



**Sisters of Charity**  
of Australia

# Keep in Touch

KIT  
MAGAZINE

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## Inside this month

Here in the December 2020 edition of *Keep in Touch*, the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic predominate.

First up, we look at two particular responses to the pandemic. The first of the two was the creation and launch in May of the RSC Online portal, to ensure Sisters could keep in touch even though they are physically isolated.

The second was the creation and launch of the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre and Archives website, which has been added to the main Sisters of Charity website. With museums and exhibitions quarantined, the Heritage Centre site allows visitors day and night safely into the virtual experience.

This month, *KIT* also celebrates the lives of two of our Sisters, Dawn Bang and Sesarina Bau.

## 2020: What a year we've all had

Welcome to the final edition of *Keep in Touch* for this year. What a relief for us all to have come to the end of one of the most eventful years we have experienced in our lifetimes.



Sr Clare Nolan

We had been working towards our sexennial Chapter together for quite some time through contemplative dialogue circles, and were on track to our Chapter and the election of a new Congregational Leader and Council. That team was due to commence on December 8.

In January, there was chat about a new virus coming out of China. By February, it was becoming clearer what this new viral threat, already killing thousands in China, was looking like. Worse than SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), worse than MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome). Worse than H1N1 (the avian virus) and swine flu.

By March, Australians looked on in horror at the new coronavirus (now called COVID-19 to distinguish it from the earlier SARS-CoV) which took hold in Europe, wrecking the north of Italy, and spread to the US. Australia went into lockdown and so did the Sisters of Charity and the Congregational staff.

Instead of coming in to work, the team began working at home from the end of March, coming up with solutions about how to keep the functionality required every day to sustain and inform the Sisters. And at the Heritage Centre, the team was fixed on how to make the exhibits from the exhibition space available to an audience despite restrictions.

There was a lot of innovative thinking going on: In Communications, we needed to shift from face to face meetings, to virtual meetings. In the Heritage Centre, the answer was the same: Face to face experiences were not possible, but virtual tours certainly were.

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# 2020: What a year we've all had

From page 1

So Information Technology professionals were called in - and you can see what was devised in stories in this edition of *KIT*.

As we have come to expect, we were able to draw on the resources of the Archives to understand the reaction of earlier Sisters to the global Spanish 'flu pandemic' in 1919 and 1920. Their stories, which were in *KIT* of June 2020, show us both the resourcefulness and the courage of these Sisters.

During lockdown, *KIT* asked five Sisters of Charity - Srs Cate O'Brien, Suzette Clark, Anne Mayberry,

Christine Henry, and Libbey Byrne - to write something about how the coronavirus had affected their lives and ministries. Their stories speak of changed circumstances, but unchanged commitment to our fourth vow, Service of the Poor.

And also in this edition, we say farewell to two of our beloved Sisters, Dawn Bang and Sesarina Bau. Dawn touched many lives in her ministry of spiritual director and supported many on their spiritual journeys. Sesarina - "Ses" - was totally committed to the healing

ministry of Christ as a nurse and was loved by all. Both sisters left their mark of love.

No matter how sad this year has been for so many, we must all go on, confident that as 2020 draws to a close and 2021 dawns, that more positive times lie ahead.

May your Christmas - although perhaps different - be happy and holy, and your New Year bright and full of love.

**Clare Nolan**  
**Congregational Leader**  
**Sisters of Charity of Australia**

# The Heritage Centre responds to the pandemic and goes online

The Heritage Centre Manager, Rachel Mensforth, writes about moving the Centre experience online.

As physical access to cultural facilities waned with the progression of COVID-19, heritage centres, museums, and galleries began considering how to remain connected to their audiences in uncertain times.

In many instances, as with the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre, the focus was on serving communities in meaningful ways and proactively engaging remote audiences with relevant content.

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*The challenge that we faced at the Heritage Centre was that now, more than ever, it is imperative to continue to communicate the history and mission of the Sisters of Charity and support the stakeholders and audiences already invested in the Centre's mission and message.*

Aside from the timely applications, Allison O'Sullivan, the Engagement, Learning and Program Developer, and I recommended to the Congregational Leader & Council that an on-line experience is a

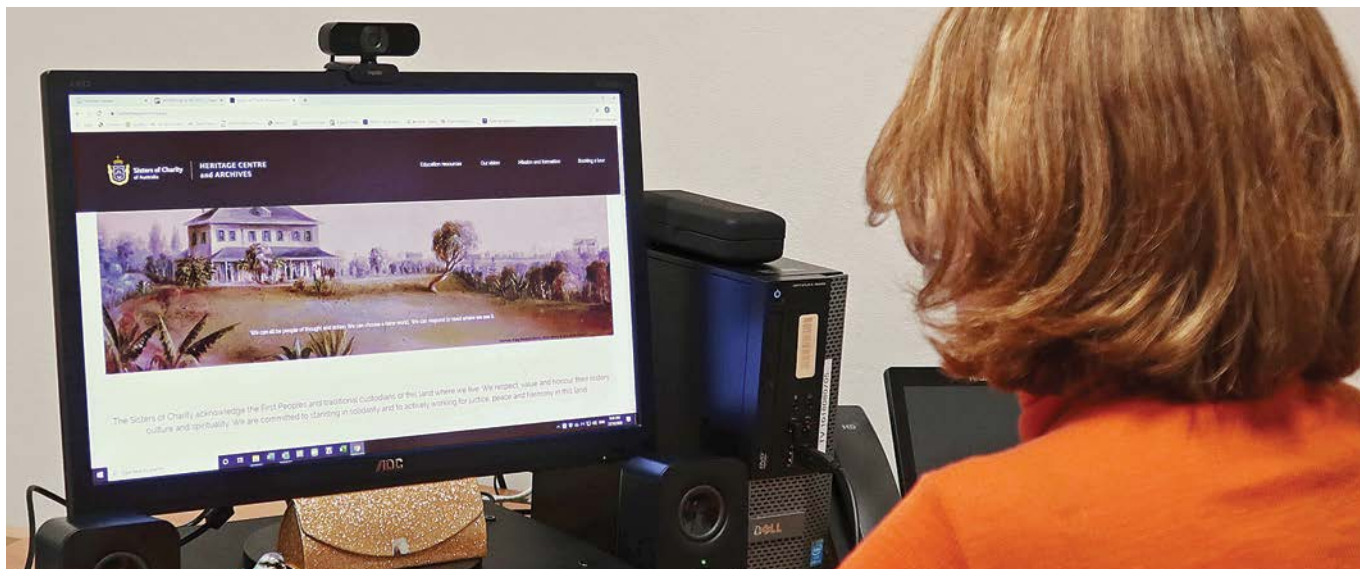
significant investment in the future direction of the Heritage Centre, particularly as a safeguard against further shutdowns, both in NSW and across the borders.

In response to changing circumstances and the need to reach remote audiences, the CL&C approved our submission, and the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre and Archives launched a new website on Monday, September 7 (with a preview to the Congregation in the days prior).

The launch framework included virtual tours and an introduction to the inception and vision for the space.

The new platform is currently located within the Sisters of Charity site, accessible via the Heritage Centre drop down.

The cornerstone of the site is a selection of digital exhibitions,



Archives Manager, Rachel Mensforth, with the Heritage Centre website.



providing an on-line excursion experience for teachers and students. Virtual tours are integral to classrooms in the era of COVID-19 and have long-term applications in support of remote



audiences as well as time poor or under resourced schools unable to coordinate physical excursions. These tours provide a practical support for History, English, PDHPE and Religious Studies and as of


Monday, October 19, were married to downloadable curriculum linked lesson material.

Similarly, the exhibitions will serve as valuable tools for mission formation and mission development with this content earmarked for completion towards the end of the year.

The Fourth Vow content from the exhibition is also available on the site; repurposed for computers and handheld devices (pictured left), it is now accessible to a broader audience. Since the launch, Allison and I have worked through an evaluation period, collating feedback, and planning improvements.

This is a multifaceted process, incorporating the site content, the video content and even includes minute details about text font, image resolution and placement of watermarks.

Recommendations for the next phase of content were recently submitted to the CL&C with a specific focus on engaging the Sisters.



**Sisters of Charity of Australia**

**HERITAGE CENTRE and ARCHIVES**

Please take the time to visit the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre website. You will find it here: <https://www.socheritagecentre.org.au>

# Creating the RSC Online Portal

Some days can be more unusual than others, and we were already in unusual times.

It was March, and the implications and ramifications of the coronavirus were just starting to be understood. We were about to be sent from the office to work remotely thanks to the coronavirus lockdown.

One of the main implications for Religious Congregations and Institutes worldwide was that all their General Chapters and Chapters (regular meetings during which the leadership teams are elected for fixed terms, and matters relating to religious life are discussed and resolved) were indefinitely postponed.

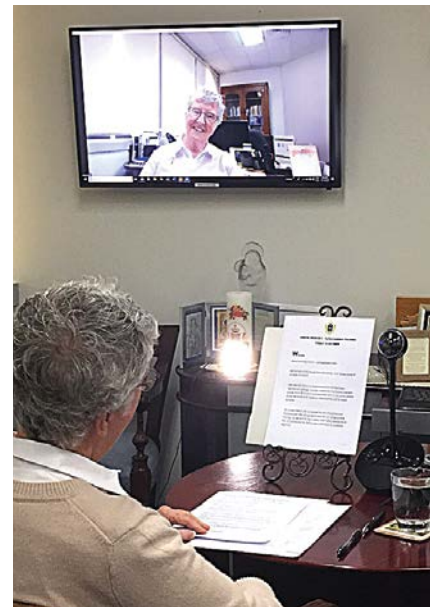
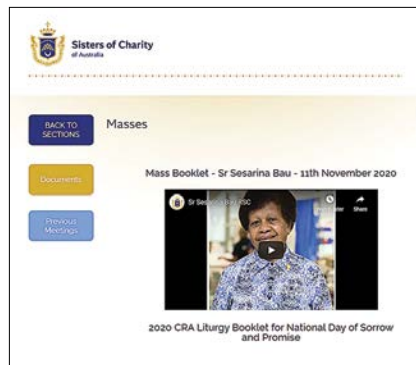
The Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life initially decreed that the Chapters had to meet face to face but not until a vaccine had been created, tested, proven.

So that day in March, Sr Clare Nolan, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, told me I was about to get very busy. She wanted an interactive television station for the Sisters, in preparation for the Chapter, which had been planned by September but was now postponed indefinitely, could continue.

And she wanted it by the second week of May.

Right. Having worked in television production, I knew what an intense form of media it could be, and how labour-intensive. I wondered how it could be managed and I was concerned. But I shouldn't have been.

I called Conal McCullough, with whom we had worked on streaming and coverage of the Sisters' Gathering in 2018 and the launch



of the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre in 2019. Could we do it, what would he suggest? A portal which encompassed Zoom meeting capacity, as well as document storage, he suggested. I asked him for a scope of the works and impressed on him the looming deadline.

It turns out that the RSC Online Portal would come together on time, on budget, and look elegantly simple. Usually, web sites (and a portal is a mini website) could be two of three requirements.

But the most important aspects for this project were timeliness and ease of use – the average age of the Sisters of Charity of Australia is 80 plus so they are mostly not native digital speakers.

So a team started to form, under the oversight of the Director of

Operations, Rosemary Young. We met regularly via Zoom from home offices to monitor progress in different areas.

Sr Clare had tapped Bruce Stephens, with whom she has worked for decades, including at Sisters of Charity Outreach, to work effectively as the producer for the online sessions. He would come to work closely with Sr Clare and Conal during the months to come.

Conal swiftly came up with a proposal, and the Congregational Leader and Council quickly adopted it.

The portal now had to be delivered. Conal started to develop the site, working with a small team in Perth.

At the same time, access to the portal became the focus. Some of the Sisters would not want to come into the sessions, but most would.

Out of the 110 Sisters at the time, around 70 indicated that they wanted to be able to access the portal and the sessions. At this stage, the Congregation's IT consultants,

CMSIT, became involved. Many of the Sisters did not have devices which would allow easy access so the principal, Angelo Millena, and his team, set about accessing the tablets, and programming them. That meant the Sisters could come into the portal at the tap of one button.

This was turning into a cross-organisational effort. Our administration officer, James Griffiths, started to contact Sisters to audit what devices they had and what

they needed. He compiled a mini-training manual to help get them up to speed on how to use the portal. The EA to Sister Clare and the directorate, Kaylene Taylor, and Melinda Gutierrez, the EA to the Congregational Leader and Council, were, along with James, trained in the ins and outs of Zoom by Bruce.

As the delivery date came closer, the devices were finding their way into the Sisters' hands (Angelo was working over weekends to



Sr Maureen Walters

*On 22 May 2020, the new Portal was launched. Plans for the 2020 Chapter had been cancelled and the Congregation entered a new era for keeping in touch.*

*Despite some trepidation, I found that clicking the right buttons enabled me to enjoy great presentations and more particularly, sharing in small groups with our Sisters across the four States. It was a joy to see my dear friend Sr Dawn and others on the screen in front of me.*

*I feel I have never experienced a Chapter preparation as we have received these past months.*



Sr Colleen Jackson

*The Portal's function of linking us directly to Zoom meetings is just one of its benefits. It is also home – a one-stop-shop – to documents and previous meeting recordings, thus giving us easy access to revisiting material.*

*Who'd have guessed, a year ago, that a group of women whose ages extend into the 100's would be bound together by technological devices like tablets, smart phones and computers!*



Sr Loretta Bani

*The connection with the sisters via Zoom has been really great as normally due to distance etc we wouldn't see each other so there is a feeling of a closer bond of connection, though it would never take the place of actual getting together this has been certainly a game changer for another way to meet discuss and form dialogue.*

*To all those who created the portal, and who run it, I am most grateful.*

**Opposite page. Clockwise from top left:**

Bruce Stephens, the external consultant who produces the portal sessions  
Conal McCullough, the Perth-based portal builder and director of the portal sessions

Sr Clare, the Congregational Leader, gets ready for a portal session  
Masses on the portal

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# Creating the RSC Online Portal

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pull this off). Then, it was time for end-user testing.

Understandably, there was some anxiety among the Sisters about using the technology, so it was decided to complete a trial before opening night: A number of Sisters, including the Congregational Leader and Council, were invited to road test the portal.

Thankfully, it went well for the most part, and the Sisters who were online for that meeting became

keen advocates for this essential new way to communicate. We even managed to spread news of our portal technology to another couple of Congregations, one of which commissioned Conal to adapt our portal to their needs.

We had a very slightly undisciplined start (pictures missing, volume missing, odd framing, feedback), but Sisters very quickly accustomed themselves to the technology and now they love their weekly catch up

meetings and miss them during non-portal session weeks.

The portal also brings another consolation in these days of COVID-19 restrictions on numbers attending funerals.

All our online Sisters are now able to go to the portal for live-streamed Masses for their Sisters. That has been an unexpected blessing.

**Christine Hogan**  
Communications Manager



Sr Genny Walsh

*Fridays dawn and laptops and devices go into action. The Sisters gather, 9 am strikes and "join meeting appears," everyone taps the screen and then each Sister appears, hellos resound and we Sisters (the eldest, 102) are joyfully connected, united like never before.*

*The meetings, the groups, the in-depth learnings, how proud we are to be, to belong and to live our legacy. The Portal is loaded with past meetings, documents, Masses. They are all available to be reviewed, enjoyed and appreciated. We sit back and wonder, how amazing all this is.*



Sr Margaret Guy

*I like the portal even though it is second best to meeting face to face because it allows Sisters from all States to be present at the same time including many who would not be able to travel to a particular place. There has also been great IT support from our RSC office staff and Sisters to those who find the portal a challenge digitally.*

*Break out groups also allow Sisters from across the States to share on focus questions with some feedback from leaders given instantly. Sessions can be viewed at a later time if any Sister is not able to be present at the "live" presentation or simply if any Sister wishes to review same.*



Sr Margaret Fitzgerald

*Naturally, there were some early hiccups as the Friday sessions began and we gingerly tiptoed our way with the new technology, but over the weeks following those early days we have all grown in confidence, ably supported by our technical companions, in logging on, joining the input session as well as the small breakout meetings!*

*This courageous and creative initiative and implementation of an RSC portal has been another little miracle in giving the Congregation this platform to prepare for the 2020 Chapter.*

# Sisters during COVID – Corona times for Remote and Rural Ministry

Many organisations which give assistance to needy people, have been affected by the COVID-19 virus, including our Remote and Rural Ministry.

The usual fund-raising stalls and Bunnings barbecues have been shelved for the present as we come to grips with these most unusual times, writes Sr Anne Mayberry (pictured).

My initial response to the situation was to take time to ponder the ramifications. I therefore retreated to my favourite place, the garden.

In restoring a section of garden, I laid an extensive brick path, which reminded me of 'journey.' Where to from here, during this time of uncertainty?

I began a huge stock take, (without the Sale). Donated goods were resorted, wrapped, packaged, labelled and boxed. Much of the beautiful clothing given to us was taken down to the Salvos in Goulburn.

I had noticed, previously, that their racks were very much depleted. They are always so grateful for assistance.

Having seen the outcome of the January fires down south, I headed to St Mary's school in Batlow, NSW, delivering a bag of groceries for each family. An extra bag was included for a staff member who had lost her home in the fires.

Some of the children at the school were traumatised by the fires and extra cash would enable them to buy hand puppets to work through their experiences in drama classes.

Tumbarumba was also affected and so the Community Church was given boxes of new clothes, books, and toys for the families who are visited by the local Pastor on her weekly rounds.

Prizes for Bingo, raffle prizes and knee rugs which had all been packed since February, have finally been delivered to an aged care facility in the Hunter.

At the same time, I was able to visit schools in Denman, Muswellbrook, Cessnock, and Merriwa, leaving behind a cheque to help with specific needs.

During these times, phone calls have been made to reliable connections, to enquire as to how we can assist, specially where people have been retrenched or where work places have been destroyed by the fires, e.g. timber mills. Around Batlow, thousands of acres of burnt trees have depleted stocks for local mills.

I have become a frequent customer to Australia Post, sending cheques, parcels, and boxes of goods to far off places.



*We journey forward with hope, joy and much gratitude for continued support, specially from our own generous Sisters of Charity.*



Above:  
Sr Anne Mayberry pre-COVID delivery

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# Sisters during COVID

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## Keeping in touch with our people

2020 has seen Downs & West Community Support (DWCS) reaching out and offering support in very different ways.

When lockdown and social distancing began in March 2020, it was essential for us to keep in touch with individuals, farming families and small businesses in regional, rural and remote areas of Southern Queensland during the unfolding events of the coronavirus pandemic.

People have been frightened, isolated more than ever before, and needed support and reassurance. COVID-19 is just another serious event that hit our farming communities hard.

DWCS continued to keep-in-touch by phoning four to five people a day (that's around 268 families to date) to check in on them and to respond to any emerging needs or emergencies; and writing *Thinking of You* cards for 110 rural individuals and families.

Some examples of farming and family needs that have been met are:

- Payment of overdue medical and electrical bills
- Posted items of winter clothing
- Distributed petrol vouchers
- Provided emergency stockfeed to those who had no feed. These farmers had destocked months ago and only kept prime breeders. They received rain in February but without follow-up rain the young pasture growth died. Selling of stock is not an option due to the coronavirus.



Left: Sr Christine Henry

Above: Sr Christine in pre-COVID times

- Transferred money into farmers accounts in emergency situations.

On May 9, DWCS was on the road heading west, permitted to see one family a day.

Sitting on a fallen tree trunk at the farm gate on a cold windy day, a farming family and I enjoyed a chat, a coffee and hot scones made especially for our meeting.

Moments like these are to be remembered and cherished. Every family we saw was invited to choose whatever they needed from the van which included a large hamper for them all.

We are now visiting families more freely although physical distancing is maintained. Although it is hard not to give a warm hug, I have a real sense that DWCS is loved and appreciated.

Liaising with rural organisations and local regional councils via

phone or Zoom meetings is the new norm and has been valuable as we planned Wellness Days for women and men in three different locations.

Strict COVID safe policies were in place and DWCS followed these closely as we did our very best to keep everyone safe.

In late August, we organised three successful Wellness Days for country women and one men's gathering. A total of 58 women and 15 men attended these days and everyone was so delighted to be invited to come together for the first time in months.

The participants had an opportunity to chat, to be pampered and cared for, to learn, to be gifted with many practical gifts and to enjoy a hearty meal.

Our thoughts and prayers are for everyone impacted by this virus.

Sr Christine Henry





# Sisters during COVID

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## If you want to make God laugh ...

I flew into Brisbane on March 15 this year, booked to return to Sydney the following weekend for two days of planning, writes Sr Suzette Clark.



Sr Suzette Clark

After all, we were having our Congregational Chapter in September and would be handing over to the newly elected CL&C on December 8.

It was during that week that the closure of borders was mooted and the Queensland border closed on March 25. So, I was in Brisbane for more than eight months. But if I have to be stuck anywhere, this is the place to be.

I live in an ILU in St Vincent's Care Services at Mitchelton. It is one of 16 stand-alone units so we have not been affected by the long periods of lockdown that have restricted life in the nursing home in this complex.



Like everyone else, initially we were in isolation, but gradually conditions improved. Our chaplain celebrates Eucharist with us on a Saturday and Tuesday afternoon, in the ILU community room.

For me, these months have been an opportunity to spend more time with our Sisters in Brisbane, at least via the phone or Zoom. Sr Jeannie Johnston celebrated her diamond jubilee in August. On the day, we gathered physically or via Zoom with a special prayer, then morning tea.

Congregationally, this has been a challenging time. CL&C and committee meetings have to continue. We have done this via Zoom. On May 22, we launched our RSC Online portal. What a blessing in the midst of the isolation and hardships of the pandemic.

On many Fridays, our Sisters have gathered, often as many as 65.

*Here in Brisbane, we have found it a great innovation. We are meeting with and having conversations with Sisters in other states whom we may not have seen for years.*

The portal has also enabled us to be present at Amanda Nguyen's perpetual profession and celebrate the lives of Sisters who have died during this time.

Sr Suzette Clark is a Councillor

Above: (L-R) Srs Mathilde Harnischfeger, Suzette Clark and Carmel Coyle



Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, Sr Clare Nolan, talks to the graduating class of 2020 at her alma mater at the end of a most unusual year. Please go to the Sisters of Charity YouTube platform: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay\\_BqJUbPwM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay_BqJUbPwM)

# This is Church!

*I reckon all the masses will be cancelled by the weekend!  
Do you really think so? Yes! ...*

A conversation at the end of a parish meeting in March, and so it came to pass.

My mind was a whirl ... our parish has no resident priest and three towns 40 km apart, writes Sr Libbey Byrne.

Unable to live-stream masses from our own churches, older parishioners with no internet ... how could we keep this community of the faithful connected with each other?

Nursing home visits, Rosary and adoration groups, all meetings and social activities held on church property were cancelled.

I wrote a "newsy" email to as many addresses as I had – "a short reflection, news relating to closures and cancellations, an article I thought might prove interesting and a cartoon.

Over the next 13 weeks, 26 editions of this newsletter were produced sustaining us through the lockdown ... parish detectives found more addresses and printed copies for the front porch and volunteers took them for delivery where needed.

The newsletter grew to include commentaries on the Sunday and Daily readings, activities for children, many more articles, lots of cartoons and the new "COVID humour" – thanks to those who are still supplying it six months later!

The front-page reflection took on a new theme each week and accompanied by a contemporary title relating the theme to daily life, world events and the weekly liturgy.



He is father of four and foster father to another three – two of whom have multiple disabilities.

As we talked, another parishioner and I engaged with the little girl who, although deaf, played "peep-o" with us and began to laugh and point to cars passing by.

Michael turned to me and said:  
*"You know sister, this is Church!", and I thought, yes it is ... the Body of Christ in the beauty around us, in the joys, sorrows and sufferings we see played out in the lives of our people and in the love which binds us all together.*

Sr Libbey Byrne was parish leader at Myall Coast Catholic Parish

On my evening walks along the river I passed the regulars and new acquaintances with a smile, and short conversation at a safe distance.

One glistening Sunday morning, I met Michael pushing a stroller.



Above, from left: Sr Libbey Byrne  
Sr Libbey on the water on the Central Coast

# Words of remembrance

## Sr Sesarina Bau rsc

June 6, 1934 – November 3, 2020

**Mass Of Christian Burial**  
**November 11, 2020**  
**The Mother of Mercy Chapel,**  
**Rookwood, Sydney**

**Her personal motto:**

**Through the cross to light**



Sr Sesarina Bau

It is my privilege to write these words of remembrance about Sr Sesarina (fondly known as 'Ses') and to give you the traditional Fijian words of welcome "Bula! Bula!"

Reflecting on Ses' life and her journey of 86 years and my involvement in it I saw what an amazing and unique story it was.

Ses was born in 1934 in Fiji and at a young age she came into our Sisters of Charity lives. She was known as Sr Francis Xavier, a Sister of Our Lady of Nazareth. She came to Australia along with other Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth whom we came to know and love.

Ses did her secondary education at the Presentation Sisters College at Windsor in Melbourne in 1959. Following that Ses came to Sydney and commenced her Nurse Training at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney.

Following her graduation, Ses went to St Vincent's Hospital, Toowoomba where she did her midwifery training.

She then returned to Sydney and did her Tresillian training (care of young mothers). She was now the 'whole package' and ready to continue her mission back in Fiji.

But Ses did not settle back in Fiji and she sought permission to enter the Sisters of Charity and permission came from Rome in August, 1967.



She entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity in January, 1968. Following her Religious Profession, Ses was missioned to St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn. I was a young Sister and Mother St Agnes felt it would be good for us to be in ministry there supporting each other.

And so our friendship began.

There were occasions we were summoned to the Superior's office

or the local community leader's office to account for our actions. On these occasions Ses was always direct and clear in her reasoning.

Fifty years later I heard Ses sharing these stories with a Leader in one of our facilities. She was mentoring him about standing up for his beliefs and being true to who he is. Ses could say in a few words what it might take someone else to write a paper about!



**Left:** Sr Sesarina Bau and Sr Clare Nolan, St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn, ca 1971

**Above:** A young Sr Ses at St Vincent's Hospital

Following my Final Vows, I was allowed to go home to Queensland. While I was planning to go home, my Superior said I was to take Ses with me. I was a bit surprised, so I wrote to my mother and informed her of our extra guest.

Mum's reply was "you come home and stay with me and Ses can stay with Aunty Joan and Uncle Merv." My family loved her, and she became part of the family.

My nieces and, nephews and cousins have all sent memories of Ses.



Above: Sr Sesarina with her family in Fiji in 2018

Below, right: Sr Sesarina receives her Papal Honour

She was very proud of her time with the St Vincent's Curran Foundation.

Charles Curran wrote this lovely tribute "We are all greatly saddened by the passing of dear Sr Ses. Sr Ses was so proud of being a Sister of Charity and she made an outstanding contribution to the work of the Sisters over many, many decades.

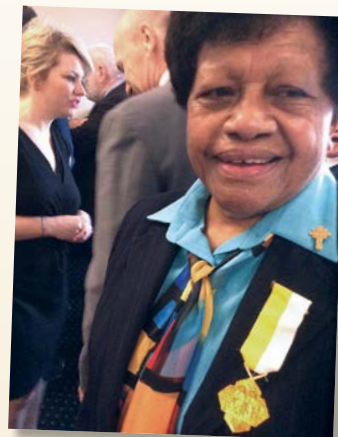
In the 80's Ses went as a Volunteer with the Red Cross to Thailand/ Kampuchea. There she cared for refugees especially little babies and children.

Sadness came to Ses during her time on mission in Kampuchea. Her mother died. It was too far to fly to Fiji, so she remained in Bangkok mourning for four days. It was so tough for Ses seeing her family go before her. Our hearts ached for her as each separation happened. Each time she came home, we, the Sisters of Charity, would share the toll it took on her.

In talking about families: Ses belonged to so many. She endeared herself to them all and the love was reciprocal. The Beswicks – Judy Lynch, a Beswick, was written down as Ses' adopted family and her next of kin. Ses loved and appreciated the support of her family in Fiji and felt so proud to share both her Aussie and Fijian families.

Ses' ministry spanning 50 years was in the Healing Ministry of Christ. She put her nurse training to good use and to do that, there was no place like St Vincent's Sydney.

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*Ses saw the Florence Nightingale Pledge as her spirituality for Nursing and it stood visible beside her Vows.*  
*"With loyalty... I will devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care."*



One of the most memorable times for us was to be present with Ses, Anthea, and Jacinta when they received special Papal Awards

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# Words of remembrance

Sr Sesarina Bau rsc

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conferred for distinguished service to the Church by lay people and clergy. It was the highest medal awarded to laity by the Pope.

Ses was not feeling 100% but she managed to rise to the occasion, giving a magnificent speech and loved the celebration with family and friends. It was such a beautiful morning, and we were proud of her.

In June, 2018 Ses agreed to go to St Vincent's Care, Edgecliff. Within weeks she had settled in and was giving me instructions. "Clare," she would say, "this is my home! We need to paint the balcony, get a better chair."

I think Ses felt her mentoring continued. Always giving speeches and the doctors and nurses told me that everyone listened, even the residents.

Then came the time for her to go home and say goodbye to family. Many offered to accompany her; however, I was the chosen one. It was my joy and privilege to accompany her on her final journey home. The family shared with me that they were nervous because the "boss" was coming. The time with Ses was precious to all. She spoke in Fijian most of the time. After an unforgettable time, we returned home.

On arrival back at St Vincent's Care, the nursing staff was wonderful in settling her.

At this stage, her phone became her lifeline. Her community was faithful to her over the two years and five months Ses was in care. Her dear friend, Sr Jacinta Fong, continued to spoil her in every way. Sr Anthea Groves and Marian Rudge were her carers; Sr Dorothy Bayliss expressed her love for

Ses who was so kind to her sick mother when Dorothy was on overseas mission. Her family here in Australia Meresiana, Charlie, Katarina, Tirana, Isabella, Cecilia, and Elia were her support. She had a meal with them and spoke to Marie and Bill the Saturday before she went into palliative care.

*To meet Ses is never to forget her. Another condolence said it all: "I just saw your note about Sr Ses' passing in which you note 'we will miss her joyful spirit.' I could not think of anything more true. In some of my darkest times on the Campus, Sr Ses was always someone who lifted the situation with her extraordinary warmth and caring. She was never shy in telling me to lighten up if I was taking myself too seriously."*

Ses celebrated her Golden Jubilee this year and it was a celebration for which she longed.

She had been on this journey of Religious Life since 1972. On her Profession Day she chose the motto THROUGH THE CROSS TO LIGHT.

Ses would have walked with many sick people through their darkness to light. And Pope Francis encourages us all to renew our initial call and allow Gospel joy to fill our heart. Ses did exactly that.

Ses was in Palliative Care for eight days and cared for magnificently by doctors and nurses. Ses died peacefully in their care and Deirdre and I were there as she took her last breath. We will miss you, dear Ses.

These closing words sum up Ses' presence in our lives: "Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never the same." (Flavia Weedn)

Clare Nolan rsc  
Congregational Leader



Sr Sesarina Bau, Sr Clare Nolan and Fr Francisco Basnayake OFM, the celebrant, St Joseph's, Edgecliff

# Sr Dawn Bang rsc

April 10, 1926 – 18 September 18, 2020

All Hallows Church, Balwyn, Vic.,  
September 29 , 2020

**Her personal motto:**

**Jesus, God of my heart**



Sr Dawn Bang, ca 1970

St John's gospel invites us to live life to the full. The many reflections that have been expressed since Dawn died give testament to her full life.

However, Dawn was not interested in how her long life would be celebrated. Decision-making was not her long suit so maybe narrowing down the hymn choices for today was always going to be left to us.

She did, however, make the life choice that her family remembers as what she had wanted to do from an early age. Becoming Sr M Janet was not a hard decision.

Colleen Jackson and I want to thank Dawn's family, the Sisters of Charity, and friends for sharing your memories of Dawn. We hope that you find something of your reflections in what we have drawn as our combined glance at Dawn's influence on each of us.

Dawn was Maureen's big sister and indeed others felt the same way

about her: now living forever in their hearts. The oft quoted "their deeds go with them" must surely have a caveat because lots of Dawn's good deeds are living on here with us.

Each of us here and those online can identify moments when something was said or done that has had a lasting affect on us. These are often hidden, quiet occasions known only to the "me." Dawn lives on in such "me" moments for many people.

Dawn was a gracious woman, genuine in her full attention in interactions with others. She was a great encourager, especially when speaking about her love and others' love of God.

Whether a new insight in prayer or something from spiritual reading Dawn was alive in its sharing.

She interacted in ways that bore witness to the effect her relationship with her God had on her.



**Above:**

(L-R) Sr John Mary S.L.C., Sr M Carmena Kelly, Sr M Joseph Barry, Sr Dawn Bang, Sr M Finbarr Balzen and Sr Claudia S.L.C. at the Novitiate, Caritas Christi, Wahroonga, NSW, ca 1964

**Below:**

(L-R) Sr Virginia Wilkinson, Sr Patricia Carroll, Sr Dawn Bang and Sr Paulina Pilkington at a Congregational Gathering, St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point, 1983



Dawn's life was about faith, hope and love: brought to life by her response to the Sisters of Charity motto: *The love of Christ impels us.* Dawn's life was an act of faith, hope, love ...

**So ... on Love ...**

Dawn orchestrated lots of laughs, tears, serious discussions and reminiscing. She cherished interesting conversations ... which were not always available in her latter years. Topics included opinions on family, sport, politics and even Sisters of Charity! She had her finger on the pulse! She loved to cheekily declare that something had "dawned" on her.

It wasn't only what she said ... but how she said it. She graced lives, young and old, with her goodness, her conversations and her sense of humour. She was a great storyteller.

Her family has many stories of her love, support and encouragement. And Dawn had a big love of our Congregation. Warts and all, she loved us as Sisters of Charity.

**On to Hope ...**

Dawn must have presented as a good RSC prospect when she was interviewed. Whether a myth or not, the family has it that she was accepted on the spot! And why not?

Continued on page 16 →

# Words of remembrance

Sr Dawn Bang rsc

From page 15

This was her heart's desire.  
Her hope became a reality in 1947.

Dawn lived giving hope to others  
in warm, friendly and joyful style:  
encouraging gifts, reassuring people.

Her wisdom gave hope because  
she was open minded and able to  
appreciate and embrace different  
viewpoints. She was a hope filled  
companion. To accompany is to walk  
side by side. Dawn did that in her  
many roles: involving fairly dramatic  
changes from teaching to Noviciate  
ministry to spiritual guide.

Others too have given her hope  
in times of anxiety, gifting her  
with reassurance.

## To Faith ...

I think Dawn probably needed  
a mountain of faith to take up the  
Noviciate ministry. Not an early  
comfort zone! Dawn saw faith as  
of the utmost importance in life.

Many have related that she was an  
example of total commitment to  
one's beliefs. She believed in God's  
unconditional love and always  
wanted to share that message.  
She saw Jesus as Lover and Giver...  
and Mary as a very human mother.

In faith, Dawn drew the connection to  
be lived in our fourth Vow (Service of  
the Poor): the hunger for spiritual growth  
and the life of service and action.



**Above, left:** (L-R) Sr Marina Ward, Sr Dorothy Maher, Sr Dawn Bang, Sr Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Sr Jean Montgomery, Sr Margaret Valentine, All Saints Church Liverpool, NSW, 1994  
Sisters Colleen Jackson, Dawn, and Virginia Mahony

Then came the years of  
dependence on others for all her  
physical needs. This didn't dim her  
pride in her appearance She loved a  
new shirt or cardigan and, of course,  
a decent jacket for her recent  
celebrations, including her 90th  
birthday and the 70th Jubilee.

The fact that in later years her legs  
betrayed her does not tame vivid  
memories of her long, purposeful,  
rosary-jingling strides at Wahroonga

Nor do we forget her great faith in  
her iPad. She was something of an  
iPad lover. Her legs didn't obey but  
the iPad did. It was her door to so  
many aspects of her life, keeping  
her alert and involved. There was  
FaceTime, Congregational zoom  
meetings, emailing, playing games,  
reading *The Age* and books.

The iPad fits in with her enjoyment  
of a good gadget, a new treat, a clever  
shortcut or a testing jigsaw puzzle. And,  
of course, she was the AFL tipping  
competition scorer at St Catherine's,  
even though she was really a "Rooster."

Dawn's connection with us has  
been changed. The separation is  
personal for each of us. Maureen  
will miss their daily chats. From her  
we learn a final faith sharing ... that  
Dawn knew that the time to leave us  
was near. Time was coming to leave  
her tired body. She had fought the  
restrictions of her body with fervour  
and found it difficult but in true  
Dawn faith gave it all to God's will.

That young woman who grew up  
in Rose Bay, Sydney and loved the  
ocean is the same woman who gave  
her everything to God in 1947 and  
again in 2020.

We know that Dawn had a marvellous  
memory so we know that she will  
be remembering us as members  
of the Communion of Saints.

We will miss Dawn. Our lives  
are blest for having known her.  
She was a great ancestor.

- Virginia Mahony rsc

- Colleen Jackson rsc



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