



# Karanga Atawhai

A newsletter for Sisters of Mercy and partners in mission

No 13. November 2020

## Exploring a Mercy Alliance of Ministerial PJPs in Australia and New Zealand

**Sisters of Mercy Leadership Teams in Australia and New Zealand have been working collaboratively over the last 10 years. With the development of MPJPs in the Mercy tradition, it seems to be appropriate that these MPJPs develop an alliance to support and strengthen each other in the mission of God's mercy.**

Two Mercy MPJPs have already been established. Set up in Perth 19 years ago, MercyCare has responsibility for hospital and aged care, disability and family and community services founded by the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia. Mercy Partners, based in Brisbane since 2008, oversees healthcare, education and community service ministries developed by Mercy, Presentation and Franciscan Congregations in Queensland.

Representatives from these two MPJPs have joined with Sisters of Mercy from other parts of Australia and with two members of our Leadership Team to form a working group. Among the tasks they hope to pursue is the development of a common charter for the Mercy alliance, sharing insights and expertise on formation for trustees and directors, and identifying ways to establish a common voice for key areas of Mercy ministry (such as ethics in healthcare).

Participants have resolved to share their experience and expertise but also to ensure the autonomy of the entities they represent. They will enter the alliance "in a spirit of openness and trust, respecting confidentiality," with a commitment to Mercy's key values and to "a flourishing of God's mission of mercy."

The working group has appointed Brisbane Sister of Mercy Margaret Endicott as convener of the group which plans to meet monthly this year to further its goals. Representing Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand in the working group are Congregation Leader Sue France and Judith Moroney rsm, a member of the Congregation's Leadership Team.

The initiative has been warmly accepted by the four organisations involved and they look forward to the ongoing development of the Mercy Alliance of MPJPs in Australia and New Zealand.



*Remembering Mercy's founder: Wed 11 November is the 179th anniversary of the death of Catherine McAuley, buried in this grave at Baggot Street, Dublin. On this day especially we give thanks for her life and legacy, perhaps with a comfortable cup of tea as she suggested.*

## Final decisions on ministerial PJP taking shape

By DENNIS HORTON

The Sponsorship Committee overseeing the process of establishing a Ministerial Public Juridic Person on behalf of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand held an online meeting on October 13. Critical decisions included the selection of a civil structure for the new entity, and the finalising of documents to be included in the petition for approval by the Holy See in Rome.

Facilitator of the meeting, Brisbane-based Sister of Mercy Marg Endicott told Karanga Atawhai that the gathering was marked by a spirit of excitement. "Participants were very happy with the progress being made, despite the problems which have arisen this year such as Covid-19 and the restrictions on travel that have resulted."

*\*continued overleaf*

## Happy to hear from you

Your responses to any items in this newsletter are welcome. If you have any questions or comments, you are invited to send these directly to either Astrid Lambert ([ALambert@somauck.org.nz](mailto:ALambert@somauck.org.nz)) or to Richard Kerr-Bell ([rkerrbell@somauck.org.nz](mailto:rkerrbell@somauck.org.nz))

# Final decisions on ministerial PJP taking shape

*\*from front page*

From several options, the Sponsorship Committee has recommended to the Congregation's Leadership that a Trust be formed as the civil structure to lead Whānau Mercy Ministries; a small group is now working with a lawyer to write a Constitution, based on the canonical statutes which have already been approved.

Documents to accompany the petition to Rome early next year include Forming Hearts for Mercy (a summary of the content and programme of formation which all prospective trustees and key leaders will be expected to undertake), a short description of the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy New Zealand and their ministries, an outline of the process of discernment which led to the decision to form an MPJP, the statutes

of the new entity and letters from diocesan bishops affirming the decision.

Work has begun on the process for nominating, selecting and appointing trustees; this includes identifying criteria for the process, based on the role of trustees as outlined in the statutes.

The Sponsorship Committee also received and endorsed a report on the working group which has been established to create a Mercy alliance of MPJPs in Australia and New Zealand (see story above). The committee also received an update on the process to register the name Whānau Mercy Ministries with the New Zealand Companies Office and acknowledged the importance of the use of the macron in this official title and in the use of te Reo Māori.

## Lay leaders not better than sisters, just different

Penny Wright says that ministerial PJPs are relatively new and not widely known in Catholic circles, but that they "are essential for ensuring that all the great works created by religious Congregations continue." The ministries supported by PJPs "are probably the way that most Australians now experience the good of what our faith can offer," she says.

Penny has known the Sisters of Charity for many years and has long had a desire to "give back" some of what she has received in the past from this Congregation. She was invited to participate in two 'discernment days' for potential trustees and became aware that God was calling her to accept the invitation to become involved in the work of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

"Lay leaders are not magically better than the religious who have traditionally run the church's ministries," says Penny. "We are not better, just different. I often look at the sisters who hold the charism so dear; they live lives dedicated to the ministries and are able to be present in a way that I cannot.

"As a lay person I have a husband, six talented and wonderful children, a small law firm that requires fulltime participation and a real life that drags my attention away from contemplation and time for discernment. I bring other skills to this role that complement what the sisters have brought.

"My role in the MPJP requires all the skills I can muster as a mother, a lawyer and a lifelong learner.



***The Sisters of Charity came from Ireland in 1838 to Australia where they established ministries in health and aged care, education and social services. In 2009 with approval from Rome they created an MPJP, named after their founder Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Penny Wright (pictured) was appointed as a trustee of this PJP in 2019. She practises as a solicitor in the small legal firm which she and her husband set up in Sydney. Before studying law, she worked in retail banking, funds management and government relations with a major Australian bank. She served for nine years on the Sisters of Charity Foundation before being invited by the Congregation's leader to join the MPJP as a trustee.***

It digs deep into my personal faith and my resolve to bring my best self to all deliberations. It would be easy to engage on a superficial 'management' level, but that is not what lay leadership should mean. It requires humble formation - an ongoing challenge - and a continued growth of all that it means to be Catholic.

"People are visiting our ministries in ever-increasing numbers, giving us an opportunity to show Christ's face to those who may not have experienced the church in the traditional way. This is a responsibility we seek to explore with the institutional church so that we can support the renewal that all faith-filled Catholics hope will come."