



MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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*'I give you a new commandment: love one another.
As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.
This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you
have love for one another.'*
John 13:34-35



COMPASSION

Compassion

COMPASSION

In a postmodern society, the world is clear on what it means to be compassionate. The modern precepts of compassion seem fleeting and, at times, border on tokenism. A recent essay on the 'The False Faces of Compassion' (Kniepmann, 2018) posits that today, "Jesus would have detractors on every side. Jesus does not measure compassion in a merely temporal, circumstantial way. His measure of compassion is eternal and transcendent."

Venerable Mary Aikenhead's compassion was rooted in her Christian faith, particularly in the teachings of Jesus Christ about love, mercy, and service to others. From a young age, Mother Mary demonstrated a keen awareness of, and sensitivity to, the suffering around her. Her conversion to Catholicism further deepened her commitment to living out the Gospel values of compassion and charity.

Her foundational principles were not just theoretical but were actively manifested in her actions. Inspired by the example of St. Vincent de Paul, a patron of charitable works, Mother Mary dedicated herself to alleviating the suffering of the poor, sick, and vulnerable. This commitment was a direct reflection of her belief in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every individual.

In 1815, Mary Aikenhead founded the Religious Sisters of Charity, an order dedicated to serving the poor and sick. The establishment of this order was a direct response to the dire needs she witnessed, particularly in the areas of healthcare and education. Her compassion was the driving force behind the order's mission, which focused on providing practical assistance and spiritual support to those in need. Mary read the signs of the times and acted.

One of the most significant contributions of Mary Aikenhead was her work in healthcare. She recognised the urgent need for accessible medical care for the poor, who were often excluded from existing healthcare systems. In 1834, Mother Mary founded St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin, the first hospital in Ireland run by a religious order. This hospital provided free medical care to the poor, embodying the spirit of compassion that she championed.

Mother Mary's approach to healthcare was holistic, addressing not only the physical ailments but also the emotional and spiritual needs of patients. Her compassionate care extended to all aspects of the individual's well-being; a philosophy that continues to influence the healthcare services provided by our health care ministries across Australia.

Education was another area where Mary Aikenhead's compassion had a lasting impact. She believed that education was a powerful tool for empowerment and social change. The schools established by the Sisters aimed to provide quality education to children from impoverished backgrounds, giving them opportunities for a better future.

The legacy of Mary Aikenhead's compassion continues to be felt today. Mary Aikenhead Ministries upholds her vision of compassionate service across our various health care and education ministries. Her life and work have inspired countless individuals to engage in acts of compassion and charity. Mother Mary's compassionate approach also had a broader societal impact, challenging prevailing attitudes towards the poor and sick. Her work demonstrated the transformative power of compassion, showing that dedicated efforts to alleviate suffering could bring about significant social change.

If we are to constructively challenge the contemporary framing of compassion in a postmodern era, it is timely to recall Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical '*Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love).' Pope Benedict traces the root of the word 'charity' back to the Greek 'agape' meaning generous, unselfish love. Agape love is selfless, unconditional, and compassionate. Through her pioneering efforts in healthcare, education, and social services, Venerable Mary Aikenhead and her Sisters have left a lasting legacy of compassion that continues to inspire and influence us today. However, we must guard against the strong lure of sentimentalism, another modern precept of compassion. Mother Mary and her Sisters read the signs of their times and responded, providing us with a powerful example of how compassionate action, grounded in faith and empathy, can make a profound difference in the world. The invitation before us is to demonstrate a compassion that is both eternal and transcendent for the challenges of our times. Venerable Mary Aikenhead and her Sisters would expect nothing less.

[Prof. Michael Drew](#)
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

MT ST MICHAEL'S COLLEGE MARY AIKENHEAD DAY MASS

The 2024 Mary Aikenhead Day Mass at Mt St Michael's College (MSM) was a memorable event. Council Member Sr Margaret Guy, Sr Cate O'Brien, Sr Karan Varker, Sr Maureen Parker, Prof. Michael Drew (Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries), Peter Kelly (Ministry Leader) and Paul Fumei (Mission Formation Leader) - Mary Aikenhead Education Limited (MAEL) joined with Ms Sharon Volp (Principal), Ms Kate Simpson (Dean of Faith and Mission) and the MSM community to mark the special day. Fr Gerry Kalinowski was the celebrant for the Mass. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, staff who had reached the significant milestone of 10-years (Ms Paege Bellett and Ms Francene Power), 20-years (Ms Ellen Bow), and 25-years (Mr Marc Beavon) of committed service to the MSM were acknowledged and celebrated. Moreover, Ms Volp was presented with the Catholic Secondary Principal's Association (CaSPA) Award for 15 Years' Meritorious Service as a Catholic School Principal. MAEL Ministry Leader Peter Kelly paid tribute to her exemplary service, vision, humility, and deep, abiding commitment to the values of Mary Aikenhead Education.

This year, MSM is centring its formation activities around the theme, *"Compassion: The courage to look, the courage to act."* The artwork on the Mass booklet beautifully captured this theme.

Following the Mass, the community engaged in a day of service activities, including a sustainable fashion parade and a house choir competition. MSM is truly inclusive and supportive community, where the great mission of the Sisters of Charity continues today. MSM was established in 1925, with the College's Centenary year fast approaching – we look forward to celebrating this milestone with you in 2025!

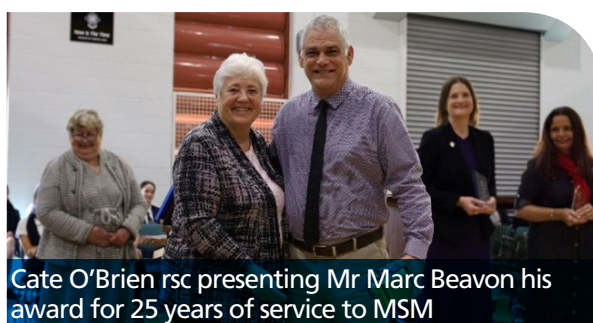
[Prof. Michael Drew](#)
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Staff members, Mr Marc Beavon - Classroom Teacher (25 years of service award), Ms Ellen Bow - Curriculum Leader - Religious Education (20 years of service award) and Ms Paege Bellett - Classroom Teacher (10 years of service award)



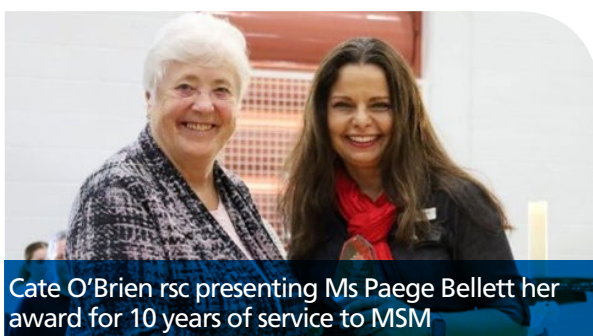
Cate O'Brien rsc presenting Ms Ellen Bow her award for 20 years of service to MSM



Cate O'Brien rsc presenting Mr Marc Beavon his award for 25 years of service to MSM



College Principal, Ms Sharon Volp, receiving her award for 15 years' service as a Catholic Principal.



Cate O'Brien rsc presenting Ms Paege Bellett her award for 10 years of service to MSM

VENERABLE MARY AIKENHEAD ORATION 2024

The Honourable Senator Malarndirri McCarthy gave us much to ponder at the Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration on 25 July 2024 at the ACU Campus, North Sydney.

In creating the Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration in 2023 we were hoping to create an annual event to share Venerable Mary Aikenhead more widely and develop a deeper understanding of the charm and founding story of Mary Aikenhead and the Religious Sisters of Charity.

Venerable Mary Aikenhead is variously described as courageous, strong, forward thinking, down to earth, a risk taker, a woman of vision, tough, strong in her convictions and a woman for all seasons. She had a vision of human flourishing that comes to life in the charm of the Sisters, a recognition of the dignity of each person so that all can be afforded equal participation in every sector of society.

The Oration aims to stimulate discussion on topics of relevance to who we are today to provoke deeper thinking on what it means to be poor and vulnerable today. The intent is to challenge how we respond in our place and time, to feel uncomfortable about what we think is usual, normal and acceptable. In looking anew at who we serve and the work we do, maybe we will discover a new way to look at the world to read the signs of our times.

Senator McCarthy is a Yanyuwa woman from the Gulf country in the Northern Territory. She was first elected to the Northern Territory Assembly as the Member for Arnhem in 2005. During her seven years in the Assembly, she held the Ministerial Portfolios of Local Government, Regional Development, Indigenous Development, Tourism, Women's Policy and Statehood.

She was then elected as Senator for the Northern Territory (including Christmas and Cocos Keeling Islands) in August 2016.



Trustees pictured with Senator McCarthy
L to R: Penelope Wright, Richard Haddock AO, Senator McCarthy, Gary Humphrys, Deirdre O'Donnell, Margaret McKenna



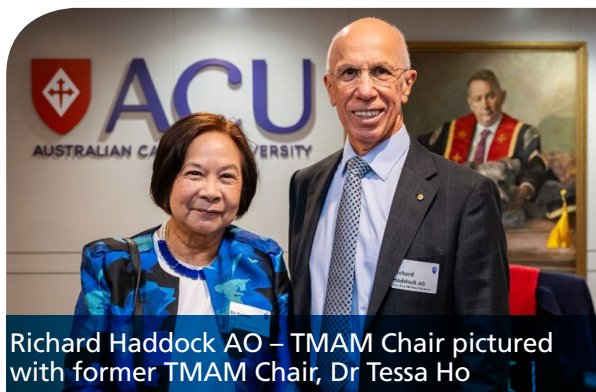
Senator Malarndirri McCarthy delivering the Oration

Senator McCarthy brings a unique perspective to Australian politics and a strong voice for the most marginalised and vulnerable people in Australia.

Venerable Mary Aikenhead sent the first five sisters to Australia in 1838 with few possessions. Knowing that service to the poor in the distant land would include Australia's Indigenous peoples, a black crucifix was one of the items entrusted to the voyaging sisters.

That small act tells us that Venerable Mary Aikenhead recognised something that it took until 1992 for the High Court of Australia to tell us - that this land never was 'terra nullius'. Venerable Mary Aikenhead knew Australia was in fact inhabited by a peoples as equal in dignity and deserving of God's love as the women who had volunteered to travel halfway across the world to make a new life in service to others.

Senator McCarthy spoke with strength and insight about the people she meets and serves in the Northern Territory and across Australia. Her stories of the intertwining of Indigenous culture and the best of western technology to support people on country reflect a sensitive understanding of how our nation may find a common path to shared values for the benefit of each other.



Richard Haddock AO – TMAM Chair pictured with former TMAM Chair, Dr Tessa Ho

Senator McCarthy reflected on her Indigenous heritage and her McCarthy ancestor who arrived in Australia in 1842 from Ireland. He was free to be here and chose Australia as his home, 'to build his future, his dream, in the land of opportunity, an unknown land yet filled with much hope and prosperity' as Senator McCarthy said in her maiden speech.

The Senator's heritage, deep love of and service to the people of the Northern Territory, were demonstrated throughout the Oration.

She spoke of her values of heart, kinship, justice for all, the importance of education and health for every person no matter where they are in society and the world. Her understanding of the challenges of today and the creativity to innovate to address those challenges, was inspiring.

Senator McCarthy's entire life has been dedicated to providing a voice for those who are not only voiceless but ignored, to telling the stories of others and building the capacity of the communities she serves.

The Oration enlightened and challenged our understanding of health and education outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Oration was a reminder that Venerable Mary Aikenhead was a woman of her time, a faith filled, visionary and tenacious woman, committed to responding to the call and needs of her era.

Senator McCarthy, today, in this time and country, offered us a vision for a different era. It is an important vision for Australia and its future, offering us both challenge to do more and hope that we can find ways to walk together.

Ms Penelope Wright
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Bishop Terry Brady pictured with Gary Humphrys – TMAM Trustee



Anne Taylor rsc and Elizabeth Dodds rsc pictured with Senator McCarthy



St Vincent's Health Australia Executives & Staff pictured with Senator McCarthy



Richard Haddock AO – TMAM Chair pictured with St Vincent's College students



ST VINCENT'S CARE, KEW

On the evening of Monday 22 July, the Trustees were joined by members of Victorian health and education ministries as well as eight Sisters of Charity to celebrate the feast day of Venerable Mary Aikenhead with Mass and a very special dinner event at St Vincent's Care (SVC) Kew. This was a most joyful and memorable event.

In the morning, a number of Trustees were able to visit both colleges in Melbourne – St Columba's College (SCC) in Essendon and Catholic Ladies' College (CLC) in Eltham. Then in the afternoon, we were given guided tours of the SVC and Caritas Christi Kew facilities and the opportunity to talk with staff. During the course of the whole day we met with and observed first-hand the inspiring and engaged people who live out the Mary Aikenhead Ministries (MAM) mission in both our education and health ministries.

In the evening, we all gathered in the chapel at Caritas Christi for Mass, celebrated by the Most Reverend Anthony Ireland. Approx. sixty people assembled to celebrate the beautiful Mass of the day, which was for the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene. Bishop Tony in his homily drew links between the story of Mary Magdalene and the Venerable Mary Aikenhead, two strong and courageous women, much to the appreciation of all present.

The visit concluded with a truly remarkable meal in the community room at SVC. Chair of Trustees Richard Haddock AO welcomed everyone to this very special celebration; Sr Maryanne Confoy offered the opening prayer and grace; and later in the evening Trustee Margaret McKenna reflected on fifteen years of MAM, followed by Greta Bajada sharing her reflections on the formative experience of the Irish Pilgrimage in 2023.

From the moment guests walked into the venue they were dazzled by the exquisite decorations which created a scene of sumptuous elegance. This beautifully presented environment served as the perfect background to the extraordinary meal curated and prepared with great flair and attention by internationally renowned head chef, David Martin, and his team.

In every respect the dinner was a wonderful way for Trustees, members of the health and education ministries, and our special guest Sisters of Charity to celebrate together.

*Ms Deirdre O'Donnell
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



L to R: Joan Stapleton rsc, Michelle Fitzgerald (SVHA), Stephanie Evans (CLC), Margaret McKenna (TMAM)



L to R: Cathy Meese rsc, Bernadette Murphy (SVC), Carolyn Moore (SVPH)

ST VINCENT'S CARE, KANGAROO POINT

On the evening of Saturday 31 August 2024, my family and I had the pleasure of joining Sr Clare Nolan at St Vincent's Care (SVC) Kangaroo Point for the annual RiverFire event in Brisbane.

The Facility Manager Kirk Farquhason and his team did an exceptional job creating a memorable night for the residents.

The event featured lively music, a fantastic meal, and engaging conversations. Witnessing the SVC

team - the staff and volunteers – caring for our residents was truly inspiring. The evening was a resounding success, providing a perfect vantage point for watching the planes and fireworks.

It was a joy to spend time with the residents who were deeply appreciative of the SVC team's efforts.

[Prof. Michael Drew](#)

Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Clare Nolan rsc (centre front) pictured with Prof. Michael Drew, his wife Jacqui, son Nick and partner Mia

CHARLES CURRAN AC RECEIVES SR MARIA CUNNINGHAM LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION AWARD

Charles Curran AC, Chair of the Trustees of the St Vincent's Curran Foundation, received the Sr Maria Cunningham Lifetime Contribution Award at the Catholic Health Australia Conference held in Sydney from 26-28 August 2024.

The Award is given to those who have made significant contributions to the Church's presence in health and aged care, and inspired others working in Catholic health and aged care ministries. The award recipients have enabled the healing love of Jesus to be felt by people in need.

It's hard to imagine a more fitting recipient in a year where the conference theme was "Rejoice Reimagine". This theme encapsulates everything about the work Charles Curran does with and through the St Vincent's Curran Foundation. His work has reimaged what the provision of health care could be at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney over almost 50 years and \$350 million of funded projects and services.

In accepting the Award, Mr Curran spoke beautifully of Sr Maria, reflecting on 'her beaming smile, her essential goodness which shone through and her energy and commitment'.



Mr Curran spoke of the trends in health / care and the changing landscape where religious vocations, the historic backbone of provision of Catholic health / care, have declined. Mr Curran's dedication to the Sisters' vision of healthcare in the development of the Darlinghurst precinct was evident. He notably reflected on the increasing role of the laity in governance and the organisational leadership of St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA).

A remarkable history of the development of the site since the Sisters first established the hospital at Darlinghurst after moving from "Tarmons" in Potts Point was recounted, highlighting both the Sisters' pioneering vision for healthcare and Mr Curran's deep connection with the ministry.

We all join together in our congratulations and sincere gratitude to Charles Curran AC for a lifetime of work and generous service to others.

*Ms Penelope Wright
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Paul McClintock AO – SVHA Chair presenting Charles Curran AC with the Sr Maria Cunningham award

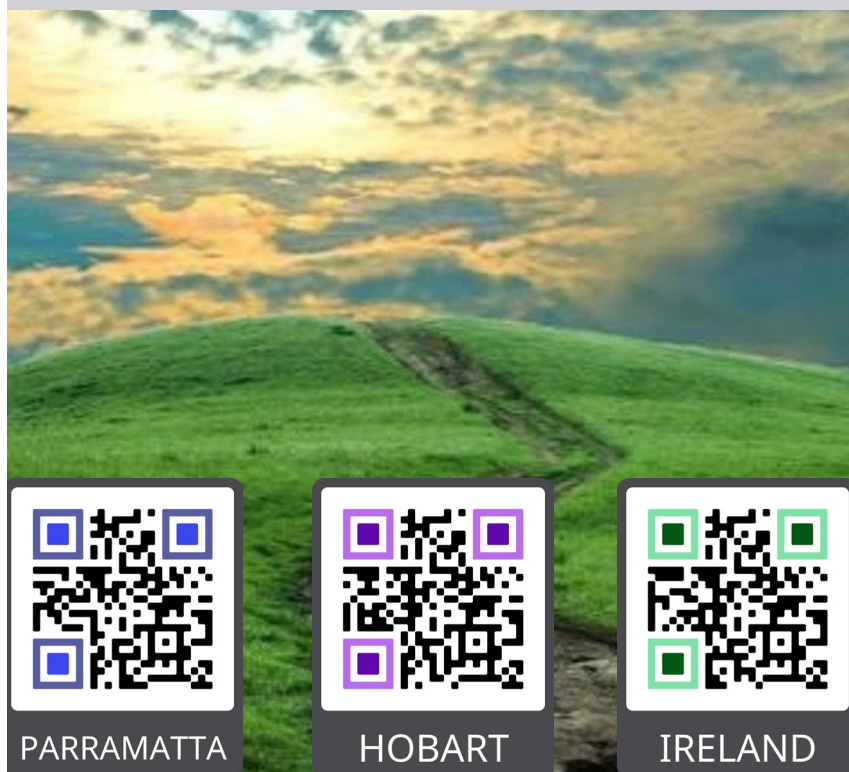
VIRTUAL PILGRIMAGES

The Sydney-Parramatta Pilgrimage is now available as a virtual pilgrimage on the [TMAM website](#) together with virtual pilgrimages to Hobart and Ireland.

We invite all ministry staff and those connected to the TMAM family to participate in these pilgrimage offerings.

They can be accessed for personal use or for group formation activities.

To view, please scan the QR Codes below.



MARY AIKENHEAD EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM 2024

'Illuminate Spirit, leading a contemporary mission-inspired ministry' was the theme of the 2024 Mary Aikenhead Education Symposium. Held late August in Melbourne, the Mary Aikenhead Education Limited (MAEL) Board welcomed over 60 delegates including Sisters of Charity, principals, chairs, directors and leaders from St Vincent's College Sydney, Mt St Michael's College Brisbane, Catholic Ladies' College Eltham and St Columba's College Essendon. Conference preparation included pre-reading in the form of three sets of articles offered as provocations and prompts for delegates to consider in the lead up to the symposium. Keynote presenters were Emeritus Professor John Warhurst AO and Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM. Dr Dan Fleming, Head of Ethics and Formation, St Vincent's Health Australia, led the synodal and synthesis dialogue that engaged delegates in key themes.

Emeritus Professor John Warhurst AO considered a contemporary social and political perspective of Australia and the Catholic Church, referencing the changed social and demographic contexts of this era. In his presentation, Emeritus Professor Warhurst AO identified shifts in society and the ways that such shifts were influencing the Church today. In many ways, this keynote address invited delegates to consider the Symposium questions and the ways in which the Mary Aikenhead Ministries (MAM) relates and contributes to the context of the Catholic Church in Australia today.

In keynote address 2, Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe AM provided an overview of governance and stewardship in a contemporary context, with reference to the Church in Australia. Adjunct Professor Pascoe AM spoke of the emergence of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons and the ways that MPJPs are a significant aspect of lay leadership today. As an expert facilitator at the 2023 and 2024 Synod Assemblies, Adjunct Professor Pascoe AM offered insights into the synodal process and highlighted the potential influences of the Synod in the future.

A notable aspect of the Symposium was the opportunity to understand and explore the themes and concepts presented throughout the two-day program. So, in light of the keynote

presentations and the context of our shared Mission, Dr Dan Fleming led us in a synodal process of listening, dialogue and reflection, as we explored the following symposium questions:

1. What does it mean to us to be a ministry of the Church?
2. What are the issues, challenges and opportunities presenting to us in the education ministry of our Church?
3. What does good governance and stewardship look like for a contemporary Education Ministry?
4. What models of governance and stewardship of/for mission will enable us to achieve our purpose as the education ministry of MAM?
5. What do we need to undertake individually and collectively to ensure that the heritage, tradition and charism of the Sisters of Charity are taken purposefully into the future?

Mission and formation was central to this dialogue. We were reminded that the Synodal journey is one of walking together and as the college boards and leadership teams explored the evolving themes, there was a strong appreciation of the harmony and alignment of our shared MAM mission in education.

To mark the 15th anniversary of MAM, MAEL Board Chair Emeritus Professor Marie Emmitt presented the four college Principals and Chairs and the Trustees with a portrait of Venerable Mary Aikenhead for their respective colleges and the MAM office.

Congratulations to the MAEL Board and Executives for the thoughtful and high calibre two-day program. It was a privilege and delight for Trustees Penelope Wright, Deirdre O'Donnell and myself to attend the MAEL Symposium.

The Symposium prayer, *'Illuminate the Spirit'* was written by Ms Kate Simpson, Dean of Faith and Mission, Mt St Michael's' College.

[Ms Margaret McKenna](#)
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

SYMPOSIUM 2024 PRAYER

Illuminate the Spirit

*Luminous One,
Whose lamp burns bright in every human heart.
May the light You placed in me
Illuminate my path
Leading me to those most in need of
Your love
Your compassion
Your hope
For in them, I find you.*

*Open my eyes.
That I may see your light,
Shimmering,
Glorious,
Radiant,
Reflected in them,*

*So that, Light meeting light,
Hearts ablaze,
We might walk on
Together
Illuminated and transformed.*

Caritas Christi Urget Nos. Amen

REFLECTIONS ON OUR *SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT*

SUE WISEMAN

Curriculum Leader - Languages
Mt St Michael's College

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

I have been working at Mt St Michael's College for 6 years.

What is your personal response when reading the *Social Inclusion Statement*? How does it make you feel?

I feel a strong sense of pride in being part of an organisation which promotes such a compassionate vision. I am proud to be part of a school which aspires to be inclusive and welcoming to all, regardless of background. I feel challenged – it is reminding me to be that person who ensures that everyone in our community feels welcomed, included and valued.

How might the *Social Inclusion Statement* inspire, challenge, or hold you accountable to respond to the needs of those around you and those you serve?

The *Social Inclusion Statement* inspires me to create an open, compassionate, safe and welcoming space in my classroom. I am not always fully aware of challenging family dynamics or past trauma, so it is imperative that I make every possible effort to make those students feel that our school is a safe place, a place without judgement.

It challenges me to actively work towards solutions which promote inclusion. Perhaps the most effective way for me to do this is ensuring that I foster genuine connections with those who are vulnerable in the classroom and in the wider school community.

The Statement calls me to be accountable to Mary Aikenhead's vision. It calls me to regularly evaluate my actions and ensure that they align with Mary's principles of wisdom, faith and courage.



How do you see your ministry/organisation living out the values found within the *Social Inclusion Statement*? Please provide one to two examples of initiatives taking place in your workplace.

I believe that Mt St Michael's College is living out many of the values found within the *Social Inclusion Statement*. The social justice group that I lead, Sisters Empowering Sisters (SES), is a warm, welcoming, inclusive place for students to discuss issues which affect them as young people, such as mental health, neurodiversity, cultural diversity and women's rights. Many students feel comfortable explaining how to use their pronouns and why it can sometimes upset them when people do not use the correct terms. SES also reaches out to the community through a period product drive, educating our students about the issue of Period Poverty and collecting sanitary items for those in need.

Our Dean of Faith and Mission organises a wide variety of outreach activities for staff on our annual Retreat Day. These very enriching activities have included community cooking for families supported by St Vincent de Paul Inala, service works at St Vincent's Hospital and packing toiletry kits for homeless women. Many staff have commented that they want to continue these outreach activities outside of school hours. I feel that this is such an authentic way to live out the values found within the *Social Inclusion Statement*.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR *SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT*

BRANDON BEAR

Manager, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity
St Vincent's Health Australia

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

I have been with St Vincent's for three and a half years. For three years, I was the Manager, Sexuality and Gender Diversity Projects at our public hospital in Sydney, and I am now the National Manager – Inclusion, Diversity and Equity for all of St Vincent's.

What is your personal response when reading the *Social Inclusion Statement*? How does it make you feel?

The *Social Inclusion Statement* reminds me that while we work in an environment that is founded in the Catholic tradition, inclusion is universal.

How might the *Social Inclusion Statement* inspire, challenge, or hold you accountable to respond to the needs of those around you and those you serve?

The Statement notes that we welcome all people because of who they are and who we are lies at the core of my work on inclusion, diversity and equity. While the Statement reflects the Catholic traditions that lead the organisations in the Ministries, the call to action for all of us is clear – to welcome and include. The challenge for all of us is then to be conscious and thoughtful in our awareness of who may not feel that inclusion, and why this might be so. Our conscious and unconscious biases, and the impact of racism, colonialism, homophobia and other prejudices at a systemic and individual level have a very real affect on those we care for and work with – and it is only through confronting how these impact out decisions and choices that we can embrace the goals of the inclusion statement.



How do you see your ministry/organisation living out the values found within the *Social Inclusion Statement*? Please provide one to two examples of initiatives taking place in your workplace.

The new commitment to inclusion and diversity for staff across St Vincent's is a strong indication of the desire to represent the values of social inclusion. While we have a legacy of providing equitable care for those we care for, this new strategic approach to applying that sense of fairness and inclusion to our people will make a big difference to our organisation.

In the short time that this role has been in place, we have made changes to our recruitment processes and data collection that provide safety for trans and non-binary applicants and staff. We have also begun to open the lines of communication across our facilities nationwide to share and scale the incredible initiatives happening at local levels, including women in leadership communities and the development of Disability Employee Networks.

THE FACES OF MAM

ERIN LONGBOTTOM

Nursing Unit Manager, Homeless Health Service
St Vincent's Hospital Sydney

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

St Vincent's Hospital Sydney – 13 years (2 years in Cardiothoracic ICU and 11 years in the Homeless Health Service).

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

Justice resonates with me – I am strongly committed to justice for all people, particularly for the most disadvantaged and underserved members of our community.

I am passionate about creating a health system that is fit for purpose for all people who need to use it. And moving beyond 'health equity' to actually achieving justice and removing the systemic barriers that prevent people receiving the care they need.

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

The Homeless Health Service is a service that is truly the mission in action providing care to the most underserved members of our community. Our team go out onto the streets and provide healthcare to people wherever they are. Whether it is where they sleep on the street, in their shelter, or where they meet to spend time during the day, they offer hope and walk alongside people in their journey to healing.

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

One winter evening I was leaving work and I noticed a man sleeping in the park opposite the hospital. My team had checked in on him during the day but he had declined help.



As I approached, I could see he was lying directly on the ground covered in only a thin hospital blanket. I called out to him to let him know who I was and asked if he would like me to contact a service to bring him some warmer sleeping gear. He consented to this but declined any other assistance.

The next day we were holding a big community event at the hospital. As I was rushing around, someone to my side quietly said to me "Miss, I just wanted to thank you for helping me last night." It was the man from the park! I told him how welcome he was, and let him know housing services were here if he wanted to find a place to sleep tonight. He then accepted support to be connected with temporary accommodation and housing.

This was a reminder of how difficult it is for people who have been repeatedly let down by systems and people, to trust services and accept support. But sometimes there is a moment of opportunity, when humanity overcomes trauma and that person feels safe to accept support.

This man also gave me a rich gift, of acknowledging my own humanity and worth, of giving me renewed courage and strength to keep fighting for justice. So really, thank you to him.

THE FACES OF MAM

ELLEN BOW

Curriculum Leader – Religious Education
Mt St Michael's College

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

I have worked at Mt St Michael's College for 20 years now - it's hard to believe! During that time, I've been able to pursue a Masters and PhD, had three children, and now my daughter is also part of the MSM community. I have been leading Religious Education curriculum at MSM for the last six of those years.

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

Of these values, love resonates most strongly with me. Love of God and love of neighbour should be the touchstone for every decision, every action, every word, every day. Of course, as humans, we all fall short of this ideal but I try to centre love as my guiding light of inspiration and motivation; love for our students is the wellspring of the energy I need to serve them. Because of love, I can keep working for justice, respond to others with compassion and, even during challenging seasons, view reality with hope.

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

The thing I'm most grateful for is the continuing resonance in this school of the founding stories and ongoing ministry of the Sisters of Charity. The daring work of the Sisters and their discernment of what has been most needed across times and places sets the pace and standard for how we – teachers, leaders and students - must constantly challenge ourselves to push to the margins and trust in providence in the work that we do. Secondly, prayer life and formation experiences add a valued chance to regularly check in with my purpose and live a few moments explicitly conscious of God's presence. It's great to have this 'built in' to every day.



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

I would be proud to tell Mary Aikenhead about the work of Mt St Michael's – and particularly the RE teaching team - in showing our young people that they are valuable beyond limit, giving them the skills to transform the world, and helping them feel they can have a home in the Church. In my 20 years at Mt St Michael's I have seen many hundreds of graduates take the 'Charity Way' forward into their working and family lives so I would tell Mary about how their formation as students is expressed in their care and advocacy for others beyond the school gates.

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

Working in schools can be extremely challenging and I think Mary would encourage me to get my head out of its tendency to be very details-focused and zoom out to keep this larger picture and the 'big why' in view, just as she must have done.

SAVE
the
DATE
2025

The Trustees are pleased to announce:

- **The Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration will be held in Sydney and Online on 23 July 2025 and;**
- **The TMAM Conference will be held in Brisbane on 28 & 29 July 2025. The theme of the 2025 Conference is: “We are called...”**



**MARY
AIKENHEAD
MINISTRIES**

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