna Nicholls, Kath Deady, Megan McKenna*

## **The Conference**

The New Zealand schools hosted 148 staff members and 52 students from among the Mercy schools and authorities across Papua New Guinea, Samoa, New Zealand and Australia at Carmel College Auckland. Sister Anne Campbell, leader of the New Zealand Mercy Sisters, met each delegate on arrival. Women from the Auckland schools gave a traditional Maori welcome, and during the opening prayer gifts of pounami were exchanged. The story of the first Sisters, sought after by the Maori women to teach their children, was retold in the conference opening and in the visit to St Mary's College Auckland, the Mother House. Students and staff of St Mary's led prayer at the graves of the founding sisters, in the garden at St Mary's. We heard about the current work of the Sisters and their colleagues at Te waipuna puawai (the restoration of women, children and the earth) from the manager, Puamiria. Here support is offered to women, children and now young men to regain self-esteem and regain control of lives blighted by poverty, violence or lack of education. Bishop Patrick Dunn celebrated the conference Eucharist at St Patrick's Cathedral, the actual site of the first Sisters' residence and work, recalling the close links between the sisters, Bishop Pompallier and the Maori people. Mercy students, ex-students and staff gave expression in the liturgy to the Maori and Pacifica cultures. Each morning Father Steve Low celebrated Mass, and each day began with prayer led by one of the New Zealand Mercy schools.

## **Keynote presentations**

International guests were Sister Marilyn Lacey and Megan McKenna. Megan asked us to look again at the biblical words *compassion*, *justice* and *mercy* and, through her gift of telling and retelling story, to question our own attitudes and practice.

Sr Marilyn founded Mercy beyond Borders ([mercybeyondborders.org](http://mercybeyondborders.org)) whose members go where there are the most marginalised of women and their families. Marilyn confronted us with the gospel call through sharing her own experiences and her deep reflection on the scripture around *awakening*, *joy*, *mercy*, *pity* (the Greek word *splanchnizomai*) and *hospitality*.

Deborah Stevens is a bioethicist working to develop ways of teaching and learning for young people when they face the critical, complex situations caused by science and technology and which require from them a principled response. Her hope is that young people might have clearer insight, better decision-making and more tolerance of different views, and payed tribute to Mercy schools where values are so public and so crucial a part of the work of Mercy educators.

## **Workshops**

In the conference workshops there were opportunities for follow-up on the presentations, and for hearing from colleagues (and from some students too) about their initiatives on a wide range of issues. As workshops were often repeated, and as the groups were small, there was spirited exchanging of ideas and views at these gatherings.

## **The Student Conference**

The student delegates attended keynote addresses and took part in their own workshops with the presenters. They also looked to their own local situations, using the time-honoured YCS process of See, Judge, Act, to plan how they might better lead in Mercy in their schools. In the closing session of the conference they presented back to the assembled delegates their reflections on their time together.

## **Thanks**

Thanks to the Carmel College community, to Kath Deady and the Conference Committee, to Mary Lynch, Conference Secretary and Sr Anna Nicholls, conference Support; to Christine Barlow and Brian Nolan and the St Mary's College community, and to the staffs and students of McAuley College Auckland, Marian College Christchurch, Villa Maria College Christchurch, St Catherine's College Wellington and St Mary's College Wellington. For their work with the student conference, thanks to Sr Anna Nicholls and to Anne Marie Hurd and Melissa Trolio. Thanks finally to the families from the Auckland schools who billeted many of the visiting students.

## **Biennial General Meeting**

The Biennial General Meeting was held during proceedings. The meeting approved two changes to the AMSSA Statement of Purpose and By-Laws, to reflect the changed configuration of the sponsoring Mercy congregations and to make more appropriate provision for the Association to engage executive staff. Views of the meeting concerning possible directions and involvements for AMSSA were sought and noted.

## 2013-15 Executive

Sheena Barber, principal of Mercedes College Perth, was elected president.

In accordance with the Association Statement of Purpose and By-Laws, the members of the 20013-15 Executive were locally nominated/elected as follows:

New South Wales: Gilda Pussich, Our Lady of Mercy College Burraneer

New Zealand: Deborah Brosnahan, Villa Maria College Christchurch

Queensland: Lee-Anne Perry, All Hallows School Brisbane

South Australia: Paddy McEvoy, St Aloysius' College Adelaide

Victoria/Tasmania: Julie Ryan, Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg

Western Australia: Rosa Speranza, Mercedes College Perth.

It is hoped that the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Association Conference, in 2015, will be held in Adelaide.

## Conference materials posted on Website

The texts and graphics of the presentations are being posted on our website as we receive them from the presenters.

## Conference evaluations

Thanks to **conference participants** for the comprehensive responses on the evaluation sheets. The collated responses have been handed on to the incoming Executive.

The conference evaluations were high in their praise and thanks to Kath and the conference organisers for their hospitality and thorough organisation, and for the conference venue (although some IT problems were commented on!).

There was appreciation for the wonderful depth of the input from the three keynotes and for the variety, interaction and practical take-away material in the workshops.

The liturgies and prayers were a highlight and many commented on how enriching and challenging it was to have exposure to Maori and Pacifica culture and tradition.

There was overall gratitude for the opportunity the conference provided to network with other Mercy educators.

Those who brought students commented on how positive it was to be able to talk with them about the conference presentations.

In their own evaluation, **the students** were loud in their praise for the experience, with Mercy Chef and the Social Justice Game high on their list. They appreciated the chance to focus and plan their own work in their school and would like a chance to come together next year to share how they've gone with this.

There were substantial comments about the perceived unevenness of the timetable, and many suggestions about how it could be improved. The timetable had to be changed at the last minute because of Megan McKenna's late decision not to stay for Day 3 and deliver a second keynote as had been AMSSA's arrangement with her. With the other two keynotes, Marilyn Lacey and Deborah Stevens, already scheduled, there was no room to move.

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*Reflection  
from the All  
Hallows  
students*



All Hallows student delegates Ishini Leelaratne (second from left) and Jane Carroll (right)

Last week, Jane and I were given the privilege to represent our school at the biennial AMSSA conference in Auckland, New Zealand. With this year's theme being "Mercy Alive" we, along with approximately 40 other students and many teachers, participated in workshops, activities, talks and tours, which enabled each and everyone of us to gain an insight into how "alive" mercy is today. We received moving talks from Megan McKenna and Sr Marilyn Lacey. These talks allowed us to see what we could do to show mercy to one another. Sr Marilyn Lacey (Sister of Mercy since 1966) introduced us to her program "Mercy beyond Borders" which is a non-profit organisation to help displaced women in areas of severe poverty. The organisation has made drastic changes to the lives of some women by giving them an education and also helped them feel that they are worth more than they think. She has also worked with many refugees from Africa and Southeast Asia. So if you ever have a spare moment, please take a look at the organisation's website to see if you can help make a difference.

<http://www.mercybeyondborders.org/>

There was one particular activity that we participated in that made me understand just how valuable some of the programs in our school are. We were given the opportunity to talk to other students about their school's mercy action programs, which made me realise how lucky we truly are to have programs such as Eddie's Van, Coffee Brigade, Villa Maria and Mercy Disability visits etc. It came to my understanding that these activities really bring out the best in us students as we are giving up our time to help others, and in return we receive happiness on the inside. Apart from the extreme cold, the conference was very good experience where we learned some valuable lessons and made long lasting friendships with students in the Australasian region.

## ***Reflection from the students of the Academy of Mary Immaculate***

(Emma Lightfoot, Yan-Ru Chen and Imogen Gandolfo)

At the conference, along with various other student representatives from Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, we had the wonderful opportunity of listening to two fantastic key note speakers - Megan McKenna and Sr. Marilyn Lacey - and participating in their inspiring workshops. Megan spoke to us about the meaning of justice, 'what love looks like in public' and how to live a life in mercy, with the key ingredients being compassion and forgiveness. Sr Megan McKenna also drew upon the scriptures and her own vast experiences. Sr. Marilyn's talk was based on the theme 'Awakening to the Joy of Mercy', focusing on paying attention to the goodness in others and finding joy in standing with the suffering of the poor. We also attended a Global Mercy Focus presentation which revealed the shocking realities of human trafficking and the current condition of our environment.

Apart from the formal conference, the Carmel girls made sure we got to experience something different each night and we felt very fortunate to have had such wonderful, diverse experiences in Auckland. As part of our first night, we were given a tour of Auckland's St Patrick's Cathedral which (although not built from bluestone) possessed the same sense of spiritual connection found in our own Cathedral in Melbourne. Also included for our entertainment, was a pizza night where the teachers and students came together for a trivial pursuit competition, and the *Mercy Chef* Competition. The task was simple: we were given \$30 to spend at the local shops on ingredients to create a dish that exhibited what it meant to be a part of mercy. All the dishes were delicious and it was a lovely way to end our conference.

On the final morning, we presented our thoughts from the conference with the adult delegates. Not only did the conference teach us to see the struggles in our surroundings and to judge how we can best help, but also to be as great in act as we are in spirit. The conference gave us the perfect platform from which to launch ourselves into the world, knowing we have such a compassionate, hospitable, supportive and international community of mercy beside us.



## A Prayer for the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy

(Adapted from Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy.  
The icon is from Carmel College Auckland))



Merciful God, on this Feast of Our Lady of Mercy in 1827 you manifested your love for your people through the opening of the House of Mercy on Baggot Street, Dublin. As we celebrate this feast of Jesus' mother and of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy, we ask that you show us your love once again.

The House of Mercy was established to serve the needs of the poor, the sick and the uneducated:

*May we freely respond to your call to serve the needy of our time.*

Catherine McAuley was assisted in her ministry by many who were animated by her vision of service:

*By collaborating with others in the works of mercy, may we learn from them how to be more merciful.*

Like Catherine and the foundresses, our Mercy schools must address our enduring concerns for the poor:

*Through our work may we model mercy and justice, promote systemic change and foster leadership for good among our colleagues, our students and our school communities.*

My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence with the most lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity. Grant me, O most merciful Redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety; suffer nothing to sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of you, my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom. Amen.