



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

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A newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families and friends, and supporters of our Congregation

Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Mary Aikenhead Ministries Task Groups meeting at Bondi Junction: (left) Joint meeting of the Legal and Finance Task Groups; (top right) Communication and Events Task Group joined by Sister Elizabeth Dodds; (lower right) Leadership Development Task Group.

To assist in the implementation of the move to Mary Aikenhead Ministries, the previous Congregational Leader and Council appointed an Implementation Team and six Task Groups. On 17 November 2008, all the Task Groups came together to share the work that they have been undertaking and identify emerging challenges. The Task Groups have been inspired by Mary Aikenhead's words: *"We can never sit down contented with what has been done. The spirit of our Holy Institute requires that each of us shall be ever ready to undertake and try to accomplish all that may promote the Divine Honour and Glory"*

Implementation Team

The Implementation Team has the role of absorbing and processing the information from all the Task Groups and then providing timely advice and recommendations to the CL&C and feedback to the Task Groups.

Trusteeship Working Party

The Trusteeship Working Party has highlighted the challenge of moving to lay ecclesial leadership for Mary Aikenhead Ministries and the importance of communication of this collaborative style of

leadership and the fact that the Trustees are not the Congregational Leader with Canonical Authority. The need for clear structures to provide pathways for this prophetic leadership model, as well as the importance of leadership and the symbolic role of the trustees in regard to ceremonial occasions, pastoral visits and relationships with the Congregation and Rome were stressed. It is vital that the Trustees understand and claim their "prophetic heart" as part of the living Church with living faith.

Legal Task Group (Civil & Canonical)

The group reported that the issues are complex but achievable. The Canon Lawyers have advised that the overall plan complies with canon law but the implementation options must be subject to ongoing review to ensure canon law compliance. Some of the more complex issues will require input from both the Legal and the Finance Task Groups.

Leadership Development Task Group

This group has been developing an induction program which will provide reflective, spiritual and authentic

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Trustees Appointed



Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries: (from left) Sister Linda Ferrington rsc, Mr David Robinson, Sister Elizabeth Dodds rsc, Rowena McNally and Richard Harpham.

Sister Linda Ferrington rsc was born in Sydney, educated by the Sisters of Charity and has been engaged in the ministry of education in various ways for the last thirty years. Linda was a Trustee of Sisters of Charity Australia for six years while a member of the Congregational Council and has been involved in Governance since 1992. She has served on Education and Health Boards with the Congregation and the wider Church. Linda is Director of the Institute for Mission which is responsible for Adult Faith Formation in the Diocese of Parramatta.

David Robinson resides in Sydney. He was educated by the Sisters of Charity and the Christian Brothers and is a graduate of the University of Sydney. David is a Chartered Accountant and a Company Director. He has been involved with the Sisters of Charity since 1989, serving on education boards and other committees and is currently Chairman of the Congregation's Advisory Finance Committee.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds rsc has twelve years experience as a Trustee of the Sisters of Charity of Australia serving as a Congregational Councillor and in the immediate past as Congregational Leader. She is a graduate of the University of Sydney and the Australian Catholic University. Her ministry experience includes education, governance and administration, serving on both education and health boards within the Sisters of Charity and other Religious Institutes and as a member of the Stewardship Board of Catholic Health Australia. In 2008 the Petition for the approval of Mary Aikenhead Ministries was granted by the Vatican after Elizabeth travelled to Rome and presented the work of so many colleagues.

Rowena McNally was born in Papua New Guinea and attended primary school there. She completed her education in Sydney and at All Hallows in Brisbane, where she now resides. Her qualifications in law entitle her to

practice in the Federal Court and the High Court of Australia. She is an accredited mediator, arbitrator and construction industry adjudicator. She is a director of St Vincent's & Holy Spirit Health.

Richard Harpham lives in Sydney. He has over 36 years experience in the financial services and banking industry within Australia and overseas. The bulk of his career has been in commercial banking with Citibank, Westpac and St George. He attended St Ignatius College, Riverview and is a graduate of the University of Queensland. Richard has been involved with the Sisters of Charity for well over 10 years serving on a number of boards and committees relating to health, education and the Congregation's financial administration.

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adult learning as well as recognising and validating the individual and collective journey of the Trustees. The group has also made recommendations regarding the appointment of a spiritual advisor, mentors and the development of a National Leadership Development Team.

Communication and Events Team

The Communications and Events Task Group has been developing strategies to ensure effective internal and external communications with a focus on communication, publicity and events management. Tasks underway include the development of a logo and design, a website, a newsletter and the planning of events to celebrate the establishment of Mary Aikenhead Ministries as well as recognising the loss and grief of the move from the Congregation. The Task Group will ensure the events recognise that spirit, values and mission are the key focus of the new Ministries and acknowledge the great traditions of the Congregation.

Finance Task Group

This group is concerned with the resourcing of the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries as well as the on-going financial viability of the ministries. They are considering issues regarding current and future ministries, and Congregational support and negotiating financial arrangements with Health and Education. The Task Group has identified that Mary Aikenhead Ministries will require "seed" funds from TSCA as well as people support, and that health and education will fund Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries in the long term.

Interview

A conversation between Sister Laureen Dixon rsc and the Communication & Events Task Group

Bruce Stephens: What is your role as Project Manager for Mary Aikenhead Ministries?

Sister Laureen: If I put it into two words, it's co-ordination and oversight: "Coordination" in relation to the task groups that we've established, which will work according to their terms of reference and report through the implementation task group to the Congregational Leader and Council; "Oversight" in ensuring that we meet the July 1st, 2009 deadline.



Sister Laureen Dixon rsc, Project Manager, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

Bruce Stephens: You mentioned before you felt your role is more defined and clearer now that the task groups are working effectively, and certainly with a lot of energy.

Sister Laureen: We launched the task groups on September 2nd with draft terms of reference. When we came back together again in November, I was quite staggered at the amount of work that each task group had done. We are now clearer about the reporting structure of each task group and the path along which each needs to walk to meet the deadlines.

Sister Clare Nolan rsc: Its really, really important that the Sisters, their families and co-workers grieve over this change and understand the Vision for establishing Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Would you like to talk about this a little further?

Sister Laureen: You've hit upon two aspects, Clare: grieving and working together.



Leadership Development Task Group

Selecting and appointing the first group of trustees, five people, two of whom are Sisters, is in itself heralding an important step in this journey. It's really not about Sisters anymore - it's about the Church and it's about how we collaborate with those people who work with us. Earlier on we had thought that the majority of trustees would probably be Sisters of Charity, so even in a year our thinking has changed.

With the grieving, I'm not sure that's actually been done sufficiently within the Congregation. It's the grieving of letting go, it's the grieving of giving birth and handing over, just as a mother hands over a child at marriage or at a significant point of initiation. The fact that we have owned our ministries for the past 170 years is embedded in us, and we think that we need to do it on behalf of and for the good of all. So perhaps the step we need to take is to identify what it is that we are being sad about, and create opportunities within the Congregation to do that. Your view of the families being involved and our colleagues being involved is a great vision and I'd like to encourage you to do that, and to create opportunities for us to be involved, because the ministry works will continue, the bedrock is there and that's what we're giving and we're giving that for the good of the Church, so let's be happy about that!

Sister Clare: So often people will say to you "Who are you? What Order do you belong to?" You say "I'm a Sister of Charity", and they look totally blank. If you say "I belong to St Vincent's Hospital or College", they say "Oh I know the Sisters of Charity! That's a wonderful hospital, that's a wonderful school!" That's who we are, that's our identity. We belong to schools and hospitals and welfare.

Sister Laureen: I think our identity has been clear even though most of us haven't been in a school or a hospital for a decade or so. It's about the identity of the tradition. It's not who we are, it's what we've done and that's the crisis point. I really believe that we've done in ministry, we have done very well and that needs to be celebrated. But now we have to ask the question: Who are we as Sisters of Charity in the 21st century when I can't say I belong to St Vincent's Hospital or St Vincent's College or St Columba's or some other Charity ministry. Who am I, who are we? A big question and we need to conscientiously work at that.

Michelle Wilson: Sister Laureen, can I ask with the changeover with the incorporated ministries to the (continues next page)

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Mary Aikenhead ministries, what opportunities does that give the Congregation in the future in terms of their other ministries or the non-incorporated ministries?

Sister Lauren: It's allowing us to look differently at how we want to serve and where the poor are in our lives, but not in our institutions as such. The challenge will be how we listen, how we see and how we serve. I'm not sure we even know that we need to do that yet because in the short term, the incoming Leader and Council will still be carrying responsibility for the incorporated works. There's a sense of people saying "we will be more free". We don't know what that means yet. That's part of the conversation that we Sisters need to have.

Rosemary Jandura: In terms of the facilities themselves, what would be the impact on the facilities when Mary Aikenhead Ministries comes into view?

Sister Lauren: Rosemary, on a day-to-day basis not a lot will be different. In fact nothing should be different. Essentially, it's a different reporting structure, a different church entity that the facilities will report to. There will still be annual general meetings, there will still be visits to facilities, there will still be ceremonies that are attended, but these will be done by the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. On the ground, people's jobs will be secure. There should be no fear that one's job will go, because that is not what's going to change. The Trustees' reporting mechanism will be different because they need to report to Rome on an annual basis, whereas currently the Congregation reports to



Rosemary Jandura, Sister Clare Nolan rsc and Michelle Wilson: Communications and Events Task Group

Rome every six years, at the time of Chapter. It's really governance that will be different.

Bruce Stephens: Would you have a word or a thought for the thousands of people that everyday help us deliver our care and services. What difference will Mary Aikenhead Ministries mean, for example to our teachers, our nurses, our orderlies, our doctors?

Sister Lauren: It will mean the same quality of service, care and compassion for all the people who currently come into their orbit while the facilities are being managed by the Sisters of Charity. We don't want that to change. Think about the values that Mary Aikenhead Ministries will focus on - love, compassion, hope and justice - that's what we want to see enacted on a daily basis by the thousands of people who staff the facilities, and those who receive what the staff gives.

Michelle Wilson: When Mary Aikenhead Ministries comes into place, will that mean all the Sisters will withdraw from our facilities?

Sister Lauren: No, not at all. We would like to hope that Sisters who are currently in the facilities will stay there and be a presence for as long as possible.

Do you have a question about Mary Aikenhead Ministries? Please email Michelle Wilson : mewilson@stvincents.com.au



Sister Lauren addresses the joint Task Group meeting.



*KEEP IN TOUCH is published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.
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