

Local Formation Animators (LFAs) - Welcome from Barbara Bolster RSM

As we begin our time together we acknowledge the traditional custodians on whose ancestral lands we are meeting today. We recognise the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal peoples to country, and pay respect to the cultural authority and traditions with which they have gifted this place.

This year marks the sixth time this group of mercy women has met. What a contribution to the life of the Institute each of you has made. The Local Formation Animators have modelled another way of sharing the spirit and gift of mercy across the congregations of the Institute. As we have come together each year we have been introduced to a topic and process discerned and developed by the Institute Formation Council. During those six years we have shared and reflected on the following:

- The formation policy
- Talking together about obedience
- What keeps me true to my calling
- Moving together on this transformative journey
- Mystery, mission, mercy
- And this year – When the wind blows... Exploring change and its possibility for conversion and mission.

Each of you has taken the topic and process back to your own congregations and led the sisters through it, assisting them in their own on-going formation. When you think of it this is quite a unique process touching sisters throughout Australia and PNG.

I'd like to introduce you to the Formation Council - Kathleen Williams, who has joined the council this year, Joan Sibberas, Angela Reed, Sue Smith, Karon Donnellon and Kaye Evans. I am privileged to chair this council.

This evening we have a couple of new LFAs: Margaret Lipsett from Perth, Jenny Bailey from North Sydney, Margaret Bannon from Grafton. Giovanna Danza is here in Marg McHugh's place and Jean Gormley in Sue Smith's place. There are apologies from Sue Smith and Carmel Ruddick. Sue is engaged in some renewal, Marg McHugh and Carmel Ruddick are in Ireland - poor things. A special welcome to our new people. We hope you will feel at home and part of the group.

Since we last met Desma has lost her mum, our deepest sympathy Des.

So welcome to old and new alike. I am sure this will be another great weekend.