



# JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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## A PILGRIMAGE IN THE SISTERS' FOOTSTEPS



Trustee David Robinson at the Parramatta Female Factory with Sr Moira Sullivan rsc and SVHA Board Directors and Executives

On 14 November 2013, the St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) Board and senior executives and Trustee David Robinson went on a pilgrimage to Parramatta and Western Sydney in the footsteps of the first Sisters of Charity in Australia. The pilgrimage was led by Sr Moira O'Sullivan rsc and SVHA Group Leader Mission, Jack de Groot.

Sr Moira, an historian, researcher and author (whose latest work was to compile the Sisters of Charity anniversary book *Impelled by Christ's Love: 175 Years Serving in Australia*), provided amazing insights into the backgrounds of the first five Sisters who arrived on Australian shores on 31 December 1838, and who, within one month of arrival, went on to Parramatta. She speculated authoritatively as to the individual character and demeanour of each Sister at that time and told stories of the many challenges they faced.

The pilgrim group visited the site of the first house acquired by the Sisters at Parramatta in 1840, St Mary's Convent which is now owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The original ground floor of the building remains surrounded by later additions and renovations. The warm hospitality of Sr Catherine Ryan rsm was very much appreciated.

A poignant moment of the journey was the group's visit to the last remnants of Parramatta 'Female Factory' – a heritage wall. The prison ministry was effectively the Sisters' first ministry in Australia. The Sisters walked almost two kilometres daily along treacherous muddy tracks from their home to the Female Factory to serve over 900 women and children with "phenomenal effect". The courage, tenacity and compassion of these five women and their successors are inspirational. The Female Factory closed in 1848.

The pilgrims later journeyed to St Joseph's Hospital at Auburn to learn about the history and traditions of the Sisters' establishment of the Hospital located originally in Parramatta and then transferred to the current site at Auburn. The group appreciated the hospitality and welcome from the staff and patients at St Joseph's.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to a pilgrimage which was, indeed, an inspirational and spiritual experience.

**David Robinson**  
Chair, Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

# DE LACY HOUSE FEAST DAY CELEBRATION

A vital part of the life of St Columba's College in Essendon is its vertical House system. There are seven Houses, bearing the names of the five courageous Sisters of Charity who set sail for Australia from Ireland in 1838 – Sr M. John Cahill, Sr M. Francis de Sales O'Brien, Sr M. Xavier Williams, Sr M. Lawrence Cater and Sr M. John Baptist De Lacy; first Principal of the College Mother M. Ursula Bruton; and first Australian-born Sister of Charity Sr M. Xavier Cunningham. Each student and staff member belongs to a House and remains in that House throughout her time at St Columba's College. The Trustees

of Mary Aikenhead Ministries welcomed the invitation in 2012 to join a House and they are very proud of the distinctive colours, badges and items which identify each Trustee with the respective House.

I proudly belong to the De Lacy House which celebrates the inspiring story of Sr M. Baptist De Lacy's significant work ministering to the poor and sick. The House is readily identified by its gorgeous PINK motifs. It was with great delight and enjoyment that I joined my fellow House students and staff at the annual De Lacy feast day on 26 August 2013.

The celebration commenced with a welcome by House Teacher Ms Therese Patti, followed by a solemn and moving liturgy in the College chapel, led by De Lacy House Captain Isabella Clemens who recalled Sr M. Baptist De Lacy's ministry. This was followed by a lunch feast in the hall of mammoth and extremely pink proportions: pink lollies, pink snakes, pink jelly beans, pink musk sticks, pink soft drinks. Even the massive quantities of pizzas looked pink! The easy camaraderie between the various year groups and House teachers was testament to the great success of the House system. Our patroness would have been smiling upon our celebrations!

Dr Tessa Ho  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Trustee Dr Tessa Ho, House Captain Isabella Clemens and House Teacher Therese Platti with members of De Lacy House

## REWARDING EXCELLENCE

Trustee Rowena McNally attended the 2013 St Vincent's Care Services Queensland (SVCS) Staff Awards evening on 9 October at St Lucia. More than 260 participants from across SVCS facilities and community bodies joined this celebration of the dedication and achievements of the SVCS workforce.

The Trustees are all extremely proud of the generous and compassionate work that is done every day across the health, aged care and community services ministries, so beautifully illustrated by the Award recipients.

Rowena McNally  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Front (left to right): Srs Mathilde Harnischfeger rsc and Nola Riley rsc, and Director of Mission SVCS Julie Walden. Back: SVHA General Manager People, Culture and Communications David Bryant, Trustee Rowena McNally and SVCS General Manager Jason Eldering

# SR MARIA CUNNINGHAM CENTRE OPENS

Recently, St Vincent's Health Australia opened a Huntington's disease unit on the St Joseph's campus in Auburn, Sydney. The new service represents an extension of the health ministry in Mary Aikenhead's pioneering tradition of seeing a need and seeking to meet the challenge. The facility has been named in honour of Sr Maria Cunningham rsc, a Sister of Charity who made a lifetime commitment to the health ministry of her Congregation and the wider Catholic Church. The Sr Maria Cunningham Centre is an 18-bed facility

dedicated to Huntington's disease patients and their families. Through an agreement between St Vincent's Health Australia, NSW Ministry of Health and Western Sydney Local Health District, the new unit offers residential care, neuropsychiatric care, and assessment and monitoring.

The Centre was formally opened on 19 November 2013. Trustees Sr Helen Clarke rsc, Dr Tessa Ho, Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM, Mr David Robinson and Mr Jim Russell attended the opening of the Centre and its blessing by Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney Terence Brady.

[Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM](#)  
*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



General Manager of St Vincent's Care Services NSW Helen Miller with the image of Sr Maria Cunningham for the Centre named in her honour



Congregational Leader Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc, Congregational Councillor Sr Lauren Dixon rsc and Trustees Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM, Sr Helen Clarke rsc and Dr Tessa Ho at the opening of the Centre

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## FLYING THE MAM FLAG!



The Mary Aikenhead Ministries flag fluttering at Catholic Ladies' College

The Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries (MAM) recently conducted stewardship visits to their four schools – Catholic Ladies' College and St Columba's College in Melbourne, Mt St Michael's College in Brisbane, and St Vincent's College in Sydney. During the visits each College was presented with one of the new Mary Aikenhead Ministries flags.

Before the school year came to an end, the flag was spotted flying at Catholic Ladies' College.

# AN IGNATIAN PARTNERSHIP

In 2011 Mary Aikenhead Ministries received an approach from Fr Mark Raper SJ, President of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania, in relation to support for the new Jesuit secondary school, secondary teachers' college and clinic to be established in Kasait, Timor-Leste. The Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries have invited the health and education ministries to contribute to this Ignatian partnership.

St Columba's College in Essendon has embraced the Trustees' invitation and in 2013 generously supported the Jesuit school. Colégio Santo Inácio de Loiola, which opened at the beginning of the year, has received from St Columba's College some 1,250 classroom chairs and 175 tables, as well as 12 stereo microscopes which were surplus to its needs. At the end of this year St Columba's College will also be shipping a number of dance costumes to Kasait, to assist in the resourcing of a performing arts curriculum at the new school.

The Principal of St Columba's College, Ms April Honeyman, said that the College takes very seriously its commitment to the charism and mission of Mary Aikenhead, and saw the support of the College at Kasait as an opportunity to demonstrate how these can be a reality for the girls and staff. "We are constantly mindful of the words in Luke's Gospel that 'From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required'", she said.

*"Our giving of what can be useful and valuable to those in need is a way of bringing to life the message of Mary Aikenhead Ministries that justice, hope, compassion and love are not just words we speak, but values which impel us to bring the love of Christ to all."*

Peter Kelly

Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Education Australia

THE TRUSTEES OF MARY AIKENHEAD  
MINISTRIES, ROWENA MCNALLY,  
HELEN CLARKE RSC, GABRIELLE  
McMULLEN, DAVID ROBINSON,  
JIM RUSSELL AND TESSA HO,  
WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU  
AND YOUR FAMILIES  
A BLESSED CHRISTMAS  
AND NEW YEAR.



The Trustees during their visit to the Mary Aikenhead Heritage Centre at Harold's Cross in Dublin, a highlight of their pilgrimage to Ireland in July 2013



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