Patricia Ryan OAM, completed her nine-year term as a member of the MSEI Board of Management at the 2010 Public General Meeting. During her time Patricia has led the Board as Chair for the past five years and has represented the Congregation and Mercy Education on numerous panels and at many functions and events. She describes her time in Mercy Education as one of joy and privilege, and for those fortunate to have worked closely with her, the feeling is absolutely mutual.

Patricia is succeeded by John Shannon as the new Chair of the Board and in his first official duty at the recent PGM, John acknowledged Patricia’s enormous contribution. Extracts from John’s speech are highlighted below:

“It is with mixed feelings that I thank Trish in my first role as Chair of MSEI. On the one hand we are very sorry to lose from the Board, a most valued leader and colleague. On the other hand for Trish it will be an opportunity to pursue other interests and loves without the constraint of Board Meetings and responsibilities.

I’ve had the privilege of knowing Trish since we were young Principals starting out 30 years ago. Trish was Principal for 20 years; a member of CECV and NCEC; a member of Committees for VIT and member of Committees for VCAB. After retiring from principalship she supported new Principals in her role as Executive Officer of the Principals’ Association of Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools (PAVCSS). Trish was privileged to be awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2000 in recognition of her service to Catholic Education.

Over the past nine years, Patricia’s contribution to Mercy Education has been outstanding and she has gained much respect from the Congregation, Board members, Principals and Staff of the Mercy schools. She has been extraordinarily generous in attending school and congregation celebrations, events and productions. No one could have done more.

At meetings, Patricia had the happy knack of covering the agenda, allowing everyone their say and with humour as mandatory. We left meetings with the sense that they were worthwhile, enjoyable and that we had achieved the goals. In footy talk, which Trish (only slightly) understands and appreciates, “You’ve been a monument to the game”. Accolades don’t come higher.

This beautiful gift was obviously selected by the female members of the Board for us men wanted to give you a copy of that most worthwhile, riveting book “The Danihers” as we know many of the book clubs members would kill for a discussion.

Thank you Trish for everything you’ve done as Board member and Chair, thank you most of all for being you.
Celebrating 150 years of Mercy Education at Sacred Heart College Geelong

On 18 April 1860 the Sisters of Mercy placed a small advertisement in the Geelong Advertiser to say that they had opened a school in Newtown. They could not have known that 150 years later more than 6000 people would gather at Sacred Heart College to celebrate their achievement. To mark the school’s 150th Anniversary, current students and staff invited former students and their families to join them for a thanksgiving Mass and day of celebration.

College Principal, Ms Regina Byrne, said that the school was “overawed” by the response to the celebrations held on Sunday 18 April 2010 - exactly 150 years to the day that the school enrolled its first students. She said: “We had optimistically placed 4000 seats on the College oval for the Mass which was due to start at 10.15am. By 9.30am all the seats were full and people were still streaming through the gates. It was a wonderful sight and we all felt blessed to be part of such a joyous occasion.”

The Mass, believed to be one of the largest ever to take place in Geelong, was celebrated by Bishop Tim Costelloe. He was supported by Fr Mick Fitzpatrick and Mons James Murray who have both have long connections with the College. Following the Eucharist, Sr Kathleen Tierney, Congregation Leader of the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation, welcomed guests.

The day was also the school’s largest ever reunion and former students came from around the world and every state in Australia for the celebration. Ms Byrne said: “Women who attended Sacred Heart in the 1930s and girls who left just last year were among the hundreds who came to share their memories of their time at the school and renew old friendships. Many former boarders returned for the day and lots of men who had been boys in the junior school came with their families. “It was a day of memories and joy and the response from our community was a testament to the love and respect people have for the school and the achievements of the Sisters of Mercy.”

The school was founded by Mother Xavier Maguire who travelled from Dublin with five companions to establish a Convent of Mercy in Geelong. She came in answer to a request from Bishop James Alpius Goold who was concerned for the welfare of the people of the Colonial township of Geelong and felt that they would benefit from the Sisters’ guiding influence. In spite of a constant shortage of funds and resources, the tenacious Sisters acquired an 11 hectare site in Newtown and over 14 years built an orphanage, day and boarding schools, Convent and Chapel.

Over the years the Sisters increased their number and as times and needs changed, refocused their work in the Geelong region. However, the historic bluestone complex built by Mother Maguire is still at the heart of the school which has grown and developed and is now attended by more and 1350 day students.
Top –

Students celebrate: Students dance for joy to the delight of the 6000 people who took part in the 150th Anniversary Mass at Sacred Heart College Geelong.

Clockwise –

Artist: 2009 graduate Anna Woodruff pictured with her parents Dr Peter Woodruff and Dr Elise Perry during the anniversary celebrations. Anna was the school’s 2009 Cranbourne Scholar in Visual Arts and painted a series of artworks for the school which featured on anniversary materials.

Orphanage and The journey: Two of the artworks created by Sacred Heart College former student Anna Woodruff to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the school.

Icon: The beautiful icon created by Sr Margaret Broadbent rsm was a 150th Anniversary gift to Sacred Heart College from the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation. The icon draws its inspiration from the icon “Our Lady of Vladimir” painted in Constantinople between 1408 and 1410 and which is now held in the Vladimir-Suzdal Museum in Russia.

Students at Mass: Part of the Sacred Heart College student body stand at the start of the Mass held on Sunday 18 April exactly 150 years to the day that the school opened its doors to its first students.

House colours: The leaders of the College Houses present their colours at the start of the 150th Anniversary Mass celebrated by Bishop Tim Costelloe.

Old Collegians: Old Collegians, from left, Rachel O’Brien, Gael Perry, Anna Negro, deputy principal, and Lila O’Brien celebrate with the hundreds of former students who returned to the school for the 150th Anniversary.
On 2 February 1910 Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg opened its doors for the first time. Now, 100 years later the students, staff and friends of OLMC have joined together to celebrate the Centenary year in 2010.

The Centenary Reunion weekend was held on the last weekend in March and what a wonderful weekend it was. It started with the Centenary Dinner at The Centre, Ivanhoe where more than 400 past pupils, staff and friends joined together for a night of reminiscing. It was wonderful to see so many old friends reconnecting and rekindling their friendships from school days. One of the highlights was the warmth and joy that so many past students displayed when meeting the Sisters again.

On Sunday all gathered at St John’s Church to celebrate the Centenary Mass celebrated by Fr Ted Teal, Parish Priest of St John’s Heidelberg and Fr Joe Dirks who is a past pupil of the college. After Mass about 1000 past pupils, staff and friends came through the school to meet old friends and relive memories of their school days. Memorabilia displays, school tours, afternoon tea and reconnecting and renewing friendships all went towards making this a very enjoyable and memorable event. It was indeed a special day and a testament to the sense of family and belonging that is part of the OLMC community, and to the pride and respect people have for the college and for the Sisters of Mercy.

Many thanks must be extended to the Centenary Committee for all their support and help in bringing this event to fruition. Without their vision and commitment this event would not have been possible.
On Thursday 27 May and Friday 28 May, students from across the Mercy schools in Victoria gathered at Templestowe for the first of the 2010 Seeds of Justice Events. The theme for the event was, “I am the guest ... What changes?” Students embraced the theme and after various presenters and discussion groups, prepared themselves to go out and put themselves in the position of being a guest.

Various extracts from school newsletters capture the spirit of the students’ involvement in the activities and placements and the pride of the accompanying teachers in sharing these experiences with such passionate and committed young Mercy leaders. Comments written by students and staff evaluating their experience of the Event were also overwhelmingly positive.

“What can be said about the May 2010 Seeds of Justice Conference that hasn’t been said about in past years? Without having been to one before, I think the key thing was the fabulous guest speakers. Father Bob Maguire and Sister Lizzie Finnerty are such great examples of living hope and the 81 attendees [63 students and 18 staff] truly had their hearts nurtured during these talks. Father Bob spoke about anything and everything, from his Hope Van to the men and women he has been nurturing since they were adolescents. Sister Lizzie spoke about her time on Christmas Island and how we must work to change the language and at the same time lobby the government to process asylum seekers rather than holding them in prison for no reason.

The opportunity to go on placement in the community was greatly embraced by all and it was clear that everyone got something out of it. Overall, the conference nurtured each and every attendee in their own way but I’m sure it was the passion for justice that was nurtured most.”

Ms Ashlea O’Connor – Faith and Ministry Trainee, CC Bendigo

…”Being a guest means that you must respect your host. I felt embarrassed inside the Gatwick Hotel, as I would hate someone to stroll through my house and judge it similarly. As a guest, I must be polite and not intrusive, and I attempted to carry this frame of mind through to my placement.

The most challenging part was leaving the soup van to return to the luxury area I was staying at in Templestowe, knowing that people just like me would be searching for a place to sleep tonight. They would possibly be hungry and scared for their safety and I couldn’t go and fix it.

In Father Bob Maguire’s words, “You’ve got people all around you telling you what to do, what you have to act like and how to behave. And then you’ve got Jesus telling you what to do. If it’s gonna be a toss up, I’m sorry but I’m going to have to choose Jesus.” The event taught us to buck the crowd, and do what is right for the world and follow the ways of Jesus.”

Johanna Mousley, SHC Geelong

On Friday after a fun warm up activity, we were lucky to hear from a guest speaker, Sr Lizzie Finnerty rsm, who reflected on her recent journey to Christmas Island. She told of the living conditions and treatment of people who are seeking refuge in Australia. She was able to tell stories about “real” people and to explain how detention affects these people; men, women and children. This was a very moving presentation and as a result many of the students want to lobby governments to make changes to the way these people are treated. The final session was an evaluation of the time spent considering the theme of the conference but also a chance to make a commitment to make changes on our return to school. Damascus College students made a commitment to promote the Justice Action Group that already exists in the College; to encourage membership and to support current projects. I look forward to witnessing the commitment of all the students to this cause.

Karen Simpkin – Damascus College, Ballarat

“Yes this program has been an amazing experience, I had no idea really what to expect as I have never attended Seeds of Justice before but it is a great program I will definitely be involved with in the future.”
“This program by far exceeded our/my expectations. The high level of care by staff, atmosphere created, accepting nature of all involved was amazing and definitely made the experience more enjoyable and also re-enacted a sense of pride in myself for my peers.”

“Definitely. It gave all of us great and unique opportunities to put ourselves in the shoes of others and to realise charity needs to start in our own backyard. But also that charity, although great on its own is not enough. We need to move beyond giving financially and head towards affirmative action to induce change.”

“Yes and more. Can it be longer? It was an amazingly powerful experience. Regina Coeli was brilliant. I want to go again and again. Students were insightful, reflective and gained so much.”

“Yes and it ignited my passion for justice and made me more determined to make a difference. I will never forget this experience.”

“All of the effort that has been put into organising this is so appreciated. Thankyou so much to all of the teachers and volunteers and speakers and organisations. This has been such a worthwhile experience. Even beyond the social justice aspects it’s a forum for youth, it gives us a voice, a way of helping, of being involved. Thankyou for the opportunity to help out people who truly need it.”
Sr Kath addressed the MLMC community and extracts of her inspirational address are provided below:

Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy was a doer. She was a woman of action, a woman on a mission – a go getter.

William and Catherine Callaghan were enablers and together Catherine McAuley and the Callaghans addressed poverty in Ireland in the 1800’s and they still are having an influence here in Lilydale today.

In 1803, Catherine moved in with the Callaghans in Dublin as a companion for Mrs Callaghan. The Callaghans, William and Catherine, were childless and Catherine McAuley provided much needed companionship for Mrs Callaghan. Catherine McAuley had many desires and dreams to assist the poor of Dublin – but she did not have the means.

Catherine stayed with the Callaghans, as a faithful companion for Mrs Callaghan until her death in 1819. By this time, Catherine McAuley had become indispensible to the Callaghans. After commencing in their employment as a companion, the Callaghans quickly realised Catherine’s capabilities. Within a short time of joining the couple at Coolock, Catherine McAuley took over the running of the household, management of the staff and organisation of Mrs Callaghan’s private and social calendar.

Following William Callaghan’s death, Catherine McAuley inherited the Callaghan Estate which consisted of Coolock House, £25,000 and furniture and belongings. In 1822 this was an enormous legacy (£25,000 then is close to $2 million now). Catherine then saw the possibility of the realization of her dream. She had waited patiently, prayed much and continued to have faith in her God.

If we look to Catherine McAuley and the Callaghans, we can see that together they made a dream come true. Either could not have achieved what was achieved without the other. Catherine McAuley – the doer and William and Catherine Callaghan – the enablers.

This is the same for us today. You may have a dream, but cannot achieve it – another may have the means – but not the vision or the energy to do...

We all need each other. There will be times when you are a doer, other times you will be an enabler – and I hope that this building and the names on it will remind you that we each need each other – together, we can do great things. Something may not happen by your own hand – but you will have a hand in it!

Give freely, generously of your gifts and dreams become a reality. Like Catherine McAuley you can have a profound effect on your world.

Sr Kathleen M Tierney rsm
Congregation Leader

Above right, Sr Kathleen Tierney unveils the commemorative plaque with Principal, Mr Bernard Dobson.