



# JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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*'The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.'*

**Psalm 145:8-9**

## COMPASSION

We share the values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries - Love, Hope, Justice and Compassion.

Trying to provide a fulsome and adequate definition of compassion is nearly impossible. We know it when we see it, when we experience compassion.

In the Gospels, Matthew writes twice that Jesus is 'moved with compassion'. Firstly, when he sees the hungry multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21 and 15:32-35), then again he was 'moved with compassion' when he touched the leper (Mark 1:40-42), curing the leprosy and cleansing him. Both Matthew (9:35-38) and Mark (6:34) write that Jesus felt compassion for the crowd of people as they were *'like sheep without a shepherd.'*

Jesus had compassion when he saw the two blind men at the side of the road (Matthew 20:29-34)

and touched their eyes, restoring their sight and then they followed him. Again, at Nain, Jesus 'felt compassion' for the widow (Luke 7:11-15), imploring her not to weep and restoring her only son back to life, presenting him to his mother.

Jesus tells two parables (the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-24 and the Unforgiving Servant in Luke 6:27-38). These provide a significant illustration of a powerful person feeling compassion for the most vulnerable – a father for a lost son, a master for the servant unable to pay his debts. Yet the servant loses his master's compassion precisely when he fails to show pity or compassion to another in the same position.

It is hard to understand the Parable of the Good Samaritan other than through the compassion of the Samaritan for the stranger for he was moved to action. Not so the religious leaders of Israel.

# COMPASSION

It seems clear, then, that compassion is something central to Jesus and his mission. In fact, we might speak of Jesus as God's compassion. For Jesus, compassion is active, it is lived, it causes action. It doesn't rest in virtuous feelings of sorrow for another person's unfortunate circumstances, no matter how kind these might be. The Jesus of the Gospels is moved. Compassion requires action, not just thought.

Compassion is focused on the other, it moves the other person, particularly the sufferer, to the centre of active care and concern. Compassion seeks relief from the cause of the suffering.

It makes sense then when Nelson Mandela writes: 'Our human compassion binds us the one to the other – not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.' Compassion, then, is not only a source of active care and concern but also a source of hope.

Greg Boyle, SJ., known for his work in the war zones of Los Angeles amongst the gang communities, writes of teaching 'Theological Issues in American Short Fiction' to inmates in California in his book *Tattoos on the Heart*. During a class as they discussed sympathy, empathy and compassion he asked the men to define each quality. They were stumped at compassion until one 'old-timer' responded "That's what Jesus did. I mean Compassion.....IS....God." Fr Boyle writes of compassion not being a relationship between healer and wounded but as a 'covenant between equals'.

In discussing compassion, Fr Boyle uses the phrase "the task of returning them to themselves". For me, that is a beautiful concept – to be able to acknowledge the inherent beauty and dignity of each person, made in the likeness and image of God, and no matter the path in life seeing in that person that they truly are one with you and me in the beauty of their creation, sharing in the divine life, just as we do.

This also draws us to see that compassion can work to express all our values – hope, love, justice and compassion. There is no way to pursue one without the other. Our values anchor our community in our common humanity, giving expression to a shared understanding of what it means to be truly human – we suffer, there are problems, we are challenged and equally we hope, we love, we have courage and strength to see our world as a joyous place to live.

There is a Buddhist prayer "May whatever circumstances that arise serve the awakening of compassion." That is probably as good a place to start as any when solving problems we encounter in life.

As we try to walk the path of compassion, justice, hope and love in everything we do, a key question becomes, how do these values guide our decision-making? How do we integrate them?

Australia approaches a rare moment on October 14, even while the debate around the referendum on the Voice is experienced as divisive. Calls to keep politics out of the debate only seem to increase the point scoring and game playing by our leaders and commentators. Indeed, when people speak of our Constitution as being for "All Australians" they seem to suggest that historically all have been given, or have now, the chance to experience the same opportunities and suffering equally.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes of realities being where ideas are worked out, that a dialogue between the two is necessary to avoid ideas being detached from reality. Words and imagining is not enough, 'realities are greater than ideas'.

We can only vote with open and good intentions. For me, the place to start is compassion. The framers of the Constitution and the 'eligible' voters of 1898-1900 were not what we would call "All Australians". Over the years we have been taken to various referenda. Famously most fail.

So, the question arises, if the Constitution was framed and passed by a subset of those who called Australia home, how could the interests of our Indigenous brothers and sisters have ever been considered? They weren't allowed to vote. They weren't counted as citizens.

Faced now with the opportunity to look afresh at the foundational document of our legal system, how might each of us be moved with compassion? When we look at the reality, is the Voice an idea that can work in dialogue with the reality to make change happen? What would be the fair choice to make in our covenant between equals, when the experience of opportunity or suffering has never been equally shared?

Jesus makes it clear in Gospels, and centuries of the Catholic Tradition and experience affirms it, compassion is at the heart of all justice, tempering it for the betterment of all peoples, by bringing focus particularly to the marginalised and forgotten voiceless amongst us.

'Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.' Dalai Lama

**Ms Penelope Wright**  
*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*

# ST VINCENT'S CARE SERVICES TOOWOOMBA 60TH ANNIVERSARY

On 30 June 2023 I attended the SVCS Toowoomba aged care facility to celebrate their 60-year anniversary with them.

Bishop Robert McGuckin led us in the liturgy, after which we took the opportunity to present Bishop Robert, who is retiring this month, with a small gift as a thank you for his pastoral leadership and support of St Vincent's Health Australia. Bishop Ken Howell has been appointed as Bishop Robert's successor.

**Mr Gary Humphrys**

*Deputy Chair, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Mr Trevor Watts MP (Member for Toowoomba North), Mr Gary Humphrys, Bishop Robert McGuckin (Bishop Emeritus of Toowoomba), Cr Paul Antonio (Mayor of Toowoomba), Fr Michael Clooney (Facility Chaplain)



Residents gathered in liturgical celebration



Residents gathered in liturgical celebration



Ms Elzette Lategan (Facility Manager, SVC Toowoomba), Bishop Robert McGuckin, Mr Gary Humphrys

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## MELBOURNE TWILIGHT DINNER

### AUGUST 2023

The Melbourne Twilight Dinner held on 21 August was a great occasion of collegiality, with representatives of both St Vincent's Health Australia and Mary Aikenhead Education joining the Trustees. Richard Haddock, Chair of Trustees, welcomed participants and acknowledged fellow Trustees Margaret McKenna, Gary Humphrys and Penny Wright, while Michael Drew and Peter Howard offered their apologies.

After dinner, Margaret McKenna affirmed that the context of the evening was to provide the opportunity to share time together and to acknowledge the significant contributions made by those present to the works of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Margaret noted that this was the third such gathering hosted by the Trustees in the past ten months; the Sydney Dinner was held at the end of 2022, and a function and Mass in Brisbane in late February.

Margaret also spoke about the common heritage and mission, that there is something of the spirit of the Sisters that wraps around all those who are part of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. At the same time recognition was given to the governance roles and relationships that have been put in place to support and steward the ministries in the contemporary context. It was acknowledged that having come through the challenges of COVID, new and different challenges are arising for those across health, education and aged care, including workforce, funding, and the secular pressures on faith-based organisations which have become part of the daily work routine. Participants left energized to continue in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity and the mission of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

**Mrs Marita Winters**

*Chief Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



# AMPJP FORUM

## 20 - 21 AUGUST 2023

Annual meeting of Canonical Stewards.

The opening session of this year's AMPJP Canonical Stewards Gathering in late August in Melbourne was a fruitful engagement of Trustees and representatives from the 17 member organisations, including Mary Aikenhead Ministries. This saw Trustees of education and health PJPs meet separately to discuss the burning issues in their respective ministry areas. The headline topic in health was the compulsory acquisition of the Calvary Hospital, how it happened and what lessons might be learned for other PJPs. In education, the discussion followed the presentation of a Stimulus Paper on whether Education MPJPs can charge a 'Service Fee' to schools within their ministry, a practice that has been challenged by some regulators.

Sr Patty Fawcner SGS gave a spirited keynote address on four key challenges facing the Church. The first was that the Canonical Stewards be challenged by and respond to the needs of the world in which we live. Secondly, that they be faithful to the Gospel. This can be seen in a myriad of ways, from caring for and including the marginalised in our ministries of education and health, to ensuring formation for Trustees and staff. Thirdly, that there is continued growth towards an adult church where all have a sense of agency, and the vision of Pope Francis for a synodal church becomes a reality. And finally, Trustees as stewards of charism were called to mine the wisdom of their particular charism for new and changing circumstances so that it evolves for new times and follows new paths.

The morning of the second day began with a formation session led by Dr Chris Jacobs-Vandegheer, Group Mission Leader at St Vincent's Health Australia, entitled "The Theology of the Human Person". Gabrielle McMullen, reflecting on this formation experience at the end of the Forum, summarised it this way: "Chris moved from the usual approach to the topic, namely a focus on the human person as an 'object of inquiry'. Instead, he helped us to understand that gaining self-knowledge is critical; our vision of the human person depends on our ability to know ourselves. Growing self-knowledge influences how we see others. He asked, what does it mean to truly 'see' someone? He illustrated his message with the story of the conversion of St Augustine, The Danger of a Single Story video and the practice of Sr Cathy and Shaun Dowling-Horgan at St Vincent's Hospital Pastoral Care Ministry. His message of 'heart speaks to heart' reminded us of how important formation is across our ministries – 'formation of the heart' [Deus Caritas Est, n.31]. Chris started his presentation noting advice received from Professor Anthony Kelly CSsR upon Chris's arrival in Australia: 'Don't be brilliant, be helpful!' Arguably, Chris was both brilliant and helpful at the Forum."<sup>1</sup>

There was ample time throughout the gathering for sharing at tables, hearing updates from Ministries during 'Member Cameos' on achievements, challenges and developments. Richard Haddock spoke on behalf of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and provided a summary of the three pilgrimages now under the stewardship of the Trustees, those to Parramatta, Hobart and Ireland, as well as the virtual version of the first two.

There was a strong spirit of collaboration, cooperation and conviviality among those present. It was a good example of synodality in action among lay leaders in the Church.

**Mrs Marita Winters**

*Chief Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



**Mr Richard Haddock AO, Chair, Mary Aikenhead Ministries (third row far left) pictured with Member representatives of AMPJP**

# IRISH PILGRIMAGE

SEPTEMBER 2023

CAROLYN – CHRIS – GRANT – GRETA – HEIDI – JANIFER – JILL – KATE – LANCE –  
LAUREN – LINCOLN – LOUWANA – MARGARET – PAUL – RICHARD – SANDRA

“Welcome, Fáilte, welcome! You’re very welcome”!

This was the greeting song of the many Sisters of Charity we met with and spent time with in Ireland during the September Pilgrimage. At each door we entered within a community setting, or bus we hopped off, we were greeted with the joyful and genuine cheer of Sisters of Charity that made every effort to welcome us. We shared conversations with them, learnt from them, prayed and celebrated Mass with them, and ate abundant scones and drank endless cups of tea with them. The time with the Sisters across the communities of St Anthony’s, The Sanctuary, Rosemount, Sandymount, and Stanhope St to name a few was a highlight shared by all of the pilgrims.

For years I’ve felt I knew the story of Mary Aikenhead well and that I understood all I needed to about the work of the Sisters of Charity. I naively jumped on the plane to Dublin ready for the experience but without any consideration given to the impact it might have on me. I knew in my mind that it would be important and beneficial but I hadn’t considered how joyful and uplifting it may also be. I am sure many of my fellow pilgrims will have felt something similar to this.



Pilgrims pictured on the steps of the original site of St Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin

As a part of the organising team, I was able to experience the pilgrimage not only as a pilgrim but with a constant awareness to the oversight of the program’s success. This enabled me to observe and appreciate the ease of connection that was made amongst the women and men who journeyed together. For the most part, they were new to each other. They were brought in from across our health and education ministries, and they came from up and down the eastern seaboard of Australia. We had met once before at our pre-pilgrimage gathering. Yet if you saw us by the afternoon of Day 1, you would think we were old friends. The chemistry we experienced as a group enabled our formation to take shape organically. We were able to step into deep reflection and quiet, and then move into laughter and the sharing of stories with great ease. This was a blessing, and a gift. One of our pilgrims reflected that:

*This week I also discovered that Mary Aikenhead had friends. Colleagues. A network of trusted others. As leaders, we need this too. I noted that when taking her vows, Mary Aikenhead had a small handful of precious “others” alongside her. We learned this week that this was also true for Nano Nagle. Same with Catherine McAuley. Not one of these amazing leaders did their journey alone.*

*Throughout this week I have been reminded that leadership is tough, often unclear, and at times can be very lonely. I didn’t realise it at the beginning of the pilgrimage, but in hindsight I really needed you all alongside me this week.*

*So, my parting thought is to be just like Mary Aikenhead and to keep your friends, your colleagues, your network of trusted others close - because you are definitely going to need them somewhere on your journey – and as I found out this week – you might just find yourself enjoying having them there with you too!*



# IRISH PILGRIMAGE

SEPTEMBER 2023

Throughout the pilgrimage many of the pilgrims were invited to share reflections on their experiences and on their leadership. Our hope is that the learnings of pilgrimage would inform their leadership once they return home. This is one of the key objectives of formation; consideration given to how the encounter will nurture you in your life and work. Below are some of the extracts shared from our pilgrims along the way:

*Today was a day of context setting by walking in the final footsteps of tragic Irish rebels that were potentially the role models for our very own "cause of trouble". Perhaps it was this political climate that emboldened Mary Aikenhead to lead her Sisters through a myriad of obstacles and fight for what truly mattered, love for the poor... To be immersed in Ireland's rich history whilst being able to eat Jammy Dodgers with the living legacy of our Sisters has been an absolute privilege and honour.*

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*This last week has really provided both the time and context not only to connect to my own spirituality but also to reflect on my role as a leader within the MA Ministries... All of us on this pilgrimage have found ourselves as leaders during an extraordinary time, for the Church and for our ministries. We can't change history... but we can all influence our future and help others understand the work we do.*

~~~~~  
*I will come away from this pilgrimage with more questions than answers and the key question that I feel we need to discern is where the future needs of the poor and vulnerable will be in Australia or adjacent territories in 10 to 20 years' time when our society may be very different?*

~~~~~  
*Mary Aikenhead was about human dignity and respect, not shame, fear, judgement or impractical rules. She was about Love. As a leader I want to be: Respectful. Inclusive. Kind.*



Pilgrims gathered around Mary Aikenhead's Round Table

Our hope is that this pilgrimage to Ireland will continue to nurture the spiritual and professional growth of those who experienced it. And, in sharing it with others (for example, the extracts above), it might provide an opportunity for us all to engage, and benefit from all they experienced. I encourage you to seek out and connect with any of the pilgrims who make journeys in our ministry; those who journey on the Parramatta, Hobart, or Ireland pilgrimages. Share a coffee, a conversation at a meeting, a quick walk around your workplace. These are all opportunities for learning, growth, and transformation – not just for the pilgrim but for those they work with too.

Our time together was an immersion into the history, hospitality, and landscape of Irish culture. It was an immersion into the life and works of Venerable Mary Aikenhead, her companions, and the many women who followed her then and still do now.

Pilgrimages are a wonderfully simple thing. A journey with a purpose. A retreat from daily life. An opportunity for reflection. Sometimes they are solo journeys, for the sixteen of us, however, our pilgrimage was a shared experience. For this we are very grateful.

Mrs Louwana Saba  
Mission & Formation Director  
Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Pilgrims standing on the front steps of Mary Aikenhead's "country" residence that she lived in during her later life. The facade now stands as a part of the exterior of the Heritage Centre Harold's Cross





Pilgrims in Glendalough



Pilgrims exploring the historical documents and original writings from the archives



Pilgrims exploring the historical documents and original writings from the archives



Pilgrims gathered with the Sisters for a Liturgy at Mary Aikenhead's Grave



# JOURNEYING TOGETHER

It is always a privilege to be invited to contribute something to any publication and for some time I reflected on what to contribute to *Journeys* around this edition's theme, Compassion.

I started with the definition – to 'suffer together' – and explored the psychology. Emotion researchers define compassion as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. I also looked to the current source of wisdom, ChatGPT, which came up with something that, I hate to admit, was possibly better than what I could write! Of course, the temptation was to use it, but the more I reflected, the more I realised that despite its immediate attraction, the content was puzzlingly inadequate. It was missing something. That something was, as it turns out, human understanding. Crucially, it was missing a real sense of what compassion actually is. Compassion is something no AI can ever replicate; it's something humans feel and do. It is something of God.

Pope Francis is big on compassion and speaks of it as the language God uses to challenge humans who often appear to be consumed by the language of indifference. 'Suffering together' mirrors 'journeying together' which is at the heart of what it means to be synodal. Compassion is the lens of the heart and the way of justice.



Sr Germanus McQuillan talking with a prisoner in the laundry, Long Bay Gaol, Malabar ca 1980.

*Photo courtesy of the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Australia*

Mary Aikenhead, through her life's commitment, exhibited compassion in real, meaningful, and fortunately for us, lasting ways. She remains a model of compassion – she founded a congregation that was impelled by the love of Christ and those who have followed her remain committed to this. In our modern world, many of us may use different language and expressions than that of Mary Aikenhead, but I believe we remain impelled by love and compassion "where the poor could be given for love what the rich obtain for money".



Sr Xavier Tier and Sr Vincent de Paul Nelson with a group of children and their Motor Mission car in western Sydney.

*Photo courtesy of the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.*



Mary Aikenhead wanted to join the first five women who came to our shore in 1838. I often think of them and wonder, were they alive today, how would they be living out their commitment? Would they be in Ward 17 like in 1983, or rallying support for the injecting room like in 1999, would they be protesting 'No War' or teaching in detention centres like in 2003? Today, would they be campaigning for a 'Yes' vote and being a loud, clear voice for climate justice, especially for those living on the margins?

When visitors come to the Heritage Centre we try hard to let them know that they too are part of this remarkable story, that they carry the legacy of a loving and compassionate woman and all those who joined her. The Heritage Centre is not a museum and a glorification of the past. Rather, it is an invitation to know the story of suffering together and journeying together in compassion. 'Synodal' may be the buzz word of the moment, but Mary Aikenhead was living it long, long before the word ever came into our lexicon.

The Heritage Centre is open Tuesday – Thursday or by arrangement. We'd love to see you!  
[www.socheritagecentre.org.au](http://www.socheritagecentre.org.au).

Ms Danielle Achikian  
 Acting Heritage Centre Manager



The Heritage Centre invites you to journey together with the Sisters of Charity and continue the story



# ST VINCENT'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL TOOWOOMBA

## STAFF AWARDS

I had the great pleasure of representing the Trustees to present the quarterly VIP (Values in Practice) Awards at St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba (SVPHT) on Friday 8 September 2023.

The two award winners (and their citations) were:

**Kelsey Farley**  
 Registered Nurse, Medical Ward

*Repeatedly and consistently, Kelsey shows compassion, care, and professionalism towards the challenging patients in the delirium unit. In particular, last week, she was caring for a particularly difficult patient whose behaviour was very inappropriate. Kelsey maintained dignity and respect towards the patient despite their actions. She put patient care at the centre of her actions and acted in a non-judgemental way.*



Prof. Michael Drew pictured with Deirdre Hickey rsc, Clare Nolan rsc, and Ms Anri Herholdt (St Vincent's Foundation Queensland)

**Pandora Bevan**  
 Marketing and Communications Coordinator,  
 Business Development

*Pandora proactively addresses the marketing needs of the hospital in a highly efficient and professional way. She is highly skilled in using the SVHA marketing and online CRM tools and shows initiative and common sense in all that she undertakes. She displays all the SVHA values - feeling with compassion, walking the path of integrity, acting with justice, and striving for excellence.*

I was pleased to be joined by Sr Clare Nolan and Sr Deirdre Hickey and it was a great honour to meet these incredible people, read out their individual citations, and spend some time with them to learn of their (and their colleagues) excellent work.

I also had the opportunity to have lunch with Kathryn McKeefry and the new members (and old) of her executive team at SVPHT and learn about some of the challenges they face.

Prof. Michael Drew  
 Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

# ST VINCENT'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL BRISBANE & NORTHSIDE GALA DINNER

My wife Jacki and I were invited to represent the Trustees at the St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane (SVPHB) and Northside (SVPHN) Gala Ball on Saturday 9 September 2023. It was a Great Gatsby-inspired evening with over 300 of our staff and VMOs in attendance.

I was asked to lead the evening in Prayer:

## Let us express our gratitude:

For the opportunity to serve St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane and Northside and the healing mission of Jesus.

For the gifts that we have that enable us to make a difference in the lives of our patients.

For the chance to do something very special and meaningful with our lives and within our professions.

For the opportunity to be here tonight to celebrate our collective work as a community, to connect, and reconnect with each other.

## Let us ask our Heavenly Father to:

Help us to embrace the challenge and responsibility we have as leaders.

To guide us to lead with integrity and compassion.

Give us the courage and wisdom to continue to strive to be future thinking and innovative in health care.

Finally, help us to always be welcoming, inclusive, and open in keeping with the mission and vision of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and her Sisters of Charity aligned to our Catholic identity, strong tradition, and heritage.

Thank you for all that you do, thank you to your partners and families who support you to do your roles.

You are the best of us.

Amen.



L to R: Mr Oli Steele, A/Prof. Patricia O'Rourke, Prof. Michael Drew

I had the pleasure of having dinner with A/Prof. Patricia O'Rourke (CEO Hospitals Division), Mr Oli Steele (CEO), Ms Nadine Gowen (Executive Manager, BDM), and senior specialists – I was reminded just how competitive the labour market is for health staff and the aging profile on not just the VMOs, but our nurses and allied health staff – not to mention our patients.

It was also great to get a national perspective from Patricia and some of the headwinds being faced across the group. I also had a handful of people come up, introduce themselves, and ask me what a Trustee is and does – Oli Steele gave a very nice introduction!

Prof. Michael Drew

Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries





# THE FACES OF MAM

In our last edition of Journeys, we launched a new initiative titled **The Faces of MAM**.

This initiative is a way to name and acknowledge different staff across our ministries bringing our mission to life in the tasks they do and roles they undertake.

We will endeavour to share with you stories of the women and men from across both our health and education sectors in each quarterly publication in the hope that you may get to know your colleagues

more. This initiative is called The Faces of MAM because it is the multitude and variety of human faces that make up who we are today, as an organisation, a work of the church and a ministry seeking to bring healing and education to those we serve.

We hope you enjoy reading and getting to know more of the people that make up Mary Aikenhead Ministries!

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## THERESE CHAPMAN

Teacher of English; Archivist; VIT Mentor  
St Columba's College Essendon

Which of the organisations within Mary Aikenhead Ministries do you work for, and how long have you been there?

St Columba's College, 30 years.

The MAM values are love, justice, compassion, hope. Which of these resonates most with you and why?

While all four are undoubtedly important, as a teacher, the value that I relate to most is hope. I've taught so many students over the years (this is my 50th year as a teacher), and I firmly believe that we have to maintain the conviction that what we do matters. If we can truly hold on to the idea that every student can learn, and that we can make a difference to their lives, then we can sustain our sense of purpose.

What do you think sets your organisation/ministry apart from other workplaces?

What sets St Columba's apart is the sense of common purpose. The collegiality and true friendship amongst the staff here are truly inspiring. Everyone acknowledges the difficulties we face with social media, compliance and technological change, but they just get on with it because they believe in the value of what we are doing, and in the value of the young people we teach.



If you were to have lunch with Venerable Mary Aikenhead today, what story would you tell her about your work?

I'd tell her that I have worked with her Sisters since I was four years old, and that I am full of admiration for the selfless, dedicated lives they led – and still lead. I'd explain that it was these memories, and the education the Sisters of Charity gave me, that brought me back to St Columba's, and her own solid values that have kept me here for so long.

What do you think she might say to you in reply?

She'd probably say, "I told everyone so".

# THE FACES OF MAM

## DARLENE DREISE

Group Manager - Reconciliation  
St Vincent's Health Australia

Which of the organisations within Mary Aikenhead Ministries do you work for, and how long have you been there?

I've been a member of the St Vincent's Group Office team for 5 years. This role has a national focus and I work with our hospitals, aged care, community care and stakeholders to strengthen reconciliation within our organisation and communities. Prior to this role, I was Mission Executive for St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba for 10 years.

The MAM values are love, justice, compassion, hope. Which of these resonates most with you and why?

The value of compassion has guided my work and learning for many years. The capacity to journey with others – listening, sharing and learning has enabled true growth and transformation. Importantly, the understanding of compassion also calls us to remember that in our efforts to support and nurture others, it is often we who come away from the experience gifted with new insights.

What do you think sets your organisation/ministry apart from other workplaces?

Whether I find myself in a busy hospital corridor, resident lounge, staff tearoom or group office, I immediately become aware of the earnestness with which St Vincent's people approach their work: be it clinical, service-oriented or behind the scenes. The work of health and wellness takes place in complex, diverse contexts, and while these multiple realities are known, the desire to care never wanes. It goes beyond the functionality of formal roles to the heart of people relating as people in the midst of challenges and joyful moments alike.



If you were to have lunch with Venerable Mary Aikenhead today, what story would you tell her about your work?

I've often sensed the hand of Venerable Mary Aikenhead on my shoulder, especially in moments of doubt or uncertainty. If we were to have lunch and a cuppa together I'd want to share with her stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and leaders. Better still – we would all be lunching together... I'm imagining many questions, deep listening and much laughter too! In Mary's day, correspondence about Aboriginal people would not have focused on their complex societies, wisdom, resilience and sophistication. While there is much work to do, I'd want Mary to know that her vision and the fervent efforts of her Sisters and supporters over time have resulted in some good outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that there is more that we can do in this space – together. I think Mary would have been a strong ally in this space.

What do you think she might say to you in reply?

I think she would be provocative and pragmatic in equal balance, urging us to hold the wisdom and desires of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people front and centre in our united efforts.



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