



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Keep in Touch

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Inside this month

Welcome to the June 2019 edition of *Keep in Touch*, where we are focussed on our new Heritage Centre, seen through the eyes of those who have worked most closely on the project during the past eight years or so.

Our Archives staff have added to the mix, writing about their favourite discoveries as they prepared to move the Congregational Archives from its old home on the campus of St Vincent's College, Potts Point, to the first floor of the new Heritage Centre.

We also farewell Sr Colleen Bell, RIP.



Celebrating the heritage of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

The Sisters of Charity had dreamed a dream that would help them to tell their story and keep the stories of the Sisters and their ministries alive. That dream was embodied in a Heritage Centre.

Around eight years ago, we had been planning the 175th anniversary celebrations for 2014, when an idea came up from the Sisters – was it time for a heritage centre designed to tell the story of the Sisters and the work they have done since arriving in Australia 180 years ago, a place to celebrate the Sisters of Charity story and that of religious women?

The Religious Sisters of Charity of Ireland had opened their Mary Aikenhead Heritage Centre in June, 2001 – and many of us had visited the Centre in Dublin's Harold's Cross, so we knew what was possible.

The idea was kindled – the Sisters in Australia could also celebrate the heritage of our own Congregation. Why not have a Heritage Centre in Sydney, where the first five Sisters of Charity had arrived from Ireland on New Year's Eve, 1838?

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The Heritage of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

From page 1

Getting such a project up and running and completed would be a very big undertaking.

Fortunately, the Congregation already had a convent on the threshold of St Vincent's College, Potts Point, very near the location upon which the early Sisters had built their first hospital in the colony of Sydney.

The plan was to repurpose the convent into a centre which would provide space to exhibit and demonstrate the history and the charism of the Sisters, and to see both Sisters and co-workers honoured for the way they embodied the love, tenderness, and concern of Christ for all.

By 2015, the project was approved. A working party turned into the Heritage Centre Committee, led by architect Robert Cahill. That committee ran in conjunction with the Sisters' Committee overseeing the project. It was led by Sr Suzette Clark, with Srs Annette Cunliffe and Laureen Dixon, who have worked together since the beginning of the project, with Curator Jennifer Forest who would help create the historical, creative, interactive, and, I hope, transformative, experience.

A special thank you must go to our Sisters for their unflagging support of the project. State Meetings were held in February 2016 at which Sisters met Curator Jennifer, and were invited to give suggestions and ideas. Their interest and support of this project continue. A great many Sisters have worked on this project during its path to completion, and I am grateful to them all.

It has taken years of planning and execution to bring the Heritage Centre, which will be opened by the Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher OP on June 6, into being.

That date holds a special place in the history of the Sisters of Charity around the world. It is the anniversary of the day in 1802 when the Venerable Mary Aikenhead, the Foundress, was received into the Church and began her novitiate in 1812.

The Heritage Centre's exhibition has been designed and equipped to provide a special experience for all visitors and will:

- Provide an experience of the story of the Sisters of Charity through a range of interpretative techniques which describe past events and experiences and which appeal to the different ways in which individuals receive and process information
- Showcase historic objects with words, images and technology which tell and support the story
- Have available different media to allow visitors to interpret the story utilising their varied skills and interpretative approaches.
- Inform visitors of significant aspects of the Sisters' service to the community, particularly their commitment to the service of the poor, impelled by the love of Christ. Its aim is to challenge visitors to similarly carry forth this spirit into their everyday lives.

The Heritage Centre will also house the Congregational Archives on the first floor. The Archives is custodian of the records and museum collection on behalf of the Sisters of Charity, and will continue to provide access to relevant records and objects to those undertaking research.



“Our work would be overpowering were we to view all in any other light than as God’s own work and entirely depending on the miraculous aid of His Almighty Providence.”

Mary Aikenhead’s quote at the entrance to the exhibition

The Archives supports the story telling and exhibition through the provision of relevant research, information, documents and objects, particularly in relation to changes over time in the Heritage Centre exhibition.

Above all, the Centre is designed as a place of hospitality and information. It will also be a meeting place. A meeting room and contemplative spaces, including the St Vincent's Chapel and the linking courtyard from the centre to the Chapel, provide an environment not only for education and information but also for peace and reflection.

I invite you all to come to the Heritage Centre in due course. We will be delighted to welcome you, and for you to experience the charism and the ministries of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

Clare Nolan rsc
Congregational Leader



The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre

From the Chair of the Heritage Centre Committee, Robert Cahill

The Project

Back in 2013, at the behest of the Congregational Leader and Council, the Heritage Working Party was convened to review the opportunities, options, and possible locations, to create a special place, to bring to life the wonderful history and achievements of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

That was the beginning of this major project to create a place of heritage and history focus, including the re-location of the Congregational Archives then located within St Vincent's College, Potts Point, to create the Heritage Centre and Archives.

The Working Party morphed into the Heritage Centre Committee, and by early 2015 the CL+C had endorsed the program developed by this Committee to create the Heritage Centre and Archives at 1 Rockwell Crescent, Potts Point.

Key aspects of the project were considered and developed by a highly specialised team brought together to design and document this complex project through 2017. Building works were completed through 2018 followed by the highly specialised installation of the exhibits, visual effects and IT installations completed in April, 2019.

Above left: Robert Cahill, Chair of the Heritage Centre Committee Above right: A Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre Committee Meeting

Project Objectives

The prime objective of the Heritage Centre and Archives has been to create a facility to reveal the history and achievements of the Sisters of Charity to act as a catalyst to promote the comprehensive initiatives and activities of the Sisters during the past 180 years to continue into the future.

In particular, the pervading impact upon a visitor to the Centre will be to identify key and present-day social justice issues, and challenge and stimulate all to respond positively to these issues.

In addition to this key objective, the project has been guided by the opportunity to

- co-locate and benefit from the common location of the Heritage Centre and the extensive Archives to promote a dynamic and developing exhibition over time, stimulate ongoing research and interest in the Sisters of Charity and their work in Australia
- integrate the Chapel, a key reflection and symbol of the life of the all Sisters, into the Heritage Centre visit.
- provide meeting facilities, reflection space for all those associated with the Sisters of Charity mission to gather at the Heritage Centre, reflect and better understand the past to support and guide the future.

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The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre

From page 5



Replica of the bust of Mary Aikenhead created by Dr Charles William MacCarthy

From the Chair of the Heritage Centre Committee, Robert Cahill

Continued

Special Challenges

The project has involved many specialist contributors including a curator, many design consultants to support an intensive building program, a specialist exhibition designer, development of integrated visual and sound displays and effects, and the design and completion of game plays. All this has been cleverly located in a building converted from what was once a 12-bedroom convent, comprising many small rooms. The many small rooms were the antithesis of what a Heritage Centre requires, but the careful reorganisation and expansion of the original building has allowed the completion of a wonderful facility, fit for purpose.

The Outcome

The project has taken more than six years to come together, driven by the coordinated efforts of two key Committees, one responsible for the design, construction and exhibition installation, the other for the content of the exhibition.

A host of dedicated individuals with highly specialised capability and gifts have then collectively understood, in the broadest sense, the vision of this facility, and worked together to create something special and enduring.

The repurposed, renovated Convent

by Sr Suzette Clark
Head of the Sisters' Committee

The Convent at Potts Point has been transformed into the Heritage Centre. The ground floor houses the Exhibition, our Congregational Archives have a purpose-built space on the first floor and the newly added second floor is a large meeting space.

As you enter the ground floor, Indigenous artist Linda Buxton's depiction of our history will catch your eye and an Acknowledgement of Country will remind you on whose country you are standing.

This welcoming space leads you to the exhibition, which explores the history of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Australia and the story of the Congregation's contribution to God's mission in the Australian Church and society. At the entrance to the Exhibition is a replica of the bust of Mary Aikenhead created by Dr Charles William MacCarthy for St Vincent's Hospital Sydney.

Objects, imagery, text, and technology tell the story. Some of the objects include the black crucifix, a copy of the Constitutions, Mass charts, a chalice, and the 1828 book *The conduct of Christian schools*, which were among the items the first five Sisters brought with them. The Morning Prayer book of one of those earliest Sisters, Sr Xavier Williams, is also on display.

The four content areas of Beginnings, Health, Education, and Diverse Ministries depict our history from our foundress Mary Aikenhead through to today, including the handing over of our ministries to the Mary Aikenhead Ministries Public Juridic Person.

But there's more!
Exploring the Exhibition is to be an experience.



Exhibition installation



One of the permanent galleries



Curator, Jennifer Forest

It is a living and interactive story of our history that draws the visitor with our mission and charism. A digital immersive experience into virtual reality directly engages the visitor. The visitor plays a character who is experiencing some form of disadvantage and helps her or him navigate a series of pathways and choices.

Through the character, we become aware of the seemingly hopelessness of the situation and the possibilities of it being alleviated by an individual, group, or organisation.

The invitation is for us to become agents of hope, advocating for the voiceless and responding to need.

From the exhibition, visitors move through the building into a connecting courtyard which offers space and quiet, then into the Chapel and the Cause of Mary Aikenhead space.

Thank you to the members of the Sisters' Committee, Annette Cunliffe and Laureen Dixon, who have worked since the beginning of the project, with our Curator, Jennifer Forest and me to create this historical, creative, interactive and hopefully transformative experience.

And thank you to our Sisters. State Meetings were held in February 2016 at which Sisters met our Curator, Jennifer Forest, and were invited to give suggestions and ideas. Their interest and support of this project continue.



External view of the centre looking towards the St Vincent's chapel

Creating the exhibition

by Jennifer Forest

I was given a clear vision for the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre. The exhibition was to tell the story of the living and continuing work of the Sisters of Charity.

The key message was that the fourth vow – service of the poor – is everyone's responsibility. It is at once both an individual action and a collective response to be carried forward by each of us, within the communities where we find ourselves.

Throughout the development of the exhibition, we worked steadfastly towards this vision, to inspire and provoke the exhibition's visitors to carry on the fourth vow in their own lives.

As the exhibition visitors progress through the galleries, they learn of the work and experiences of the Sisters in living out the fourth vow.

The gallery spaces are grouped around the four content areas of Beginnings, Health, Education and diverse Ministries. In each space a range of historically significant objects, imagery, text, and technology tell the story.

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'Mike and Evie' who feature in the interactive exhibition

The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre

From page 5

Creating the Exhibition by Jennifer Forest

Continued

It is at the digital immersive, though, that visitors are directly engaged with the reality of the fourth vow in Australia today.

This immersive blends filmed actors with an illustrated background in a digital animation format. Visitors play a character and help them navigate a series of pathways and choices.

It is a distinctive and unique storytelling experience designed to encourage empathy for fellow Australians living with disadvantage or in challenging situations.

Through the 10 characters, disadvantage is mapped across Australia today by geographic region, age, gender, life stage, and socio-economic class. It is a snapshot of the challenges facing Australians today and the actions taken at all levels – individual, church, community, organisation, and government – to be the agent of hope and love for those in challenging situations.



View of the side of the chapel from the second floor

Glimpses of the past

by Tania Gorey, Property Manager

When I have shown Sisters around the new Heritage and Archives building, they often point out where they, or a friend, used to have their bedroom, or they reminisce about where the kitchen, the old courtyard or the laundry used to be.



Very little of the inside of the old convent is distinguishable today, with the old convent's repurposing and transformation into a modern heritage centre exhibition space and brand-new archives area with hundreds of metres of shelving. However, the façade facing the street is pretty much intact apart from the new corner and entrance.

My favourite parts of the building are the glimpses of the chapel of St Vincent's College next door which can be seen in many parts of the building – in the exhibition area, on each floor near the lift and especially the view from the top floor meeting room, to the top of the chapel and the newly transformed Caritas Christi courtyard in the school grounds.

This very complex project has been brought to fruition by the creativity of and input from a large number of people including: Curator (Jennifer Forest), architect (Royden Metcalf from Young and Metcalf), exhibition designer (Paul Broadhurst), software designer (Gibson Group from New Zealand including illustrator, Australian actors, filmmakers, sound engineers) sculptor, artist, conservation team, specialist lighting designer, multi-media hardware specialist, graphic designer, sign makers, IT specialists, fire, regulatory, acoustic and accessibility consultants, surveyor, town planner, and the builders, Belmadar.



View from the meeting room on the second floor



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Pictorial: The Heritage Centre

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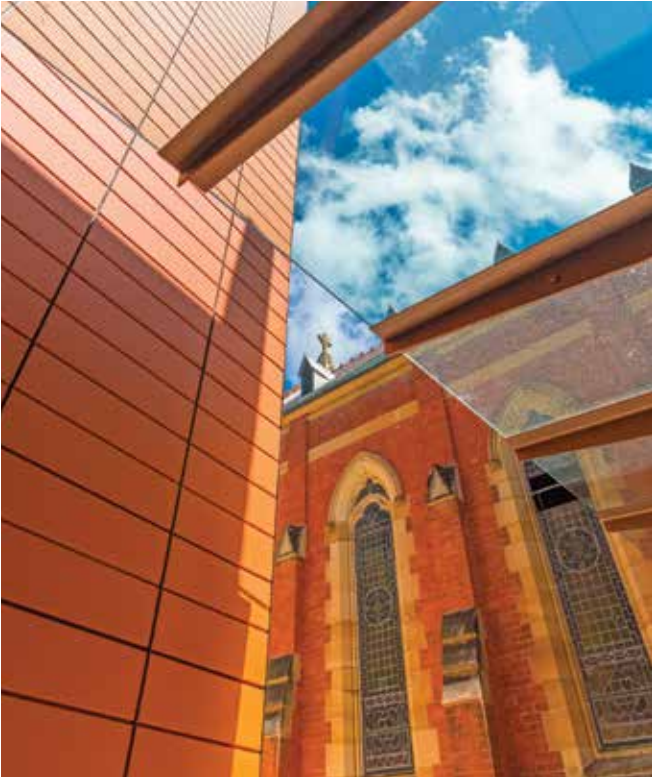
Three exteriors of the Heritage Centre. In the second, workers were sorting out final details (all images by Tim Bauer).

The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre

From page 7



Page 8, right to left: Side exterior of the Heritage Centre, with a corner of the chapel; the courtyard of the Heritage Centre; Exterior view from the Heritage Centre stairwell Page 9, right to left: A magnificent response to the architectural brief made these wonderful scenes; installation in progress; Mother Mary Aikenhead bust; more work in progress.

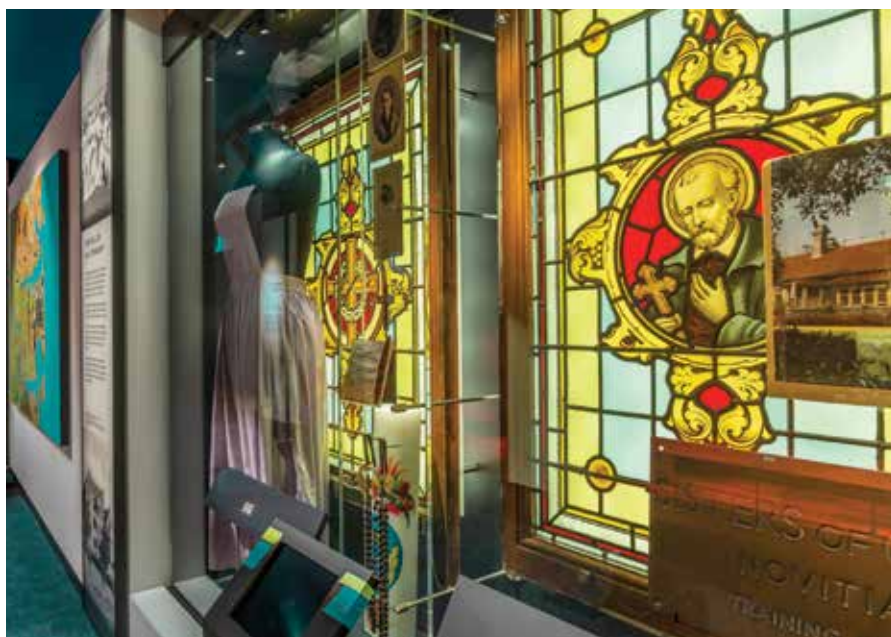


The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre

From page 9



Page 10, right to left: The nursing history of the Sisters of Charity of Australia remembered. Page 11, right to left: Detail from the Archives; other views from the exhibition, including a set of gates from one of the convents, and the habit of a teaching Sister.





A new Congregational Archives facility: Challenges and achievements

Two buildings at Nos 1 and 3 Rockwall Crescent were purchased by the Sisters in 1950 and leased as residential buildings. Their demolition in 1992 allowed the construction of a new convent to house 12 Sisters of Charity in 1993. Planning for a Heritage Centre and Archives utilising the existing building had already begun prior to the convent's closure in 2016.

The challenges

Relocating from the current Archives on the ground floor of the 1960s Tarmons building with no environmental control to a 21st century purpose-designed Archives with complex and specialised requirements was a lengthy and major undertaking commencing in July 2015 with our first draft involving research, planning and coordination with a range of experts for a varied collection of paper-based records, photographs, artworks, museum objects and textiles.

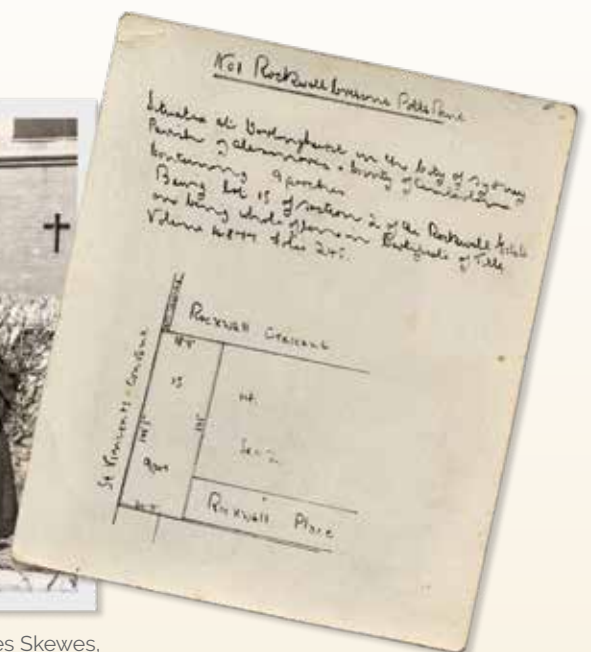
Design aspects provided challenges to ensure the Archives had sufficient and properly designed storage space for the long term, air-conditioning and that staff had improved working conditions.

We had to balance the needs of a number of stakeholders in relation to the heritage component (the exhibition space), including the curator, conservators, exhibition designers, the Heritage Committee and the needs of the Archives and the records and objects in our custody.

The decision for most of the Archives collection to undergo specialised pest management treatment prior to relocation involved a complicated logistical and relocation timetable.



Sisters at St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point farewelling Sr M. Agnes Skewes, Superior General, for Rome, 1960s. Nos. 1-3 Rockwall Crescent can be seen in the left background with the Chapel in the right background.



Site plan for 1 Rockwall Crescent, n.d.



The newly completed convent at 1 Rockwall Crescent, 1993.



Top right: Archives staff on the day of uplift of objects for conservation and installation preparation, 10 July 2018 (from left): Janet Howse, Imogen Kennard-King, Liz Sheridan and Carlos Lopez.



Above: Sisters at the new convent, 1 Rockwall Crescent, Potts Point, August 1993 (from left) Sr Sarah Ryan, Sr Margaret Beirne, Sr St Jude Doyle, Sr Catherine O’Carrigan, Sr Patricia Coyle, Sr Deirdre Hickey, Sr Angela Burke, Sr Agnes Skewes, Sr Maureen Fetherston.

The achievements

The major achievement is that the Congregation will now have a quality facility well into the future for its significant archival and museum collection, a rarity for this type of collection, with an exhibition space for the public to access and for engagement with a broader community.

The Archives relocated to the new facility on time. Coordinating different contractors in the areas of removals, conservation, pest management, shelving suppliers and information technology was another achievement.

Desk-top computers in the two physically secure repositories enable staff to search and amend the database on the spot. We have a new light-filled Archives Office with windows (a first), with furniture appropriate to our workflow. The task was immense, so the Archives staff was augmented for a few weeks by two university students and additional days of work to existing staff.

Conclusion

We are excited that the Congregational Archives containing records and objects significant to not only the Sisters of Charity but to the national community can now become the hub of future historical research.

Janet Howse
Congregational Archives Manager



Would you like a copy of Ministry of Love?

If you would like to receive a copy of the latest book from the Sisters, *Ministry of Love: The Story of the Sisters of Charity*, email James (james.griffiths@rscoffice.com) with your request.

Please make sure you include your full postal address in your email.



Photographic record of the first overseas mission



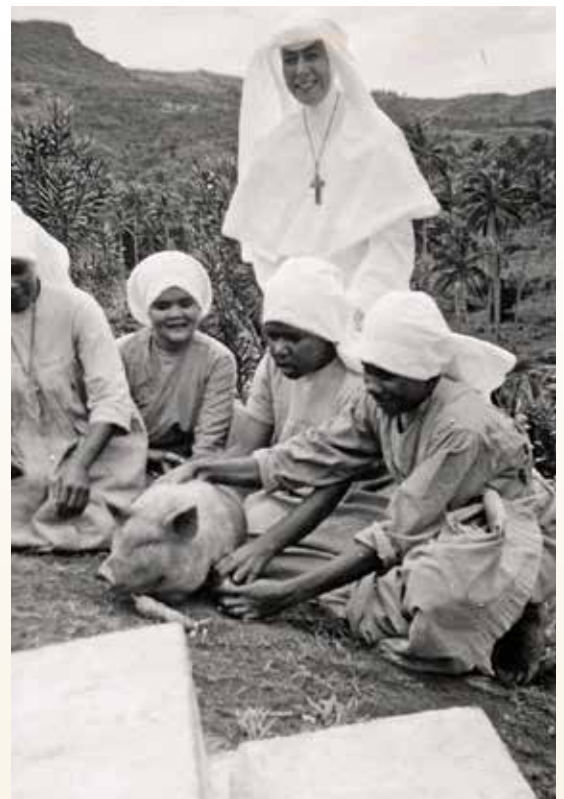
In preparing the Archives for its move into the new Heritage Centre and Archives, members of staff were tasked with identifying and removing photographic prints, negatives and slides from unprocessed accessions.

While undertaking this work, a significant collection of more than 250 photographic prints from the first overseas mission of the Sisters of Charity at Cawaci, Fiji was identified (for the period 1957 to 1965). Due to its significance, the collection was catalogued and rehoused. What first appeared to be a relatively straightforward process turned into a challenging, yet rewarding, three-month project.

The collection depicts scenes of daily life at the Sisters of Charity Convent, Maryhill, the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth (SOLN) Novitiate, St Teresa's, and surrounding communities. These photographs show the faces of many unidentified SOLN postulants, novices, professed Sisters and lay people hailing from islands including Fiji, Rotuma, Tonga, Samoa and Kiribati. Some of these Sisters continued their studies with the Sisters of Charity in Australia, before returning to manage and work in hospitals and schools across the Pacific.

This collection serves to highlight the significance of the Archives, not only to the story of the Sisters of Charity, but to other Religious Congregations and communities in the Pacific and beyond. The new Heritage Centre and Archives provides an opportunity for the Congregation to engage and collaborate with these communities in remembering their collective heritage.

Carlos Lopez
Archives assistant



Above left: Sr M. Peter Fennessy being taught how to use a sugar cane knife by SOLN Novices, April 1957. **Above right:** Sr M. Mark Lehmann with SOLN novices who had recaptured a run-away pig, June 1957. **Left:** Sr M. Mark Lehmann, Sr M. Florence Bailey and Sr M. Peter Fennessy boarding the Orion, March 1957.



Top left (from left): Sr M. Anne Crowley, Mo. Pierina SMSM (Superior General of the SOLN), Sr M. Mark Lehmann and Sr M. Donatus Harris seated inside the Sisters of Charity Convent, Maryhill, 1962. **Top middle:** Sr M. Mark Lehmann with the first group of exam candidates from the Novitiate awaiting the bus to Levuka, ca 1958. **Top right:** Sr M. Baptist Whyte holding a dead snake outside the Sisters of Charity Convent, Maryhill, ca 1958. **Above:** Sisters of Charity Convent, Maryhill (foreground) and St Teresa's Novitiate including dormitories, chapel, refectory and classrooms, ca 1965. **Left:** Sr M. Mark Lehmann and SOLN novices farewell Sr M. Florence Bailey, 1958.



Heritage Centre opening on YouTube

The Congregational Gathering was live-streamed to the Sisters unable to attend, and that was very well-received.

The launch of Ministry of Love: The Story of the Sisters of Charity, was recorded and then posted to the Sisters' YouTube platform.

And now, the Heritage Centre launch is also on the Sisters' YouTube platform. You will find it here:

youtu.be/O5DGF3Sm02I

“Black Tuesday” in Tasmania



During a single afternoon of bushfires in Tasmania – Tuesday, February 7, 1967 – 64 people died and 900 were injured.

The Archives have two remarkable first-hand reports written by Sisters

who were caught up in the dramatic events of that day at both Kingston and Hobart.

These excerpts, discovered in the Annals of St Aloysius Convent, Kingston recall that extraordinary day:

We commenced school on Tuesday morning, temperature of 102°, and a very strong, hot wind ... By lunchtime ... homes were burning, the roads were cut off ... we sent local children home but were left with thirty from Margate, Snug and Taroon.

Around 2.30pm it suddenly became as black as the darkest night ... a horrible red glow was over the back of the Convent ... we had to get out, down to the beach ... some children were five year olds who had only commenced school that day. They held hands ... the sand was burning our faces, we could hardly breathe. A family near the beach gave us water ... we saw homes burning all around us ...

Firefighters came to the beach and told us the Convent couldn't be saved. By 7pm parents had collected the children ... we drove up through heartbreaking devastation to see what was left ... we were absolutely speechless to find the Convent and school still standing ... everything around it is burnt, all power is off ...

It is unbelievable...but our community is full of initiative ... last night we scrambled eggs on the burning remains of our garage!!

Liz Sheridan
Archivist



Above left: St Aloysius Convent Sisters after the bushfires, February 1967. Below left: Back of St Aloysius Convent Kingston, 1960. Above right: St Aloysius Convent Kingston, 1960. Below right: St Aloysius Convent Community, 1967 (from left): Srs Myrna Lynch, Maureen Heffernan, Virginia Wilkinson, Deirdre Hickey (seated).

Archives relocation

The Sisters' creative works



As a part of the development of the Heritage Centre, the Archives was asked to compile a list of artistic works within the collection made by Sisters of Charity.

A selection of these objects will be displayed in the exhibition space.

This compilation and selection involved an extensive process of identifying, documenting and researching objects and textiles in the Archives' collection which are known to have been made by Sisters of Charity.

Some of these objects and artistic Sisters were already well-documented and would be familiar to many Sisters; however, many others had not yet been identified as being the creative work of a Sister, or fully appreciated, for some time.



The artistic practice of many Sisters is often closely linked to their ministry, for example, those who taught art in schools. However, there are many Sisters who have used and continue to use their artistic practice as a creative outlet and respite from their ministry work.

What was surprising was the many media and forms these artistic works have taken. The examples in the Archives number in the hundreds and include painting, drawing, iconography, candle making and decoration, illumination and calligraphy, needlework in many forms, knitting, pottery and painted ceramics, jewellery making, stained glass, bark artworks, photography, poetry and musical composition among others.



Watercolour painting, "Spring time at Mt St Raphael's", by Sr M. Baptist Whyte, 1952

Examples of creative works by Sisters of Charity are also present in other collections in Australia.

The display of Sisters' creative works in the Heritage Centre would not have been possible without first documenting the examples which exist within the collection. The examples documented are far too numerous to display in a single exhibition; however, this project allows scope for future displays and access to these beautiful objects.

In presenting these works to be viewed and appreciated, the Heritage Centre will continue to add to the understanding of the ongoing story of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

Imogen Kennard-King
Archives assistant



Above Left: Hand painted silk monstrance cover (detail), painted by Sr Carmena Kelly. **Above:** Hand painted tea cup and milk jug, both by Sr M. Solanus St Julien, 1938.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation supports Fighting Chance Parramatta

Richard Haddock, Chairman of SoCF, spoke movingly at the opening of Avenue Parramatta, on Tuesday, March 5, 2019.

People living with disabilities deserve more than our compassion. They deserve our commitment to develop innovative, supportive pathways to social, educational and workforce opportunities.

And they deserve organisations to think creatively, develop partnerships and combine resources to empower them to achieve their potential.

Tonight – we have gathered to celebrate one such partnership – and the opportunities it will provide to those living in our community with significant challenges.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation is proud of our partnership with Fighting Chance – and that together we have been able to create social and workforce opportunities in Sydney's Western Suburbs which covers an area of great need.

Parramatta is now recognised as the geographical centre of Sydney – but disappointingly the distribution of funding and services has not kept pace with the population growth of the area.

Lack of funding and services have meant that people living with disability have been denied many of the opportunities so many of us take for granted. The negative impacts on the individual and their families are not acceptable.

However, Laura and the Fighting Chance team have, over time, developed a unique social enterprise. And we are delighted it is now available in Parramatta.

Fighting Chance first came to our attention in 2012 and from the very beginning we recognised that their mission and compassionate approach aligned with our own. Since that time, we have committed funding for the purchase of equipment, paid the salary of a recruitment intake officer for three years – and provided the funding necessary to create the Parramatta hub of Avenue.

Laura – your vision and passion are truly commendable and we congratulate you, and those around you, for making this a reality.

I would also like to make special mention of, and thank the Sisters of Charity of Australia. The Sisters fund the operations of our Foundation and it is their generosity that enables the Foundation to create partnerships with other community organisations and deliver relief and hope to those who need it most.

It is also very important to the Sisters that we are partnering to deliver much needed services in Parramatta. From the very earliest days of the Colony the Sisters ministered to the women in the Female Factory – just up the road from where we stand this evening.

The Foundress of the Congregation, Mary Aikenhead, charged her pioneering Sisters with the responsibility of bringing love, compassion and relief to those who were in need. Nearly 200 years later, her Sisters are here again honouring that mission in a way that is applicable to this modern setting.

The Foundation is pleased and privileged to be involved with this service that has its origins in the very personal story of Laura's brother and his journey through an earlier system that was rigid, inadequate and failed to embrace the intrinsic worth of every individual.

As the NDIS evolves we hope governments and service providers will increasingly work together with the interest of their clients at the forefront. It is the flexibility created by the NDIS that is driving the innovation and excellence in services like Fighting Chance.

We wish you a fulfilling work and social life here at Avenue and it is our honour to have helped to create those opportunities for you and your families.

Thank you.

Richard Haddock
Chairman – The Sisters of Charity Foundation



From left: Monique Ribeiro – General Manager – Fighting Chance Avenue; Camille Bennett – Manager – Fighting Chance Avenue Parramatta; Laura O'Reilly – CEO & Founder – Fighting Chance; Richard Haddock AO – Chairman – Sisters of Charity Foundation

We remember

Sr Colleen Bell rsc

December 17, 1927 to February 27, 2019

St Therese's Church, Essendon
March 8, 2019

Her personal motto:

**"I live now not I, but
Christ lives in me."**

It is such a privilege to be here this morning speaking these words of remembrance on behalf of all Sisters of Charity and Colleen's family.

It is a sad morning because we are saying goodbye to a dear Sister, family member, and friend.

Colleen has been so much part of our lives and it is hard to express the depth of our loss. The great poet Helen Keller says it well "What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose; all that we love deeply becomes part of us."

It is at times like this that the Paschal mystery in our lives becomes so real. We witnessed in Colleen the necessary dying required of all of us to live the new life of resurrection, that is now hers. As spiritual writer Richard Rohr ofm tells us, we must die before we die. Colleen taught us much in her living and in her dying.

On January 28, Colleen celebrated her 70th year (Platinum Jubilee) as a Sister of Charity. On February 27th, her God called her home.

Today we celebrate the unique person that was Colleen – a loving and faithful Sister of Charity.

At age 19 Colleen responded to God's call to be a Sister of Charity. She was filled with passion for our Congregational motto "the love of Christ urges us" and her personal



Sr Colleen and Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan, at Sr Colleen's platinum jubilee in January.

motto "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me." (St Paul).

Colleen endeared herself to all and she was loved by so many in return. No one was left out of her embrace..

Colleen's connections with others from her family, her Sisters, her carers to the hairdresser, to the podiatrist, to the doctors to the barista who prepared coffee for her and Sr Marguerite Moloney – all her interactions engaged her with people and what people found in Colleen brought them joy and comfort. She celebrated everyone and everything, including Annabelle her cat. Colleen was a great story teller.

Colleen's ministry in primary and secondary education over many years left its mark. After Education

she stepped into pastoral are in health care and readied herself with a Diploma of Theology and Clinical Pastoral Education.

Colleen enjoyed the move into the healing ministry of Christ at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and again she endeared herself to all.

Colleen's life and ministry at St Columba's Essendon (which included the ex-students) and later at Mercy Place, Parkville where she and Marguerite took up residence was so full. Colleen was actively engaged and reaching out to all, wherever needs arose.

In November last year, Marguerite, Colleen, Liz Costigan and myself met together. The four of us had a wonderful sharing.

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We remember

Sr Colleen Bell rsc

From page 19

There was a sense that Colleen was planning her death. I hasten to say probably without realising it – or maybe she did. She asked to talk about her Platinum Jubilee that was coming up in January 2019 and to plan together the what and how of her celebration, this included her liturgy.

There was talk of extra care if Colleen needed it, she talked about messages for family, friends and others. The Jubilee was unfolding from just a small gathering, which in time, became – and I quote a Paul Kelly song via a certain TV ad that goes “from little things big things grow.”

No matter, because in the long run Colleen shared with many that that day was the happiest day of her life. Colleen knew exactly who she wished to have at her celebration.

There had been a few important celebrations prior to her Jubilee – Marguerite's Jubilee and Colleen's 90th birthday. In planning for her Jubilee many felt we had got to know and love her family and friends.

Colleen looked forward to January, 2019 as a special date to celebrate her Jubilee with more Sisters and RSC Companions. It was so

wonderful for us to be present with Colleen at her Jubilee. Her celebration was simply a continuation of what Colleen held dear and liked to celebrate.

She lived life to the full, she engaged with people at their level, she was hospitable, welcoming and grateful. Not least of all was her faith and vocation – they meant everything to her.

In presenting Colleen with the Apostolic Blessing of Pope Francis on the day of her Jubilee, I shared with her some words of Pope Francis to religious women and men.

We are to live the consecrated life more fully; be prophetic, capable of waking up the world; we need to be alive and attractive and show how it is possible to live differently in this world. Well, weren't we blessed. We had in Colleen exactly what Pope Francis wanted.

A very special time for us was to hear Colleen's response she made to her nephews Geoff's and Andy's toast on the day of her Jubilee. In her response, she said: “At my age, life can be a bit scary, but I must face the scary and when I do, I find things are not so scary after all. And I find I can do it.”

These were Colleen's final words to us, and little did we know that those very words were part of our discussions taking place within the Congregation the day Colleen was admitted to hospital heralding her final life journey.

We were so touched and there was a sense that Colleen was God's messenger to us at an important time in the Congregation – “don't be afraid!” We treasure her God-sent words. We treasure her.

The reading at Mass last Friday was focused on friendship:

“A friend is like a safe shelter; find one and you have found a treasure. Nothing else is as valuable; there is no way of putting a price on it. A loyal friend is like a medicine that keeps you in good health”.

Sirach 6

On her Jubilee day, Marguerite shared with us that her priest brother, when he was dying asked Colleen to look after Marguerite. And Marguerite thanked Colleen for being a wonderful friend. I promised Colleen that we would continue to care for Marguerite.

May God comfort you dear Marguerite. We are so grateful for all Colleen has been to us and others. You will miss her. We will miss her.

Colleen, well done good and faithful servant... there is a house prepared and waiting for you in Heaven. Go now in peace.

Sr Clare Nolan rsc
Congregational Leader



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