

# **Seeds of Justice 2013 Annual Report**



*I solemnly pledge ...*

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



*I will remain ...*

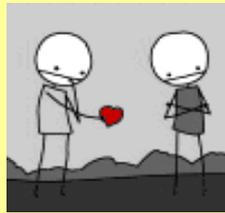
committed, steadfast and connected to others in heartfelt compassion.

*I 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* 2013 School Year

*“But let justice roll down like waters,  
And righteousness like an ever flowing stream”  
(Amos 5:24)*

As the Seeds of Justice project moves further into its second decade, it is worth taking a moment to reflect upon our project’s name. The simple beauty of the ‘seed’ metaphor that we take as our title is that, by definition, it speaks of the potential for growth. And as we learn from the *Parable of the Sower*, it is when seeds are planted in rich soil that this growth can truly begin. Throughout 2013, it has been the humble aim of the project to offer rich soil to the students and staff participating in each event. To this end, it has been with great pleasure and some excitement that the scope of the project has itself grown: with the Regional Victoria Committee hosting its second annual event; and with an inaugural Western Australian event taking place in July.

As the project has expanded, it has remained committed to its three founding goals:

- to offer formation and development in the Mercy charism to students and staff from Mercy Education;
- 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.

Also, as the project has grown, so too has the number of wonderful people involved in working to meet these three founding goals; to the point where we now have three distinct planning committees. It is with pleasure that I acknowledge and thank each member of the three committees for their efforts to plan, facilitate and then review each of our programs this year.

### **Melbourne Committee 2013:**

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

### **Regional Victoria Committee 2013:**

- Darren Egberts (Mercy Regional College, Camperdown)
- Jo-Anne Saunders (Mercy Regional College, Camperdown)
- Tony Haintz (Damascus College, Ballarat)
- Maureen Myers (Damascus College, Ballarat)
- John O'Sullivan (Emmanuel College, Warrnambool)
- Catherine Phelan (Trinity College, Colac)

### **Western Australian Committee 2013:**

- Rosa Speranza (Mercedes College, Perth)
- Helen Chaffer (Santa Maria College, Attadale)

A very warm thank you is also extended to the team in the Mercy Education office, who take on much of the behind the scenes administrative work, without which our events could not go ahead:

- Pam de Kort
- Effie Coulson

While the Melbourne Committee will continue to plan and facilitate two student and one staff program each year, the addition of the Regional Victoria and the Western Australia events means that the Seeds of Justice calendar now includes five annual programs. An overview of each of the programs held in 2013 is provided below.

## Seeds of Justice Programs

### **Melbourne Student Event 1: 23 & 24 May 2013**

**Theme:** “*Who is Mercy?*”

**Venue:** Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe



Our first event for the year invited participants to engage with the concept of ‘Mercy’ and to explore what it means to be a person of mercy in a range of contexts.

The first workshop session was hosted by Sr Kath Tierney rsm, who offered a brief history of the work undertaken by the Sisters of Mercy in Australia, and explained the rationale behind the Institute’s recent moves into Aged Care ministry.

After lunch, participants worked with Br Harry and Kerry from the Olympic Village Exodus Community as they explored the stories of challenge and hope that they have encountered in their work with those experiencing significant socioeconomic disadvantage.

As in previous years, the evening session offered participants an opportunity to visit and engage with one of a range of social outreach organisations across Melbourne. In 2013, students were offered the following options for their community placements:

- Father Bob Maguire Soup Van
- McAuley House, Parkville
- Mercy Care, East Melbourne
- Mercy Care, Parkville
- Baily House, North Melbourne
- St Jude’s Homework Club, Carlton
- Olympic Village Exodus Community, West Heidelberg
- St Vincent de Paul Soup Van, Collingwood

On the second day of the program, participants worked with a spokesperson from McAuley Community Services for Women; and looked at the many ways in which Mercy school communities can link in with MCSW and assist them in the remarkable work that they do. Sr Anila Isaac rsm also shared stories of her own time living and working alongside the residents of Regina Coeli (now McAuley House) and offered participants further insight into what it means to be a person of mercy.

#### **Comments from the event:**

- *The program exceeded my expectations. It has been such a valuable learning experience and I thoroughly enjoyed my placement and everything offered throughout the last two days.*
- *I loved the Seeds of Justice experience, because we got a chance to find out about all the Mercy organisations and we got to meet the hard working people. We got the chance to reflect on what Mercy was for us and to others.*
- *It was great to hear and listen to people's stories from all walks of life, while sharing the experience with others passionate about social justice.*
- *Seeds of Justice gave me a great insight into what 'Mercy' means; and into how I can 'be Mercy' to others.*
- *The program gave me an amazing opportunity to understand more about the world and the people around us.*
- *I learnt things that I really needed to know. The program helped me open my mind to what is going on in our community.*
- *The program was a very rewarding experience. I learnt a lot that I can use back at school to raise awareness for all. I am now more educated about social justice.*
- *It gave us the chance to think deeper about 'Mercy' and allowed us to realise how much we can make a change.*
- *I liked meeting other students and seeing that even though you are strangers, the power of Mercy and teachers bring us together.*

As a key part of the May 2013 event, each participant was invited to spend time reflecting on the question "Who is Mercy?" The responses offered by each participant was indicative of the deep insight and gentle wisdom of the assembled group, and a selection of these is provided below:

#### **'Who Is Mercy?' responses**

- *Mercy is someone who is able to see the light in darkness.*
- *Mercy shows respect and dignity to everyone.*
- *Mercy is a heart opener - not just an eye opener.*
- *Mercy is our responses and devotion to discover the needs of others. Mercy is acting on the needs of others and forgiving those who may be undeserving in others eyes.*
- *Mercy lies in the heart of each human being.*
- *Mercy is the connection that people make one to another, that allows them to empathise and assist the 'other' that they see as truly human.*
- *Mercy is empowering people and giving them opportunities to improve their situation. Mercy shows indiscriminate respect and care to all people.*
- *Mercy is the world that we are faced with every day. It is the ability that each person holds to take the initiative to support and to guide others. Whether a person is in need, or is simply asking a question, the way in which we respond is Mercy.*

**Western Australia Student Event: 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

**Theme:** “*Boundless plains to share?.... Asylum seekers and refugees: seeking a merciful response*”

**Venue:** St John of God Retreat Centre, Safety Bay



On 29 and 30 July, a group of Year 10 students and I attended the Seeds of Justice Conference at Saint John of God retreat, Safety Bay, where we were joined by students from Mercedes, St Brigid's and Aranmore Colleges. The overnight conference was focused on the theme of asylum seekers and refugees, and through the course of the two days, we heard shocking yet exceptional, first hand stories from refugees themselves. The presentations, workshops and stories we uncovered, heard and discussed, dramatically changed many opinions of the students and there were many times throughout the course of the two days where there was not a dry eye in the room. Our first intensive day was twelve-hours long and as we listened to the many eye opening stories, we felt compelled to change the views that refugees and asylum seekers were perceived as in society. The second day was about putting our knowledge into action and we hope to build a strong connection with the Intensive English Centre students at Aranmore College. Along with the workshops, we met many new friends and built great relationships with all the students, and are excited to have a reunion eventually to see how our progress has played out in our respective schools. Overall, the Seeds of Justice Conference was a great success and a life-changing experience.

*Kate Robertson (Year 10, Santa Maria College, Attadale)*

**Staff Formation Day: 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

**Theme:** “*Mercy and Justice Shall Meet*”

**Venue:** Mercy Congregation Centre, Alphington

This year's Staff Formation day was well attended, and proved to be the starting point for many justice focused connections and conversations. Alongside of the three founding goals of each Seeds of Justice event, the 2013 Staff Formation day also pursued the following aims:

- to provide an opportunity for participants to gain a better understanding of other Mercy ministries;
- to provide a broader perspective on the social teaching of the Universal Church through the work of the Office for Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese of Melbourne; and
- to share ideas and projects across the colleges and to explore further the Mercy Education values.

The day began with time for prayer, and a brief overview of the current developments taking place within the Seeds of Justice project.

The first workshop for the day was hosted by Margaret Banks, the Community Services Manager at McAuley Community Services for Women [MCSW]. Margaret spoke candidly of the uncomfortably high statistical likelihood that an Australian woman has of encountering family violence, and offered some of the personal stories that sit behind the facts and figures. With this context in place, Margaret then went on to explain the range of services offered by MCSW. While the difficult reality of family violence is confronting for all, it was Margaret's message of compassion and hope in the face of this social ill that resonated throughout the workshop.

The second workshop was hosted by Mark Clarke, Executive Officer of the Melbourne Archdiocesan Office for Justice and Peace. Mark worked with participants to examine the nature of 'justice' itself; and challenged all staff present to reevaluate how their school communities take up the mission to respond to social injustice as a proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

In the final session of the day, participants took the opportunity to swap stories of the social justice initiatives taking place in their own schools, and to share ideas, contacts and plans for future.

**Regional Victoria Student Event:** 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**Theme:** "*Homelessness*"

**Venue:** Araluen Camp, Anglesea

The Event was a great success; the five schools involved each had a role to play and contributed to the essence of the days with joy and gusto. Schools that attended included, Mercy Regional College Camperdown, Notre Dame College Shepparton, Damascus College Ballarat, Emmanuel College Warrnambool and Trinity College Colac. A total of 27 students and 8 staff were booked to take part in the event and there was a good ratio of male to female students.



Our presenters for the two days included an icon to the Homeless in Melbourne, Les Twentyman OA and Sr Assumpta Kent rsm who works in St Kilda with those who battle in the street as well as Briar Terrace and the City Mission. Br Peter Walsh fms and Jacinta Holffar represented St Vincent De Paul and the incredible work of the Soup Kitchens and programs that St Vincent De Paul advocate for the homeless both locally, nationally and worldwide. The issues of addictions influencing the number of homeless or disengaged community members living on our streets in both city and rural settings was highlighted by each of the speakers. Their stories touched the hearts of the participants and the responses they offered showed how much they had been surprised yet inspired by the experiences our speakers shared. Whilst the problem seems so endless, the students were also presented with positive ways to help a number of different organisations continue their valuable work.

All the students mixed well and were actively involved in the comfortable and intimate environment at Araluen, being reminded that even though they may be isolated by distance, particularly in regional areas, they belong to a Mercy family. As Mercy people students may be inspired by each other to promote Social Justice issues with creativity and fervor.

Staff from each school were actively involved during the event; from planning to booking speakers and leading prayer or facilitating group activities during the Event. Notre Dame College provided a wonderful wakeup call of team building activities in the morning and Damascus College set a beautiful prayer space, helping us to begin in a prayerful and reflective manner. One of the other major activities was the 'hypothetical', ably facilitated by John O'Sullivan from Emmanuel College. Each school including Mercy Regional College and Trinity College also took a role in welcoming and thanking our guest speakers.

The mixed school group activities resulted in some very creative responses to the topic and were definitely inspired by each of the speakers. Finally of course there was the time for staff to sit with their own College students to plan for the future, to present ideas to nurture both awareness and active responses to the concept of 'homelessness' in their schools.

We would hope that the Regional Seeds of Justice Event at Anglesea will grow and continue to foster an awakening of interest, leadership and active response to Social Justice issues in our Mercy students. Promoting action through the process of touching the heart, reflecting and planning with our minds and taking action with our own two hands.

I would like to thank the Regional planning team with representatives from Damascus, Trinity, Emmanuel and Mercy Colleges along with support from the Melbourne planning Committee, for their efforts and dedication to the task of planting the Seeds of Justice in the hearts of so many fortunate students.

*Jo-Anne Saunders*

*On behalf of the*

*Seeds of Justice Regional Planning Team 2013.*

**Melbourne Student Event 2: 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

**Theme:** *"Paving the Road to Refuge"*

**Venue:** Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe

The Committee made the decision at the end of 2010 to use the October events as an opportunity to explore the four focus areas in justice identified by ISMAPNG. While the 2012 October event had previously explored the issues of asylum seekers and refugees, the feeling of the Committee was that in the time since then the urgency and importance of this topic had sadly increased; and as such the decision was made to again examine these issues as the focus of our October event.

The three workshops on the first day of the program were run in tandem by two dynamic hosts. Sr Brigid Arthur csb spoke of her work with the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, sharing stories and photos of the women, men and children that she had worked alongside; while Dana Affleck provided participants with the information necessary to make an informed and empowered contribution to a national conversation that is all too often dominated by shallow rhetoric and political posturing.



In the evening session, the reigns were handed over to the participants to make their own response to the material that they had been presented with during the day. The creativity and energy with which the group took to this task was truly awesome in every sense of the word; and the range of responses that the participants came up with included prayer, song, dance, storybooks, dramatic pieces, and role play. In each case, the work of the students was imbued with notable amounts of good humour and hopefulness, along with a conviction to advocate for positive change.



On the second day of the program, participants spoke with a panel of guests, each of whom was involved in some form of outreach work with asylum seekers and refugees. During the discussion, the participants heard a range of ideas for practical action in response to the issues at hand; and they later had the chance to develop these ideas further when meeting with their own school groups.

#### **Comments from the event:**

- *This program, I believe, is as good as it gets. It showed us so much. We have learnt a lot.*
- *The program has inspired me to get more involved in social justice issues in my own community.*
- *I learnt a lot that I can apply in my life and I feel inspired to do further work.*
- *I thought the program was very well structured, perfectly organised. The games were great injections of energy. A wonderful balance was achieved, and I had a lot of fun, whilst gaining lots of valuable and important information.*
- *The program went way beyond my expectations. The experiences and friendships made whilst being here are one of the most memorable moments in my life as a student.*
- *I learnt a lot and gained a better insight into the way asylum seekers and refugees are treated and into the challenges that they may face.*
- *Ultimately, with the combination of the people, venue, eager atmosphere and goals, this is probably the best experience in my life (so far).*
- *It was a great experience and I hope that it continues to thrive. It has created a new world of opportunity and ideas.*
- *Congratulations to the Mercy Education network. Seeds of Justice is a magnificent initiative that must continue as an integral feature of our connection in the Mercy tradition.*
- *I love Seeds of Justice! Together we can make a difference and real change on the issue of asylum seekers in Australia.*
- *I loved listening to all the guest speakers as they were interesting and very knowledgeable. I gained knowledge that I know I will use.*
- *I absolutely loved "Raise your Voice" as it was so amazing to see the wonderful and clever stuff that people do.*
- *Seeds conferences are incredible events that I hope many other like-minded young adults get to experience.*

## Comments and Discussion Points:

### Sponsorship and support

- We remain grateful for the ongoing support of MEL and ISMAPNG. As in previous years, it is again the case that much of the Committee's expenditure is on donations to community placement locations and on gifts to speakers and guests; our funds are thus disseminated across a range of worthy social outreach services and individuals.
- Additional, ongoing sponsorship funds have also been offered by Grant Thornton: Chartered Accountants. As an annual commitment, Grant Thornton has contributed a total of \$3000 to the Seeds of Justice project.
- From this additional sponsorship, the Committee agreed to offer \$1000 to the Western Australian committee and \$500 to the Regional Victoria committee, to assist with the costs of their respective programs.
- As always, we appreciate the support of the Principals of Mercy sponsored, co-sponsored and affiliated schools. We are grateful for the energy, time and resources they invest in allocating funds for students and staff to attend events, and allowing time release for staff.

### Dates for 2014

The dates for each event are as follows:

- Student Event 1: Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> – Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May (*Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe*)
- Staff Formation Day: Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August (*Mercy Centre, Alphington*)
- Regional Victoria Wednesday 20 & Thursday 21 August (*Araluen Camp Anglesea*)
- Student Event 2: Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October (*Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe*)
- WA Event: TBA

### Membership

- Throughout 2013, all members have given generously of their time, energy, creativity and passion, and the Committee recognises and appreciates the support of those schools that have allowed time for members to attend meetings and events.
- As the year draws to a close, we farewell Loretta Kitch from the Committee and welcome Mairead Kennedy. Loretta is thanked for her many contributions during her time as a Committee member, and we wish her well for 2014 and beyond.

## Closing Comments:



While 2013 has had many highlights, perhaps the most exciting news was the birth of Amos Inman. The Committee welcomed its newest and youngest ‘member’ with the gift of some gardening tools, ready for when Amos is old enough to tend to some rich soil of his own. As the year ahead holds the promise of much growth and excitement for young Amos, so too does it for the Seeds of Justice project; as we look to further consolidate the Regional Victoria and Western Australia programs, and seek to plant further seeds amongst the students and staff of our Mercy schools.

Peace,

Sam Weir, Committee Chair

On behalf of the Seeds of Justice Steering Committee

November 2013

# FINANCIAL REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013

## MELBOURNE ACCOUNTS

**Starting Bank Balance** **\$ 331.68**

As at 1 January 2013

**Cash Receipts**

15/03/2013: Mercy Education Limited \$ 2,000.00

25/03/2013: Sisters of Mercy – Australia & PNG \$ 2,000.00

14/10/2013: Grant Thornton sponsorship \$ 2,000.00

**Total Receipts** **\$ 6,000.00**

**TOTAL: \$ 6,331.68**

**Less Cash Payments:**

**Event One - May**

Donations to Street Placements & Guest Speakers \$ 150.00

McAuley Community Services for Women \$ 150.00

Mercy Place Parkville \$ 150.00

Mercy Place East Melbourne \$ 150.00

Exodus Community \$ 150.00

St Vincent De Paul Society \$ 150.00

Fr Bob Maguire Foundation \$ 150.00

Bailly House Residence Trust \$ 150.00

St Judes Community Centre \$ 150.00

McAuley Services for Women (Guest Speaker) \$ 200.00

Exodus Community (Guest Speaker) \$ 200.00

Donation to Guest Speaker \$ 200.00

**Total Payments for Event One** **\$ 1,800.00**

**Staff Formation Day - August**

Donation to McAuley Services for Women \$200.00

**Total Payments for Staff Formation Day** **\$200.00**

**Event Two – October**

Guest Speakers

Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project \$ 300.00

Dana Affleck \$ 300.00

Chocolates gifts \$ 36.00

Flower arrangements \$ 140.00

**Total Payments for Event Two** **\$ 776.00**

**Other Expenses**

Seeds of Justice Badges \$ 933.45

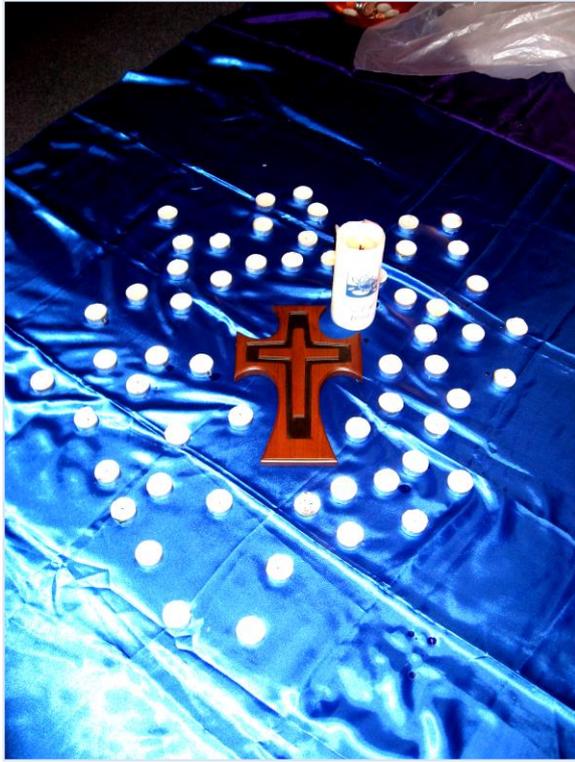
**Total** **\$ 933.45**

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2013** **\$ 3,709.45**

**CURRENT BANK BALANCE** **\$2,622.23**

Account held at Mount Lilydale Mercy College

Account Number: 124170



Mercy Education  
ABN 69 154 531 870