



Mercy Partners Newsletter

Issue No 4 – Jan. 2010

Greetings, sisters and partners in ministry

We begin 2010 with great hope and peace and pray that each of our sisters and partners in ministry are ready for this year ahead. This newsletter introduces the new members of the Sponsorship Council of Mercy Partners, and provides a copy of the First Report to Rome as well as a painting done for Mercy Partners.

It is with great pleasure that we introduce to you the members of the Mercy Partners Council. This group will lead Mercy Partners for the next few years. Their names were announced on the 12th December. The Sponsorship Council consists of four councillors each of whom are appointed by the four Congregations. These four Councillors then conducted a discernment process to select the additional three Councillors. This took place during November and early December 2009. The following is a little introduction to each of them.

Mr Ray Campbell: Ray is currently the Director of the Queensland Bioethics Centre and of the John Paul 11 Centre for Family and Life, both agencies of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. He is currently a member of Research Ethics Committee of St Vincent's and Holy Spirit Sisters Health Service, Qld. Ray is married to Carolyn with two step-daughters and five grandchildren.

Mr Garry Everett: Garry Chaired Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission for 15 years; erstwhile Chair of Parish Council; member of St Vinnies local Conference; recently (October '09) completed a Review of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Toowoomba. He is married and now has grandchildren.

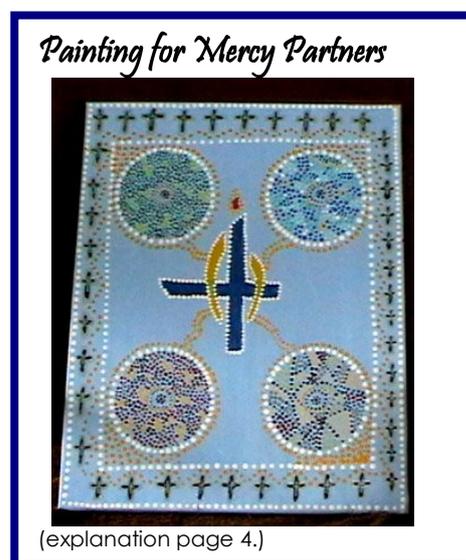
Sr Anne Hetherington rsm: Anne is the Steward's Councillor for the Brisbane Sisters of Mercy. A secondary school teacher by profession (now retired), fourteen years she was Principal of All Hallows' School, then Director of Mission at the Mater Hospital and more recently served two terms on the Brisbane Congregation Leadership Team.

Sr Berneice Loch rsm: Berneice is the Steward's Councillor for the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy. She has been in teaching, administration and leadership within schools and within the Congregation for a significant part of ministry life. Berneice worked as a facilitator mainly with other Congregations and Catholic Education Offices. She is a member of the Rockhampton Diocesan Environmental Awareness Commission, and at times been a member of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and its Capital Grants Committee, and a member of the Board of Mercy Health and Aged Care Central Queensland Limited.

Sr Marie Melville rsm: Marie is the Steward's Councillor for the Townsville Sisters of Mercy. Most of her ministry time has been at St Patrick's College, secondary girls' day and residential school. She has also fulfilled various roles in the College, including caring for the residential students and principal for 24 years. A member of the Board of the Mater Health Services North Queensland, and undertaken various leadership roles within the Congregation.

Emeritus Professor Peter Sheehan OA: Peter retired from the position of Vice-Chancellor at Australian Catholic University. Immediately before that time, he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies at the University of Queensland. In 1995, he became an Officer of the Order of Australia for services as a psychology educator and a researcher. Currently, he holds the position of Chair of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Centre of Excellence for Positive Behaviour Support (for the disabled), and a Member of the Queensland Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Council.

Sr Moira Truelson rsm: Moira is the Steward's Councillor for Cairns Sisters of Mercy. She taught in both Primary and Secondary schools for many years before moving into Chaplaincy work at Central Queensland University, Adult Faith Development and Pastoral Planning on behalf of the Diocese of Rockhampton. She has also been involved in Congregation Leadership. Recently been working in Pakistan on behalf of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia.



(explanation page 4.)

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

The Mission

The purpose of Mercy Partners as stated in its Statute is:

- 2.1 As a public juridic person, MERCY PARTNERS continues the mission of Jesus Christ and assumes responsibility to further the aged care, religious, health, education, charitable and community service ministries entrusted to it within the ministries of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 2.2 MERCY PARTNERS ensures through its governance policies and practices that each of the works for which it is responsible operates in conformity with the teachings, discipline and laws of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 2.3 MERCY PARTNERS will continue to build on the charism and sound traditions of the Sisters of Mercy and other Stewards within the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

This will be a brief report. The twelve month period since Mercy Partners was approved in November 2008 has been needed to get the new entity to a stage where it is ready to function. The Stewards believe this has been achieved with the appointment of the Council on 12 December 2009.

The Sponsorship Committee, of seven Sisters of Mercy from the four founding Congregations which was responsible for preparing the submission requesting the approval of Mercy Partners, continued to work throughout 2009. It held its final meeting and was formally disbanded on 13 November 2009. Considerable work was undertaken by the Sponsorship Committee and its Formation, Legal and Implementation Sub-Committees.

Developments which are of particular importance in readying Mercy Partners to undertake its responsibilities include the following:

- ❖ Publication of the *Statute and Constitution* as approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
- ❖ Publication of *Mission and Values* as submitted with the application for approval.

- ❖ Preparation and Publication of *Selection of Councillors*, a document covering the role and responsibilities of the Council and criteria for selection of Councillors.
- ❖ Preparation and Publication of *Theology of Sponsorship*, a paper intended to be the basis for reflection and further development by the Council.
- ❖ Preparation and Publication of *Transfer of Ministry*, a paper setting out the processes and criteria to be addressed when there is a request to transfer a ministry or group of ministries into the care of Mercy Partners. The paper has been recommended to the Council for their consideration, finalisation and approval.
- ❖ Preparation and Publication of *Shared Wisdom: A Document to Assist the Implementation of Mercy Partners*. This is a compendium of what was learnt by the Committee over the years in which it worked. It includes several recommendations for consideration by the Council.
- ❖ The Constitution as approved in Rome was the basis of a successful application to the Catholic Bishops of Queensland for Mercy Partners to be incorporated under the Roman Catholic Church (Incorporation of Church Entities) Act 1994 (Qld).
- ❖ Legal Advisors have been asked to draw up a "common constitution" to be adopted by the various companies conducting ministries in the care of Mercy Partners. The Council has been asked to undertake appropriate consultation on this document and adopt it in its final form.
- ❖ The Implementation Committee has done all that is necessary to make it possible for the new entity to function as a civil entity:
 - office accommodation has been prepared at 131 Queens Road Nundah (a property owned by the Brisbane Congregation);
 - a bank account has been opened;
 - Mercy Partners has been registered for an Australian Business Number and for an endorsement as a tax concession charity.
- ❖ The Formation Committee has ensured that Formation has continued to be a focus of activity for Mercy Partners. The point is included in this list for the sake of completion, but more information is given below.

Formation

The formation programme commenced in 2007, well in advance of the approval of Mercy Partners in November 2008. The vision is to build a community of leaders who are committed to Mercy ministries into the future, be it as a Councillor, a Director of a Board or an Executive Leader. An essential strategy in attempting so much in the first two years, was the employment by the Founding Congregations of a Formation Resource person. She will continue in this position with Mercy Partners in 2010 and, we hope, beyond.

Thirty-five people have participated in the programme to this stage and others will enter the programme in 2010. It has been planned as a number of discreet units which can be done in any order, this design being of assistance when it comes to needing to deliver the programme in centres at considerable distance from each other. To date half the people doing the programme have been Sisters of Mercy since the Sponsorship Committee itself and several Sisters from the four Leadership Teams were urged to participate.

Four people have completed the programme during a residential weekend held in Cairns in

July 2009. The course of formation can be done over a period of two years if the person is able to attend all of the weekend seminars in that time. The study streams are:

- ❖ Catholic Church – Catholic social teaching, Governance and management within Catholic entities, Biblical foundations of Catholic care and promotion of Catholic identity.
- ❖ Mercy Partners' vision – foundation stories, present issues locally and globally, and future trends.
- ❖ Theology of Sponsorship, Theology of Mission, Prophetic Leadership in the Church.
- ❖ Governance and Leadership – structures and responsibilities, accountability requirements both civil and canonical.

In order to complete the full course, participants do a Project to be presented to a suitable audience. Throughout the time they are doing the course they are supported with on-going reflection material, peer group support and mentoring.

The Formation Committee is now at the stage of writing a more complete curriculum based on its experiences and learning during the past two years.



The Persons Involved

On 13 November a Discernment Evening was held in Brisbane. Those attending were the four Steward's Councillors, a Facilitator, Sr Mary McDonald sgs, and seven others who had been invited by the Stewards to consider if they would be open to an invitation to serve as Councillors for Mercy Partners. Prior to the evening they had been provided with reading material about Mercy Partners. The Facilitator led the participants in a process of reflection and discernment on the role and responsibility of a Councillor, and their own possible call to serve in this way.

Following the meeting, the four Steward's Councillors met to decide who, of those available, should be asked to join them on the first Council. The Council Members are:

Mr Ray Campbell	Councillor
Mr Garry Everett	Councillor
Sr Anne Hetherington rsm	Steward's Councillor, Brisbane Sisters of Mercy
Sr Berneice Loch rsm	Steward's Councillor, Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy
Sr Marie Melville rsm	Steward's Councillor, Townsville Sisters of Mercy
Emeritus Professor Peter Sheehan OA	Councillor
Sr Moira Truelson rsm	Steward's Councillor, Cairns Sisters of Mercy

It is expected that the Council will need to spend time on its own formation as a group prior to being able to announce that it is ready to accept applications for any Ministry to be transferred into its care. It is likely the Council will be in this position sometime during the second half of 2010. In the meantime the Stewards, the four founding Congregations, are continuing their preparations to ready ministries for transfer to Mercy Partners.

Sr Carmel Dwan rsm continues to be the Formation Resource Person coordinating the Formation programme and follow-up to it. Sr Margaret Endicott has been the Sponsorship Committee's facilitator throughout its existence and will be continuing as facilitator for the Council.

Undertakings

It is anticipated that during the first few years of the operation of Mercy Partners, the Council will need to devote considerable energy to learning and understanding its role and to dealing with the transfer of responsibility of existing ministries into its care.

The four Founding Congregations are in a process of considering the proposed reconfiguring of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia. Some other Mercy Congregations with responsibility for large ministries have been following closely the development of Mercy Partners and the Founding Congregations have been happy to share information with them and others who enquire. However, it is recognized that the new entity will need to consolidate and establish its own identity prior to being in a position to expand further.

Financial Situation

During its establishment, the cost of Mercy Partners has been met by the Founding Congregations according to a funding formula agreed at the outset. It is intended that its costs will be transferred to the ministries for which it is responsible, but during the period of transition which might be from two to five years, there will be an ongoing need for the Congregations to make a contribution.

A Bank Account for Mercy Partners was established in November 2009 and separate bookkeeping commenced at the same time. Until then the Rockhampton Congregation looked after the financial affairs of Mercy Partners. No separate audit of Mercy Partners is possible at this time, but one will be conducted at the end of the first financial year as determined by the new Council.

Some financial information which might be of interest includes:

- ❖ Recorded Expenditure by the Founding Congregations during the 12 months since approval of Mercy Partners was \$ 50,069.00
- ❖ This figure does not include an estimated \$48,000.00 in contributed services by Sisters of the Founding Congregation eg for travel to meetings, secretarial work, documentation etc.
- ❖ In November 2009, each of the Founding Congregations made an establishment grant to Mercy Partners, the total of which was \$80,000.00

Relations with Diocesan Bishops

The Leaders of the Founding Congregations have continued to take responsibility for keeping local Bishops informed on what is occurring with the development of Mercy Partners. At this stage no ministry has been transferred to the care of Mercy Partners, but the Stewards have recommended to the Council that the process for transferring a ministry will include a letter of support from the Bishop in whose Diocese the ministry is situated.

Among other recommendations that the Stewards have made to the Council, is that Mercy Partners should establish appropriate and mutually acceptable protocols with the local Bishop at the time of transfer of a Ministry. In addition, steps are being taken to ensure that the Councillors understand the respective roles of the Bishop and of the Council with respect to safeguarding the authentic Catholicity of the works.

(The final report was approved by the four Stewards of Mercy Partners.)

Painting for Mercy Partners Office

Barbara Trevaskis is an aboriginal woman in Rockhampton who has been associated with the Sisters of Mercy there for many years. She is a descendant of the Batchulla Tribe of Fraser Island. The following is the explanation of her painting as shown on page one.

Background: Blue reflects Mother Mary and the Water of Life

Border: The mercy crosses reflect the images of past and present, chosen to carry the Light (which symbolizes Christ) from one chapter to the next.

White dots: Will be found all around sacred objects and always reflect the Holy Spirit.

Yellow dots: Represent the candles that are passed on to light up the way for those who follow.

Colours: Yellow dots around the circles are again the light of the candles. Black and silver of the circle reflect the present. Blue and yellow reflect the future – the mercy spirit of love, compassion, wisdom and endurance. The red in the centre of the circle represents Jesus.

Circles: The top right hand circle is the islands and overseas' land. The top left hand circle is the rainforest in this sacred country. Bottom left is the desert and the open plains. Bottom right is the city.

Centre: The dreamtime tracks leading to the new symbol are the light of Jesus. The centre is the new symbol of coming together as one working family, just as it was in the beginning with the love reflected by Catherine McAuley. The flame of fire above the new symbol lights up the future and for all the world to see especially Jesus.