NEW LEADERSHIP
AT MERCY EDUCATION
BOARD CHAIR, LUCY MOLONY
WITH NEW CEO,
CHRISTOPHER HOULIHAN

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This edition of *Mercy Ed* highlights a number of significant changes at the leadership and directorship level of the Board of Mercy Education. After nine years of outstanding service on the Board, including five years as Board Chair, John Shannon concluded the maximum term as a Director and left behind a legacy of professionalism, commitment and a deep love for the education of young people. He has gained the respect and admiration of all in Mercy Education including the Institute Leadership Team, his fellow Directors, Executive staff and College Principals. John’s contribution will be formally recognised next month at the annual Mercy Education Dinner.

The Board looks to an exciting new phase of leadership under the chairmanship of Lucy Molony, new Directors, Anthony Loschiavo and Em Prof Anne Hunt and the commencement of the inaugural Chief Executive Officer, Christopher Houlihan. We wish the Board much success and our full support at this time of new horizons.

We congratulate St Aloysius College, North Melbourne on hosting the 2015 Frayne Speech Festival and commend the staff and students for the organisation, warmth of hospitality and preparation for this wonderful spirited competition for Mercy students across the country.

We once again reflect on the Mercy Leadership Program and Pilgrimage to Dublin with contributions from participants from across ministries who share their inner thoughts and experiences on a journey that has taken them to the heart of Mercy.

In May, Mercy Schools from across Victoria gathered together at the Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe for the First Seeds of Justice event for 2015. Reflecting on the theme: Mercy: Impelled to Respond, students and staff from participating colleges were inspired by keynote speaker, Sr Elizabeth Dowling rsm, Mercy Theologian and Scriptural Scholar, various ministry placements across Melbourne and by their own peers. Mercy Education continues to thrive, excite and inspire us.

Eugene Lynch
Editor

Farewell & thank you
John Shannon

John Shannon completed his nine-year term as a Director of the Board of Mercy Education at the 2015 MEL Annual General Meeting. John’s contribution to Mercy Education has been enormous and was always seasoned with good humour, warmth of welcome and an abounding generosity of spirit.

After a distinguished career in education, including over twenty-six years of principalship at a number of Catholic schools in Victoria, John joined the Mercy Education Board (MSEI) in 2006. He was appointed Chair of the Board in 2011 and served as Chair until May this year. John led the transition of Mercy Secondary Education from an incorporated body under Victorian legislation to a national company limited by guarantee operating in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. From 2011, he oversaw the almost seamless introduction of five colleges, Mercedes College Perth WA, Santa Maria College, Attadale WA, St Brigid’s College, Lesmurdie WA, Catholic College Bendigo VIC and finally St Aloysius College Adelaide, SA into Mercy Education Limited. All would agree that John’s gentle yet determined leadership in this process guaranteed a most respectful and collegial partnership for all twelve colleges under MEL.

John has a deep passion for Catholic education, young people and the Sisters of Mercy. He took great pride in being able to continue his relationship post-principalship to work with the Sisters of Mercy and was pleased to accept his appointment, initially by Sr Kath Tierney RSM and subsequently by Sr Berneice Loch RSM in bringing Mercy Education into a new structure under the reconfigured Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG). John’s leadership has been inspiring and will be formally acknowledged at the 2015 Mercy Education Dinner in October this year.
The Institute Leader, Sr Berneice Loch rsm, was delighted to announce the appointment of Mrs Lucy Molony as the new Chair of Mercy Education in May this year.

Lucy has held the position of Deputy Chair for the past three years and has been a Director of Mercy Education since 2009. Lucy has much experience in Catholic ministries including past Principal at Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill, member of the Tribunal of the Catholic Church, Director of Towards Healing Victoria and most recently, returning to education working in the induction and mentoring of new Secondary Principals, reviewing and appraising of senior leaders in education and as a Reviewer for the School Improvement Framework, Melbourne.

We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.

Catherine McAuley
Letter to de Sales White December 20, 1840
Introducing New Board Directors

Emeritus Professor Anne Hunt

Professor Anne Hunt was a secondary school teacher of Chemistry and Mathematics, in government and Catholic secondary schools, and was Principal of Loreto Mandeville Hall, Toorak, for thirteen years. She has been a member of the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA) since 1994 having held the position of Vice President, President and Chair of the Council of Deans of Theology.

Mr Anthony Loschiavo

Anthony is a lawyer and works as the Manager of KnowHow at Minter Ellison, Melbourne – a senior role in the firm. He is an experienced Director (just retired after seven years as a Director of Bayley House, a disability service) and currently facilitates part of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) course in the area of directors’ duties and the legal environment. Anthony has a complete understanding and a deep respect for the Catholic mission and environment.

Welcome to Inaugural MEL Chief Executive Officer

“The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) together with the Board of Directors of Mercy Education Limited announced the appointment of Mr Christopher Houlihan to the inaugural position of Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education. Christopher will commence on 5 October 2015.

Christopher has held senior leadership positions in Catholic Education in Western Australia as deputy principal and in Victoria as the Principal of Padua College since 2001. Padua College is a three-campus College, owned and administered by the parishes of the Mornington Peninsula and was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1898. Christopher’s first two schools as a teacher were St Aloysius College, North Melbourne and Santa Maria College, Attadale - both current member schools of MEL.”

Lucy Molony
Board Chair

I am delighted to renew my association with the Sisters of Mercy in commencing this role. As Chief Executive, my task is to support the Board’s work in governing our twelve schools on behalf of the Institute Leadership Team. Pastorally, I see the role as providing personal and professional support to our College Principals and the Executive Team at the National Office of MEL.

My role will allow the Board to concentrate on providing advice to ISMAPNG and the Institute and setting strategic direction for the operations of the MEL schools.

This management role will be a conduit between the Executive Staff of MEL, the Principals of our schools and the Board to ensure the Vision and Mission of all schools is in line with the Institute.

I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received already from all associated with Mercy Education Limited. I look forward to visiting our schools and meeting many of the school members who contribute to Catherine McAuley’s legacy.

Christopher Houlihan
CEO
If one were to pay attention to the daily news it is evident that we live in a world where displacement is the norm – politically, economically, culturally and spiritually. Mercy ministry leaders face daily the challenges of an ever-expanding complexity of needs in a global context that invites every faith-based organisation to respond. Sometimes the daily demands leave little time to reflect on the wider context.

Each year ISMAPNG offers senior leaders, board members and mission staff the opportunity to take time to reflect on their leadership in Mercy. The Mercy Leadership Program and "Dublin Pilgrimage" is offered by the Mercy Ethos Office to all ministries within ISMAPNG, the congregations of Parramatta, Brisbane and North Sydney and as far afield as Mercy ministries in New Zealand and Newfoundland. In 2015 Carmel Crawford (Institute Mercy Ethos Coordinator) and I travelled the leadership journey with thirty-six of our ministry leaders including six Sisters of Mercy.

The programme is designed to offer both the invitation to reflect on the individual’s way of leading and what we as Mercy are called to offer the contemporary world in the light of our founding story. The opportunity to spend time in the founding house and to be present to that initial dream and how it might be lived now forms the core of the time. In preparation for this the group met in February for orientation – to each other, to Mercy and to the Ireland of Catherine McAuley’s time.

The time in Dublin on pilgrimage is an opportunity to immerse oneself in the tradition that gives meaning to Mercy today. Participants are also invited to reflect on their own leadership style and what might be being called forth by the world at this time. Each leader from this experience shapes a project for implementation in their ministry on their return. This project is the fruit of their reflection and a way to integrate their experience.

Also 2015 saw the implementation of a new and exciting initiative ‘Emerging Leaders’ – two places are given to people who may not normally have the opportunity to participate but who exhibit exceptional leadership potential within their ministry area. This means that the programme is again enriched by the capacity and experience of Mercy people throughout the ministries.

All of this created a wonderful context for each participant to take from the experience what was needed for their growth in understanding the demands and depth of leadership in Mercy. In July the group met to share their projects and to begin the conversation regarding the integration of this experience into the lived experience of ministry.
**Kerrie Fraser**

**Education, WA**  
**Principal, Mercedes College**

I was very fortunate to be invited to be part of the 2015 Mercy Leadership Programme and Dublin Pilgrimage. Being new to a Mercy school it was an opportunity to learn through experience about the life and work of Catherine McAuley. It was also a chance to reflect on what it means to be a Mercy person in today’s world and to meet wonderful people from a variety of Mercy ministries.

I enjoyed the experience of walking each day to the Mercy International Centre and having quiet time in key locations in the house. It was a privilege to be able to spend time in Catherine’s room and know that she once looked out from this room in much the same way I did. I had a strong sense of her commitment to the poor, vulnerable and marginalised through the Baggot Street house. The impact of place on me was something that took me by surprise.

Breege O’Neil RSM presented on Catherine’s approach to leadership and this had the biggest impact on me. Catherine recognised other people’s gifts and saw what they could become with the right mentoring. This has guided my approach since returning from Dublin. Catherine cultivated a climate of joy and happiness. This has strengthened my commitment to student and staff well-being at Mercedes College.

The time in Dublin and Glendalough also made me more aware of the importance of time for reflection. Having times of stillness and silence are vital and I have committed to making time for reflection. Having time in Catherine’s room and know that she breathed her last breath. The fact that we were standing on the original floorboards laid in the room in 1827 enhanced the mystique of the experience.

The passion and commitment of the many fine women who led discussions or guided us on tours during the week was highlighted when eight Sisters in our group stood before us in the Chapel at the Presentation Convent, Georges Hill, where the Sisters amongst the poor, vulnerable and the sick being cared for in the infirmary. After the group took time to renew their vows at the very place Catherine was first professed in 1831. The day in the valley at Glendalough remains a pivotal memory of my pilgrimage. From the windswept shores of the Upper Lake to the peace of the Chapel in The Hermitage, I think Glendalough provides a perfect backdrop for the words of John O’Donohue; “When you cease to fear your solitude, a new creativity awakens in you”.

Denise Boyle’s concluding presentation on Saturday morning, titled “Mercy in a Global Context”, demonstrated clearly to me the challenges which lie ahead as Mercy Ministries and similar organisations throughout the world strive “to bring the Mercy of God to those in need”. By participating in the program I developed a greater appreciation for our core Mercy values, which are timeless, trans-cultural, non-negotiable, and the soul of a Mercy organisation.

**Jim McDougall**

**Welfare, NSW**  
**Board Chair, St Joseph’s Cowper**

I think it is reasonable to assume that when we gathered in Melbourne in February for the first Module of our 2015 pilgrimage, I was not the only person feeling a little unsure about the journey which lay ahead. But as we assembled for the Concluding Reflection in the “upper room” at Baggot Street on a Saturday afternoon just six weeks later, the sense of collegiality and kindred spirit present among us made me realise that I had been part of something special.

Throughout our week in Dublin we had the opportunity to experience the warmth and hospitality of Mary Reynolds, Mary Kay and all the staff at the Mercy International Centre. We had prayed and reflected in Catherine’s Room, where she had breathed her last breath. The fact that we were standing on the original floorboards laid in the room in 1827 enhanced the mystique of the experience.

The passion and commitment of the many fine women who led discussions or guided us on tours during the week was highlighted when eight Sisters in our group stood before us in the Chapel at the Presentation Convent, Georges Hill to renew their vows. This was the same Chapel where Catherine had stood to take her vows one hundred and seventy years ago.

The day in the valley at Glendalough remains a pivotal memory of my pilgrimage. From the windswept shores of the Upper Lake to the peace of the Chapel in The Hermitage, I think Glendalough provides a perfect backdrop for the words of John O’Donohue; “When you cease to fear your solitude, a new creativity awakens in you”.

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**Gillian Moorhouse**

**Mercy Health, Victoria**  
**Manager, Strategy and Business Development**

In March of this year I had the great privilege of travelling to Baggot Street to participate in the Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage. I thought I knew Catherine’s story having heard it over the years, but I discovered when you have such knowledgeable people as Mary Reynolds RSM and Aine Barrins RSM sharing insights, enjoying tea at Coolock House and walking the same streets of Dublin that Catherine would have, there is so much more richness to the story. This story also comes to us with an invitation to play our part in continuing it into the future.

Selected by the Institute Leadership Team to participate in this program as an emerging leader, I had the added bonus of being able to lean in and learn from others on the program, Board Chairs, Principals, Sisters of Mercy, who each had a wealth of wisdom and knowledge I could benefit from. I could have listened for hours to the stories which the Sisters so humbly told of their time serving communities in PNG, Pakistan, and Thailand.

A beautiful and sacred moment we shared was in the chapel at Presentation Convent, Georges Hill, where the Sisters amongst the group took time to renew their vows at the very place Catherine was first professed in 1831. The Mercy International Centre at Baggot Street is an impressive home still today, and as you move around within it you can truly appreciate Catherine’s visionary thinking in the building design. As you walk the winding central staircase you can imagine it being a hub of activity with children being taught in the school, music coming from the chapel and the sick being cared for in the infirmary. Within the house I also experienced the legendary Mercy hospitality and it is fortunate that they only check our luggage for excess weight on the flight home.

By participating in the program I developed a greater appreciation for our core Mercy values, which are timeless, trans-cultural, non-negotiable, and the soul of a Mercy organisation.
Anita Ghose  
Mercy Health, WA  
State Manager, Western Australia and Queensland

There was much delight and a sense of tremendous gratitude when I was invited to participate in the 2015 Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage. This turned quickly to quiet reflection….what ignites me at the prospect of this pilgrimage and how can I be truly awakened to live this time away to its fullest?

The preparation for the pilgrimage, so aptly led by Carmel Crawford and Karon Donnellon RSM augured well for what was to be a most enriching and transformational experience in Dublin. Importantly, this preparatory gathering prior to our departure for Ireland allowed us to create the space to “free our heart of ballast”…. “.. and the urgencies that deserve to claim you”. And so we were ready as fellow pilgrims across many ministries for a journey of enrichment - of mind, body and soul.

I stood outside the Mercy International Centre in Baggot Street, Dublin the day before the pilgrimage had begun and marvelled at the legacy of Catherine. The House of Mercy, as its doors opened warmly to us with a welcome by Mary Reynolds RSM on the first day, was a place of comfort and ‘home’ with a remarkable array of speakers. From sharing food in the dining area, praying in the chapel, quietly reflecting on Catherine’s last moments in her room and climbing those stairs to different levels, we were walking in the footsteps of Catherine and her fellow sisters. It was the time spent outside in the garden of Baggot Street, where Catherine was buried, that brought so much connection to the story.

Defining moments in this journey included visiting Coolock House where Catherine and the Callaghans lived together, setting the foundations of compassion for her later ministry and walking the streets of Catherine’s Dublin, including the time she spent at George’s Hill. The physical challenges endured during her years establishing the ministry must have been tremendous. It was the cold air and rugged hills of Glendalough with its icy cold waters and rugged terrain that connected us with a far more age-old experience of ruins of old churches and history of religion. I have a small rounded and smooth pebble from the waters of Glendalough that I carry with me in my bag every day as a reminder of that journey.

A lasting memorable moment was to hear of the work of Mercy at an international level and our call to action as global citizens. I wanted to feel that the Dublin experience could be put to continued action and am pleased that our group re-convened for a final reflection in Sydney with a purposeful intent to continue Catherine’s work across our ministries with a number of projects. The Spirit of Mercy continues well beyond the pilgrimage.

Liz Moloney RSM  
Sister of Mercy, NT  
CatholicCare NT

Three hundred words, not many when sharing about our Mercy Pilgrimage. A few of the significant moments and experiences that continue to tug and or enrich me are:

- visit to Coolock House
- hearing again about Mary-Anne Doyle’s place in Catherine’s life
- spending time at Baggot St after the group had left
- and the diversity and richness of the group participants.

Catherine’s experience with the Callaghan’s at Coolock had a very formative impact on her life. Catherine was loved and deeply cared for by the Callaghan’s, Catherine lived and developed her faith privately, she met society’s ‘well to do’ and the most vulnerable and cared for Mr and Mrs Callaghan until they died, with both being received into the Catholic Church just prior to their death. The mystery of the experience deepened Catherine’s faith, hospitality, respect and need to care for the vulnerable. What does this mean for me now?

Being at Baggot St and hearing again the place Mary-Anne Doyle had in Catherine’s life brought with it the reminder of how each of us, not matter our gifts and roles, has a significant contribution to make by just being ourselves. Mary-Anne was shy, reserved and certainly not upfront, although a very stable and loyal supporter of Catherine’s. Mary-Ann was Catherine’s first companion in ministry and mercy. Some have said, “…there were two”. Life cannot be fully lived without the contribution of each other.

Spending time in the silence of Baggot St and again being drawn into the attraction and mystery of Catherine’s life which was fired and inspired by our God of mercy. Time alone to allow God to move and speak within is needed for me to be in mercy ministry.

All group participants were drawn, curious and exploring the life of Catherine and mercy. What did it mean for their personal and professional life? Hard to know although when we met again there was the common theme of the experience changing participants inside, changing them at a very deep level which was not possible to capture yet important to trust if we are going to live by Catherine’s example.

The mystery of the experience deepened Catherine’s faith, hospitality, respect and need to care for the vulnerable.
What a wonderful occasion it was on 28 August this year when students from fifteen Mercy colleges across Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria gathered at St Aloysius College, North Melbourne to enter into a spirited competition of voice, public speaking and debating. The level of competition was palpitating and was matched by the strong sense of collegiality, true friendship and high intellect.

The planning and organisation for the Festival were managed superbly by College’s Head of Students and Programs, Pauline Cutajar. Pauline was ably assisted by Deputy Principal, Rachel Valentine, many other staff members and all Year 7 students who were wonderful ambassadors on the day. VCAL students and staff were very involved and instrumental in preparing much of the catering provided throughout the day.

Congratulations were extended to the host College, all students who participated and the teachers who provided their time, passion and expertise. There was much excitement as winners and runners up were announced and awards and prizes presented by Mercy Education Board Chair, Lucy Molony.

Overall results for the 2015 Festival were:

**Winners**

- **DEBATING** Sacred Heart College, Geelong
- **VOICE CHOIR** Catholic College Bendigo, Bendigo
- **PUBLIC SPEAKING** Zaphidan Kanji, St Aloysius College, North Melbourne

**Runners Up**

- **DEBATING** St Aloysius College, North Melbourne
- **VOICE CHOIR** St Aloysius College, North Melbourne
- **PUBLIC SPEAKING** Emma Kijagulu, St Aloysius College, North Melbourne
Above left: Winner, Voice Choir – Catholic College Bendigo; Above right: Winner, Public Speaking – Zaphidan Kanji, St Aloysius College North Melbourne; Clockwise from Below left: Runner up, Voice Choir – St Aloysius College North Melbourne; Runner up, Public Speaking – Zaphidan Kanji, St Aloysius College, North Melbourne; Runner up, Debating – St Aloysius College, North Melbourne
Mercy creates a spiral of right relationships. This message was one of the first heard by all participants at the first Seeds of Justice event for 2015, held in May. There was a real buzz from the moment staff and students from the many Mercy schools began arriving at the Holy Cross Centre in Templestowe, as smiles all around were shared and the beginning of new friendships began to form between people with a similar vision. Everyone felt very much at home from the moment they walked in the door.

An amazing number of schools were represented – 13 in total, including Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy, Sacred Heart College, Geelong, Catholic College Bendigo, St Aloysius College, Nth Melbourne, Sacred Heart College, Kyneton, Mount Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale, St Joseph’s College, Mildura, Our Lady Of Mercy College, Heidelberg, Damascus College, Ballarat, Notre Dame College, Shepparton, Catholic Regional College Sydenham and Mercy College, Coburg.

Our theme for the Conference was Mercy: Impelled to Respond and what better way to begin to be immersed in mercy, than to listen and engage in conversation with Sr Elizabeth Dowling RSM, our first keynote speaker. Sr Liz reminded us all that our God of Mercy feels the pain of the whole earth community and through His compassion and parental love, ‘womb’ love He is impelled to respond. We too are called to be ‘agents of mercy’, to follow His lead and to follow in Catherine’s footsteps and to learn from her wisdom. Sr Liz used scripture to inspire and teach us the real meaning of being moved with pity; a pity that stems from deep within us, that leaves us with no choice but to respond.

Students were kept thinking during ‘The Mercy Shark Tank’ activity prepared by Mercy College Coburg, which involved collaboration in small teams upon various issues that students believed required attention. Through discussion of how a resolution could be achieved when on a strict budget, this exercise mimicked that of world leaders’ in their conferences on social justice and service to the local, national and international communities. Each team made a final proposal to the judges, who then selected the winning group. Much fun was had by all but in staying true to the issues being discussed the students were empowered to think about the manner in which everyday decisions for the vulnerable are often made.
A number of Placements were offered for students to experience during this conference and not one disappointed. Our students came back from each of their community interactions with wonderful stories of hope, empathy and motivation to make a difference. They willingly shared their experiences of participating in Soup Vans, visiting the Exodus Community, Mercy Care communities, McAuley House and Big Group Hug, a volunteer driven service that provides assistance to families in need. All staff and students confirmed that being out in the community was a highlight of the two-day event.

Our second day agenda did not disappoint. It began with two wonderful young speakers who presented a program that was born from a Seeds of Justice event a couple of years ago. Camp Heidi, run by OLMC students, brings young children from the Exodus Community together in the school holidays, allowing young friendships to form and mentoring to take place. This was an invaluable presentation as it challenged our young Mercy men and women to think about how they could respond to the needs of others and on how they, as young adults in our community, can truly make a difference. The opportunity to work in school groups allowed each participant to have input on how we can live out our Mercy values within our own communities.

This conference proved to be a great success for all present. After having lived the experience of a Seeds event through my daughters’ attending, I was thrilled to now be a part of the team. I was humbled by the willingness of all staff to give of themselves and thankful that we have students in our midst that will carry Catherine’s message, the message of the Gospel, to all those they meet. Sr Liz mentioned the interconnectedness of giving and receiving mercy – the ‘dance of mercy’ and I believe that this is our challenge – to be impelled to respond and to inspire and to shine forth Mercy to all we meet on life’s journey.

Mrs Franca Caruana, Director of Mission and Social Justice – Sacred Heart College Geelong.
On 9 June 2015, Principal, Mr Brian Turner, welcomed members and friends of the Catholic College Bendigo community who gathered for a liturgy and blessing of the restored St Mary’s Courtyard. The blessing was conducted by Bishop of Sandhurst, His Grace, Leslie Tomlinson DD. Twelve local Sisters of Mercy joined the celebration, along with student leaders and staff who had been involved in the project. Catholic College Bendigo also welcomed newly appointed Mercy Education Board Chair, Lucy Molony to join with the community in celebration. The beautifully restored courtyard offers a space for reflection and sharing quiet times encompassing the Mercy Education values.

Other small projects, including design and construction of a Mercy cross mosaic, ably assisted by local Sisters of Mercy, students and staff, are adding to the visible and tangible images of Mercy around the College.