



MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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"...we need to continue to hope, because whatever the past has been, the story that begins in each person today is yet to be written." Pope Francis

HOPE



HOPE

The four foundational values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries are the Gospel values of Love, Justice, Compassion and Hope. In this special Jubilee Year of Hope, we are surrounded by inspiration and opportunities for both personal and ministry-led reflection on what the value of Hope means for all of us who are part of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Importantly, we are challenged to respond in creative and inspiring ways - we are called to action as Pilgrims of Hope.

In his autobiography, *Hope*, Pope Francis writes:

...we need to continue to hope, because whatever the past has been, the story that begins in each person today is yet to be written. (p.256)

This forward focus, and the call to action embedded in the messages around Pilgrims of Hope, will be responded to in myriad ways across our ministries. Each ministry is bringing life to the value of Hope in their special way, whilst reflecting our foundational values and always being mindful of the poor, marginalised and vulnerable.

Our *Vision, Mission and Values* document says this about Hope:

Hope is a light in the darkness, "the door that opens on to the future". Hope is neither a denial of suffering, nor a resigned acceptance of fate. Hope arises from the wellsprings of purpose and orients the human spirit towards possibility and new life.

Motivated by Jesus' promise of a future that is in loving hands, Mary Aikenhead Ministries trust in the providence of God and seek to provide a wide range of ministries that are beacons of hope. Trusting in God's providence, we are prepared to be courageous in order to be true to our mission.

There are clear challenges in the guidance we are receiving from Pope Francis, whether in his autobiography, or in his pronouncements around this special Jubilee year.

..[A]fter I proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee in March 2015 for the purpose of manifesting and encountering the face of Mercy, a central theme of the Gospel for every person in every age, the time has come, nine years later, for a new Jubilee, to offer the experience that kindles in our hearts the certain hope of salvation.

"Hope always grows in me when I meet young people" Pope Francis

If Mercy is the name of God, Hope is the name that He has given to us - the name that responds to our deepest reality, to our truest essence. We are made of life and for life. We are made of relationships. We are made of love and for love, and those we love, those who love us, have not vanished in the darkness but await us in the light, in the fullness of that love. We are all chosen children, made for great things, for bold dreams. (p.257)

Notwithstanding the many challenges faced by the world today, Pope Francis links hope and joy, especially when he speaks of the young. He says *"Hope always grows in me when I meet young people"* (271), while urging us to offer concrete signs of hope to those who experience pain and suffering. These pronouncements resonate across all our ministries, where every day, in every interaction with those we serve, we endeavour to offer hope, as we look towards the future.

The metaphors we tend to use when we reflect on the meaning of Hope are light-filled, transcendent, often depicting inspirational images from nature - birds, butterflies, beautiful pastoral scenes. These contrast strongly with the verbs we are using in this Jubilee year - all around action, change, striving, opposing injustice, being witness to the Gospel values, acting with courage.

This year, therefore, whilst recognising that we will experience joy in seeing hope in action, we are above all called to actively, urgently, energetically be part of the future we are creating each day. The resonance with the motto of the Sisters of Charity is clear - *Caritas Christi urget nos* - In this Jubilee year of Hope we are impelled to act, inspired by the love of Christ.

The many and varied responses being developed throughout our ministries now and across the year will provide stories for us to gather at the end of this Jubilee year to remember, recognise and celebrate how we have lived the value of Hope.

Ms Deirdre O'Donnell
Trustee
Mary Aikenhead Ministries

EASTER: MORE THAN A WORD, MORE THAN A THEME - A Living Hope

St. Augustine famously said, “We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.” These words capture the profound essence of Easter—the triumph of life over death, light over darkness, and, most importantly, hope over despair. This year, how fitting it is that hope is also the theme of the Jubilee—a reminder that in the face of suffering, uncertainty and loss, hope remains our anchor.

In recent years, the world has been shaken by tragedy and turmoil—the impact of COVID-19, wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, devastating wildfires in California and Australia, and countless other trials faced by humanity. Imagine confronting such isolation, heartbreak and grief without hope. It is difficult to comprehend how one could navigate such darkness without the assurance of something greater—without the certainty of Easter’s promise.

I often wonder what people truly mean when they say “We hope they will be safe”, especially those who do not profess faith. What is their hope anchored to? Is it a vague optimism, a desire for fortune to favour them?

Hope, when used as a passive sentiment, can often resemble mere wishful thinking—a vague longing that depends on chance rather than certainty. It can sound well-intended, yet hollow, like tossing an uncertain expectation into the universe and simply waiting for it to return fulfilled.

The First Disciples and Their Hope After Christ’s Crucifixion

This passive understanding of hope can be seen in the initial reaction of the first disciples of Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross was a devastating moment for His disciples. They had followed Him, believed in Him, and placed all their hopes in Him as the Messiah. Yet, as they watched Him suffer and die, their hope seemed to be shattered. How could the One who had healed the sick, raised the dead, and preached about the Kingdom of God now be gone? Had they been wrong about Him? Had their mission ended in failure? Their hopes for a new kingdom seemed to have died with Him.

Even the two disciples on the road to Emmaus expressed their deep sorrow:

“We had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24:21)

The resurrection revived and transformed their hope. It was no longer based on earthly expectations, but on the eternal reality of Christ’s victory over sin and death.

Hope: A Real and Active Trust

The Easter message of hope is not passive. It is not wishful thinking or empty optimism. Hope in Christ is real, active, and transformative. It is rooted in a deep relationship with God—grounded in the unwavering certainty of His love and faithfulness.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, describes hope as something that is refined through suffering:

“We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Romans 5:2-5)

This passage reminds us that true hope is not fragile. It does not crumble in the face of hardship. Rather, it is forged in endurance, strengthened in character, and confirmed by the unwavering love of God. Hope does not disappoint because it is not based on fleeting circumstances but on the eternal promise of God’s providence.

The hope of the disciples was not wishful thinking; it was anchored in their encounter with the risen Christ. Their hope did not shield them from suffering—in fact, many of them were martyred for their faith. Yet they never lost hope, because they knew that death was not the end.

Easter: The Dawn of a New Beginning

Easter reminds us that hope is not a fleeting emotion—it is a virtue that embraces confidence, realism, and trust in God’s providence. Hope is what sustains us through the darkest of nights, through every trial, loss, and uncertainty. Hope assures us that suffering is never the final chapter.

Easter is the hope of a new day, a new life, a new beginning. It is the certainty that even in the darkest moments, the sun will break through, and light will overcome the night.

Because of Easter, we do not simply wish for better days—we know they will come. Because Christ has risen, we do not merely hope for life—we are promised life eternal.

“We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.”

Mr Troy Tornabene

*Acting Mission & Formation Director
Mary Aikenhead Ministries*

MAM PILGRIMAGES

One of the many privileges of Mary Aikenhead Ministries is our Sisters of Charity heritage. This heritage speaks of the vision, courage, compassion and faith-filled journeys of generations of Sisters of Charity. At its most ideal, the heritage and spirit of the Sisters is carried forward by all who work and contribute to Mary Aikenhead Ministries today.

With this treasured inheritance comes the responsibility that the ministries continue to flourish in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity. The ongoing formation of leaders, boards and staff is the vehicle that enables the continuity of the heritage, mission and spirit of the Sisters of Charity in our contemporary context.

For us, formation incorporates our story, Gospel values, and the legacy of Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity across Mary Aikenhead Ministries. We understand formation to be a dynamic process that is relational, reflective and calls us to action. It is both an educative process and a spiritual journey. It offers the foundations for group discernment, inspired by faith, prayer and Church teachings. Formation supports culture, ethos and identity and can deepen awareness of God's presence alive and active in the world.

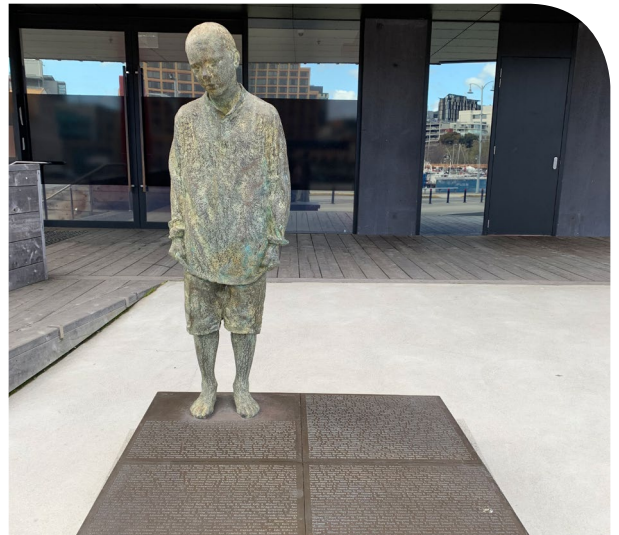
Formation is an invitation to something more.... it can touch the heart and open the mind. Our MAM formation celebrates the Sisters of Charity spirit as it is being lived now and as it is imagined into the future. Formation is both lifelong and now.

The **MAM Pilgrimages** are part of ministry formation and provide opportunities for pilgrims to understand and embrace the heritage and spirit of the Sisters of Charity. The Trustees, with the endorsement of the Sisters of Charity, have carriage of the three foundational MAM pilgrimages:

The **Paramatta pilgrimage**, sharing the story of the first five Sisters who arrived in Australia from Ireland on 31 December 1838.

The **Hobart Pilgrimage**, which captures the Sisters' move to Hobart within 10 years of arrival and the ongoing commitment of the Sisters to the evolving needs of the Tasmanian people.

The **Ireland Pilgrimage**, which sees pilgrims trace the footsteps of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and gain a first-hand understanding of the call to mission at the heart of the Sisters of Charity ministries.



Hobart: Footsteps Towards Freedom Statue sponsored by The Sisters of Charity of Australia in recognition of the order's long history of ministering to women and children

Throughout 2024, the Trustees have reviewed and refreshed our Pilgrimage Policy and Guidelines in support of these pilgrimage programs. With each pilgrimage we strive for pilgrims:

- to gain a deeper knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Sisters of Charity story in Australia and Ireland,
- to gain a deeper appreciation of the woman, Mary Aikenhead, and of her times and circumstances,
- to gain an increased capacity to respond to the needs of the world today through the application of Gospel values,
- to gain a greater understanding of the meaning of 'preferential option for the poor',
- to develop and inspire the pilgrims understanding of the MAM mission and spirit as these are lived in their roles and daily workplaces.

In the development of each pilgrimage, I'd highlight the generous support and encouragement that the Trustees and MAM staff have received from the Sisters of Charity, for which we are most grateful. We particularly acknowledge Sr Genevieve Walsh and Sr Margaret Fitzgerald for their leadership of the Paramatta Pilgrimage and Sr Maria Wheeler for her leadership of the Hobart Pilgrimage - their passion, wisdom and insights are invaluable.

The following link takes you to the [Mary Aikenhead Ministries Pilgrimage Policy and associated ministry guidelines](#).

Finally, the Trustees look forward to welcoming you to a MAM pilgrimage in the future.

Dr Margaret McKenna
Trustee
Mary Aikenhead Ministries

SACRED HEART HEALTH SERVICE VISIT & GORMAN UNIT

Thanks to A/Prof. Davinia Seah (Head of Palliative Medicine) and the incredibly dedicated team at the Sacred Heart Health Service, St Vincent's Health Network Sydney, for sharing with the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries the palliative care services provided to our patients with life-limiting illness.

Opened by the Sisters of Charity in 1890 as a dedicated Hospice for the terminally ill, Sacred Heart has grown from a small palliative care cottage to a facility offering comprehensive rehabilitation services as well as specialist supportive and palliative care.

The team provides a consultation service to St Vincent's Hospital Sydney with patients and carers supported by:

- A 12-bed inpatient unit; and
- A 24-hour community and outpatient consultative service in Eastern Sydney.

The service supports patients undergoing anti-cancer treatments, and provides pain control and symptom management, nursing and psychosocial and pastoral support.

The Community Support & Palliative Care Team works with palliative care teams from Prince of Wales, Royal Hospital for Women, and the Sydney Children's Hospital covering the areas of Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick, and Botany. Patients are referred for assessment and management at varying stages of their illness. The team visits patients in their homes and in Residential Aged Care facilities.

Sacred Heart is home to an active clinical research program, furthering the development of new management techniques of symptoms such as pain, nausea, and breathlessness. In addition, the Rehabilitation Services Team provide complete patient rehabilitation following an illness, injury or surgery, helping patients achieve their maximum potential.

The team includes medical staff, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, pharmacy staff, pastoral carers, dietetics staff and clinical and neuropsychology staff.

Thank you to all at Sacred Heart for the caring, tailored palliative care provided to our patients in need every day.

In addition, the Trustees visited St Vincent's Hospital Gorman Unit, a medically supervised alcohol and drug short stay unit that provides 5-7 days inpatient withdrawal management. The Gorman Unit is a multi-disciplinary medical, allied health, and counselling team which supports the journey of each patient. We learned of the importance of peer workers and the confidential and non-judgmental accompaniment of each person. It was a privilege to be present in the Gorman Unit.

*Dr Michael Drew and Dr Margaret McKenna
Trustees
Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



L to R: Anna Laverty-Wilson, Mia Caldwell, Richard Haddock, Manuel Grech, Mark Brook, Claire Vandenberg, Dr Michael Drew, Mollie Boland Anderson, Maggie Bunker
Front row L to R: A/Prof Davinia Seah, Cindy Gundy

OPENING BLESSING AND DEDICATION OF THE AIKENHEAD CENTRE

CATHOLIC LADIES' COLLEGE, ELTHAM

It was a delight and privilege for Trustees, Richard Haddock AO, Chair, Deirdre O'Donnell and Margaret McKenna to be present at the Opening Mass and Blessing of *The Aikenhead Centre* on 21 February 2025.

Mrs Stephanie Evans, Principal, addressed Sisters of Charity, students, staff and invited guests as follows:

...I especially acknowledge the presence of our newly appointed Auxiliary Bishop, Bishop René Ramirez, RCJ. On behalf of our College community, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to you. Bishop René, we are truly grateful and honoured that you will be leading the blessing of our new building, *The Aikenhead Centre*. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Father Steven Rigo for being part of our special celebration.

Students, today we celebrate more than just a new building; we celebrate a space designed to inspire, connect, and support each of you on your learning journey. *The Aikenhead Centre* has been thoughtfully designed with you in mind—embracing our beautiful natural surroundings while providing spaces that reflect the many ways you learn, collaborate, and grow. May you continue to be inspired by Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity, women of great faith, strong and steadfast in their commitment to service of others. May this space be filled with learning, laughter, and the shared pursuit of excellence.

At this moment in the Mass, we begin the first part of the Blessing Ceremony—the unveiling and blessing of the plaque, which will be placed in the new building. At the conclusion of the Mass, the official party will proceed to *The Aikenhead Centre* for the second part of the ceremony, where the building itself will be blessed.

As we officially bless and open *The Aikenhead Centre*, I encourage you all to embrace this new space—make it a place where curiosity thrives, friendships are strengthened, and new ideas come to life.

This moment marks an important chapter in the history of Catholic Ladies' College.

Fifty-seven years ago, the Sisters of Charity made the pivotal decision to relocate Catholic Ladies' College from its original site in East Melbourne, where it was founded in 1902, to Eltham in 1971. This transition and transformation, like many others throughout our school's history,



The Aikenhead Centre



Ms Stephanie Evans, Principal pictured with Fr Steven Rigo, Bishop René Ramirez RCJ & staff

reflects a commitment to growth, adaptability and a steadfast belief in the power of education.

Catholic Ladies' College is more than a school—it is a community of heart, a place where every student finds belonging and purpose. At its core is a culture that nurtures ambitious learning, guiding students from their individual starting points towards their aspirations. *The Aikenhead Centre* was designed with this philosophy in mind, providing spaces for collaboration, creativity, and cross-curricular engagement. It will serve as a hub for innovation, critical thinking, and dialogue, enriching both students and staff.

This journey began with the development of the College Master Plan, a process that involved refining our vision for learning and wellbeing, reviewing our existing facilities, and—most importantly—listening to the voices of our students, staff, and families. As we moved forward, we adapted our original plans to ensure *The Aikenhead Centre* met the evolving needs of contemporary learning and the realities of a post-pandemic world. Our aim was to create a space that is not only relevant today but also future-proof—flexible and adaptable for generations of learners to come.



L to R: Ms Deirdre O'Donnell (Trustee), Joan Stapleton rsc, Dr Margaret McKenna (Trustee), Pat Walker rsc, Anne Taylor rsc, Mr Richard Haddock AO (Chair)

The realisation of this vision would not have been possible without the dedication of so many individuals and teams.

Throughout the planning processes, College leadership have been well supported by the College Board. I extend my sincere gratitude to the College Board Directors, whose guidance has been invaluable throughout this journey.... We greatly valued our partnership with Law Architects, who seamlessly connected this new building to the natural beauty of our surroundings—the trees, the landscape, and the Diamond Creek. I am sure that Sr Una Mc Allister and Mother Agnes, who visited this site in 1968, would be just as delighted as we are today with *The Aikenhead centre* being described as “a canopy in the trees.” They too were captivated by this site’s beauty, even though Mother Agnes once remarked, “We cannot make this decision [to establish a school on this site] on the bellbirds and the gum trees.”

We are deeply honoured to name this new building *The Aikenhead Centre*. Venerable Mary Aikenhead was a woman of spirit—visionary and resourceful—who, driven by the love of Christ, dedicated her life to serving those in need. Her vision and commitment have been carried forward by the many women who became Sisters of Charity, shaping the identity of Catholic Ladies’ College. As members of a Mary Aikenhead College, we hold the story and spirituality of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity close to our hearts. *The Aikenhead Centre* will stand as a living tribute to her legacy, inspiring our daily work, learning, and interactions.

It is with gratitude and great anticipation that we open this new chapter in the life of Catholic Ladies’ College.

Dr Margaret McKenna
Trustee
Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Ms Stephanie Evans, Principal pictured with Fr Steven Rigo, Bishop René Ramirez RCJ & students

BLESSING AND OPENING OF THE FOXFORD INNOVATION CENTRE ST COLUMBA'S COLLEGE, ESSENDON

Trustees Dr Margaret McKenna and Deirdre O'Donnell had the joy and privilege of attending the blessing and opening of St Columba's new Foxford Innovation Centre in a day of celebration at the College on 28 February 2025.

Following a beautiful smoking ceremony in the school grounds, guests proceeded to the new building where Bishop René Ramirez RCJ officiated and led the blessing. Special guests from the Sisters of Charity included Joan Stapleton rsc, Denise Hannebery rsc, Cathy Meese rsc and Pat Walker rsc (as well as an apology from Sister Josephine Cannell, who taught at the College, and who has just celebrated her 107th birthday on 24 February). A highlight of the event was the performance by the College Choir.

Following the unveiling of the plaque by Victoria's Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Hon. Ben Carroll MP, and a blessing offered by Deirdre O'Donnell on behalf of the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, Principal Rita Grima gave a wonderful speech, an extract from which is set out below:

"A new facility for our students has been a long-held dream of the College. The purchase of the first house block on Buckley St in 2003 by Julie Ryan, principal at the time, supported by Kevin McCartney, Board Chair, was the beginning of the realisation of that dream.

"In 2011 and 2014, April Honeyman and Paul Herrick purchased the next two blocks, and the last remaining property was purchased in 2020. The Foxford Innovation Centre stands as a testament to the vision, innovation, courage, and tenacity of its leaders and governors over decades, inspired by the vision and values of Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity, and championed by Mary Aikenhead Education.

"So why Foxford? Irish Sister of Charity, Mother Agnes Morrough-Bernard, or Mother Arsenius, as she was called, arrived in Foxford (Ireland) in 1891 (she was 49 at the time) and was stunned by the poverty and dire living conditions of the people there. Sister Agnes's first role after her profession was as a teacher, and then soon after as a headmistress. Her life before Foxford was witness to her commitment to the poor - setting up dispensaries, a bakery, a library, supporting industry and entrepreneurship. She was clearly a woman with a practical bent of mind, who exercised the calling of the Sisters to be extensively useful.

"After responding to requests to establish a convent at Foxford, Sr Agnes and four other sisters arrived and to quote, "the sight that greeted them was not for the faint-hearted". Almost two decades after the famine of 1872, squalid living conditions, and the absence of bare necessities to make life tolerable, made for a populace where disease was rife, and where hope seemed elusive.



"In a few months after their arrival, following the efforts of the Sisters to improve housing conditions, this was an observation made by a local magistrate: "The change wrought in Foxford to health and sanitation by the example and gentle influence of the Sisters of Charity was more than all the Acts of Parliament ever passed."

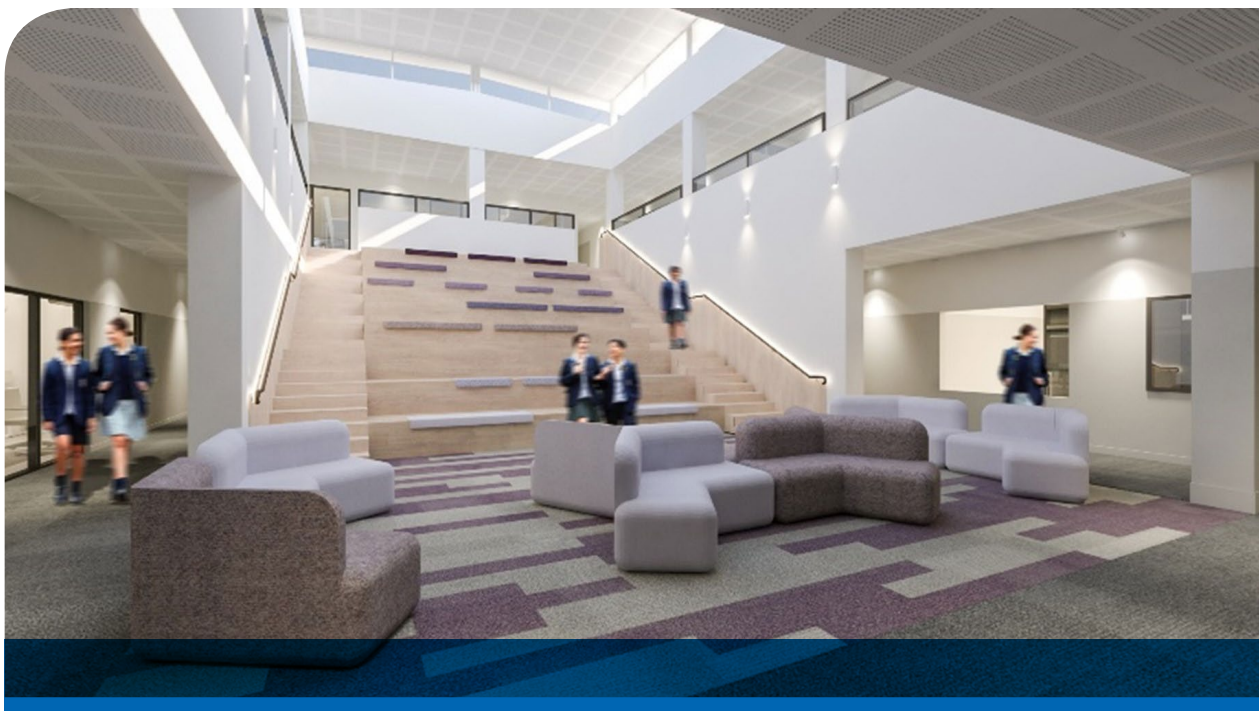
"Recognising that it was education, employment and enterprise that would make a long-term and lasting difference to the people, and with divine providence on her side, Sr Agnes responded to the need of God's people through partnership, collaboration, determination, perseverance and an unshakeable trust in God's providence. While Sr Agnes was reportedly not the first to see the potential for a Woollen Mill in Foxford, she was the first to make it happen, creating employment, education, improved circumstances and most importantly hope for the Foxford townspeople. The Foxford Woollen Mill has been a thriving enterprise, not without its ups and downs, that re-invigorated a town and provided dignity and pride for its people. The woollen mill, and the town of Foxford, stand as a legacy in our tradition of the enterprising spirit of the Sisters of Charity.

"In our St Columba's College Foxford Innovation Centre, we aspire to do the same - instilling in our students a sense of purpose, determination and courage, using their gifts and talents to grow their own knowledge and skills and then setting forth into the world armed with the tools to make a positive difference for themselves and for others.

"This wonderful new facility would not have been possible without the talents and combined efforts of a cast of hundreds. Much like Mary Aikenhead, and Sr Agnes, we recognise the synergy that comes from collaboration inspired by shared purpose and vision."

(Sourced from: Molloy, Margaret. Agnes Morrogh-Bernard: Foundress of Foxford Woollen Mills. Mercier Press, 2014.)

Ms Deirdre O'Donnell
Trustee
Mary Aikenhead Ministries





**Sisters
of Charity**
of Australia

HERITAGE CENTRE

The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre brings alive the spirit of the Congregation, its history and heritage. Australia's first religious sisters have been of service to the community regardless of creed, wealth or ethnicity, for over 185 years.

You too are part of this continuing and living heritage and we'd love to welcome you.

Tuesday – Thursday
10.00am-3.00pm or by appointment
Bookings recommended

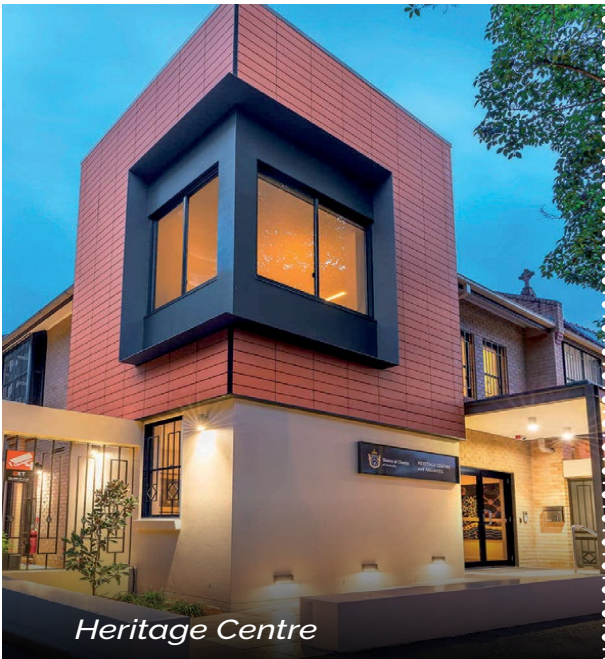


*"So go on in faith and let all
do their own little best."*

Mary Aikenhead,
18 June 1846



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Heritage Centre



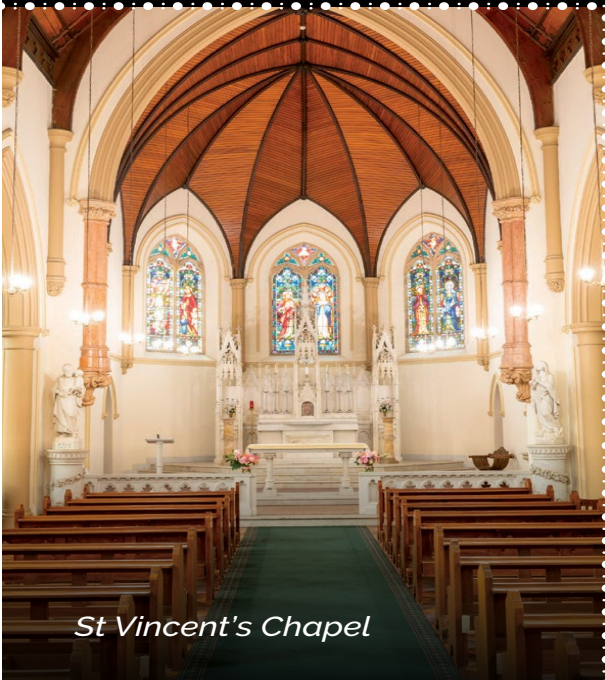
Conference Facility



Collection



Collection



St Vincent's Chapel



Meeting and display space

THE FACES OF MAM

PAT GARCIA

Group General Manager Public Affairs & General Counsel
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 work at St Vincent's Health Australia and lead our national legal, governance, risk, public affairs and communications functions.

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

They all resonate with me at different seasons. Right now, I would have to say it's hope. I am hopeful that 2025 will be a year of innovation, transformation and impact at St Vincent's. Is it a coincidence Pope Francis has called 2025 the jubilee year of hope?

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

Radical inclusion sits in the DNA of St Vincent's. Our centre lies in the margins and in those spaces where we are most likely to encounter Jesus. Our people are known for standing with the isolated and vulnerable.



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

I would say there are 30,000 people in Australia today who continue her work, caring for the sick, the elderly, the homeless and the vulnerable. The stories of their care have become legend in this country - the modern-day parable... I would say the community know the story of how St Vincent's cared for those with AIDS in the 1980s when no one else would. Paramedics redirect vulnerable patients to St Vincent's because they know St Vincent's cares for those that no one else will. Our nurses are the only ones who go into the community to provide clinical care for the homeless. There are challenges, but our people have made a habit of finding ways through them. They are hopeful and scrappy. They wait patiently for a slight opening in the doorway, and they race towards it, and turn something out of nothing. Mary Aikenhead would call that slight opening 'providence'. I would agree.

THE FACES OF MAM

JOSEPH HEKEIK

Head of Staff Administration
St Vincent's College, Potts Point

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

St Vincent's College. I commenced here in 1998.

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

All four are very attractive to me but if I had to pick one, it would be Compassion. If you are compassionate in your engagement with other people, the other values are already covered.

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

Our College is really a very welcoming, compassionate community. Eccentric kids and staff find a niche here and I love that we welcome all abilities and dispositions. I like that the College Leaders really do anchor our College in the Mary Aikenhead tradition of compassion, service, justice, hope, and generosity of spirit.



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

I would enjoy having lunch with Mary Aikenhead. I think she would be great company! I would tell her that her Australian Sisters have carried on her remarkable work in Health and Education. I think the best story to tell her would be that the first history of the Australian congregation is "nothing but a cause of trouble". Her Sisters have shown remarkable courage in challenging authority and the status quo when they could see a way of serving people. I really am always exceptionally proud of the work of the Sisters in the care of HIV patients and their championing of the need for a safe injecting room. They are very important stories in our neighbourhood.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR *SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT*

ELIZABETH BROOKS

Deputy Principal

St Vincent's College, Potts Point

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

This is my 10th year at St Vincent's College.

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

The MAM *Social Inclusion Statement* gives me hope and a feeling of gladness and pride in being part of a Church ministry of love. It is an explicit statement of welcome inviting us to be intentional in noticing diversity, particularly looking towards those who may feel marginalised so we respond with welcome and love.

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?

I am inspired by the repeated use of the plural 'our', 'we', 'all' so that we are not othering in our commitment but rather positioning ourselves as one human family, all created sacred by our loving God. This gives me confidence as an educator of young people and as a leader in schools, that our ministry is called to respond with love and inclusion of vulnerable students and colleagues, as well as nurturing a culture that makes explicit these values of inclusion. It is my hope that all members of the community grow in empathy and an appreciation of the diversity of who we all are as a rich tapestry that allows us to be more fully human.



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.

Positioned in Sydney's inner-city Potts Point, our students are great advocates for inclusion, particularly in creating safe cultures for those of diverse expressions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Working closely with student leaders and senior students to guide their initiatives (such as planting a pathway of purple flowers or an address at an Assembly that reflects on the impact of language), we are able to make visible an authentic expression of students' lived experience shaped by the values of our being a MAM community. Similarly, our staff bring their full selves to our community and it is important they feel known and valued. Our Monday morning Briefing begins with prayer - with staff opting in to lead with a partner and often linked to Feast Days and International days of awareness. Recently we expressed our commitment to healing and harmony in the context of rising anti-semitism in our own neighbourhood, expressing our care of Jewish members of our own staff. Briefing is also a place to express good wishes to staff on such things as engagements, this is inclusive of all partnerships, to ensure all staff feel they can be their full selves in a community of colleagues.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR *SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT*

HANNAH MURRAY

Reconciliation Action Plan Project Coordinator
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?

St Vincent's Health Australia - 2.5 years

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

I respect the commitment to supporting inclusion and the acknowledgement that the world is complex and imperfect. The statement fills me with hope and also highlights the journey ahead to ensure that equal access becomes a reality for all.

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 is an inspiration to embed diversity and inclusive practices into our everyday. There is an opportunity to extend the good work of Mary Aikenhead not just to our patients but to each other, to our structures and to the systems that continue to inherently oppress those experiencing marginalization. I think the statement challenges us to make changes within our world. Challenging the unconscious bias that we all have based on our own lived experiences is critical to ensuring that those we serve are truly supported.

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'd like to share a moment that cemented for me the difference with the Sisters. When I attended the Parramatta Pilgrimage, we were at the site of the Darlinghurst Gaol (now known as the National Art School on Gadigal land) and a woman joined our group who was visibly affected by alcohol and/or other drugs. The security for the arts school promptly asked if they could help, but the Sisters said no. They included her in conversations, answered her questions about the stories they were sharing and most importantly, recognised her inherent human dignity. The *Social Inclusion Statement* brings me back to this moment where perhaps others would have hidden behind authority or safety and the Sisters chose to step in and connect with a human being as an equal.

I feel as though there are so many inclusive projects happening through the kindness of the St Vincent's community.

At St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, we run the Aunty Fay Carroll program which is named after trailblazer Aunty Fay who was committed to Closing the Gap in Aboriginal health through education. The program works in collaboration with TAFE and aims to support and educate healthcare workers beginning their career. This collaboration supports the equity discussed in the *Social Inclusion Statement*.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR *SOCIAL INCLUSION STATEMENT*

Sonia Robinson and the supporters of the Aunty Fay Carroll program in Sydney work so hard to ensure that the students' needs are met, including their cultural needs. Often programs have a prescribed focus which leaves little flexibility for the human needs of those it supports. What I see in the Aunty Fay program is support being given to students that is tailored to their needs and culturally focused.

In Melbourne, the First Nations nursing students completing practical aspects of their course at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne are supported extensively by Molly Kennedy and her colleagues to ensure that their cultural needs are met and they can focus on providing excellent care. This cultural support is extensive and often requires

outside support and guidance beyond the role; however, that cultural expectation is critical to the program's success.

As it is with most work in this space, the magic really is down to the people who support it. Healthcare is a work of service and the people we serve are often at their most vulnerable when they engage with us. The colleagues I have had the pleasure of working with during my time at St Vincent's are the personification of the *Social Inclusion Statement* and my hope is that with the release of this statement it will further change the system in which they operate to be available to all.

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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..."**



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