



AMSSA

AUSTRALASIAN MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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News from the AMSSA Executive

The Mercy Student Conference is coming up very soon from October 3 - 7 October in Melbourne. It has been great to see the registrations coming in from schools across Australia and New Zealand.

The organising committee has been working very hard to plan a conference that will be an inspiration and a challenge for the young people in our Mercy schools.

Thank you to Mercedes College Perth, St Aloysius College Adelaide, Villa Maria College in Christchurch and Mt Lilydale Mercy College in Victoria for their articles in this newsletter. Thank you to Mercy Works for the article on Yarapos. Any school interested in fund raising for Yarapos, please contact Sr Ailsa Mackinnon at Mercy Works.

Congratulations to Mercy International Centre in Dublin who are celebrating their 20th birthday from September 23-29. Let all of us involved in Mercy education share in this wonderful celebration. Happy Mercy Day to all!!

Kitty Guerin
Executive Officer

MERCEDES COLLEGE

THE ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAM

2014 marks the inaugural year of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at Mercedes College and though in its infancy, early indications are that the program is definitely meeting the needs of a group of students too often less catered for in standard educational settings.

Our College Vision begins with the statement 'Mercedes College offers young women an outstanding Catholic education ..' and if we are to honour the Vision in meaningful action then must continue to respond to this need in a way that challenges and ignites each learner.

The ALP at Mercedes College is based on aspects of SEAL (Select Entry Accelerated Learning) Schools in Victoria. During 2013 several staff visited two Melbourne schools to gain insights into their program and assess its adaptability to a Perth and Mercy context. Staff observed classes, met with key staff members, and met with students who were part of the program. The anecdotal comments from those students was certainly most convincing of how young people can flourish in an educational environment that meets their needs and where they are learning alongside similarly talented students.



Students in the ALP are grouped in a distinct class for English, Maths, Science, Social Sciences and Chinese (Mandarin). Chinese is the compulsory language for students in the program; however, students have the opportunity to select an additional language in Year 8. It is recognised that most students will not be equally strong across these five subjects, but entrance testing to the program ensures that they are highly able across the range.

Students participate in all other subjects with the rest of the year group and are spread across the six homerooms. This structure is deliberate to ensure that the group of Accelerated Learning students remain connected to their like-aged peers and year group for the whole time that they are at the College. Social and emotional development is just as important, as is the provision of a challenging program. In fact, when this year's group of Accelerated Learning students were asked about the friendships they had developed, the majority responded that they had great friends within the Accelerated Learning class, but many of their 'best friends' were outside of this group.

Students complete Years 7 to 10 in three years and are then able to begin Courses of Study in Year Ten. The breadth of courses they can undertake from 10 to 12 is expanded and some may even choose to undertake Structured Workplace Learning as an immersion opportunity in careers they wish to explore. Conversations with universities also indicate that students may be able to undertake a mix of school and university study in their final year. It is not the intention that students graduate from the College a year before their peers and enter university a year earlier. In the rare instance this may be considered in close consultation with the student and family. We believe that the rites of passage such as the College Ball and Graduation, as well as particular privileges and responsibilities afforded Year 12s are essential elements of their secondary school experience.



The seventeen young women in the program are a diverse group with many different strengths and talents. There is undoubtedly a 'buzz' in the ALP classes where many feel that for the first time in quite a few years they are working at a pace and level that is commensurate with their ability.

'The ALP curriculum interests and challenges me more than the mainstream would. I'm actually learning new things everyday instead of endless repetition of things I already know.' And the level of engagement is also very visible. 'I'm not sitting in class doing nothing anymore. I used to finish work before everyone and just sit there because I had to wait for everyone else to catch up.'

What is also apparent is the fact that these students are Year 7s. Their transition experiences from a primary to secondary setting are the same as the rest of their year group. They have also encountered the challenges of a greater range of subjects, numerous teachers, homework, revision and test taking, movement from class-to-class, and the logistics of a locker. *'I feel as if I'm a Year 7 still, not a Year 8. My Homeroom friends still have lunch with me.'*

We acknowledge that as a College, we will continue to learn alongside our students and ensure that *'The focus is on life-long learning that will provide the spiritual, social, physical and emotional development needed to achieve personal fulfilment'* for all our young Mercy women.

Sabrina Hughes
Director of Learning Innovation

VILLA MARIA COLLEGE CHRISTCHURCH

MERCY IN ACTION

Two Year 12 Villa girls pulled together a wonderful team to create a Tea Party for people with disabilities in Christchurch. Anastasia Loeffen and Sherry Malik worked in conjunction with 'The Special Events Trust' to organise an Under the Sea themed Tea Party complete with a band, dancing and plenty of food. It's wonderful to see our girls putting Mercy into action.



**ST ALOYSIUS COLLEGE
ADELAIDE**

PRIMARY MASS - COMING TOGETHER

On Wednesday 2 July all primary students and their families celebrated our Primary Mass in the St Francis Xavier Cathedral. Our theme highlighted *Celebrating Together the Year of Ecology*, continuing the whole school Mass theme for our year, reminding us of the importance each one plays in taking responsibility for our Earth and one another.

Primary students prepared by learning hymns and singing enthusiastically and reverently. In our entrance procession our Year 7 leadership team brought forward items that represented their roles of Student Representative Council Executive, Primary Justice and Mercy leaders, Sports leaders for St Clare, St Margaret, St Teresa and St Anne and Primary Music leaders.



Evelyn carrying the Processional Cross,

Our celebrant, Fr Peter Rozitis was assisted by altar servers Chancelline Shukurani 7SS and Charlotte Turner 7MP and cross bearer Evelyn Jackson 7SS.



Eleanor and Scarlett singing hymns

Junior classes provided the beautiful decorations on the pews. Year 4 presented the Gospel procession while students from Year 5 brought forward the gifts of bread and wine. Year 6 provided and read the Prayers of the Faithful. It was wonderful to see so many parents and family members who were able to join us for our liturgical celebration followed by the awards ceremony.

Thank you to our Minsters of the Eucharist: Ms Paddy McEvoy, Ms Christine Simpson and Ms Wendy Heuzenroeder.

Ms Sandra Sofia
Religious Education Coordinator (R-7)

YEAR 11 RETREAT

The Year 11 students reflected on their Retreat day which focused on Social Justice.

*And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice
And to love kindness
And to walk humbly with your God?*
Micah 6:8

The Global Village activity made me aware of how lucky I am as a student and a girl to be receiving an education. It made me realise that many of the things I take for granted are regarded by others as luxuries. I did not know that the gap between the rich and the poor was so great. I appreciate more the things that I have and realise that I can work to make the world more just.

The drama activity was something new which I enjoyed. It was different from the other tasks because it required acting skills and some quick thinking. The activity highlighted the ways in which we can help others and make people more aware of social injustices in our world. [Ngan Tran 11 NR](#)



The social justice focus of our Retreat day made us fully appreciate all the things and opportunities we have in life and realise that not everything in the world is just and fair. The first activity about the inequitable distribution of wealth was very powerful as we could clearly visualise the vast number of people who don't have the simple necessities of life, in contrast to the tiny minority who are extraordinarily wealthy. It certainly makes me very thankful for what I have.



Listening to Sue and Georgia Germein was the most enjoyable part of the day. They are both very passionate about promoting justice. I felt inspired thinking about how ordinary people like ourselves can make a difference in the world. I felt encouraged by the quote from Nelson Mandela who said, "We must use time wisely and forever realise that the time is always ripe to do right". In the future, I would like to go to Vietnam or Thailand and help out in an orphanage. *Chau Tran 11 NR*

MT LILYDALE MERCYCOLLEGE
IMMERSION EXPERIENCE TO JIGALONG



Jigalong is a remote community in Western Australia. A group of 16 year 10 students had the privilege to experience what life is like out in Pilbara. We got to visit land that is very sacred to the Aboriginals and we spent 3 days working in the school and helping the teachers in the classroom. We also got to see the Rabbit-Proof fence.

This experience has helped us to develop a further understanding of the Indigenous culture in Western Australia. We have learnt how different and yet how similar the schools are. We have taken back with us knowledge of a new culture and a different outlook on life and how we act towards others. By observing and learning about the way of life of the Aboriginal culture, we have realised how lucky we are to have all our resources, but it has also made us realise how connected the Aboriginals were to their land and how smart they were in how they survived. The Aboriginals are so happy, are never selfish and they always so accepting towards each other no matter what. We felt so welcomed by the community as they were always so friendly and not afraid to approach us. The time we spent playing with them and getting to know them better are memories that we will never forget.

We also got to experience new, eye-opening experiences and some of us faced our fears. One of these experiences was eating a witchery grub. We were all proud of ourselves and proud of each other, as we all stepped out of our comfort zones and tried something new. Another experience was climbing the water tower. For those who were scared of heights, this was a very daunting experience, but once we got to the top, it was most definitely worth it. We got to see the whole community of Jigalong from a different viewpoint, and it was amazing to see the community from so high up.

We immersed ourselves into a new culture and a new community and by doing so, we were able to broaden our minds and experience new things. By entering Jigalong with an open mind, we were able to appreciate and respect others around us. Some of what we saw and heard was confronting, but we kept our mind open to new experiences and we respected their culture.

We highly recommend this experience to the lower year levels, as we have all come out of this trip with a more appreciative outlook, new experiences and a broader viewpoint on how we respect ourselves and others. We all had so much fun getting to know each other and have formed many special friendships within our group. But most of all, we have all become stronger and more confident within ourselves and have returned to our school more positive, more insightful, and more merciful.

The Jigalong group.



HELPING TO PROVIDE BETTER BOARDING FACILITIES FOR 600 STUDENTS AT MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL YARAPOS

Mercy Secondary School Yarapos is located on the outskirts of Wewak, East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. The Brisbane Sisters of Mercy founded the school in 1963 with 11 students. Today the school has 600 boarders and 100 day students. It provides education for young women up to Year 12 and the students come from all over PNG. Many of the girls spend the entire year at school because home is just too remote and difficult to get back to.



Currently Mercy Works is committed to funding the renovation of two dormitories built in 1963, which are in urgent need of repair. The total cost of this project is \$158,800 and so far Mercy Works has guaranteed funding of only \$58,000.

Wewak is on the main northern coast of PNG an area of high humidity and rainfall. Malaria is a common problem and education, employment and social issues are also significant. Mercy Works has funded a number of projects over the years as the school has grown.



Mercy Secondary School's motto is *Valiant Woman*. In 2012 the School Captain, Stephanie Maragian spoke at the graduation ceremony. She said: "Education here has helped us fit into all walks of life – be real women and mothers of tomorrow and find a job and earn money. Finally to be a true valiant woman is to be a productive citizen of this country."

The Yarapos students call their school, *bingavia*, which means "happy place".

Any school who wishes to assist in fund raising for the renovation of the two dormitories in Yarapos, please contact Sr Ailsa Mackinnon at Mercy Works.