

the MercyWorks Bilum

Sisters of Mercy in Australia & Papua New Guinea | DEC 2024

Richard's journey

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

**Celebrating 25 years
of Mercy Works**

After the floods in PNG

Seeking a new life in Australia



MercyWorks

SISTERS OF MERCY
IN AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Mercy -
Walking Together.
Changing Lives.*

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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ACFID
MEMBER

We are a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and as such committed to the ACFID Code of Conduct for Australian aid and development organisations. See www.acfid.asn.au

Cover

(L to R) Pat Carmody and Richard Ayat.



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....

At the end of 2018 I felt called by God to apply for the position of Executive Director of Mercy Works. The small seed of this call was sown into my heart in 2015 when I first visited Bihute Correctional Institution in Goroka, Papua New Guinea with Mercy Works staff. This trip was not my first to PNG. However, this visit to the prison was a deeply moving experience. One I will never forget.

In appearance, the prison is harsh with high barbwire fences, padlocked gates and grey concrete floors. It felt confined and crowded. In contrast, it is surrounded by the magnificent, green and expansive Highland mountains.

On arrival, we were warmly met by the Commander of the prison who spoke so appreciatively about the faithful presence of Mercy Works staff. He told us, their weekly outreach visits had contributed so positively to Bihute prison's culture. We also met with prisoners, from the female and male sections of the prison, who shared personal stories about how Mercy Work's life and skills training workshops had turned their lives around.

A female warden then stood up and openly expressed her gratitude for attending our anger-management workshop. At the workshop she grew to understand the reasons for her deep hurt and anger and so was able to change her behaviour and reconcile with her family.

My visit to Bihute prison left me profoundly moved by how faithful acts of Mercy could have such a positive impact on people and communities. This prison, built to be harsh and imposing, had become a place of respect and dignity!

In 2025, we proudly celebrate 25 years of Mercy Works Ltd as a community development organisation. The leaders of the Sisters of Mercy first came together in 2000 with foresight and vision to form this new company. Mercy Works Ltd was created to carry on the work of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia with both Indigenous and refugee communities, and beyond.

You can read more about the history of Mercy Works in this edition of the Bilum – **"Mercy Works: 25 Years of Making a Difference in Communities Worldwide"**.

There are also many other moving stories of hope and gratitude in the Bilum. Testimonies to the ways your generous support enables this to happen.

This year, we have continued to build on the strength and vision of all who have gone before us by strengthening our Programs team, bringing on new staff with varied gifts, cultural backgrounds and skills to fill four newly created positions: Head of Programs, Overseas Project Coordinator, Indigenous Project Coordinator and Refugee Senior Project Coordinator. We are filled with hope as this gives us greater capacity to expand our project work.

The powerful words of the song **"Standing on the Shoulders"** by Joyce Johnson Rouse, sum up the gratitude I feel for all whose shoulders we stand upon 25 years later.

*We are standing on the shoulders of
the ones who came before us*

*They are saints and they are humans,
they are angels, they are friends*

*We can see beyond the struggles and
the troubles and the challenge*

*When we know that by our efforts things
will be better in the end*

On behalf of Mercy Works, I give thanks to so many dedicated people – past and present – the Sisters of Mercy, the Mercy Congregation Leaders who are our members, our staff, volunteers, Board Directors and Standing Committee members. I especially thank Joe Zabar, our Board Chair for his tireless dedication, support and belief in our mission; and to you, our kind-hearted donors, who give so generously to improve the lives of the disenfranchised and vulnerable.

I also give thanks for the firm foundations laid for Mercy Works today. I feel very blessed to be a part of this ongoing story. In the words of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, **"The tender mercy of God has given us one another."**

Every blessing to you and your loved ones for a healthy and safe 2025!

With gratitude,
Sally Bradley rsm / Executive Director

Mercy Works:

25 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

'The poor need help today, not next week.'
- Catherine McAuley. These words have been the guiding mantra for all who have contributed to Mercy Works since its inception. In 2025, we celebrate 25 years of Mercy in action and reflect on a legacy of service, innovation and dedication.

Since arriving in Australia in 1846, the Sisters of Mercy, alongside others inspired by Catherine McAuley's vision, have committed themselves to walking with the most marginalised and vulnerable in society. In 1993, a desire to formalise this commitment led to the establishment of Mercy Overseas Aid. Recognising the need for clear principles to guide both national and international ministries, the organisation as we know it today, was renamed Mercy Works Inc. in April 2000.

Ailsa Mackinnon rsm, former Executive Director of Mercy Works recalls 'In the beginning it was extremely difficult because we were so vulnerable financially but the work being done was magnificent. No government funding meant fundraising needed to have a solid commitment from foundations, private donors and importantly our Mercy schools, to ensure the mission was sustainable.'

By 2003, a Board of Directors was formed, and in 2004, Mercy Refugee Services was fully integrated into Mercy Works. As the number of programs with tax-deductible funding continued to grow, Mercy Works applied for Public Benevolent Institution status, transitioning to a Company Limited by Guarantee in July 2010.

***We knew that we were making
a difference. It was tangible.
You could see it in people's lives.***

Ailsa Mackinnon

From the onset Mercy Works aimed to evolve earlier works designed to improve social justice and self-reliance through education, health care and welfare programs. These grew to encompass 11 countries from Australia to Kenya, from Pakistan to Papua New Guinea



(PNG) and from Peru to Timor-Leste. For Ailsa, 'Mercy is a verb. It is action. It is how you put your faith life into action.'

Projects included the installation of water systems in remote villages of Timor-Leste and PNG. Groups were formed to support and empower women, and advance maternal health outcomes, in Pakistan, Kenya and Peru. In Timor-Leste and PNG courses were offered to give women and men the skills required to find work to sustain themselves.

Keen effort was afforded to programs that focussed on elevating educational outcomes for people from a refugee or asylum seeker background in Australia, through the creation of Classroom Connect in 2008 (now called Mercy Works Connect). The mission to create educational opportunities extended to Pakistan with assistance to two schools, and Sudan where in partnership with other NGOs, Mercy Works built a hostel to house young female students attending secondary school. In PNG, hundreds of students benefitted from the Access to Tertiary Education Scholarship program.



Ailsa believes 'The turning point for Mercy Works was our partnership with local communities. That grassroots approach allowed us to design programs that truly met the needs of the people we served.'



Former Board Chair, Kathleen Donnellon adds ‘For me it was that sense of bringing it back very firmly to mission all the time, making sure that the things that we were funding were in collaboration with the people that we were working with, whoever they might be, that it was really mission based in the sense that it was working towards sustainability for that community or that organisation.’

This is evident in the current work across Australia, PNG, Timor Leste, and the Philippines.

In Australia, Mercy Works partners with organisations like Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation to provide weekly gatherings for Indigenous mothers and children, Jtunga Wattyjara ‘Family Together’ is dedicated to advancing better outcomes for Indigenous women and families, and the Nallei Jerring Youth Leadership Program fosters leadership and self-identity among Aboriginal youth.

Mercy Works Connect supports child and adult students from a refugee or asylum seeker background with mentoring and academic assistance. Mercy Works also supports asylum seekers in Brisbane finding employment through the Romero Centre.

In partnership with the Diocese of Daru-Kiunga in PNG, Mercy Works supports West Papuan refugees and enhances living standards in Simbu Province through financial services, skills training, and crop production.

Mercy Works collaborates with the Hospitaller Sisters of Mercy in Timor Leste, to combat malnutrition in Maucatar, with a focus on pregnant women and children.

PHOTOS TOP (L-R):

Celebrating ten years of Mercy Works in Goroka, PNG (2016).

Mercy Works meets with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canberra (2024).

(L to R) Helen Nolen rsm, Gaye Lennon rsm, and Armandina Gusmão Santos, Consul General of Timor-Leste (2015).

PHOTO LEFT: (L to R) Ailsa Mackinnon rsm, Ali, and Lorraine Phelan rsm (2016).

The Teresa Orsini Maternity Clinic plays a key role in improving health outcomes in this underserved region.

Alongside the Good Shepherd Home in The Philippines, Mercy Works supports survivors of gender-based violence, offering refugee, rehabilitation, and livelihood opportunities.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to further empowering these communities and building on the sustainable progress that has been made. Mercy Works Board Chair Joe Zabar’s aspiration is ‘I’m hoping that we have tilled the soil well enough so that the next generation coming through will be able to harness some of the gains that we’ve achieved and then springboard Mercy Works to even greater things in the next 25 years.’

Mercy Works began with a vision for a better world, and 25 years later, that vision is stronger than ever. From humble beginnings, the organisation continues to be a force for change. Joe concludes ‘We may have grown but we’re still a small organisation, and nimble, and I don’t think we’ll ever change that because it’s grassroots and it’s sustainable, in the sense that individuals can take control over their own lives. That’s our niche.

We might be too small to change the world, but we can change the world for those we support.’

MERCY WORKS LEADERS

Executive Officers

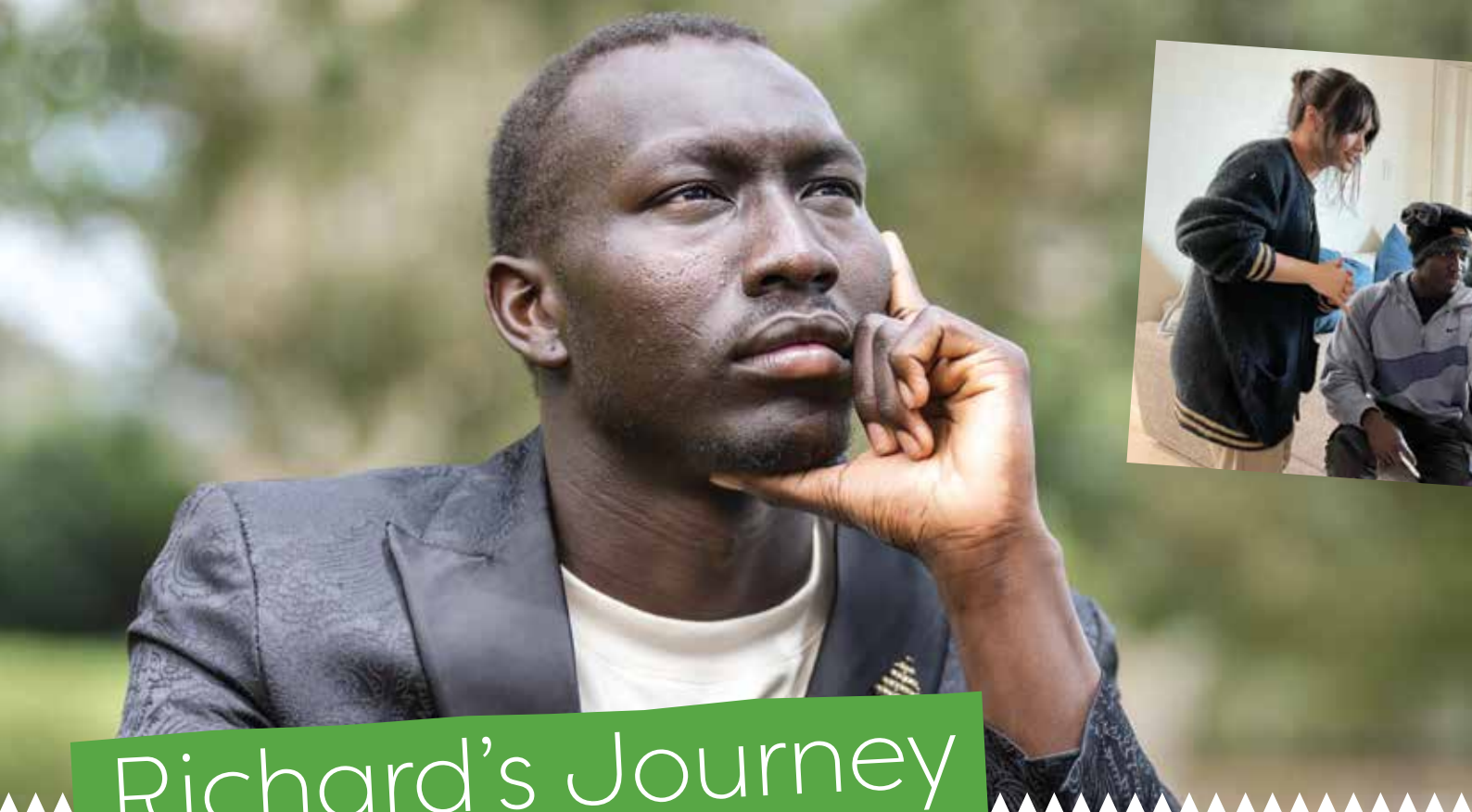
Helen Nolen rsm	2000 – 2003
Maryanne Loughry rsm	2004 – 2005
Rosemary Carroll rsm	2006 – 2011

Executive Directors

Ailsa Mackinnon rsm	2012 – 2018
Sally Bradley rsm	2019 – present

Board Chairs

Patricia Pak Poy rsm	2000 – 2002
Mary Densley rsm	2003 – 2007
Mary Duffy rsm, RIP	2008 – 2011
Berice Livermore rsm	2012 – 2017
Kathleen Donnellon	2018 – 2021
Joe Zabar	2022 – present



Richard's Journey

MPowering the Future:

In the bustling world of movie production, where dreams are made and opportunities are scarce, navigating the industry can seem daunting. But with the right guidance and support, even the most challenging paths can be illuminated. This is the essence of the MPower program, where mentor Pat Carmody and mentee, Richard Ayat, have shared an inspiring journey of growth, friendship, and empowerment.

Making a Connection

Two years ago, Pat, a professional with a vast network, was introduced to Richard, a young man from a refugee background with big dreams, at an MPower event. Richard was in his final year of high school, just beginning his university studies in screen media. Like many young people, he was brimming with potential but needed direction. He wanted to break into movie production but wasn't sure how to begin. That's where Pat stepped in.

Richard can remember 'I was very mixed, I was open to [Pat being my mentor], but I just wasn't confident in Pat's ability to fulfill my desires. But once we established a friendship and, we would meet up for coffee or meet up for lunch and talk about stuff that has nothing to do with university, nothing to do with my goals, you

bond with your mentor so that they become more so a friend. And that's the most important part.'

The Power of Networking

One of the first lessons Pat imparted to Richard was the importance of networking. Together, they arranged meetings with a wide array of industry professionals—a marketing director from Channel Nine, a renowned voice coach, and even a movie producer based in New York. Though these meetings didn't yield immediate results, each one offered valuable insights into the workings of the film industry. Pat understood that success rarely comes from a single opportunity but from the accumulation of small wins and the knowledge gained from every encounter.

Richard says he learned that 'eventually you might find one of those diamonds in the rough,' reflecting on the countless conversations and advice he absorbed along the way. He believes these experiences were instrumental in building his confidence and understanding of the industry.

Building a Strong Foundation

Beyond networking, Pat worked closely with Richard on the practical aspects of career-building, especially crafting a compelling resume. In a highly competitive field like movie production, it's crucial to stand out. Pat guided Richard on how to highlight his skills and experiences in a way that would catch the eye of potential employers and scholarship committees.



PHOTO BELOW LEFT: Richard (centre) working behind the camera on a filmset.

PHOTO BELOW MIDDLE: Richard (left) at a Sudanese Youth Rising meeting.

PHOTO BELOW RIGHT: Pat and Richard catching up on each other's news.



Richard says 'I came to understand that there's a lot of focus on post school qualifications. Employers only wanting those with a stacked portfolio of, 'you've done this... you have all this experience.' So that's what I've been focusing on,' Richard explains. With Pat's help, Richard was able to secure a job as a production engineer on a movie set, a significant stepping stone in his career. But they weren't stopping there. Pat and Richard began working on securing a coveted scholarship at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), preparing his resume and making connections to bolster his application.

A Mentor Becomes a Leader

As Richard grew in experience, so did his independence. The first year of his mentorship with Pat was a whirlwind of learning, filled with invaluable lessons about patience and persistence. But by the second year, Richard had gained the confidence to take on leadership roles within his own Sudanese youth group, echoing the same mentorship and guidance he had received from Pat.

"I've already caught myself sort of talking, speaking the way Pat used to speak to me. To the youth. When we host our events, we have a lot of high schoolers come in, and I'm just sitting down with them. I'm talking to them about my experience and giving them advice. It's one of the things that Sister Maria* would always do, just have a genuine conversation about what stage you are in your life before she even started discussing your goals."

Using the same empathetic approach he experienced with Pat and Sister Maria, Richard has become a trusted leader within his community. His youth group is now actively involved in supporting Sudanese students, creating spaces for connection, and fostering opportunities for growth and learning—just as Mercy Works and the MPower program have done for him.

PROJECT: MPower – a mentorship program
LOCATION: Sydney, Australia
GOAL: Empower Sudanese youth, from a refugee family background, to ensure a successful transition from school to tertiary education and meaningful employment.



"Our Sudanese Youth Rising group is well formed now. It's growing. We're basically doing what Sister Maria was doing for the Sudanese, for us. We've taken over her role now that she's retired".*

Learning from Each Other

Mentorship is a two-way street, and Pat is the first to acknowledge how much he's learned from Richard.

Pat is not only proud of Richard's accomplishments but also deeply impressed by his commitment to paying it forward. Richard's leadership within the youth group reflects the same values of mentorship, trust, and perseverance that Pat has instilled in him.

A Bright Future Ahead

Richard is now in the third year of his four-year degree, with his eyes firmly set on a future in the movie production industry. He continues to build his portfolio and expand his network, understanding that these connections will be key to his success. He's working toward his NIDA scholarship, all the while remaining dedicated to his community and his peers.

As Richard moves forward in his career and Pat continues to mentor, their journey is far from over. Together, they are living proof that mentorship isn't just about professional growth—it's about empowering the next generation to lead, inspire, and make a difference.

*Sister Maria Sullivan RSJ who started MPower in 2017.

Seeking Asylum:

RIGHTS, BARRIERS, AND THE JOURNEY TOWARD A NEW LIFE IN AUSTRALIA



Asylum seekers, refugees, boat people, detainees – these terms are often used interchangeably in media and public discourse, but they carry important distinctions, particularly in relation to a person's legal status and rights in Australia. While the conversation is often muddled with labels, one fact is clear: it is not illegal to be a person seeking asylum.

Under international law, specifically the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Australia is a signatory, individuals fleeing persecution, conflict, or human rights abuses have the legal right to seek asylum in another country.

However, in Australia, the 'means of arrival' can affect how a person seeking asylum is processed. Mengistu Hailu, manager of the Romero Centre in Brisbane, was once himself seeking asylum and knows the process well. He shares 'here you can see people go 14 years without a visa, without the right to work and no income.'

Those who arrive into Australia without a visa, are often detained or sent to offshore processing centres while their claims are evaluated. Mengistu explains 'I have worked with people, who were on Manus Island, detained for a long time, insulted, abused. Lots of violations happened to them. So, whenever they see for example, a policeman or a security guard, trauma can be triggered very easily.'

In the face of these challenges, Mercy Works, in partnership with the Romero Centre, is stepping up to address critical barriers faced by people seeking asylum in Australia. The Gateways to Employment project focusses on improving employment opportunities for people seeking asylum in

PROJECT: Romero Gateways to Employment for People Seeking Asylum.
LOCATION: Brisbane, Queensland
PARTNER: Romero Centre
GOAL: Support people seeking asylum to gain work experience and employment.

Queensland, who are often dealing with mental health issues, language difficulties, lack of resources, and limited social networks.

The project serves a diverse group of people from over 40 cultural backgrounds and offers free language classes, mentoring from bicultural facilitators, and opportunities for participants to gain vocational skills and certificates. Mengistu emphasises that learning English is essential. 'Some people we work with don't have any literacy background at all, they come from a village. So that makes things very difficult because they have to start from scratch. You can imagine for these people it's very hard, it's impossible to find a job unless they learn quickly and take some English classes and become confident.'

For women, particularly those escaping domestic violence, paid employment is life-changing, providing not only income for shelter, food, and healthcare but also a renewed sense of dignity and social connection after often horrific experiences. Mengistu describes working with 'women who have been abused by men, bitten by their husbands. Sometimes, when you hear identical stories from the same country, you wonder if these people are telling the truth? But then they show you the marks on their legs.'

Through this project, Mercy Works and the Romero Centre aim to empower people seeking asylum to build stable, fulfilling lives for themselves in Australia. In the words of Mengistu 'Twenty-three years ago I was an asylum seeker and some of the memories are still fresh. I remember everything and I thought, if I could stay here I could do more meaningful work for people seeking asylum... I see myself in the people I am serving every day.'

PHOTO TOP LEFT: Romero Centre staff with clients following a health and safety workshop.

PHOTO TOP RIGHT: Mengistu Hailu standing in front of a portrait of the martyr and Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero who famously spoke out in defence of the poor and marginalised.



ANYA'S STORY

In February 2024, Anya*, a 34-year-old woman seeking asylum, arrived at the Romero Centre in Brisbane. Fleeing domestic and sexual violence in her home country, Anya's family had helped her escape to Australia on a nine-month work visa. With few repercussions for perpetrators of such violence in her homeland, applying for a protection visa became her only option to remain safe.

Before reaching Brisbane, Anya spent eight months working on farms in Northern Queensland, hoping to save money for her uncertain future. However, she quickly discovered that there were inadequate services to assist people seeking asylum in that region. Facing dwindling savings, a visa about to expire, and growing concerns for her family overseas, Anya made her way to Brisbane, seeking help at the Romero Centre.

Upon her arrival, Anya's mental and physical health were in a critical state. The trauma of the violence she endured, coupled with her inability to access healthcare, weighed heavily on her. She also worried deeply about her children and parents still in her home country. Despite these challenges, Anya sought the support she needed from the Romero Centre.

The dedicated team connected Anya with essential services, including healthcare providers, mental health support, and migration lawyers.

They also assisted her with emergency relief and started working on her resume and job seeker profile. With her savings nearly gone, Anya was living in a shared room at a boarding house that worsened her mental health. Finding stable accommodation became a priority.

Anya applied for a protection visa with the support of the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service, and with help from the Romero Centre employment clinic worker, she began searching for employment. Thanks to a partnership with Holy Cross Laundry, Anya secured an interview and was offered a full-time cleaning position at a hospital. The team also helped her obtain necessary certifications.

Additionally, the Romero Centre connected Anya with a community member willing to rent a discounted granny flat, providing her with safe housing. They also enrolled her in an online aged care course, aligning with her goal of becoming an aged care worker.

Four months after first visiting the Romero Centre, Anya has made significant progress. She now has full-time employment, safe housing, access to regular healthcare, and a lodged protection visa application. With her sights set on a stable future, Anya hopes to support her family and ultimately bring her children to Australia.

**Not her real name.*

Life in PNG:

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES, EMBRACING CHANGE

After more than 12 years of dedicated service in Papua New Guinea, Justine McMahon has returned to Australia, bringing with her a wealth of experience and passion as she steps into her new role as Head of Programs at Mercy Works.

During her time in PNG, Justine served as the Country Director of CARE International and the Director of Catholic Health Service, working closely with local communities. Her intimate knowledge of the country's unique challenges and opportunities is now helping to guide Mercy Works' initiatives aimed at some of the most vulnerable people in the region.

Justine and her team understand the complexities on the ground in PNG. They know the communities they serve—their persistence, their determination, and the extreme hardships they face daily. Many of those they work with, including West Papuan refugees, have experienced profound displacement, living in conditions with few resources and little support.

When asked about life in PNG and the difficult issues people confront Justine says 'There are so many. There are issues of violence, violence in the home, violence in the community and society. There are governance issues, particularly around honesty of the public officials. Just a total lack of basic services. So, things we take for granted in Australia, like education, where the classrooms have a decent number of kids, not 60 kids per classroom. Where health facilities have basic medicines and are staffed by health workers.

So, families spend a lot of money getting their kids educated, but then there's no formal employment for them to go to. So yeah, quite a few things.'

Yet, despite this, these communities remain steadfast, resourceful, and hopeful. Justine says,

'The people are generous, welcoming, and incredibly resilient. They want the same opportunities we have, and they want to improve their lives.'



Justine says she never feels completely overwhelmed by the challenges because there is also much good that is taking place by people like Sr. Maryanne Kolkia rsm, Mercy Works Program Coordinator Simbu. 'There are huge successes, the work in the prisons. Maryanne and the Mercy Works team have done that previously in Goroka and now are working in Simbu in Barawagi Prison. Those people often don't see anyone, they don't have any kindness done to them, and for someone like Maryanne and the team to go in there regularly, that's enormous.'

Justine remembers Maryanne from years earlier, 'She had a big reputation then. She's the boss of her place. She's strong, and for her to be a woman leader, and what that actually shows to other girls or women is something we just can't measure. She's a woman in the Highlands who is driving a car, which is a great example for other women and girls, but also helps to break down the barrier with some of the boys. For the men, it's probably too late [to break down the barriers], but the boys are learning.'

At Mercy Works, we are committed to supporting programs that offer real, ongoing change. These aren't just short-term solutions; these initiatives are designed to uplift and empower communities, ensuring that they are self-sufficient and capable of sustaining progress long into the future.

'What we're doing is letting them design what they want to do, providing funding and giving technical support. And that's a really important way of working.'

PHOTO LEFT: Justine (right) with a local leader during a celebration at Kumbal Village, Jiwarka Province (June 2024).

PHOTO RIGHT: Justine (left) with Senior Sergeant Ann "Ronnie" Akum who is in charge of Minj Police Station (July 2024). It is extremely rare for a woman in PNG to hold such a position.



FLY RIVER COMMUNITIES STRUGGLE WITH FLOOD RECOVERY AS WATER LEVELS REMAIN HIGH

As earlier reported by Mercy Works, three months of continuous rainfall in Papua New Guinea's remote Western Province has caused severe flooding, particularly affecting communities along the Fly River. While water levels upstream are now returning to normal, downstream villages continue to face high water levels and significant challenges.

Some villages are slowly returning to normal life, particularly those with vegetable gardens located away from the river. However, the recovery process is challenging as they deal with the aftermath of the flooding, including clearing debris and rebuilding their homes.



Villages with farming plots located near the river, face continued food instability as their vegetable gardens and crops were destroyed by the flood. Survival remains the primary focus, and recovery may take months. Persistent high-water levels downstream has led some villagers to consider buying land further from the river to protect against future floods.

In response to this crisis, Mercy Works provided \$50,000 in emergency relief funding in July 2024, to prevent famine and ensure critical aid reached those in need. Concerned and compassionate donors provided another \$5,210. This support has been vital in helping families access food (rice, tinned fish and noodles), water, and essential supplies.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, your contributions have provided immediate relief to affected communities and hope for a better future. Thank you!



PHOTOS LEFT & RIGHT: Flooded communities along the Fly River receiving emergency relief supplies funded by Mercy Works and generous donors.



FLOODING DELAYS KIUNGA LIVELIHOODS PROJECT BUT PROGRESS CONTINUES

The rollout of the Kiunga Livelihoods Project has been significantly impacted by the recent flooding, which has delayed progress by at least two months. Prior to the floods, the project was already facing challenges related to the remoteness of the villages, e.g. communication difficulties between visits and the impact of weather on travel. The flooding further disrupted efforts to bring the project back on schedule, especially in relation to the installation of critical water tanks in local villages.

Despite these difficulties, two water tanks were successfully transported via the swollen river and are now in place, though they still require minor parts and plumbing work to become operational. The installation of two additional tanks has been delayed by heavy rainfall and vehicle breakdowns, but the project team is working closely with a local parish priest and using a tractor to complete this task.

Water levels remain high, which has stalled other key activities such as the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) initiative. However, efforts to resolve these issues, including the recruitment of a trainer, are underway. In the meantime, the focus on livelihoods

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 the Border Villages.

continues with the distribution of banana seeds to border villages, ensuring some progress despite the adverse conditions. Completion of the first water tanks remains the immediate priority.

PHOTO TOP LEFT: Memeyok Village and program staff in front of a new water tank funded by Mercy Works' donors.

PHOTO TOP RIGHT: The Border Village of Gaiindu now has a new water tank in position. Next step is the installation of guttering, to collect rainwater, and plumbing.

PHOTO BELOW: Women from Memeyok Village carrying their new water tank from the Fly River into their village for installation.



Programs Team Update

This year, Mercy Works has strengthened our Programs Team, bringing on new staff with a depth of experience, varied gifts, cultural backgrounds and skills to fill four newly created positions. Justine McMahon, Head of Programs has 30 year's experience working in the international humanitarian sector. Most recently, as the Country Director of CARE International in Papua New Guinea (see page 10). Our new Programs Team also includes Farid, Cass and Andrew.



Farid Ghalib, Refugee Projects Senior Coordinator, is a passionate advocate for social justice, refugee and human rights. He leads programs and partnerships supporting people from a refugee and asylum seeker background in Australia. This includes our largest volunteer program, Mercy Works Connect which provides learning and mentoring support to children and adults.

Farid believes freedom is the most essential human right. He has experienced life as a refugee, twice. The first time was in 1996 when Farid, aged five, and his family fled Afghanistan when the Taliban took over the country. They later returned home following the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 by NATO. On 15 August 2021 when the Taliban regained power, Farid suddenly became a refugee for the second time. Today, Farid is a proud Australian citizen and is deeply grateful for the opportunities he has found in his new home.



Cassandra "Cass" Gibbs, Indigenous Projects Coordinator, is a proud Yuwalayaay, Yuwalarayaay and Gamilaraay yinaar (Aboriginal woman) originally from the small Aboriginal community of Goodooga in the far North West of NSW. In her role, Cass coordinates and leads our program partnerships with Indigenous organizations across Australia. Mercy Works and our Indigenous partners are dedicated to Closing the Gap (between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians) by advancing better outcomes for Indigenous women and families.

Cass has dedicated much of her life to learn, connect, grow and understand Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. In Australia, we have the oldest continuous living cultures in the world. Cass believes all Australians should have a vested interest in ensuring the ongoing survival of Aboriginal cultures.



Andrew Lowry, Overseas Project Coordinator, is striving to make a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable people, especially women and children. On behalf of Mercy Works, he develops and manages programs and partnerships with organisations and communities in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. Andrew strives to partner with local leaders to create real and positive change in their community. Change that is enduring and self-sustaining.

Andrew is a program management specialist. His experience includes the management and execution of humanitarian and disaster risk reduction programming in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji. He has also worked in for-profit project management in the IT, defence and aerospace sectors. Prior to this, he served as an officer in both the British and Australian armies.

BAABAYN MUM'S AND BUB'S GROUP

In April, the Baabayn Mum's and Bub's group at the Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation in Mount Druitt, Western Sydney launched their very first book, "Why are Our Children Proud to be Aboriginal." The book contains beautiful artwork created by the mums and inspired by their children.

PHOTO ABOVE: The celebration cake was decorated with images from inside the book.

PHOTO BELOW: Tereesa Potter and Janaya Hickey, present and past Baabayn Early Childhood Coordinators at the book launch.



During Mum's and Bub's sessions, mums asked their children what they liked about being Aboriginal. They then created artwork illustrating their child's story. At the launch, the mums were ecstatic to see their artwork in print.

Thank you to Mercy Works donors who are supporting Indigenous mothers to reconnect with their culture and create a better future for their children.



Chair's Report



In a world filled with tragedy and suffering humanity seeks comfort in hope. Hope resides in all of us. It gives us courage to seek change for something better. Hope offers us a sense of what is possible and when linked with action, allows us to realise it.

This past 12 months seems to be one filled with stories of violence, death and destruction. Rarely does a day go by without yet another image of a mother holding the lifeless body of her child, villagers wading through the remnants of their local community devastated by a flood, landslide or hurricane. These events have become far too common and are now an unwanted staple of our collective consciousness.

For the victims of these tragedies resilience and hope is all they have. For those watching on, these events evoke a sense of helplessness and anger against those with the power to address or respond to these issues but who appear unwilling or incapable of doing so. The travesty is that we have the means to address the many global economic, social and climatic issues facing us today, but there seems to be a lack of courage and conviction from our governments to do so.

We should demand more from our governments. The latest report on the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, shows that we are falling well short in achieving the agreed targets, and in fact going backwards in many. While we can sit idle and complain that our governments should do more to address poverty, climate impacts and peace, that doesn't address the immediate needs of those currently affected by these issues.

Mercy Works is a vehicle for change. We offer hope with action and with our partners we make a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people here in Australia and the Asia/Pacific region. Our programs reach some of the most disadvantaged people and communities in our region, providing practical assistance to those in need, so their hope for a better life can be realised.

The tireless work of Mercy Works' staff, led by Sr. Sally Bradley rsm, my fellow Board members and our many partners is delivering meaningful change to the lives of those we serve. **While we might be too small to change the world, we can change the world for those we support.**

As we move into our 25th year of operations, we proudly recognise what we have achieved over that time but acknowledge at the same time that we have more to do. The Board has set out a plan to grow our programs to reach even more people in need, capitalising on our established areas of expertise and presence to develop more projects and empower local partners to deliver improved outcomes for the communities they serve.

Fortunately, we are not alone in this quest to do more. We are blessed to be part of a broader Mercy family, a family steeped in the tradition of Catherine McAuley. Schools of the Mercy tradition offer us an opportunity to engage and create a genuine connection between our work and young people, many of whom will become future leaders. This connection will cement a future for Mercy Works and allow us to continue to address need, when and where it occurs.

Despite economic conditions and cost of living pressures we remained buoyed by the generosity of our supporters and donors, who make what we do possible. On behalf of Mercy Works and those we support we say thank you.

In truth poverty, conflict and disasters will continue to be a part of this very uncertain world. If we can continue to offer hope to those in need, hope which is supported by action, then we will make the world a better place, at least for those we support.

"We have ever confided largely in Divine Providence and shall continue to do so."

Catherine McAuley – September 24, 1841.

Joe Zabar / Board Chair

Key Project *Outcomes*

Mercy Works partnered with local community leaders on ten projects across four countries in the Financial Year (FY) 2023–2024. From providing education and skills training to health, nutrition and advocacy, here is a snapshot of what our programs have achieved.

Overseas Projects

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Daru-Kiunga Livelihoods Program

Approx. 1,980 people living in the refugee resettlement areas of Iowara and Border Villages have benefited from the program to improve their living standards. This was despite the devastating impact of extreme wet weather, resulting in the flooding of the Fly River. (See p.11–12)

- Income generation training included: sewing, duck and chicken husbandry.
- Food security. Seeds distributed and horticultural training provided.
- Community leadership and mobilization. Two training events with 110 participants from 16 villages.
- Improved access to clean water. Two villages received water tanks and infrastructure.
- Early childhood education. Nine volunteer teachers engaged and training provided in four schools.

Mercy Works Simbu Program

Worked with approximately 2,024 people in the Simbu area to improve the quality of their daily lives. Key achievements include:

- Updated agricultural practices resulting in increased vegetable production and duck husbandry output (increased threefold).
- Strengthened community self help cooperatives. Improved income generating enterprises: casava flour (production doubled) and soap production.
- Micro enterprises. Individuals provided with small financial grants to start/grow their small businesses.
- Recorded radio programs were played in remote villages

TIMOR LESTE

Maucatar Health and Women Empowerment

Project reached approx. 11,788 people in 22 villages in Maucatar to improve health and quality of life.

- Mobile clinics visited 18 remote villages providing testing, treatment and health education.

- School health program. 13 schools visited. Students educated on sexual health, nutrition, dental care and safe water.
- Safe water. Two schools (392 students) received new rainwater tanks.
- Livelihoods activities. Some 692 villagers trained in improved farming methods.
- Distributed chickens and eggs to increase nutrition.

PHILIPPINES

Creating Change for Women Through Advocacy, Cebu City

Raised awareness and response to human trafficking and safeguarding the rights of women and children to live and enjoy a peaceful and secure environment.

In FY2023–24, 1,148 people reached. Highlights includes: strengthened network of like-minded organizations to conduct unified activities such as community advocacy and to provide support services. One remarkable achievement was when youth advocates convinced a person at a talk to report cases of trafficking to the authorities and victims were successfully rescued. The project has empowered a group of women survivors to advocate for victims as well as provide support for those in crisis.

Healing and Empowerment of Women and Children, Legazpi City

Addressing barriers to development including Gender Based Violence (GBV), limited education and income earning opportunities.

- 39 local girls/women, survivors of GBV were provided access to rehabilitation services. 17 provided with residential care. 10 returned to independent living.
- 21 families provided with small grants to invest in income generating businesses.
- New Skills Training. 17 people were trained in fish processing.
- GBV awareness training provided to 141 school representatives and five victim advocates trained.

Australian Projects

INDIGENOUS

Baabayn Aboriginal Corp. Mt Druitt, NSW

Supporting Baabayn's Mums and Bubs Group to enhance the parenting life skills of Indigenous mums. In FY2023-04, 21 adults (19 female) and 28 children participated.

- Launched a children's book *Why are Our Children Proud to be Aboriginal?* (See p. 14)
- Collaborated with Western Sydney University to determine how health care services can be more culturally appropriate. The mothers were acknowledged in the final report.
- Mothers have increased understanding about preparing nutritious meals for their families.
- Supported five mothers to find accommodation more suitable to their needs.

Jtunga Wattyjarra (Family Together), Adelaide, SA

Two programs, Nunga Babies Watch and Salt n Pepper combined and share the goal of Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In FY2023-24, 41 adults (36 females) and 33 children were supported through their engagement with the Department of Child Protection to keep Aboriginal children connected with kin and to prevent another stolen generation. 107 adults (82 women) and 117 children were supported through an outreach program for Indigenous women in Adelaide Women's Prison, supporting their rehabilitation and transition back into society.

Nallei Jerring (Join and Unite) Youth Leadership, VIC

Supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 12 to 15 living in the West of Victoria (Ballarat and inner west Melton). Run by the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation in partnership with Mercy Works, aims to educate, engage, and empower young Indigenous participants. The program includes increasing understanding and connection to community, culture, positive self-identity, and leadership. In FY2023-24, 147 teenagers (72 males and 75 females) participated. Activities included leadership workshops, a 2-day camp, Aboriginal Elders as guest speakers, careers' days and art therapy.

Yaanyji Ngalan (Walking Together), Bowraville, NSW

The goal is to enhance cultural and wellbeing opportunities and experiences for St. Mary's Primary School Bowraville. The school educates 51 children of which 65% are Indigenous. Some families are from very low socio-economic homes. In the past FY, Aboriginal

Education Workers were developing student resources that support their learning journey with culture in the local Gumbaynggiirr community. Teachers have undergone professional learning in trauma informed education. Built a fire pit and yarning circle area. Held an Indigenous family camp.

REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER

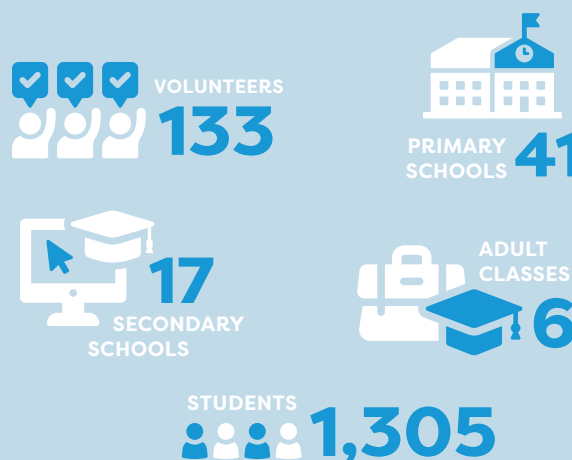
Romero Centre Gateways to Employment, Brisbane, QLD

Establishes employment partnerships for people seeking asylum, offers free English classes, and provides peer mentoring through bicultural facilitators. Links participants to employers, enhances skills and empowerment, and raises awareness on legal, health, and employment matters. (See p. 8)

- In FY2023-24, conducted 194 employment clinics, providing one-on-one support. 71 people (49 women, 22 men) registered for Gateways to Employment Program (GEP) resulting in 45 people securing employment.
- Ten meetings held with employers to strengthen collaboration with Romero Centre.
- Additional bi-cultural case workers were employed to support clients to develop confidence, skills, and knowledge.

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

Pairs trained volunteers with students and adults from a refugee and asylum seeker background to provide mentorship and educational support.



In NSW our MPower program (see p. 6) matched 11 volunteer mentors with 12 students from a Sudanese refugee background as they negotiate their first year of tertiary education.

Financial Statements

INCOME STATEMENT

For year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
Revenue	\$	\$
Monetary Donations and Gifts		
- From Members	469,602	445,422
- From Other Parties	1,115,371	706,430
Grants - Other Australian	105,863	118,308
Grants - Other International	27,987	26,687
Bequests	-	49,706
Other Income		
- Interest Received	114,713	103,744
- Distribution Received from Investments	126,218	108,782
- Gain on Revaluation of Investments	36,848	57,400
Total Revenue	1,996,602	1,616,479

Expenditure	\$	\$
International Aid & Development Programs Expenditure		
International Programs		
- Funds to International Programs	360,758	322,263
- Program Support Costs	111,163	109,180
Community Education	42,996	33,828
Public Fundraising Costs	92,136	66,552
Accountability and Administration	192,122	164,700
Other Expenditure	-	-
Total International Aid and Development Programs Expenditure	799,175	696,523
Domestic Program Expenditure (incl Monetary and Non Monetary)	610,534	524,219
Total Expenditure	1,409,709	1,220,743
Excess of Revenue Over Expenditure	586,893	395,736

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023
Assets	\$	\$
Current Assets		
- Cash and Cash Equivalent	703,077	288,386
- Trade and Other Receivables	3,855	15,031
- Financial Assets	2,704,515	2,598,642
- Other Assets	20,391	15,955
Total Current Assets	3,431,838	2,918,014
Non Current Assets		
- Financial Assets	1,559,795	1,396,729
- Property, Plant and Equipment	9,218	11,817
Total Non Current Assets	1,569,013	1,408,545
Total Assets	5,000,851	4,326,560

Liabilities	\$	\$
Current Liabilities		
- Trade and Other Payables	35,568	26,652
- Other Liabilities	48,094	39,813
- Employee Benefits	135,532	76,629
Total Current Liabilities	219,194	143,094
Non Current Liabilities		
- Employee Benefits	20,816	9,518
Total Non Current Liabilities	20,816	9,518
Total Liabilities	240,010	152,612
Net Assets	4,760,841	4,173,948

Equity	\$	\$
Retained Surplus	4,760,841	4,173,948
Total Equity	4,760,841	4,173,948

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

For year ended 30 June 2024

	Retained Earnings	Reserves	Other
Balance as 1 July 2023	4,173,948	-	-
Excess of Revenue over Expenses	586,893	-	-
Balance as 30 June 2024	4,760,841	-	-

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 FY25 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 2024, 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 2024. We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on that special purpose financial report in our report dated 8 November 2024. 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 2024 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: 8 November 2024



Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation.

Our People

OUR BOARD



Joseph Zabbar
Board Chair /
Finance, Risk and Audit
Committee Member



Michael Cuzic
Board Member /
Finance, Risk and Audit
Committee Chair



Francis Elvey
Board Member /
Program Committee
Chair



Sr Catherine Ryan rsm
Board Member



Catherine Glenister
Board Member



Kerrie Walshaw
Board Member /
Program Committee
Member



Steven Collins
Board Member /
Program Committee
Member



Andrew Burke
Board Member /
Finance, Risk and Audit
Committee Member



Berneice Loch rsm
Board Member



Margaret Scroope rsm
Board Member

OUR STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chris Bissett
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Fiona McKenzie
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Lorraine Asmann
Program Committee
(Resigned Apr. 2024)

Renae Lowry
Program Committee

Patricia Monemvasitis
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Jenny Howard
Finance, Risk and
Audit Committee

Bernard Dobson
Program Committee

OUR STAFF

MERCY WORKS AUSTRALIA

Sally Bradley rsm
Executive Director

Martin Binoj
Finance Manager

Cassandra Gibbs
Indigenous Project
Coordinator

Farid Ghalib
Refugee Project
Senior Coordinator

Andrew Lowry
Overseas Project
Coordinator

Justine McMahon
Head of Programs

Sandra Marreiros
Finance and
Administration Officer

Danielle Hayes
Fundraising and
Marketing Manager

Katrina Richardson
Grants Coordinator

Paul Taylor
Mercy Works Connect
Coordinator - NSW

Katherine Cooney
Mercy Works Connect
Coordinator - VIC

Kristen Tong
Mercy Works Connect
Coordinator - WA

MERCY WORKS SIMBU 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 Kupo
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

Brigitha Maima
Finance Officer

OUR 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

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 Australia, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines and Timor-Leste. 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 2023 to October 2024.

*Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy
All Hallows School, Brisbane
Aquinas College, Ashmore
Aranmore Catholic College, Leederville
Bunbury Catholic College
Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Bathurst
The Cathedral College, Rockhampton
Catherine McAuley College, Bendigo
Catherine McAuley College, Mackay
Emmanuel College, Warrnambool
Holy Cross College, Ellenbrook
Holy Family Primary School, Kelso
James Sheahan Catholic High School, Orange
John Paul College, Kalgoorlie
Marymede Catholic College, South Morang
Mater Dei College, Edgewater
McAuley Catholic College, Grafton
Mercedes College, Perth
Mercedes College, Springfield
Mercy Catholic College, Chatswood
Mercy College, Koondoola
Merici College, Canberra
Mount Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale
Our Lady of Lourdes School, Nollamara
Our Lady of Mercy College, Australind
Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College, Burraneer
Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg
Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta
Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School, Kellyville
Padbury Catholic School, Padbury
Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes
Sacred Heart College, Geelong
Sacred Heart College, Kyneton
Santa Maria College, Attadale
St. Aloysius College, Adelaide
St. Brigid's College, Lesmurdie
St. Denis School, Joondanna
St. Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, Mackay
St. Gerard's Primary School, Westminster
St. John Fisher College, Bracken Ridge
St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School, North Mackay
St. Joseph's Primary School, Kangaroo Point
St. Kieran's Catholic Primary School, Tuart Hill
St. Luke's Catholic Primary School, Woodvale
St. Mary's Catholic School, Wellington
St. Mary's School, Mackay
St. Michael's School, Gordonvale
St. Patrick's College, Mackay
St. Thomas School and Preschool, Goodwood
Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Gladstone
Ursula Frayne Catholic College, Victoria Park*

