



Karanga Atawhai

A newsletter for Sisters of Mercy and partners in mission

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Goals in sight as PJP journey progresses

By DENNIS HORTON

The Sponsorship Committee held its first meeting for the year on 9 February. The session was conducted by Zoom, which project facilitator Margaret Endicott rsm described as effective. "It's the way we have learnt to work over the last 12 months, and it has proved very, very productive."

Two priorities emerged from the latest meeting. The first was the preparation of documents required by Rome for the establishment of Whānau Mercy Ministries, the PJP which is in the process of being formed by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand.

Before the pandemic, it was anticipated that these documents would be presented to the appropriate authorities in Rome by the Congregation Leader or her representative, but this is no longer an option. It is more likely now that the Apostolic Nuncio in Wellington will be invited to forward the documents to Rome.

A Zoom meeting is to be held in March with canon lawyer and Australian Sister of Loreto Mary Wright, who has advised the Congregation on issues relating to the PJP over several years. On this occasion, her advice will be sought on whether the documentation is complete and deciding on the process for lodging it in Rome.

Among the documentation will be letters of support from each of the local bishops, especially from those in whose dioceses one of the ministries to be included in the new PJP is already operating.

The second priority for the Sponsorship Committee this month was to clarify the process for selecting and forming the trustees who will serve on the Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust. A process will be led by the Congregation's Leadership Team to identify and invite potential trustees. The number and criteria for trustees are already determined in the PJP statutes.

A detailed formation programme for trustees has been developed, initially by the Mission Working Party and more recently by the Formation for Mission committee, comprising Margaret Endicott rsm, Lorraine McArthur and Richard Kerr-Bell. It is anticipated that trustees may be chosen by the Leadership Team and be able to begin their formation while approval by Rome for the new PJP is still being awaited.

Meanwhile work is progressing to finalise the Constitutions of the Trust. Sponsorship Committee members Denise Fox rsm and Astrid Lambert are working with lawyers associated with the Congregation to see that this work is completed.

The Sponsorship Committee is due to meet again in April.



A screenshot from this month's meeting of the Sponsorship Committee (from top, left to right) Sue France rsm, Raylene Dwyer rsm, Tina Vaeatangitau rsm, Judith Moroney rsm,

Richard Kerr-Bell, Mary Wood rsm, Margaret Endicott rsm, Denise Fox rsm, Virginia Noonan, Astrid Lambert and Debi Tatana (minutes).

Absent from this shot is Doc Godfrey, general manager of McAuley Trust, who made his apologies for the meeting. GRAPHIC © NGĀ WHAEA ATAWHAI O AOTEAROA

PJPs - a call to serve by being the human face of God

Back in New Zealand after an eight-year sojourn in Australia is Denise Fox rsm, currently a member of the Sponsorship Committee and a former Congregation Leader of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand. She recently concluded six years in Sydney as CEO of Mercy Ministries Ltd, which provides governance for more than 50 ministries working on behalf of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea. In recent months, Denise led the legal working party of our Sponsorship Committee and oversaw the drafting of the PJP's statutes. Karanga Atawhai caught up with her this month, to talk about her trans-Tasman experience.



THE Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) is in the process of setting up a ministerial PJP to be known as Mercy Ministry Companions. Denise Fox explains that the creation of this new PJP (the third to be established by Sisters of Mercy in Australia) follows the recommendation of a working party of sisters and lay colleagues engaged by ISMAPNG to identify the best model for providing governance for the future of these Mercy ministries and to ensure that they flourish in the future.

The recommendation of the working party shows confidence in the effectiveness and sustainability of the PJP model, says Denise. "Some PJPs in Australia are now more than 20 years old and have demonstrated their capacity to provide canonical leadership in governing Catholic ministries.

"To Sisters of Mercy, this has brought confidence that service in the tradition of Mercy will continue. Within the ministries themselves, their friends and benefactors, there is confidence that the service they love and admire will continue into the future, well supported by canonical leadership."

A key factor in ensuring that leadership, says Denise, is finding lay people who can serve as trustees for ministerial PJPs. "This is a question that the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons in Australia takes

Shared interests for Mercy PJP Alliance

Topics of mutual interest are likely to be explored by the Mercy PJP Alliance Committee which has been formed among the three Mercy PJPs in Australia and Whānau Mercy Ministries in New Zealand. A newsletter for the group notes that while work is still at a preliminary stage, "there is real enthusiasm for something like an Oceania Alliance of autonomous Mercy PJPs which could enable collaboration for the sake of our one Mercy mission." The newsletter names sharing of 'formation for governance' programmes and speaking 'with one voice' on particular ethical subjects as likely areas of collaboration. To read the November edition of Towards Mercy Ministry Companions, a newsletter published on behalf of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, go to <https://ampjp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Towards-Mercy-Ministry-Companions-Newsletter-Number-1-November-2020.pdf>

very seriously. The availability of people to serve as trustees for a PJP is vital to the future of Catholic ministry. The priority is to provide formation of trustees, existing and prospective."

Denise says that one idea being considered is the development of a pool of 'professional' trustees, recognising that this is a specialised role requiring a level of skills and a knowledge of canonical or church governance, different from what is required of a company director in civil society.

She notes that a strategic alliance between Whānau Mercy Ministries and the Mercy PJPs in Australia is being proposed and that formation of trustees will be a major focus of this alliance.

Establishing a PJP is part of a global trend, Denise says. "The ministerial PJP is a structure in canon law and has been adopted by congregations in the United States, Ireland and Australia. But no single model exists. In Australia, there are 16 ministerial PJPs operating and no two are identical. This shows that within the MPJP governance model, there is flexibility.

"For us in Aotearoa New Zealand, we have a long tradition of engaging in strategic partnerships and adapting to enable our ministries to flourish. In forming a new PJP, we are building on this tradition, engaging with others in new ways to ensure the future of a shared mission of Mercy.

"In plans for the formation of the trustees of Whānau Mercy Ministries, you will see that there is a uniqueness and a faithfulness to the tradition to which we belong."

Denise believes that a PJP reflects the baptismal vocation of all Christians to engage in God's mission, enabling believers to be the human face of God. She says that in deciding to change the way their ministries are governed, Sisters of Mercy are responding to the signs of the times. "Service has been provided for centuries by groups within the church. A ministerial PJP is a piece of this tradition - people committed to witnessing to the healing and teaching Jesus."

While in Australia she observed the leadership of several PJPs, established by a variety of congregations, continuing to provide excellent services in education, healthcare and social services, faithful to the gospel and to the tradition of their founders. "Despite the negative press which the Catholic Church and religious congregations in Australia have drawn recently, the people of Australia continue to seek the services which these Catholic ministries offer."