

the MercyWorks Bilum

Sisters of Mercy in Australia & Papua New Guinea | DEC 2023



MERCY

Walking Together.
Changing Lives.



MercyWorks

SISTERS OF MERCY
IN AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

OUR VISION

Mercy in action, partnering with the most vulnerable toward opportunity, dignity, and self-reliance.

OUR MISSION

We are a community development organisation, in the tradition of Catherine McAuley. We work in partnership with local community organisations to support the most vulnerable, both in Australia and elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region, with a particular focus on women and children. Our programs strive to build capacity and self-reliance and to foster environmental sustainability. Our mission is inspired by Catherine McAuley's vision of change for the poor and disadvantaged.

OUR VALUES

Mutuality • Integrity
Compassion • Justice

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THE BILUM

In Papua New Guinea, bilums are beautiful, traditional, and intricately handwoven string bags which have been crafted and used by people for hundreds of years to carry their most precious and essential belongings.

They are at the heart of Papua New Guinean traditions and hold deep cultural and emotional significance.

The Bilum is the name of our magazine, which carries and communicates the stories of the people involved in the many projects supported by Mercy Works. It is sent to people like you. Our friends, donors, and partners of Mercy Works.

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In the spirit of reconciliation **Mercy Works** acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we walk, live and work. We pay tribute to all of those who have nurtured this country over many thousands of years, deriving spiritual and physical needs from the seas, forests, soil, rivers, lakes and streams, and to Elders past and present. We join our First Nations people in honouring these lands as sacred. We welcome the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

From the Executive Director



Dear Friends....

My favourite part of my role is going out to meet with the individuals in our community who make Mercy Work's vision a reality. I really value engaging with our partners, the beneficiaries of our projects, and with you, our generous donors from across Australia and Asia Pacific. These moments bring my role to life and fuel my energy and passion for our mission.

The early Sisters of Mercy were often known as 'the walking nuns'. They put their boots on and went out to visit the sick and the poor, those on the margins of society, to bring compassion and restore dignity. They had their feet on the ground. They were determined and they were courageous. They were ready to walk in another's shoes, especially those who were powerless and suffering. As women and men of Mercy, we are asked to do the same today.

The theme of this year's Bilum, **Mercy - Walking Together. Changing Lives.** captures this spirit of the walking nuns of Dublin. Like them, we focus our outreach on the poor and the marginalised. The ones in society who so often have little power over their own life.

We partner with community leaders on programs led by locals for locals, and we know that this outreach does change lives. The stories in this magazine testify to this. And in the process, each of us changes too, becoming more compassionate with wider, more spacious hearts. As you read these stories, hopefully you too will feel your heart widen.

It was Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, who once said,

"If the love of God really reigns in your heart it will show itself in the exterior."

In February 2023, I had the privilege of again visiting the town of Kiunga in the vast Western Province of Papua New Guinea. A mixture of images stays with me - the stark, usually dry landscape, the heavily polluted Fly River due to the presence of the Ok Tedi Mine, and the warmth and welcome of the local leaders and people. The story, **Seeds of Transformation: Cultivating Change in Remote PNG**, captures our new work with the West Papuan refugees in this very poor and remote place.

For the last six years the Josephite Refugee Mentor Support Program (JRMSP) has gathered and trained generous volunteers to mentor Sudanese students from Western Sydney as they transition from secondary education to tertiary studies or employment. We are honoured to receive the baton from them and incorporate this program into Mercy Connect NSW. The story, **Empowering Futures: The MPower Mentorship Program** highlights this journey.

On the Frontlines: 'Creating Change for Women Through Advocacy' Initiatives continues to tell the powerful story of our partnership project in Cebu, Philippines which fights human trafficking. **Tricycle Crusaders: Fighting Human Trafficking on Three Wheels** is a fantastic example of changing awareness of human trafficking at the local level.

Salt 'n' Pepper: Healing Through Hope captures both the struggle of Aboriginal women caught in the cycle of incarceration and the lifeline offered by our Salt 'n' Pepper partners, Aunty Pat Waria-Read and her team of volunteers. As a nation, Australians are looking for practical ways to overcome the socio-economic inequality experienced by our First Nations Peoples. Salt 'n' Pepper is leading the way.

School. Community. Connections. warms my heart. Over the year, we have visited and shared stories of mercy and justice with many schools across Australia. During every visit we are offered Mercy hospitality and felt the tangible spirit among staff and young people who are passionate, generous, and keen to make a difference.

I conclude by expressing my thanks to so many who make up the fabric of Mercy Works, our dedicated staff, Mercy Congregation Leaders - who are our Members, and the Board of Directors and Standing Committee Members. I especially thank Joe Zabar, our Board Chair who provides wise counsel and leadership.

Most importantly, I thank you, our donor community whose generosity makes our work possible. I am filled with hope and appreciation to all for your enduring support.

With blessings to you and your loved ones for a healthy and peace-filled 2024,

Sally Bradley, RSM / Executive Director



On the Frontlines:

'CREATING CHANGE FOR WOMEN THROUGH ADVOCACY'

Funded by Mercy Works and facilitated by Villa Maria Good Shepherd Sisters Incorporated, 'Creating Change for Women through Advocacy' (CCWA) is a project with a powerful mission. It is dedicated to raising awareness of human trafficking, enhancing society's response to this critical issue, and protecting the rights of women and children to empower them as valuable contributors to their communities.

At the heart of this remarkable initiative, are the achievements of those working tirelessly to drive change and the impact they are making in the fight against human trafficking. They are driving change in the Cebu region, a known hotspot for women and girls abuse in the Philippines.

Human trafficking represents a grave violation of human rights. It is vital for the community to remain vigilant and informed about its complex dynamics and the systemic exploitation it perpetuates. Trafficked women and girls are not criminals. They are victims.

The Philippines government has established robust laws against human trafficking. However, it does not vigorously prosecute offenders, especially at a local government level.

While these challenges persist in the Philippine context, the CCWA project, with the support of Mercy Works donors, is actively working to combat the issues.

A Year of Impact

Since the launch of the program in 2021, we have been heartened by the multitude of activities undertaken. The association for women survivors of trafficking 'USWAG' (United Services for Women Advocates of Good Shephard Association) now boasts 46 women who proudly represent their membership as a capable group of committed advocates.

The women have been empowered with skills and knowledge acquired through a series of comprehensive training sessions and workshops. They are using their voices to drive change, urging policymakers to either amend or formulate new laws, resolutions, or ordinances that are more responsive to the needs of women and girls impacted by human trafficking.

Bravely sharing their personal stories, they provide invaluable insight into the realities they have experienced, helping to eliminate stigmatisation and reach more women who are still trapped in situations of exploitation.

A coalition of like-minded interfaith organisations, non-government and government entities, has now been created with a focus on four pilot municipalities. These parishes have been sending potential advocates and youth leaders for training alongside USWAG members.





PROJECT: Creating Change for Women Through Advocacy
LOCATION: Cebu City, Philippines
PARTNER: Villa Maria Good Shephard Sisters Inc.
PARTICIPANTS: 1,296
GOAL: To raise the level of society's response to human trafficking

An advocate 'train the trainer' workshop has been developed to be replicated across communities including ways in which youth advocates implement awareness-raising activities.

Coalition members have partnered with local government units to influence policy making. Additionally, local parish youth leaders have been accompanying parish priests to meet with mayors and lobby for the rights of victims. Two of four mayors are already showing support for Zero Tolerance resolutions.

In July, USWAG published a booklet called Padayon (a term used in several Visayan dialects to mean 'moving forward'). It comprises a collection of inspirational stories by women describing their life transformation.

USWAG has also devised an income-generating plan for their organisation to assist in its awareness-raising work. Most of the women are certified sewers and they have been producing unique bags with printed designs to be sold at advocacy events.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the partnership with Mercy Works. It has allowed our agency to extend beyond our recovery centre, enabling us to make a larger impact by raising awareness and educating individuals on the issue, achieving a greater consensus within our community and beyond."

Ashley Conde,
Advocacy Officer,
Villa Maria Good Shepherd Sisters Inc.



A Tale of Triumph:

DIANA'S FIGHT AGAINST TRAFFICKING

Diana* endured a harrowing journey as a victim-survivor of human trafficking at age 12. Hailing from a loving yet humble family in the tranquil northern part of Cebu Province, her early life resembled a fairy tale. But a new friendship at high school introduced her to a dark world.

This new friend led *Diana* into prostitution and vice, lured by material possessions. She left for Cebu City without a word to her family, finding herself far from her innocent past. Her yearning to return home grew, but she felt trapped.

Her first night was marked by a terrifying initiation. She was coerced into revealing attire, heavy makeup, and drugs to please her first foreign client. A turning point came when an older man from her hometown recognized her, alerting her parents and authorities.

The subsequent raid on the "Casa" brought relief to many, including *Diana*. Reunited with her family, she comprehended the gravity of her situation. Unfortunately, legal protections for trafficking victims were lacking, leaving her trauma unaddressed and her perpetrators unpunished.

Two weeks after her rescue *Diana* relapsed back into the cycle. However, meeting outreach workers rekindled hope, leading her to the Good Shepherd Sisters where she embarked on a healing journey through therapeutic activities.

Three years later, she was reintegrated into her community with skills in housekeeping and certification as an HIV tester and counsellor. Her career focused on aiding women and children on the streets, including those affected by HIV.

Today, *Diana* works as a Hospital Aid in Cebu City, directly assisting those living with HIV. She's an active outreach volunteer, providing support through the Creating Change for Women through Advocacy project.

In 2021, *Diana's* dream of forming USWAG became a reality with Mercy Works' support. The association is led by *Diana*. She conducts HIV awareness, testing, and advocacy; sharing her personal testimony to drive change.

* Not her real name



Salt 'n' Pepper

HEALING THROUGH HOPE

For two decades, *Jane's life has been marked by heartache and struggle, trapped in a relentless cycle of incarceration that began in her early twenties. It all unravelled when child protection services deemed her an unfit mother, taking her three children. *Jane* is a single Aboriginal mother, grappling with life's challenges and now the despair of losing her purpose. She embodies the pain of a mother who has lost everything dear.**

Jane's mission is to secure a home, regain custody, and provide her children the love they deserve. However, her path is an uphill battle. After becoming entangled with a man who introduced her to the shadowy world of substance abuse, she found herself back in prison. Bravely, she is now clean of drugs and his influence.

Her young children remain in foster care under the Department of Child Protection's jurisdiction. They face further turmoil as the system looks to relocate

them due to their grandmother's inability to care for them. The Department will not tell *Jane* where they will be placed.

The stress *Jane* bears is unimaginable, especially while locked behind bars. Uncertainty about her kids' future, along with her own impending court date, hangs like a dark cloud.

The hope is to secure *Jane* a place outside of prison. One that the courts deem suitable for release. The goal is to find her stable accommodation, where she can begin to rebuild her life and, more importantly, her children's lives. It won't be through any familiar connections; she's been isolated for too long.

Jane's story isn't a unique one; it's a painful reflection of many female inmates.

In this specific facility, Adelaide Women's Prison, the women of Aboriginal descent believe they make up an alarming 85% of the population, a stark contrast to 33%, the official government number. The Department of Correctional Services may claim otherwise, but the women themselves know the truth. Their stories are a chorus of despair, a plea for understanding, and an urgent call for change.

Enter Auntie Pat Waria-Read, a guiding light for many Indigenous women caught in a continuous pattern of detention. As a co-founder of the Salt 'n' Pepper initiative, an outreach program supporting these women in prison, she stands as a beacon of optimism, offering unwavering support and care to those in need.





PROJECT: Re-release and post-release outreach program for Aboriginal women
LOCATION: Adelaide, Australia
PARTNER: Salt 'n' Pepper
PARTICIPANTS: 107 adults and 117 children
GOAL: Support rehabilitation of Aboriginal women in prison and post-release, reduce the risk of re-offending, and provide reconnection with family and culture.

"One of the biggest problems in Adelaide right now is that there is no available accommodation for [women like Jane]," Aunty Pat laments, her voice heavy with concern. "There are people sleeping in cars, in doorways, in any place that can offer some shelter. There are no halfway houses. So, when they get out of jail, there is nowhere for them to go."

Home Detention, often a condition of release, comes with its own set of challenges. Home Detention allows offenders and prisoners to live in the community under strict supervision at a nominated location, monitored by an electronic device. It makes it far more difficult to find housing solutions for these women as most accommodations refuse to accept people with Home Detention orders.

As the women are restricted to a certain space, any outing requires notification and scrutiny by correctional service officers. Aunty Pat knows the system's pitfalls and the dire consequences it can bring. *"If there is any discrepancy, the Department of Correctional Services will send people, usually the police to investigate and report, often resulting in the issuing of a warrant for a return to jail."*

Salt 'n' Pepper is their lifeline, filling the gaps left by the official channels. *"We visit them, we encourage them, and we follow up on those things that Aboriginal services in the prison can't do,"* she explains. Their role extends to searching for accommodation, connecting with family members willing to offer a place for Home Detention, and assisting in securing essentials for their eventual resettlement.

What sets Salt 'n' Pepper apart is its availability for women who often find themselves alone, struggling through the darkest hours of their lives. *"They need someone 24/7 who cares for them,"* Aunty Pat

emphasises. *"Some days I could be home, and somebody rings and says, 'Aunty Pat, I am in this trouble. Could you come and get me?' And that's what I do."*

Cultural connection is another cornerstone of the work Salt 'n' Pepper undertakes. Indigenous women face unique challenges, often struggling with addiction and broken family ties. *"The families find it very hard to be encouraging and supporting,"* Aunty Pat explains. *"It's not like the families are not there for them. It's just that the families are tired. So, we encourage our women."*

Aunty Pat's passion and dedication shine through her words: *"Even if they've been in and out of jail for about 20 or 25 years, it doesn't matter to me. We will always be there to help them as long as we can."*

This program's impact is immeasurable, and Mercy Works' contribution has been instrumental in sustaining its operations. Salt 'n' Pepper has touched the lives of hundreds, if not thousands of Indigenous women in need.

Aunty Pat's vision is clear: *"Seeing people grow and allowing them the freedom to do that."* She believes in empowering those she helps, not just providing temporary assistance but giving them the strength and support they need to stand on their own feet.

Margie, Aunty Pat's co-founder, has been an invaluable ally. Their partnership, fondly represented by the program's name, Salt 'n' Pepper, is a testament to unity transcending cultural boundaries. Margie's unwavering support has made a significant difference.

Yet, Aunty Pat remains acutely aware of the ongoing battle against racism, insisting, *"If we are going to heal this country, the first thing we need to get rid of is that racism."* Her tireless efforts, alongside the Salt 'n' Pepper program, symbolise a crucial step toward healing and hope, bridging the divide to build a brighter future for Indigenous women.

** Not her real name.*



PROJECT: Daru-Kiunga Livelihoods Program
LOCATION: Kiunga, Papua New Guinea
PARTNER: Diocese of Daru-Kiunga
GOAL: To improve the living standards of people in the refugee resettlement areas of Iowara and Border Villages

Seeds of Transformation:

CULTIVATING CHANGE IN REMOTE PNG

THE DARU-KIUNGA DIOCESE PROJECT

As the sun's first rays kiss the horizon, a small girl begins her day in a humble village along the Down Fly River in the vast and remote western Diocese of Daru-Kiunga, Papua New Guinea. Life here is a tapestry of challenges and dreams. With each dawn, she embraces the hope that someday, things will be different. Her steps, like those of the generations before her, are marked by resilience and determination.

For over twelve years, Mercy Works has dedicated its efforts to assisting those struggling in this challenging environment. Recently, in January 2023, it was decided to engage a Papua New Guinean consultant to conduct a thorough evaluation of past operations, setting the stage for a remarkable new collaboration.

In February 2023, the recommendations from the Evaluation Report were discussed at a pivotal meeting held in Kiunga, a bustling town on the fringes of this district. In attendance were key members of the Mercy Works team including Sally Bradley RSM, Executive Director and Maria Prescilla, Program Manager – Overseas, local leaders, and Vicar General, Fr Andrew, a steadfast supporter of the project.

"During the gathering, it became evident that the West Papuan refugees residing within the Diocese confront shattering hardships and are among the most impoverished and disadvantaged in the world", Sally reported. After fleeing their homeland during the resistance fight against Indonesian occupation in the early 80s, these resilient people settled in two main areas of unwanted and unforgiving land: Iowara, comprising 18 villages, and the Down Fly River, often referred to as the 'Border Villages' which includes ten

more communities. It is within this locality that the seeds of the new initiative were planted.

In partnership with the local population, Mercy Works and the Diocese have embarked on a journey to launch a **Livelihood Program** with the primary goal of addressing the root causes of poverty and elevating living standards. In July 2023, the program officially began, and will have a strong emphasis on sustainable livelihoods, agriculture, health, and education.

Cycle of Poverty

Problems encountered by the residents of Iowara, and the Down Fly River are multifaceted. The constant threat of food shortages and the elusive quest for a sustainable income source have cast a long shadow over their lives. Agriculture, the primary livelihood for many, is hampered by limited arable land, a shortage of crops, infertile soil, drought, and flooding. These obstacles have perpetuated the cycle of poverty.

For refusing to relocate, many refugees have paid a high price, forfeiting powerful inducements like recognition, schools, and health care. Basic services as well as access to markets, are exceedingly scarce due to the remoteness of the area and the lack of support from the PNG government. Sally says *"this is particularly so for the Down Fly River villages because the government refuses to officially recognise this region as a refugee resettlement area. This has left the Catholic Church as the primary service provider over many years."*

Residents of this area often confront difficult travels on treacherous roads, with the way into Kiunga, the nearest urban centre, sometimes only achievable by boat in some parts.

Hygiene and sanitation conditions are dire, with open defecation being the norm. Clean water is a luxury, and pit latrines a rarity.

Moreover, perennial flooding along the Border Villages washes away crops, latrines, and contaminates water sources. The presence of the Ok Tedi mine which pollutes and destroys the Fly River system, only adds to the environmental woes.

Grassroots Empowerment

With the commencement of the program, a renewed sense of optimism has emerged. Over the next three years, in partnership with each village, this program aims to address the wide-ranging challenges experienced by these communities.

The need for community mobilisation with leadership capability building was considered as essential to empowering leaders to help drive positive change within their own communities. So, to finalise activities that will occur during the program Tony Karolus, Program Coordinator, and members of the Diocesan Livelihood Program team set out to consult with participating villages.

Consultative Planning

The team provided an introduction to and briefing of the program to discover numbers of participants and which aspects of the program were of interest and best suited to circumstances and locality. Some villages want to improve their knowledge in animal husbandry and other villages have requested materials for flower arranging and table skirting. As explained by Maria, *"it's not a one-size fits all scenario. For example, you don't encourage the breeding of ducks when there is no water. Our focus is on building the capacity of people so that they can be self-sufficient and self-reliant at the end of the program."*

A key component will be skills training encompassing a wide spectrum of endeavours from improved farming practices to financial and small enterprise management alongside income-generating ventures. Tony affirmed that the visits had seen visible enthusiasm *"we have identified and collected lists of names for fish nets, sewing and seed distribution and also contact persons for the exchange of information and communication. The communities have already planned training dates."*

Other crucial elements of the program will focus on enhancing the availability of clean water, and on improving health, sanitation, and education, especially for young children.

Additionally, the formation of local savings and credit groups (also known as microfinancing loans) will seek to instil a culture of saving and offer ongoing access to funds, ensuring financial stability.

The challenges are undeniable, but the determination to overcome them is even stronger.

The significance of the program lies not only in the tangible improvements it will provide but also in the intangible sense of optimism it will instil in the hearts of those it touches.

The launching of this program serves as a testament to human resilience and the power of collaboration to make a difference. As we look ahead, we see the seeds of promise taking root, reminding us that even in the most challenging circumstances, transformation is possible.



Empowering Futures

THE MPOWER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

In the vibrant heart of Western Sydney, a transformative mentorship program is quietly shaping the destinies of young Sudanese men and women. The program, formerly known as the Josephite Refugee Mentor Support Program (JRMSP), now proudly bears the name “MPower.”

MPower serves as an inspiring framework for mentors and mentees, forging pathways to tertiary education and meaningful employment. Born out of the profound realisation that many young Sudanese were facing daunting challenges after leaving school, the program embodies the Sudanese community’s resolve to create a brighter future for their youth.

In the past, many young Sudanese found themselves at home, jobless, lacking government welfare, and dependent on their parents for financial support. Some had legal issues, others were trapped in unhealthy relationships, and young single mothers were navigating the complexities of parenthood. Often, parents lost touch with their children, with grandmothers stepping in as caregivers.

Sister Maria Sullivan, a sister of St Joseph, has been a steadfast companion to the Sudanese since their arrival in Australia in 1998, and lived in Mapuordit, South Sudan, for twelve months in 2006. She says that her involvement began with a request for help from the South Sudanese community *“because so many of their young people were doing well in school – but when they left school, they would fall off the bridge.”*

Deacon John Cinya, Chaplain to the Sudanese community, recognised the need for assistance. In 2017, he turned to Sr Maria and a visionary collaboration was forged as the JRMSP initiative began to take shape. Since that time, a core group of mentees from the original program formed a leadership team and by early 2020, in collaboration with this team of young leaders, it was decided that a website should be established and a new name “MPower” was chosen.

PROJECT: M Power
LOCATION: Sydney, Australia
PARTNER: Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart
GOAL: Empower young Sudanese refugees to take leadership and ensure their successful transition from school to tertiary education and meaningful employment

In August 2023, Mercy Connect NSW, as part of Mercy Works, joined forces with Sister Maria and is excited to take on full custodianship of the MPower program from April 2024. Paul Taylor, Mercy Connect NSW Project Coordinator, says

“MPower isn’t just a mentorship program; it’s a life-sustaining support for young Sudanese people in Western Sydney.”

It acknowledges the unique challenges they face and sets out to equip them and their families to transition successfully from school to higher education or meaningful employment.”

Mercy Works is currently evaluating applications for a new wave of mentors to join MPower. Mentees often need guidance to understand and value their rich cultural heritage, fostering pride and leadership within their community. To create a meaningful relationship, mentors are advised to engage with mentees’ families and familiarise themselves with the unique background of their students, including a basic understanding of Sudanese history and geography. This knowledge helps them to recognise the significant differences in the school journey of Sudanese youth compared to those whose parents can read, write, and speak English.

A significant hallmark of this endeavour is its approach of respect and non-judgment towards cultural differences, to understand the position in which mentees often find themselves—caught between two cultures, two languages, and two sets of social norms. There is a true appreciation of the hardships that some mentees have experienced as child refugees, including separation from family, torture, trauma, language barriers, racism, discrimination, and possible post-traumatic stress.



In addition, some parents may be undergoing further trauma related to the ongoing situation in South Sudan, such as poverty, hunger, tribal conflicts, illness, and pressure to send money home. Many parents may have received little or no education, resulting in a limited understanding of tertiary studies and the demands of higher education.

Despite the challenges, MPower's ultimate goal is to empower every Sudanese student who completes Year 12, inviting applications through School Counsellors. It's an inclusive program, welcoming young people from all religious backgrounds and distinguished by its commitment to involving parents, especially mothers.

Research indicates that, after completing formal education, young people tend to fall into three distinct and discernible groups.

Some students wish to proceed to University or TAFE pathways and often require facilitation with course selection, enrolling, and managing their time between work and study.

Others choose to pursue a TAFE course or apprenticeship and may require more support in determining their career path without an ATAR.

Lastly, some students decide on the option of immediate full-time employment and may need help in understanding the concept of career progression and job security.

MPower's focus in 2024 will be on those wishing to undertake tertiary education where the program has proven to be successfully instrumental in providing crucial assistance to mentees and their families in the shift from a structured school environment to self-directed learning.

Mentees are assisted to develop specific skills and knowledge including access to services and resources needed to achieve independence, confidence, and success. This covers help with challenges such as navigating an application, a car insurance claim, connection with part-time employment opportunities, and financial support for various educational materials, travel expenses, and internet access.

Coordinator and mentor Tess Mulveney expounds *"The one-on-one mentoring provides young people with practical and meaningful support during the crucial stage between finishing school and stepping into life as an independent adult."*



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That might be helping a young person to fill out the complex enrolment forms for university – so they're not shut out because of administration barriers."

Throughout the journey, both mentors and mentees are motivated to be open to new experiences and personal growth, forging connections that help to create trust and friendship. Exploring new art, music, culture, or sports together, also provides opportunities to share knowledge back within their own communities, bridging the cultural divide.

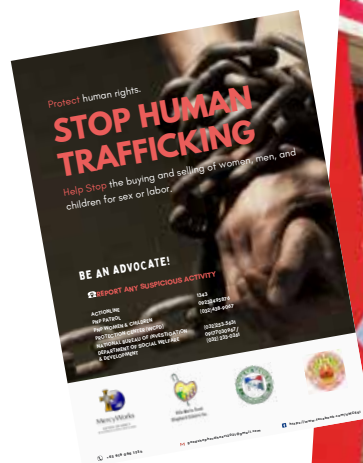
Adau, a former mentee, is grateful that her mentors *"have continued to support me and all my endeavours. They have changed my life and future for the better!"*

Mercy Works is proud to promote The MPower program, to foster a sense of self-determination and independence among young Sudanese, inspiring them to pursue their dreams and to become role models for the following generations. Through mentorship, MPower is lighting the path to more optimistic, more promising futures.

TRICYCLE CRUSADERS: Fighting Human Trafficking on Three Wheels

Santa Fe, in the province of Cebu in the Philippines is a designated pilot area of the 'Creating Change for Women through Advocacy' project. Following a request from the Tourism Office, responding to the concerns of local government a special initiative has been launched.

There was evidence of some tricycle drivers canvassing on behalf of foreigner's intent on seeking out bars, clubs, and brothels where they could 'find girls'. A seminar was organised, bringing together the tricycle drivers to educate them about the crime and what they can do to combat it. This vital knowledge has equipped them to be vigilant and act when necessary.



To make their commitment visible, these drivers were provided with stickers to display in the window of their tricycles with information on where to go for help. The stickers serve a dual purpose – they act as a reminder of the lessons learned in the seminar and, crucially, they can signal to passengers that they are in a safe environment.

Chair's Report



I write my report in the shadow of ongoing global unrest. Billions of our sisters and brothers are being impacted by the ravages of war, economic and social instability as well as by damaging floods, fires, and drought. Even in Australia, the lucky country, cost of living pressures and natural disasters have affected millions of people, particularly the poor and vulnerable living in our regional and remote communities.

In times of uncertainty, it is natural to focus inwards, on our own needs and security. However, it is even more important that we look outwards, with increased kindness and generosity of spirit towards those who suffer from poverty and social exclusion, especially our First Nations people. Many will be grieving the disappointing outcome of a referendum which sought to give them constitutional recognition through a voice to parliament.

The result of the referendum has only strengthened Mercy Works' resolve to support programs focused on First Nations people by improving the lives of young Aboriginal women and their children through such projects as Nunga Babies Watch and Keeping a Good Thing Going.

As Board Chair, it has been a privilege to witness the success of our activities both in Australia and overseas. Like many of those who attended the Friends of Mercy Works event in October 2022, I was moved by those who shared their stories of how Mercy Works initiatives had changed their lives and the lives of their communities. Our project in partnership with the Villa Maria Good Shepherd Sisters, mentoring former trafficked women to become strong advocates, was particularly inspirational and demonstrated how we can make an immediate difference and be a catalyst for generational change. These projects, like those across PNG and Timor Leste, are only possible through the ongoing generosity of our donors and supporters.

The sad reality is that the issues of global conflict and poverty will continue to be with us. Our commitment is that Mercy Works will do what it can to make life better for the poorest and most vulnerable communities. We will continue to work with partners to identify and address needs and look to leverage our current undertakings and further expand our activities.

For those escaping conflict and commencing a new life in Australia, Mercy Works continues to provide practical support through its Mercy Connect project, operating in NSW, Victoria, and Western Australia. This vital program is one of our largest, recruiting, training, and supporting hundreds of volunteers who offer their time and expertise to assist school students, families, and other adult groups from refugee backgrounds, adapt to life in Australia. This project assists refugees to flourish aided by the compassion and good will of those who work with them.

We are also committed to engaging with the next generation of leaders to encourage them to live in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy. I am comforted in the fact our schools' program is exposing students to the many Mercy Works projects which empower people and improve the lives of their communities. The opportunity to motivate these students to give witness to the work of Catherine is both exciting and rewarding.

Of course, stewardship of these projects is only possible because of the hard work of the staff, board, and committee members of Mercy Works Ltd. I acknowledge and thank my Board Directors, Committee members, Sr Sally Bradley RSM, and her team of professional and dedicated staff for their endeavours over this last year. Together we have made great progress and created a pathway for even greater things into the future.

The years ahead will be exciting, albeit challenging as we too grapple with the realities of economic and social uncertainty. There is always more to be done, things that we could do better, more arms we could twist and ears we might bend, but as Catherine McAuley said:

"The simplest and most practical lesson I know is to resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow."

Finally, I thank our members and our many donors, large and small, individuals, corporates and foundations who have generously provided the vital financial resources required to fund our many projects. Thank you for your trust in us, your generosity and ongoing support. Together we have made a difference to the lives of thousands of people and with that, a better world.

Joe Zabar / Board Chair

Key Project *Outcomes*

From providing education and skills training to health, nutrition and advocacy, here is a snapshot of what we have achieved in FY2022-2023. Mercy Works is grateful to our members and donor community for making these outcomes possible.

Overseas Projects

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Kiunga Program

- 32 Village Health Volunteers received skills training (Tarakbits and Bolovip)
- **Adult Literacy:** 18 women attended a training workshop on how to run Adult Literacy classes in their own communities.
- **Family Life:** A 5-day marriage encounter seminar for 28 participants from 8 parishes.
- **Girls Hostel:** Safe housing and educational support was provided to 9 girls, from remote villages, while studying in Kiunga.
- Trained 21 teachers in classroom and financial management.

Simbu Program

Building capabilities benefiting 3,502 people.

- Expanded **income generating production:** flour, spices, cooking oil, soap, potholders, table mats, clothing, baked goods, etc.
- Beyond potato and onion **farming**, more are growing sweet potato, ginger and mushroom. Some are producing natural fertilizers and pesticides.
- **Financial literacy training.** 16 of the savings cooperatives remain active.
- Five speakers purchased to broadcast **news updates** during village visits.
- 26 prisoners trained on anger management, self-esteem, and life skills.

TIMOR LESTE

Maucatar Nutritional Project, Cova Lima

Benefited 1,596 people (798 children, 692 women, and 106 men).

- FY2022-23: **maternal nutrition has improved, and low birth weight reduced.**
- 1878 patients attended **health screenings.**
- **Health and nutrition education** sessions in remote villages.

- Mothers taught nutritious meal preparation with local produce.
- 22,080 eggs provided to 1472 malnourished children and mothers.
- 42 families with severely malnourished children were each provided with 3 egg-laying chickens.
- 46 women and 27 men attended chicken raising training.

Community-based Rehabilitation and Inclusive Education for Children and Young Adults with a Disability, KATILOSA

Benefited 244 people with a disability, including 57 children.

- 75 received physiotherapy. 48 have **increased mobility** (e.g they can now move their limbs).
- 20 referred to major health centers for wheelchair, walking stick, cane, or mobility footwear.
- 57 students with a disability received **inclusive education**. Nine are now in mainstream schools. Ten receive home-based schooling.
- Educated families on providing their children with basic physical therapy.
- Advocated nationally for the protection and inclusion of people with disability.

PHILIPPINES

Creating Change for Women Through Advocacy, Cebu City

Awareness raising of human trafficking of women and children, and lobbying government, has directly reached 1,296, people (officials, service providers and public). Trained 46 anti-trafficking advocates.

- Mayor of Moalboal committed to enforcing existing ordinances.
- Mayor of Santa Fe is now hosting mandatory education sessions for business owners renewing licenses.
- Toledo City is supporting our anti-trafficking advocates and has invited us to present to Municipal Staff and other leaders.

- Mayor of Cebu City is implementing the “Zero Tolerance to Human Trafficking” ordinance.
- National Housing Authority affirmed the need to **prioritize women survivors for housing**.
- TESDA (technical school) has asked us to refer women survivors to them for scholarships.

Balay Banaag, Davao City

- **Supported 15 girls** living at the Centre with education, play therapy, psycho-social and spiritual activities, as well as basic life skills.
- **All students performed well academically**, with 8 receiving a certificate of honours in the 2nd quarter, 9 in the 3rd quarter. 11 received awards and medals in the 4th quarter.
- Three students graduated in Grade 6 and are now eligible for Junior High School.
- One child was reintegrated with her family.

Domestic Projects

INDIGENOUS

Cape York Girl Academy, Cairns QLD

Boarding school for Indigenous teenage mothers and their babies to live and learn. In partnership, we built a multisensory **calming room**. In FY2022-23 the room **benefited 25 students and three babies**.

Dr Crystal Williams: *“Your generous contribution... has had a profound impact on the lives of the girls we are assisting, and we cannot thank you enough.”*

Salt ‘n’ Pepper, Adelaide SA

Outreach program for Indigenous women in Adelaide Women’s Prison, supporting their rehabilitation and transition back into society. In FY2022-23, **107 adults (82 were Indigenous women)** and 117 children were supported. (see page 4)

Nunga Babies Watch, Adelaide SA

Supports Aboriginal families when engaging with the Department of Child Protection (DCP) to ensure they are heard, and rights are protected. In FY2022-23, **41 adults (36 females)** and **33 children** were supported.

NBW produces a **monthly newsletter** providing insights into the rights of Indigenous families and news on working with the DCP. This newsletter is distributed to the Indigenous community, stakeholders and leaders.

Baabayn Empowered Educator, Mt Druitt NSW

Partnered with the Baabayan Aboriginal Corporation to support their **Mums and Bubs Group**, a program enhancing the parenting life skills of Indigenous mums. In FY2022-23, 40 adults and 22 children participated.

We supported the **education of Early Childhood Administrator**, Janaya Hickey (studying for a Certificate IV in Business). Janaya’s mentor reports she has **strengthened her leadership role**. She hosted a visit from OLMC Parramatta students and teachers.

Kuro Yerlo: Yartangka Tirkanthi Camp, Learning on Country, Adelaide SA

Supported two overnight camps for city-based **Indigenous youth** and youth leaders to stay on Country and **learn from Aboriginal Elders** about their culture and language. The camps benefited 20 children and 13 adults. Participants reported enjoying the opportunity to **connect with Country** and to learn skills from their Elders. The youth team and Elders were also very satisfied with their experiences.

REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER

Romero Centre Gateways to Employment for people seeking asylum – Brisbane QLD

Preparing asylum seekers and refugees for employment. In FY2022-23 we achieved higher employment outcomes than expected with **37 people securing employment**. 55 adults directly benefited from the program (23 men and 32 women).

Mercy Connect – New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia

Pairs trained volunteers with asylum seekers and refugee school students and adults to provide mentorship and educational support.

 VOLUNTEERS
136

 PRIMARY SCHOOLS
48

 **18**
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

 ADULT CLASSES
9

STUDENTS
 **1,194**

School. Community. Connections.

We value the strong bonds we share with our school communities. It is exciting to partner with the next generation of philanthropists who are just as passionate as we are about helping the marginalised across Australia and Asia Pacific. Strong bonds create the foundation for making the impossible, possible. Here are just a few examples of how schools are raising funds.



Fashion for Compassion

A big dazzling thanks to the entire Mercedes College, Perth community who raise funds for Mercy Works through their annual fashion show. Staff and students modelled the exceptional designs of the College's creative student-designers. Dedicated members of the Young Mercies group together with staff orchestrated this remarkable event. Their efforts are helping to improve the lives of vulnerable people in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Timor Leste. Some of the very people mentioned in this magazine.



Changing Lanes: Giving Trafficked Women a Voice

The students, staff and families of All Hallows' School, Brisbane, dedicated 2023 to raising funds to free women and children from human trafficking through our advocacy project in Cebu, Philippines (go to page 4 to learn more). Their enthusiastic fundraising efforts included lunchtime bake sales and sausage sizzles. The school sewing group helped students mend their uniforms for a small donation. Fun, dress-themed fundraising days included Do It in Denim, Pink Parade, Pyjama Day and Fandom Friday, where staff and students revealed their "inner fan."



Celebrating Mercy Day

The sun shone as students and staff of **Catherine McAuley College, Bendigo**, came together to celebrate Mercy Day and raise funds for Mercy Works projects. The day was filled with warmth, hospitality and joyful celebration. Following a Mercy Day liturgy, the College transformed into a vibrant carnival, welcoming all to celebrate together. Students and staff dressed in fun, house-coloured costumes creating a colour explosion across the campus. Students participated in Rock in the Square, playing games at the student-led Mission Marts and enjoying the Carnival Rides.



OLMC, Parramatta Mercy Giving Tree

In 2023, **Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta**, raised funds for the Baabayn Mums and Bubs Group. A program designed to enhance the parenting and broader life skills of young Indigenous mums and to promote the resilience of young families to reduce the likelihood of intervention by child protection authorities. Students from OLMC came out to Baabayn and meet with Janaya Hickey, Early Childhood Administrator, and Sally Bradley RSM, Executive Director, Mercy Works, to learn more about how their fundraising is benefiting Indigenous families.

Financial Statements

INCOME STATEMENT

For year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
Revenue	\$	\$
Monetary Donations and Gifts		
- From Members	445,422	378,660
- From Other Parties	706,430	739,430
Grants - Other Australian	144,995	91,014
Bequests	49,706	33,448
Other Income		
- Interest Received	103,744	97,765
- Distribution Received from Investments	108,782	93,030
- Gain on Revaluation of Investments	57,400	-
Total Revenue	1,616,479	1,433,347

Expenditure	\$	\$
International Aid & Development Programs Expenditure		
International Programs		
- Funds to International Programs	322,263	353,377
- Program Support Costs	109,180	43,944
Community Education	33,828	42,420
Public Fundraising Costs	66,552	38,064
Accountability and Administration	164,700	146,874
Other Expenditure	-	-
Total International Aid and Development Programs Expenditure	696,523	624,679
Domestic Program Expenditure (incl Monetary and Non Monetary)	524,219	621,714
Loss on Revaluation of Investments	-	109,419
Total Expenditure	1,220,743	1,355,812
Excess of Revenue Over Expenditure	395,736	77,535

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
Assets	\$	\$
Current Assets		
- Cash and Cash Equivalent	288,386	262,721
- Trade and Other Receivables	15,031	9,812
- Financial Assets	2,598,642	2,496,914
- Other Assets	15,955	16,216
Total Current Assets	2,918,014	2,785,663
Non Current Assets		
- Financial Assets	1,396,729	1,230,547
- Property, Plant and Equipment	11,817	10,481
- Right-of-use Assets	-	9,233
Total Non Current Assets	1,408,546	1,250,261
Total Assets	4,326,560	4,035,924
Liabilities	\$	\$
Current Liabilities		
- Trade and Other Payables	26,652	43,353
- Other Liabilities	39,813	37,069
- Employee Benefits	76,629	135,588
- Lease Liability	-	27,620
Total Current Liabilities	143,094	243,630
Non Current Liabilities		
- Employee Benefits	9,518	12,192
- Lease Liability	-	1,890
Total Non Current Liabilities	9,518	14,082
Total Liabilities	152,612	257,712
Net Assets	4,173,948	3,778,212
Equity	\$	\$
Retained Surplus	4,173,948	3,778,212
Total Equity	4,173,948	3,778,212

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

For year ended 30 June 2023

	Retained Earnings	Reserves	Other
Balance as 1 July 2022	3,778,212	-	-
Excess of Revenue over Expenses	395,736	-	-
Balance as 30 June 2023	4,173,948	-	-

The income for our programs comes from a wide variety of donors, including the Sisters of Mercy, associated ministries, Corporations and members of the public. During the year, specified donations have been received for Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Philippines, Mercy Connect and other domestic projects.

Obligations for projects carried forward to FY24 are adequately covered by cash and cash equivalents. These funds have been directed towards the retained earnings and will be used to fund future projects.

The ACFID-Code-compliant financial statements comply with the presentation and disclosure requirements of the ACFID Code of Conduct. Refer to the ACFID Code of Conduct website for further information. <https://acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/>

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with relevant legislation, accounting standards, provide a true and fair view of their financial position and performance, and that the organisation can pay its debts as and when they become due. These financial statements have been reviewed and approved by the Board. The full statutory financial statements separately from the Annual Report is available on: <https://www.mercyworks.org.au/who-we-are/financial-statements-and-annual-reports/>



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON THE SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT FOR MERCY WORKS LIMITED

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, and the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year then ended, are derived from the audited financial report of Mercy Works Limited for the year ended 30 June 2023. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that special purpose financial report in our report dated 7 November 2023. That financial report, and the summary financial statements, do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on that financial report.

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, or the relevant Australian Accounting Standards. Reading the summary financial statements, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report of Mercy Works Limited.

The Responsibility of the Board Members for the Summary Financial Report

The Board Members of the entity are responsible for the preparation of a summary of the audited financial report.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the summary financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with *Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

Opinion

In our opinion, the summary financial statements derived from the audited financial report of Mercy Works Limited for the year ended 30 June 2023 are consistent, in all material respects, with that audited financial report.

NOT FOR PROFIT ACCOUNTING SPECIALISTS

KESWICK SA 5035

Ian Mostert CPA

Registered Company Auditor No 539768

Dated: 7 November 2023



Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Our People

OUR BOARD



Joseph Zabar
Board Chair,
Finance Risk and Audit
Committee



Travis Bowman
Board Member,
Finance Risk and Audit
Committee Chair
(Resigned Nov. 2023)



Francis Elvey
Board Member,
Program Committee
Chair



Sr Catherine Ryan RSM
Board Member



Catherine Glenister
Board Member



Kerrie Walshaw
Board Member,
Program Committee



Steven Collins
Board Member,
Program Committee



Mark Sleight
Board Member,
Finance, Risk and Audit
Committee; and
Program Committee
(Resigned Oct. 2023)

Everyone involved in delivering Mercy Works' programs shares an enduring commitment to strengthening communities and delivering positive change for people in need.

OUR MEMBERS

We give thanks to the Sisters who have now finished their term in leadership and as members of Mercy Works. We welcome our current members.

Karon Donnellon RSM
Leader, ISMAPNG

Elizabeth Moloney RSM
Institute Vicar, ISMAPNG

Duyen Thi My Nguyen, RSM
Institute Councillor, ISMAPNG

Theresia Tina RSM
Institute Councillor, ISMAPNG

Margaret Madden RSM
Institute Councillor, ISMAPNG

Margaret Jones RSM
Leader, Sisters of Mercy Parramatta

Jennifer Ryan RSM
Leader, Sisters of Mercy North Sydney

Peta Goldberg RSM
Leader, Sisters of Mercy Brisbane

Sandra Marreiros
Finance and
Administration Officer

Danielle Hayes
Fundraising and
Marketing Manager

Katrina Richardson
Grants Coordinator

Paul Taylor
Mercy Connect
Coordinator - NSW

Katherine Cooney
Mercy Connect
Coordinator - VIC

Kristen Tong
Mercy Connect
Coordinator - WA

Clare Bennett
Program Manager -
Indigenous and
Refugee Projects

Maria Prescilla
Program Manager -
Overseas

MERCY WORKS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Maryanne Kolkia RSM
Simbu Project Coordinator

Theresia Boyek RSM
Administration and
Finance Support

Andrew Waike
Officer in Charge of
Agricultural Activities

Joseph John
Community Team Leader
and Advocacy Officer

Gabriella Kawage
Life Skills Trainer and
Publicity Officer

Salume Kup
Office Administration
and Trainer

Merawo Mauglia
Community Team Leader
and Advocacy Officer

John Rubi
Life Skills Trainer and
Publicity Officer

Saki Yepa
Community Team Leader
and Advocacy Officer

Ekine Koimb
Community Team Leader
and Advocacy Officer

OUR STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Andrew Burke
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Chris Bissett
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Fiona McKenzie
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Michael Cusic
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Bernard Dobson
Program Committee

Katherine Burton
Program Committee

Lorraine Asmann
Program Committee

OUR STAFF

MERCY WORKS AUSTRALIA

Sally Bradley RSM
Executive Director

Martin Binoj
Finance Manager

Thank You

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS...

Right across Australia, our school communities are partnering with us to help the vulnerable and disadvantaged in the Asia Pacific region. To these school students, staff, parents and friends – THANK YOU for your compassion and generosity. You are improving the lives of countless individuals and communities. You are giving them hope.

The following schools generously raised funds between November 2022 to November 2023.

*Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy
All Hallows' School, Brisbane
Aranmore Catholic College, Leederville
Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Bathurst
The Cathedral College, Rockhampton
Catherine McAuley College, Bendigo
Catherine McAuley College, Mackay
Catherine McAuley Westmead
Emmanuel College, Warrnambool
Holy Cross College, Ellenbrook
Holy Family Primary School, Kelso
McAuley Catholic College, Grafton
Mercedes College, Perth
Mercedes College, Springfield
Mercy Catholic College, Chatswood
Mercy College, Koondoola
Mercy Regional College, Camperdown
Merici College, Canberra
Mount Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale
Notre Dame Catholic Primary School, Cloverdale
Notre Dame College, Shepparton
Our Lady of Lourdes School, Nollamara
Our Lady of Mercy College, Australind
Our Lady of Mercy College, Burraneer
Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg
Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta
Padbury Catholic School, Padbury
Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes
Sacred Heart College, Kyneton
Sacred Heart College, Geelong
Santa Maria College, Attadale
St Aloysius College, Adelaide
St Aloysius College, North Melbourne
St Anthony's Primary School, Girraween
St Brigid's College, Lesmurdie
St Columba's Catholic School, Bayswater
St Columba's Primary School, Adamstown
St Columba's School, Soldiers Hill
St Gerard's Primary School, Westminster
St John Fisher College, Bracken Ridge
St Joseph's College, Mildura
St Joseph's Primary School, Kangaroo Point
St Luke's Catholic Primary School, Woodvale
St Mary's Catholic School, Wellington
St Mary's College, Gunnedah
St Mary's School, Mackay
St Michael's Primary School, Baulkham Hills
St Michael's School, Gordonvale
St Monica's Primary School, Wodonga
St Patrick's College, Mackay
St Patrick's College, Townsville
St Patrick's Primary School, Blacktown
St Thomas School and Preschool, Goodwood
Ursula Frayne Catholic College, Victoria Park*

