

Seeds of Justice

Justice

2012
Annual Report



/solemnly pledge ...

to continue to work for justice in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley and to support the works of the Sisters of Mercy.



/will remain ...

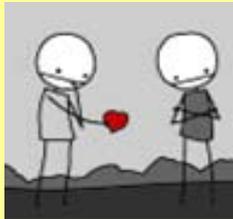
committed, steadfast and connected to others in heartfelt compassion.

/will endeavour..

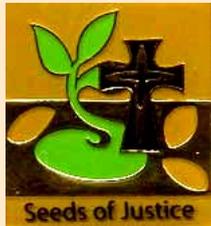
to serve others and stand up for the needs of the poor and marginalised in our society.

By proudly wearing this badge I will keep the spirit, energy and heart of this conference alive in my own school community and the world.

Yes I know I can Make a Difference.



Seeds of Justice pledge recited by staff and students at each event



Seeds of Justice Annual Report

2012 School Year

“Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!” (Mt 13:8-9)

It has been the Committee’s great pleasure to have interacted with many remarkable participants across the course of 2012’s three events. Indeed, it is truly a blessing to have had the opportunity to work alongside both Mercy students and Mercy staff that not only have the ‘ears to listen’, but the resolve to respond to the often complex challenges that face our society – and to do so with energy and a spirit of hope.

As in previous years, 2012’s events were Gospel-centred programs, grounded in the founding goals of the Seeds of Justice project:

- to form students and staff from Victorian Mercy schools in the Mercy charism;
- to raise awareness of contemporary issues in social justice; and
- to facilitate new links between students and staff to promote mercy and justice in their own contexts.

Over the course of the year, the Committee also began to consolidate its membership after a time of natural flux. In particular, we were very pleased to welcome Loretta Kitch, Angela Moore and Sr Anila Isaac rsm onboard in 2012. They, along with the rest of the Committee, are thanked for their effort and enthusiasm throughout the year, as they have worked to plan, facilitate and review each of the three programs:

- Marlo Drake (Sacred Heart College Geelong)
- Michael Haywood (Mount Lilydale Mercy College)
- Bernadette Inman (Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg)
- Loretta Kitch (Mercy College, Coburg)
- Eugene Lynch (Mercy Education)
- Angela Moore (St Aloysius College, North Melbourne)
- Natasha Pisotek (Mount Lilydale Mercy College)
- Sr Anila Isaac rsm (Academy of Mary Immaculate and Sister of Mercy)
- Sam Weir (Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg).

The annual roster of programs continues to follow the format of two overnight conferences for students and one formation day for staff in Mercy schools. An overview of each program is provided below.

The Program

EVENT 1: Thursday 24 and Friday 25 May, 2012

Venue: Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe

“The Heart of Mercy”

The first event for the year was a special and memorable one. 38 students and 7 staff from Mercy schools as well as those on the Seeds of Justice steering committee, came together to attempt to “Break open the heart of Mercy”. The theme, the speakers and the placements were chosen so that the students could be challenged to gain a much deeper understanding of the variety of places Mercy Sisters and other members of the Mercy community work.

After gathering as a group, Sr. Giovanna Danza RSM spoke to those present about her incredible experiences working in the Catholic prison ministry throughout Victoria. All who heard her speak were captivated, and came away from their time with her astounded at her compassion, and unconditional love for those she works with. After a hearty lunch, the group regathered to view a documentary presented by Marlo Drake. Some of what we saw was confronting, but given the opportunity to debrief afterwards, the students felt it was very worthwhile viewing.

The placements that the students and staff visit were a fantastic experience. As is often the case, the students amazed us with their resilience, maturity and ability to reflect deeply on what they had just seen and done. The placements included visits to Mercy Place East Melbourne, McAuley House (formerly Regina Coeli), Bailey House, North Melbourne, Exodus Community, the Collingwood soup van and many more. The overwhelming response from those who participated was that they had gone out that night expecting to ‘help’ people, and instead received a welcome they had not been prepared for.

After a long day, a very good night’s sleep and some fun in the autumn sun the next morning, Allan Ansell from Sacred Heart Geelong spoke to the group about the experience he had shared with a group of girls from his school in Papua New Guinea. Allan is a gifted storyteller, and at different points of his presentation I spied from many of our group, both tears of laughter and tears which came from the way in which he touched our hearts.

Needless to say, those who attended this Seeds of Justice event went away invigorated, energised and raring to change the world (or at least, their community). A particular highlight for many was the time we spent singing “Catherine’s Call” a song written for the AMSSA conference in 2011, which was led by the talented Mike Haywood.



OLMC students with staff members, Bernadette Inman and Sam Weir

“The Heart of Mercy”



Above: MLMC students and staff members, Natasha Pisotek and Mike Haywood



Above: Damascus students and staff member, Carmel Russell

Participants Comments

- *This year's theme was inspirational as were the speakers. I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations by the guest speakers as well as the placement.*
- *The insight into works of 'Mercy' that are unlike those we are used to hearing about was fantastic. This Program has encouraged me to consider opportunities such as the placements after school.*
- *I was expecting to learn things and I feel I haven't just learnt facts but personal qualities and a frame of mind which I can apply to my daily life.*
- *I thought that it was a great experience and I found all of the guest speakers and videos and placement work was really confronting, but also a great experience.*
- *I found the placement experience quite wonderful as meeting the women at McAuley House helped to break down some stereotypical expectations of a women's shelter and who we would meet there.*
- *I was amazed at how everyone embraced the opportunity and the placement was an amazing experience.*
- *It was a highly enjoyable event with many interesting elements and insight to how we can further be part of the Mercy community after leaving school.*
- *It was better than I expected. I'm surprised at how much I got out of the placements*
- *The Program was better than expected. I really enjoyed it and can't wait for the next one.*

STAFF FORMATION DAY: Monday 6 August

“Mercy Calling Us Today”

As well as offering an insight into the purpose of the Seeds of Justice project, this year’s Staff Formation day also pursued the following aims:

- to provide an opportunity for participants to gain a better understanding of the recent establishment and development of the new Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG);
- to provide an opportunity for participants to gain a better understanding of the recent developments in the Mercy Education ministry across Victoria and Western Australia;
- to raise greater awareness of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia and on our neighbouring shores.

Approximately twenty staff representing nine Colleges attended and gained much insight from each of the speakers into each area. Speakers were: **Sr Faye Kelly rsm** – ISMAPNG Community Leader: South C; **Eugene Lynch** – Executive Officer, Mercy Education; **Sheelagh Purdon** - ASRC Community Speaker Coordinator and **Sr Brigid Arthur csb** - Brigidine Asylum Seekers’ Project.



Seeds of Justice Committee Members and participants at Staff Formation Day

STAFF FORMATION DAY:

“Mercy Calling Us Today”

Comments from the event:

- *Yes, it was good to hear the story behind the Mercy restructure and the link between it and the continuation of “Catherine’s call” which is entrusted to us, as people who are part of Mercy education. Also, the information and sharing of both afternoon speakers was informative and interesting as well as eye-opening. (Food was excellent too!)*
- *A great starting point. Thought provoking.*
- *A very interesting day which gives a lot to take back to the school community.*
- *Yes, learnt lots – particularly Asylum Seekers. I am now clearer on Mercy Institute. Will pass info onto students.*
- *Yes, every Seeds of Justice event I’ve attended has been very worthwhile.*
- *Clearing up misinformation. Yes, extremely interesting and relevant information about refugees and asylum seekers. The “human face” of a political hot potato – fantastic idea in using Asylum Seekers Resource Centre (ASRC) to cater for lunch.*
- *An enjoyable and informative program with personal and interesting reflections from each speaker.*
- *Yes, I learnt a lot about asylum seekers. Challenged me to make a difference. Support the work of organisations.*

EVENT 2: Thursday 25 & Friday 26 August

***“Boundless plains to share? Asylum seekers/refugees:
Seeking a merciful response.***

Venue: Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe

The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea have a long tradition of working with refugees and asylum seekers, both within Australia and across the world. This retreat aimed to ensure that the students in our schools deal with the facts surrounding this as a political issue. We wanted those present to hear from people who have sought asylum and worked closely with those who have.

We were very lucky to have **Sr Mary Geason RSM** join us as our first speaker. Mary helped to show us that as part of being in a Mercy community, working for and with displaced people is a responsibility that each of us has. Her address gave the students a real sense of why this issue was so important to ISMAPNG.

Sr Rita Malavisi RSJ works with young people in detention in Broadmeadows, as well as working with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. Sr Rita ran two extremely informative, very interactive sessions with the group over the course of the afternoon, and captured the hearts of the students with her humour and empathy.

Throughout the two days, students were encouraged to ‘post’ comments on a variety of resources placed around the space we were meeting in (using post-its). These resources included the Australian national anthem (including the oft-forgotten second verse), excerpts from Pontifical documents on asylum seekers and refugees and some information debunking myths about the issue. By the end of our time, the resources were covered in thoughtful, insightful “tweets”.

That evening, we feel honoured to have a young Tamil man, **Yomal** come and share his experience with us using performance and song. His story was heartbreaking, yet hopeful, and the courage with which he shared with us took our breath away.



MLMC students and staff with guest presenter, Yomal

“Boundless plains to share? Asylum seekers/refugees: Seeking a merciful response.”

After some reflection and some much needed sleep, the group came together again in the morning to hear from **Dr Deborah Zion**, who teaches ethics at Monash University. Dr Zion spoke with authority on the issues we had been hearing about, and generously and patiently listened to and answered all of our questions, with honesty and compassion.

To complete the event students spent time in their school groups formulating plans for what they would do after the event. We prayed together, took ‘the pledge’ and commissioned and distributed our badges. A special thankyou was given to those at the Holy Cross centre for making us feel so at home during our time there.



Left: AMI staff member, Andrea Luscombe with students and guest presenter, Dr Deborah Zion



Right: Sr Mary Geason rsm (right) with Seeds of Justice Committee Members, Sr Anila Isaac rsm, Natasha Pisotek , Sam Weir and Angela Moore



Above: Sr Mary Geason rsm, OLMC students and staff member Sam Weir



Above: Sr Rita Malavisi RSJ, (centre) with students and staff having fun

Comments from the event:

- *My aim was to learn and I know I learnt a lot. I can now have a fully developed opinion on the issue so now I can fight for what I believe is right and share these amazing stories with others.*
- *The program exceeded my expectations. I was enthralled by the stories, and am compelled to make a difference in my school community.*
- *I loved how we got to communicate with other schools. I always believed the theme was a very important, interesting and relevant topic.*
- *I didn't come into this knowing a lot of information about refugees and asylum seekers, but now I am well informed and can pass on the knowledge I have learnt to others.*
- *I didn't expect it to have such a profound impact on my mind and my heart and my future. I was told once that "your passion should make you cry" and I have found my passion.*
- *It really opened my eyes and provided me with knowledge that I can now use to educate others. It was confrontational personally, meaning it challenged me to think (which is brilliant). Hearing personal stories has really inspired me to make a difference.*
- *I was very happy to work with other Mercy Schools and to share opinions and make friends with members of other schools. It is fantastic to join together in the Catholic community*
- *It was a confronting and eye-opening experience. It was great to hear the religious side of the situation with the Sisters as well as the expert faith side with Deborah. Yomal's performance was one of the most powerful things I've ever seen. The presence of an asylum seeker expressing his situation through music and drama really gave a human fact to the entire issue. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be able to listen to these stories and sharing all this extremely valuable knowledge. I hope to see everyone again next year!*

As the year draws to a close, there are a number of comments the Committee can make:

Sponsorship and support

The Committee is ever thankful for the ongoing support offered to us by the Institute Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea and by Mercy Education. As has been the case for over a decade now, it is through their financial sponsorship that we are able to continue to plan and implement high quality programs that challenge our participants and promote the pursuit of justice in our world.

We also recognise the investment made by Principals of Mercy sponsored, co-sponsored and affiliated schools. We thank them for continuing to provide time release for staff to attend, and for assisting to fund the participation of individual students and staff.

Dates for 2013

The schedule of events will continue to follow the now familiar format in 2013:

- **Student Event 1:** **Thursday 23rd – Friday 24th May (*Holy Cross Centre*)**
- **Staff Formation Day:** **Monday 5th August (*Mercy Congregation Centre*)**
- **Student Event 2:** **Thursday 24th – Friday 25th October (*Holy Cross Centre*)**

It is also with excitement that we look forward to the second Regional Seeds event in September, a date that is likely to become a fixture on the Seeds calendar in years to come:

- **Regional Seeds Student Event: Thursday 5th – Friday 6th September (*Araluen Camp, Anglesea*)**

Finally, anticipation is also beginning to grow as the prospect of a Perth based Seeds of Justice event (catering to Western Australian Mercy Schools) continues to look increasingly likely to occur sometime in 2013.

Finances and account

Natasha Pisotek and Mike Haywood are again to be thanked for their work in maintaining the Committee's accounts and managing its finances. An overview of the Committee's income and expenditure for the year can be found as an appendix to this report. While our sponsorship has increased in recent years, so too have some of our regular expenses.

Earlier in the year, the Committee decided unanimously to offer some financial assistance to the Regional Committee as they prepared for their inaugural event. In 2013, the Committee will again look to offer what support that it can to the Regional Committee, be this financial or otherwise.

For the past two years, the Committee has made the decision to provide some performance art during the evening of the October student event. Both the music and song of Scott Darlo in 2011 and Yomal's dramatic monologue in 2012 were received with great acclaim by all participants, and the Committee now feels that this element should become an integral part of the October program. As such, continuing to source – and recompense – local performance artists will become an important budget issue in future years.

Comments and Discussion Points

Regionalisation

It was with enormous excitement that the newly established Regional Committee ran its inaugural event at the Araluen Lutheran Camp in Anglesea from Tuesday 4th September – Wednesday 5th September. The feedback from this program has been resoundingly positive, and plans are in place for a second event in 2013.

While recognition and thanks must go to all schools and staff that took part in the initial meetings and planning, it seems appropriate to single out the administrative support provided by Mercy Regional College, Camperdown.

Sisters of Mercy

We were again greatly blessed by the presence of Sisters of Mercy at each event in 2012. Our programs were enriched by the involvement of Sr Giovanna Danza rsm, Sr Faye Kelly rsm, Sr Mary Geason rsm and Sr Anila Isaac rsm. Promoting awareness of the Mercy charism is a key principle of each Seeds event, and we are grateful for the gentle wisdom and vibrant faith that each of these remarkable women has so readily shared with our students and our staff during the course of the year.

At each student event, I am struck by the gentle beauty of the gardens at the Holy Cross Centre. From the elegant rose bushes to the many graceful natives, the gardens stand as a proud testimony not only to 'good soil' but to the caring hands that tend to it.

Closing Comments:

This, in some way, is the rationale that continues to guide our events. We have again been blessed with speakers and performers that have sparked rich and fertile discussions, and who have offered participants opportunities for considerable personal growth. Alongside of this, the Committee warmly recognises the active involvement of Mercy teaching staff not only across the course of the programs, but also once students have returned to their school communities.

The essential element of any garden though is of course the seeds themselves. Across 2012 it has been both humbling and heartening to have met with young women and men who are determined to ensure that acts of justice and of mercy occur not just as isolated events, but by the 'hundredfold'.

Peace,



Sam Weir and Bernadette Inman
On behalf of the Seeds of Justice Steering Committee
December 2012

Financial Report for Year Ending 30th November 2012

Starting Bank Balance **\$1,162.25**

As at 1 January 2012

Cash Receipts

Sisters of Mercy – Australia & PNG \$2,000.00

Mercy Education Limited \$2,000.00

Total Receipts **\$4,000.00**

TOTAL: **\$5,162.25**

Less Cash Payments:

Event One

Donations to Street Placements & Guest Speakers

Catholic Prison Ministry \$200.00

Sisters of Mercy of Australia & PNG \$200.00

Alan Ansall \$200.00

Mercy Place Parkville \$150.00

Mercy Place East Melbourne \$150.00

McAuley Community Services for Women \$150.00

Bailly House Residence Trust \$150.00

Fr Bob Maguire Foundation \$150.00

St Vincent De Paul Society \$150.00

Exodus Community \$150.00

Transport to Placements \$587.47

Other Purchases: Journey Stones, hand cream & nail polish \$451.60

Total Payments for Event One **\$2,689.07**

Donation to Mercy Regional College Camperdown **\$500.00**

Staff Formation Day

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre \$250.00

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project \$200.00

Other Purchases: Gifts \$46.95

Total Payments for Staff Formation Day **\$496.95**

Event Two

Guest Speakers

Yomal Rajasinghe \$200.00

Deborah Zion \$200.00

Sr. Rita Malavisi \$400.00

Sr. Mary Geason \$200.00

Flower arrangements \$144.55

Total Payments for Event Two **\$1,144.55**

TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2012 **\$4,830.57**

CURRENT BANK BALANCE **\$331.68**





Mercy Education

ACN: 154 531 870