

Seeds of Justice 2015 Annual Report



Dr Maryanne Loughry RSM surrounded by students at The Seeds of Justice October Program

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.

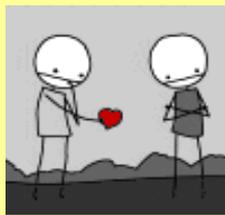


I will remain ...
committed, steadfast and connected to others in heartfelt compassion.

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 students and staff at events



Seeds of Justice Annual Report 2015 School Year

In his recent letter to the *Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization*, announcing the theme for the Extraordinary Jubilee Year that we are about to enter, Pope Francis called upon each of us to “rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.” One of the countless joys that come with working on the Seeds of Justice project, is that our events provide us with the opportunity to meet many of the remarkable young people that attend our Mercy schools; and to recognise that within them, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy are active and alive. At each event, we aspire to bring these same young people into conversations with guest speakers whom will offer them wisdom and challenges, knowledge and inspiration. However, it is the opportunity for our participants to meet with each other, to form bonds with like-minded peers, and to make plans together for how they might become agents of hope and positive change that often leads to the most powerful outcomes at each event.

This of course, does not happen without some planning and preparation. And so, as 2015 began, we were very happy to welcome Franca Caruana (Sacred Heart College, Geelong) and Suzanne Moran (Academy of Mary Immaculate) to the Melbourne Committee, and they have each generously shared their time and talent to plan and implement our events throughout the year. Alongside of our newest recruits, our planning team comprised of the following members:

Melbourne Committee 2015:

- Suzanne Moran (Academy of Mary Immaculate)
- Franca Caruana (Sacred Heart College, Geelong)
- Michael Haywood (Mount Lilydale Mercy College)
- Bernadette Inman (Our Lady of Mercy College)
- Mairead Kennedy (Mercy College, Coburg)
- Eugene Lynch (MEL)
- Sr Anila Isaac (ISMAPNG)
- Sam Weir (Sacred Heart College, Kyneton).

The Seeds of Justice project also continues to have a presence in Regional Victoria, and in Perth, Western Australia. Each of these regions is home to their own Steering Committee, and each of these committees run a now well-established annual student event. You will find an overview of the activity of these two further committees within this report. We acknowledge in particular the ongoing work undertaken by Jo-Anne Saunders (Mercy College, Camperdown), Rosa Speranza (Mercedes College, Perth) and Helen Chaffer (Santa Maria College, Attadale) to maintain these committees.

Regional Victoria Committee 2015:

- Jo-Anne Saunders (Mercy College, Camperdown) – Chairperson with support from teachers from Mercy schools.

Western Australian Committee 2015:

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

It is a pleasure also to acknowledge the generous administrative support offered to us by the team in the Mercy Education offices. As in previous years, we have been blessed with the support of Pam de Kort and Effie Coulson, who are warmly thanked for their indefatigable efforts behind the scenes.

Seeds of Justice Programs

Melbourne Student Event 1: 21st and 22nd May 2015

Theme: “*Mercy – Impelled to Respond*”

Venue: Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe

In our first event for the year, our participants spent time in conversation with Dr Elizabeth Dowling RSM. In her presentation, Sr Liz provided us with new lenses for exploring scripture, and for seeking the ‘Insights into Mercy’ that are to be found within the texts of our faith.

Using the parable of the Good Samaritan from [The Gospel According to Luke](#) as a model, Sr Liz encouraged us to consider the spirals of mercy that can emerge from an action or event (and taught us how to say ‘splachnizomai’!).



Later in the day, participants had the chance to put their learning into action, as they took part in the Shark Tank. Aably hosted by Mairead Kennedy, the Shark Tank required students to think clearly and strategically about their desire to respond to issues of social justice; and equipped them with the skills to confidently present coherent and workable ideas for actions that lead to positive change.

As in past years, a central component of our May event was time spent in the evening at a range of social outreach organisations across Melbourne. In 2015, some new options were added to the list of organisations that were happy to offer a community placement to our participants. Over the course of the evening, student groups spent time at each of the following locations:

- McAuley House, Melbourne
- Mercy Care, East Melbourne
- Mercy Care, Parkville
- Baily House, North Melbourne
- Olympic Village Exodus Community, West Heidelberg
- St Vincent de Paul Soup Van, Collingwood
- St Vincent de Paul Soup Van, North Melbourne
- Big Group Hug, Rosanna

On the second day of the event, our guest presenters were members of the growing number of ‘Seeds Alumni’ that have now moved into the adult world as empowered agents of hope and positive change. With Bernadette Inman acting as host, Rachael and Eliza (past students of OLMC, Heidelberg) took part in a panel discussion focused on the efforts they undertook while still in high school to establish the Camp Heide program. Following an idea that had germinated at a past Seeds of Justice event, Rachael, Eliza and their peers had secured a grant to plan and implement a recreational holiday program for children experiencing vulnerability. The panel members were proud to note that, since its inception in 2012, the Camp Heide program has continued to run; and has inspired a similar program run out of SHC, Kyneton (Camp Campaspe). Led as it was by young

people who had themselves been formed through Mercy education and the Seeds of Justice experience, the panel discussion then opened up into a time of rich ideas and inspired thinking, as participants made plans for action in their own school communities.

Comments from the event:

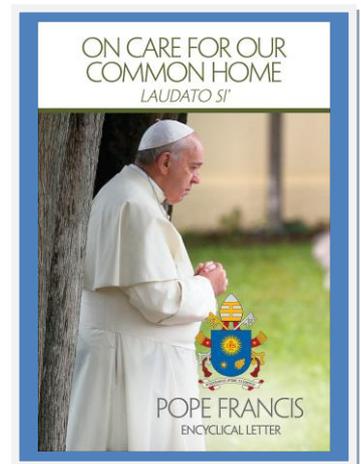
- *“The Shark Tank activity was creative, engaging and gave those who are passionate about something the chance to take action.”*
- *“Shark Tank was really fun and made us truly realise that, although it’s challenging, helping is not that far out of reach.”*
- *“Sr Liz gave us a new way to look at Mercy Values.”*
- *“I found all of the presentations really relevant to focusing on our response to injustice.”*
- *“Sr Elizabeth’s presentation was very touching; and Shark Tank was an awesome idea.”*
- *“The program has given me an insight into other people’s way of life and inspired me to make a change.”*
- *“I learned so much from my time with the Exodus community.”*
- *“The program was very insightful and fun. It was great to meet new people and get ideas as to what to do now.”*
- *“I loved it. The program convinced us we can make such a difference.”*
- *“It was great meeting like-minded people with the same passions. I learnt so much and experienced new things in such a short time. It was inspiring and sparked my passion to make a difference.”*
- *“Keep it going! Seeds is an excellent program for people who are passionate about these issues to get involved and do something about it.”*

Staff Formation Day: 3rd August 2015

Theme: *“Hearing the Cry of the Earth; Hearing the Cry of the Poor”*

Venue: Mercy Congregation Centre, Alphington

The central focus for discussion at our annual staff event was the contents of Pope Francis’ first encyclical. We were blessed with the guiding presence of Pat Long as our guest presenter, as she led participants through two workshop sessions examining the contents of the encyclical and how we might apply the wisdom contained within. Pat spoke of her work with the EarthSong project and invited participants to consider the kinship that humanity shares with all life on planet Earth. Guiding us through the beauty and the complexity of *Laudato Si*, Pat drew us towards an intimate understanding of the interconnectedness of all creation, emphasising the point that *‘nothing in this world is indifferent to us.’*



In the second stage of her workshop, Pat provided participants with the opportunity to read closely from key sections of the encyclical, and to discuss the implications and applications of the document. From the conversations that ensued, Pat assisted us to consider the interrelationship between our pursuits of social justice and ecological justice; and invited us to explicitly address the ecological elements that are integrally involved in all that we do.

Following lunch, the closing session of the day was used as a time for staff participants to share their own vision of an ecological and socially just community; and to plan together by exploring ideas for school-based initiatives in pursuit of this vision.

Comments from the event:

- *“I really appreciated the fire and energy that Pat put into preparing two engaging and thought provoking sessions.”*
- *“Pat’s sessions allowed insight into the encyclical in a practical way. Her activities allowed for discussions and provided a great resource for us to use back at our school. The last session was a great chance to network. I love learning about what others do.”*
- *“The program offered very powerful messages. The activities were great and created an awareness that things can be done to cause change.”*
- *“Excellent brainstorming – lots of good ideas and interesting perspectives.”*
- *“It was really good to get an insight into Pope Francis’s encyclical. Great to see the ideas for introducing it to classrooms.”*
- *“A great day with a good balance of input, time for networking and sharing of ideas and resources. A good opportunity to unpack ‘Laudato Si’.”*

Perth Student Event : 19th and 20th August 2015

Theme: *“Human Trafficking”*

Venue: St John of God Retreat Centre

Participants in this year’s Seeds of Justice program explored the eye opening theme of 'Human Trafficking'. The Conference was held at the St John of God Retreat Centre and included 15 students from Mercedes, 15 from Santa Maria and 6 from Aranmore Colleges. Seven staff were involved in the preparation and presentation of the conference, coming from all three colleges.

Facilitated on the first day by Sr Lucy van Kessel, a Presentation Sister, the program consisted of input, research, open space workshops, art, drama and liturgy and was highly interactive with participation in a number of meaningful and insightful activities. The maturity of the students in dealing with such a difficult and confronting issue was inspiring, reflecting the manner and standard of all presenters and presentations.

Helen Chaffer

“Prior to Seeds of Justice, many of us were not aware of Human Trafficking and how serious it truly is. Over the course of the two days many of us gained a better understanding and are looking forward to meeting again to discussing this important issue.”



Students from Mercedes College, Santa Maria College and Aranmore College at the annual WA Seeds of Justice Conference

Regional Victoria Student Event: 20th and 21st August 2015

Theme: “Global Poverty as a Mercy Concern”

Venue: Araluen Campsite, Anglesea

This year’s Regional Seeds of Justice Event was another success with thirty six students and eight staff from six Mercy schools attending the two-day retreat at Araluen Campsite in Anglesea. Our guest speakers were of an exceptional standard and enlightened the students information, reflections and challenging concepts, all focusing on Global Poverty as a ‘Mercy concern’.



Students attended from Notre Dame College, Shepparton, Mercy Regional College, Camperdown, Emmanuel College, Warrnambool, Damascus College, Ballarat, Sacred Heart College, Kyneton and Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg. With the group ratio of 9 boys and 27 girls we explored the issues of food shortages, positive action, scientific research and our moral obligation to support those who are less fortunate.

Anthony Leddin from Yambuk, Western Victoria, engaged the students with his unique concept of seed gathering and storage for use in third world countries as a way of managing the food production needs of our world in the future. Anthony has travelled the world and played an important role in seed collection for the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The seeds there are stored in case of global crisis. Anthony challenged students to plan effective ways of developing crops to sustain populations from areas of the planet that are war torn or suffered an environmental crisis.

Sister Karon Donellan was a wonderful companion for the day. She spoke of the works of Mercy around the globe and the rich tasks that we are called to undertake in the future. Karon spoke in relation to food shortages, global problems and the picture of Compassion for others we might paint with the brush of Mercy in our ‘earth community’.

All the participants enjoyed meeting other like minded students and making connections with others who may be interested in Social Justice Issues. The event also included a ‘hypothetical’ debate regarding resources and the current controversial environmental topic of alternative gas collection by ‘fracking’.

Each school was able to respond to the theme of the event creatively and then consider how they might share the information and raise awareness about the correlation between conflict and global food shortages.



Mercy Regional College students with Jo-Anne Saunders

We look forward to another Seeds of Justice Regional Event on August 25th and 26th 2016 at Anglesea to support our rural and city Mercy students to gather and to learn.

Jo-Anne Saunders

Melbourne Student Event 2: 22nd - 23rd October 2014

Theme: *“Turning the Tide”*

Venue: Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe

We were very blessed at this year’s October event to have **Dr Maryanne Loughry RSM AM**, Associate Director of Jesuit Refugee Services Australia, involved as a guest presenter across both days of the program

In our first session, Sr Maryanne worked with our participants to unpack our theme: exploring the turning tide of public concern for the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. It was a rare and wonderful pleasure to spend time with a speaker that was intimately engaged with the issue at hand, and whom generously shared her experiences of national and international advocacy. In her presentation, Sr Maryanne drew our attention to the symbolic actions that Pope Francis has undertaken during his papacy so far, in the name of turning the world’s attention and compassion towards the vulnerability of those who have been displaced.

In her second workshop, Sr Maryanne introduced our participants to the notion of a PESTLE analysis, and invited us to consider the political, economic, social, technological, legal and ecological implications of Australia’s response to asylum seekers and refugees. Later in the day, students then had an opportunity to put their new analytical insights into use, as they prepared their own creative ‘Pitch’ to a panel of judges. Each ‘pitch’ captured our participants desire to renew our national conversation on the issue of asylum seekers; and each group drew upon the knowledge and compassionate insights that they had encountered through Sr Maryanne’s workshops earlier in the day.

The keynote event on the second day of our program was a panel discussion, hosted by **Rachael Ward** – a ‘Seeds Alumni’. Sr Maryanne joined us again to sit on the panel, alongside **Hannah Carr** from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (and also a ‘Seeds Alumni’!) and **Lauren McCarthy** from Road to Refuge. The breadth of experience shared between our panel members assisted to enrich the discussion, and if time permitted we would surely have continued the conversation for much longer. While each of the presenters acknowledged the many challenges they have faced in their work for justice for refugees and asylum seekers, their overall message was one of hope, and the belief in the possibility of a world where extravagant hospitality is extended by all.



L to R: Panel presenters, Rachael Ward, Hannah Carr, Sr Maryanne, Lauren McCarthy and Mairead Kennedy

Comments from the event:

- *“It has given eye opening information about justice, mercy and asylum seekers.”*
- *“The information was clear, precise and appealed to everyone’s sense of justice.”*
- *“Although I thought I was already well informed, I actually found that there was so much more to learn about asylum seekers and refugees.”*
- *“I’m so glad that I was able to share my knowledge and to learn from others.”*
- *“The program allowed for detailed discussion of the situations in which people seeking asylum find themselves.”*
- *“Excellent program, insightful and inspiring. Allowed me to question things in the world and analyse all sides of the issue.”*
- *The thrill of having past ‘Seeds’ participants present to us was inspirational.”*

- *“I kept wondering how we had an adviser to the Minister of Immigration for 2 days! How wonderful to hold up an inspirational “Mercy” role model with knowledge, experience and most importantly a Mercy spirituality as foundation to work for Justice.”*

Dates for 2016:

The dates for each event are as follows:

- Melbourne Student Event 1: 19th – 20th May (*Holy Cross Centre*)
- Staff Formation Day: 1st August (*Mercy Centre, Alphington*)
- Perth, WA Student Event: 17th – 18th August (*St John of God Retreat Centre*)
- Regional Vic Student Event: 25th – 26th August (*Araluen Camp, Anglesea*)
- Melbourne Student Event 2: 20th – 21st October (*Holy Cross Centre*)

Closing Comments:

While it is a pleasant task to reflect on the joys and achievements of the year that has been, it is hard not to already begin thinking of the year ahead, particularly as we enter into the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. As we plan our program for 2016, our committee will surely take some inspiration from the actions, prayers and events that are occur as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

As in past years, it has been a sincere pleasure to have worked alongside committee members whom have each generously shared their time and talent. It is indeed a joyful task to pass on a heartfelt thanks to each member of the committee for the creativity and drive they have shown throughout the year. Grateful acknowledgement is also extended to those schools that have allowed time for members to attend meetings and events; as their ongoing support is warmly appreciated. We also acknowledge our wonderful sponsors whose continued generosity provides the various Seeds of Justice chapters with the necessary funds to engage excellent speakers and to keep costs to schools to a minimum.

At the conclusion of the year, we bid fond farewell to Michael Haywood. Mike has been a much valued member of the committee over the past five years. During his time on the committee, Mike has not only been instrumental in planning and running our events, but he has also taken close care of the committee’s finances. Mike’s capacity to invite people into prayer in a manner that is joyful, participatory, and communal is a wonderful attribute, and he has enlivened each and every event that he has been involved in. He is warmly thanked for his many contributions during his time as a Committee member, and we wish Mike well for 2016 and beyond.

Peace,

Sam Weir

On behalf of the Seeds of Justice Steering Committee
December 2015

2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

DATE	DESCRIPTION	DR	CR	BALANCE
01/01/2015	Opening Balance			\$2,648.56
04/03/2015	Balance of 2014 sponsorship		\$1,350.00	\$3,998.56
25/03/2015	MEL annual sponsorship		\$2,000.00	\$5,998.56
26/03/2015	MEL sponsorship Regional Victoria		\$500.00	\$6,498.56
26/03/2015	MEL payment to Regional Victoria	\$500.00		\$5,998.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne speaker Sr E Dowling rsm	\$150.00		\$5,848.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement EXODUS	\$150.00		\$5,698.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement Mercy Place, East Melbourne	\$150.00		\$5,548.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement Mercy Place, Parkville	\$150.00		\$5,398.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement Baily House, North Melbourne	\$150.00		\$5,248.56
04/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement McAuley Community Services for Women	\$150.00		\$5,098.56
15/05/2015	Event 1 Gifts for speakers	\$36.00		\$5,062.56
19/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement St Vincent de Paul Soup Van, Collingwood	\$150.00		\$4,912.56
19/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement St Vincent de Paul Soup Van, Fitzroy	\$150.00		\$4,762.56
19/05/2015	Event 1 Melbourne placement Big Group Hug, Rosanna	\$150.00		\$4,612.56
02/06/2015	Event 1 Bus Hire	\$600.00		\$4,012.56
20/07/2015	Event 1 gift for speaker	\$70.00		\$3,942.56
06/08/2015	Staff Formation Day - Catering	\$590.75		\$3,351.81
06/08/2015	Staff Formation Day - Gift for speaker	\$74.55		\$3,277.26
06/08/2015	Staff Formation Day speaker - Pat Long	\$375.00		\$2,902.26
07/09/2015	MEL sponsorship Perth WA		\$2,000.00	\$4,902.26
07/09/2015	MEL payment to Perth WA	\$2,000.00		\$2,902.26
07/09/2015	MEL sponsorship Regional Victoria		\$1,000.00	\$3,902.26
07/09/2015	MEL payment to Regional Victoria	\$1,000.00		\$2,902.26
31/10/2015	Event 2 Melbourne speaker reimbursement to SHCK	\$347.61		\$2,554.65
09/11/2015	Event 2 Melbourne gift	\$16.37		\$2,538.28
17/11/2015	Event 2 Melbourne speaker and travel costs - Dr Maryanne Loughry RSM	\$784.97		\$1,753.31
10/12/2015	ISMAPNG sponsorship to Seeds of Justice		\$2,000.00	\$3,753.31
23/12/2015	Closing Balance			\$3,753.31

The Seeds of Justice Committee acknowledges our generous sponsors.

