



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 4, February 2018

## Welcome ...

2018 is well underway, and most Mercy Associates groups will have held their first meeting for the year by now. From the perspective of our faith, Lent is well underway too, and before we send out the next edition of *Many Paths*, Easter will have been celebrated, as will Pentecost. Time moves quickly it seems, yet we need to ensure we give ourselves time to reflect on why we are involved in the Mercy Associates movement.

In this edition, four Mercy Associates share their story. They were asked to prepare a short passage or be interviewed by a Mercy Associate who would write up what was said about why they became a Mercy Associate and why it is important to them in their daily lives. These are warm and sincere accounts, a heartening reminder of the importance of having a group of people share to faith and friendship with and to work alongside in serving others in need.

Anne Pate, the Network Facilitator in Victoria, has penned a reflection on hope, and what the liturgical period we are in now might tell us about hope as an element of our faith.

In a different 'dimension', we have two articles that are about our professional conduct as Mercy Associates, and our obligations to conduct all of our relationships with dignity and respect. The Institute Leadership Team has provided a short article about the outcomes of the Royal Commission for the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. As well, we have an article on the new requirements of the Privacy laws, and our obligations to protect the privacy of Mercy Associates and those they deal with in their ministries and other activities.

We also have stories about commitment ceremonies and other activities of Mercy Associates groups including Townsville, Ballarat and Rockhampton. This time, it's wonderful to have an article from the Mercy Friends group in Papua New Guinea.

Opposite this column is the Chapter Statement that arose from the Institute Chapter in August last year. It is important to read and think about it, and it might provide a fruitful resource for discussion at a Mercy Associates meeting.

**Carmel Ross**

Mercy Associates Executive Officer



**MERCY**  
Associates

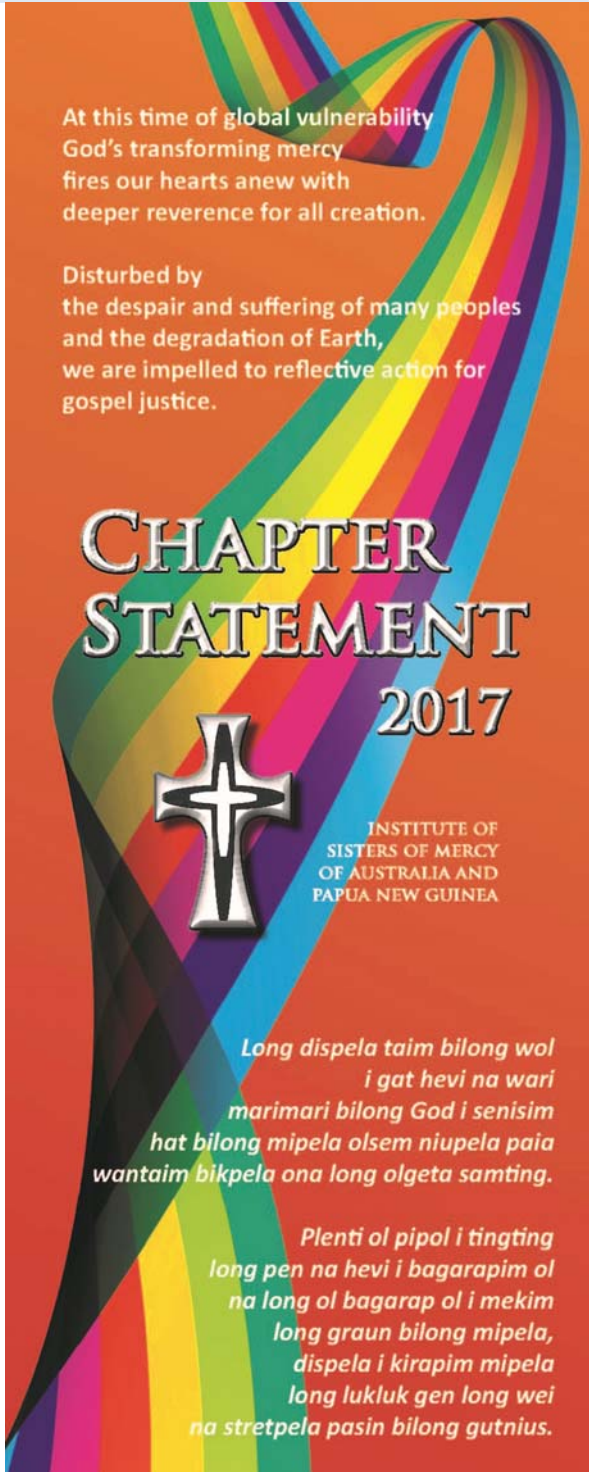
Institute of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

**One Charism, Many Paths**

At this time of global vulnerability  
God's transforming mercy  
fires our hearts anew with  
deeper reverence for all creation.

Disturbed by  
the despair and suffering of many peoples  
and the degradation of Earth,  
we are impelled to reflective action for  
gospel justice.

## CHAPTER STATEMENT 2017



INSTITUTE OF  
SISTERS OF MERCY  
OF AUSTRALIA AND  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Long dispela taim bilong wol  
i gat hevi na wari  
marimari bilong God i senisim  
hat bilong mipela olsem niupela paia  
wantaim bikpela ona long olgeta samting.*

*Plenti ol pipol i tingting  
long pen na hevi i bagarapim ol  
na long ol bagarap ol i mekim  
long graun bilong mipela,  
dispela i kirapim mipela  
long lukluk gen long wei  
na stretpela pasin bilong gutnius.*



Catherine's basic  
stance in life was a re-  
markable trust in God's  
providence.

Jan Geason RSM

## Living hope

'The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.'

*Guadium et Spes (Joy and Hope) Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 1965*  
(Vatican Council II)

Hope, wrote the theologian Jurgen Moltmann, has a wayfaring character. I have been pondering his description of hope while preparing a series of Lenten reflections and retreat days called 'Journeys of Hope'. Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, I know what it is to hope passionately for some worthwhile good, and, like them, I also know something of the temptation to despair when my particular hopes are not fulfilled. No doubt you do, too. As we enter the season of Lent, can we become more aware of our own journeys of hope, and of the many hopes we carry for our world and for ourselves?



One of the outcomes of the Mercy International Reflection Process is the call for us to become 'messengers of hope' as we respond to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. Each Mercy Associates group has its own way of living out this call. Perhaps you visit people who are sick and isolated, or raise funds for initiatives working with refugees. How do you create and share hope, especially when you journey intimately with people who may be struggling to hold on to hope? How do you remain hopeful, trusting in God, in the face of the complex challenges of our world? After all, despite all our striving for justice, the news brings us stories every day of the

continuing degradation of the earth, of the loss of wild-life species, and of the terrible suffering of people displaced from their home countries. At times, we might be tempted to give in to despair or to cynicism, to throw up our hands and to protect ourselves from sharing in the griefs and anguish of the world.

And yet, God has given us this wonderful gift of living hope (1 Peter 1:3-5), a hope that believes in the promises of God and sees the signs of the 'not-yet' here in this world. As we wait patiently for the fullness of the dawn, let us choose, over and over again, to practice hope within the communities we are called to serve. This can all sound rather spiritual, but is in fact completely practical, involving countless small, often unnoticed acts of mercy. Our hope is grounded in our trust in the character of God, is always attentive to what could be, and is lived out in action which gives birth to a life-giving future.

Thankfully, we do not journey alone, but in companionship. The existentialist philosopher of hope, Gabriel Marcel, wrote that 'all hope is at bottom choral'. Inher-

### *'all hope is at bottom choral'*

Inherent in the life of Mercy Associates is a recognition that we need to come together to encourage and support each other, just as Catherine McAuley walked with others as she acted in hope for the poor and vulnerable of her time.

ent in the life of Mercy Associates is a recognition that we need to come together to encourage and support each other, just as Catherine McAuley walked with others as she acted in hope for the poor and vulnerable of her time.

Perhaps we might share our stories of 'living hope' with each other, talking and discussing just as the two disciples did as they walked towards Emmaus, and always being open to the possibility of the arrival of hope in unexpected places.

**Anne Pate, Network Facilitator Victoria**  
[mercyassociatesvic@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercyassociatesvic@ismapng.org.au)

*Were not our hearts burning within us while he was opening the scriptures to us? Luke 24:32*



## *Mercy Associates and Privacy legislation*

As a Mercy Associate you may come across information which is private and relates to other individuals in the Mercy Associates movement or others in the communities with whom we work. You will need to respect the privacy of this information and not act in a way that discloses personal details to any other individual or organisation. You will also need to familiarise yourself with the Privacy Policy common to all Mercy ministries and available at: <http://institute.mercy.org.au/privacy-policy/>

To foster trusting relationships and enable our ministry to thrive, it is essential that we safeguard people's rights and respect their personal and private information at all times. If you have any questions about privacy or expected behaviours as part of your Mercy Associates group, please contact your Network Facilitator.

**Please note:** This will become **section 3.5** of the newly published **Administrative Handbook** for Mercy Associates.

Prepared by **Nicki Patten**, Legal Counsel, ISMAPNG

## *Responding to the Royal Commission—from the Institute Leadership Team*

Dear Mercy Associates,

As you appreciate, there are a number of recommendations from the Royal Commission which affect religious orders such as ISMAPNG. The Sisters of Mercy are keen to implement these recommendations as best they can.

Our Legal and Professional Standards staff are giving much valued assistance in this important work of implementation, which is concerned primarily with ensuring that children and other vulnerable people in our care, such as the frail aged, are safe and protected at all times.

In that regard, we gratefully acknowledge the efforts that have been made over recent years to develop and abide by policies and practices of the highest standards.

At the same time, we can always strive to do more than we have to date, and so to ensure that our Institute is truly 'in accord with' the intentions of the Royal Commission's recommendations, our relevant policies and practices are currently being reviewed. These include

- the code of conduct for all sisters throughout the Institute who are engaged in ministry of any kind;
- the code of conduct for all Institute staff and volunteers throughout Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- the documents and practices related to the Initial Formation Programme for potential Institute members.

We will provide you with periodic updates on how the reviews are progressing.

The findings of the Royal Commission have been and remain deeply disturbing for people of all faiths and none. For many Catholics much trust in the Church and its ministers - clerical, religious and lay - has been destroyed. Please pray often that God's mercy will heal the hearts of all, especially the survivors of abuse and those who love them.

Gratefully

Eveline, Caroline, Gaye, Marie and Liz  
**Institute Leadership Team**



### *Mercy Associates Code of Conduct*

The **Formation Resource** and the **Administrative Handbook** both contain a copy of the **Mercy Associates Code of Conduct**.

In essence, a code of conduct is about the standard of behaviour we adopt in our role as Mercy Associates. Codes of conduct focus on relationships—ensuring we treat others with respect, in a way that upholds their God-given dignity as human beings, equal to ourselves and all others.

The Mercy Associates Code of Conduct is part of our commitment as Mercy Associates. It will be of value to Mercy Associates groups to discuss this Code of Conduct at a meeting. Sometimes in a page of words we can miss important points, but discussing those words with others can draw out the things we need to focus on.

## *This Easter, be a Good Egg — Make Your Easter Chocolate Slavery-free*

Please buy and sell only slavery-free chocolate this Easter. That's the message from ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) to everyone intending to buy chocolate, or run chocolate fundraising during Lent. Slavery-free chocolate carries one of these three labels - **FAIRTRADE**, **Rainforest Alliance** or **UTZ certified**. This shows that the cocoa beans used in the chocolate's production have been sourced ethically, from farmers who engage in good labour practices.



Christine Carolan, the Executive Officer of ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), said buying slavery-free chocolate at Easter gives people the opportunity to take a stand against human trafficking and slavery. "We know that some children, working in some of the cocoa farms in West Africa are trafficked. Many others work in dangerous conditions for little or no wages and cannot attend school," Ms Carolan said.

To find out more about slavery-free chocolate please go to <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/slavery-free-easter-chocolate/>

## *Transition Ceremony for Townsville Mercy Associates*

On February 8<sup>th</sup> a small, enthusiastic group participated in a ceremony in Townsville to mark their transition to being Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG. Also attending were a number of Sisters from Townsville along with representatives of Mercy ministries in Townsville including St Patrick's College, the Mater Hospital, and Mercy Community Services NQ.

The ceremony involved eight people making their commitment as Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG – the group included Rita Tomba, Trudy Clarke, Una King, Joan Neal, Fiona Williams, Sheerah Tait, Marcia Chock Man and Anne Henderson.

Sr Helen White, Community Leader of the North region, presented each Associate with a certificate, and Sr Carmel King presented their badges. Sr Helen spoke of the importance of hope as an element of faith and as a way of engaging with the world. She described the imbalance we experience via media coverage of violence and destructive world events whereas the day of day lives of people are mostly directed towards goodness, expressing the capacity we all have for living in a way that benefits others.

The presence of Mercy Associates in the Townsville diocese for over twenty years has been largely the result of the dedication of Sr Carmel King. At the conclusion of the ceremony, she was presented with flowers to acknowledge the gratitude of the local Mercy Associates for her unwavering commitment to ensuring this movement operated in Townsville. Sr Carmel responded by encouraging the Mercy Associates to carry on with their ministries as Mercy Associates are a positive hope for the future. Following the ceremony, the gathering adjourned to a sumptuous afternoon tea provided by the local Sisters.

More than a dozen others have expressed an interest in being part of the renewed Mercy Associates movement in the Townsville region, but distance precluded their attendance at the ceremony. A meeting of all those who are Mercy Associates in Townsville or who are interested in finding out more will be held at the House of Prayer at 5.00pm on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Contact Carmel Ross (Executive Officer, Mercy Associates) for details about Mercy Associates in Townsville, at [mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au) or on 0408 124404.



The reading aloud of the Commitment Statement is a powerful element of the Commitment Ceremony.



Standing, L-R: Sr Carmel King, Sheerah Tait, Trudy Clarke, Rita Tomba, Marcia Chock Man, Sr Helen White, Joan Neal, Anne Henderson.  
Seated, L-R: Una King, Fiona Williams.





## *Mercy Friends, Kunjigini, Papua New Guinea*

Here at Immaculate heart of Mary parish Kunjigini we have started Mercy friends. The group is made up of thirty women and six men, Sr Philomina is very helpful by leading the group. We Mercy Friends come together at the end of every month to pray together and on September 24<sup>th</sup> feast day and foundation day December 12<sup>th</sup> we have recollection and eat together. We meet two days in a week, Wednesday we teach each other for cooking and sewing skills and Saturday work such as cleaning around the sisters convent and visiting the old and sick people. We pray for all the sisters of Mercy and vocations for young women. God bless you all.

### **Lucy Samoe, Mercy Friends, Kunjigini**



Mercy Friends learning to sew bags (left); and wearing the finished product (right).

## *A 'coming home' experience—Suzanne's story....*

I was received into the Roman Catholic Church four years ago after maybe two decades of wandering, wandering but at the same time knowing that Catholicism was the correct path to take at this time in my life. I have no regrets.

One of my Sponsors, Jane Walton, invited me to attend a Lenten Prayer Group in a nearby suburb. I walked in, having no idea as to who the group were, what was expected of me or what I should know or believe or actually be doing. This invitation proved to be one of the most significant and worthwhile experiences of my life to date. It came, as things often do, all in God's perfect timing.

The Providence Prayer Group had been meeting in the Tighes Hill Convent, the home of Mercy Sisters Val O'Hara and Moya Langtry for about twenty years, and from my first encounter with the fifteen or so members present, I was aware of an immediate 'coming-home'. The welcome I received that first afternoon was so genuine, warm and engaging that I felt I wasn't an outsider, I wasn't the new kid on the block, I was part of this amazing group of, mainly women, who cared, who lived lives of tolerance, compassion and grace. I gradually learnt that those in the group who weren't Sisters of Mercy were actually known as Mercy Associates.



Today, I am a proud Mercy Associate and feel I owe much to my friend and Sponsor Jane for her foresight in introducing me to the Mercy world and in particular the words of the prayer that have become my constant in times of need – 'in Mercy we forgive the incompleteness in another' and I always add 'and in myself'. These are words I know I can lean on, always there, whenever strength is needed.

**Suzanne Romani, Tighes Hill Providence Mercy Associate**

Lose not for a moment the presence of God... as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre. Now, our centre is God from Whom all our actions should spring as from their source.

Catherine McAuley



## *Support and Service—Norma's story...*

I became a Mercy Associate in 1992, when I was invited to join the recently formed Mercy Associates by Sister Maria Goretta.

I had lost my husband a couple of years previous and at times, I was very lonely. I thought that by joining the Associates, it would help my prayer life and at least I would have someone to talk to. I got more than I bargained for. As we (the Associates) joined with the Mater Volunteers and we were soon making morning or afternoon tea for the 'Day' patients. The nurses also found jobs for us when we were having a slack day i.e. folding robes or plastic bed pads. A group of us were invited to make up 'medi-paks' once a month.



Gladstone Mater Volunteers:  
Norma is third from the left.

When Sisters Maria Goretta and Sister Mary were transferred to Rockhampton, Sister Beryl took over leading us. We started joining the Saturday Morning Healing Mass to be followed by a meeting at the Parish Hall. We opened our meetings with prayer and usually a talk by someone within the Parish.

Over the years we have formed a telephone circle (to ring for prayers for the sick and needy), a casserole bank (to supply people with a casserole after funerals or trauma) and visiting the sick and lonely.

In 2001 / 2002, I co-coordinated with Narell Guinea at a time of much activity for the Associates. We had retreats led by a Sister from Rockhampton.

Although my original reason for joining the Mercy Associates was about me, I soon learnt to share and work for people who are sick or needy. Each month we put money in an account and at the end of the year we donate it to Mercy Works.

This year, it is the Star of the Sea Catholic Church's turn to host the World Day of Prayer and the Mercy Associates have been invited to assist with the presentation of the Service for the visitors from other Churches in Gladstone.

The Mercy Associates are a very important part of my life and I thank God that I was invited to join this lovely group of people.

**Norma Reynolds, Gladstone Mercy Associate**

## *The heart journey of a Mercy Associate...*

In a nutshell ..... Mercy is the carrying out of Catherine's dream to extend love and compassion to all people.....

To me this Mercy comes to life in the actions of the Sisters of Mercy. This is one of the influences I cherish most in my personal journey. My closeness to and admiration for the Sisters of Mercy harkens back to my early days in Bathurst when my eldest daughter began Kindergarten at the Cathedral School. I met these truly remarkable women who gave so much of themselves to me and my family and who embedded within me a deep desire to explore their spirit of compassion and their genuine caring for everyone who crossed their paths.

I also look back with fondness upon the Sisters' beautiful home St. Joseph's Mount which is now taking on such a dynamically different life-giving role of Mercy and compassion towards our environment. That first visual encounter stole my heart! I remember being in awe as I gazed at the magnificence, yet the homeliness of the wonderful old building which whispered of graciousness and of history. I had an immediate sense that this beautiful home housing Mercy within its environs would play an important part in the growth of my spiritual life .... in my training to be a more worthwhile person of Mercy.



St Joseph's Mount in Bathurst, previously motherhouse of the Bathurst Sisters of Mercy; now the Rahamim Ecology Centre (<http://www.rahamim.org.au>).

So when I was approached to join the Mercy Associates I was touched and honoured, it seemed to be such a 'coming home' a natural progression. In the chapel so special to me, I was inaugurated into a group of strong, inspiring like-minded people who fill the ranks of the Mercy Associates.

**Sandra Lynch, Bathurst Mercy Associate**

God's foolishness is wiser than  
human wisdom,  
and God's weakness is stronger than  
human strength.

1 Cor 1:25



## Ballarat Commitment Ceremony

On Sunday December 3, 2017, a large group of Sisters and Associates gathered in the Mercy Centre Chapel for the Annual Commitment Ceremony of the Ballarat Mercy Associates.

The Celebration commenced with Associate, Jeanette Morris, welcoming all to the land of the Wathaurong People and the message stick was placed on the altar. Kathy Pollard, Chair of the Coordinating group, welcomed all with a special mention for Anne Pate, the newly appointed Associates Facilitator for Victoria, who was joining us for the first time. Kathy then invited Sister Berenice Kerr rsm, the Community Leader for South B, to lead us in the Liturgy which saw both the commitment of two new Associates and the renewal of Commitment of present Mercy Associates.

Mary Reus and Kierce O'Loughlin, with their sponsors, had undertaken their formation preparation over the preceding months using the new Formation Resource. Mary and Kierce (pictured below), each made their First Commitment and were presented with their badge, certificate and Associates Vision Statement. All present then prayed a prayer of blessing over our newest Mercy companions.



The Renewal of Commitment followed for the thirty-five Associates present and all responded with the singing of the Suscipe and the sharing of a sign of peace. It was a very prayerful and meaningful time for all.

Following the ceremony, all moved to enjoy 'a comfortable cup of tea' in each other's company.

Our annual celebration of welcome for new Associates and Renewal of Commitment is a wonderful coming together of Mercy and a very special day in our calendar.

**Ballarat Mercy Associates**

## Music, Prayer and Service—

### Betty's story...

Betty says it is all due to her mother!

Betty has had an association with the Sisters of Mercy for 70 years. Her mother was a woman of faith, and milked cows by hand, so that Betty and her sister could go to Sacred Heart College. It was here that Betty learned the piano and where music became an important part of her life, along with family. This petite lady, with a warm and welcoming smile, is a qualified music teacher A.Mus.A. From those early beginnings Betty has played music all her life. She played the organ at St. Alipius, Ballarat East, for over 40 years. She has taught at St. Patrick's College; played for weddings and funerals, always mindful of the effort her Mother put in, and the opportunity she provided her with.

Betty became a Mercy Associate around eight years ago. She says she was very privileged to be asked. Now that Betty's large family have all gone from home, and she is on her own, she says that the Mercy Associates provide her with an immediate connection and stop her feeling isolated. Her days are filled with music – playing at a local Residential Facility, for Mass, and for community singing; playing at small prayer services in Residential Facilities for other religious groups. Betty is full of Mercy towards all those she meets in these circumstances and is very generous with her time.

She says that as she gets older she prays more, and that the Holy Spirit becomes clearer. She takes the Holy Spirit with her on all the visits she makes. Thank you, Betty, for all you do.

**Prepared by Kathy Pollard, based on an interview with Betty, both are Ballarat Mercy Associates**



### Keeping connected...

*Many Paths* is published on the ISMAPNG website, [institute.mercy.org.au](http://institute.mercy.org.au)—click on 'Become Involved', then you'll see 'Mercy Associates' as one of the options. On the Mercy Associates screen you'll also see the Vision Statement and other items of interest.

If you would like to subscribe to the Institute's monthly newsletter *Just Mercy*, you can do this on the ISMAPNG website. Click 'News Centre' and the final item is 'Just Mercy'. On that screen you can sign up to receive this each month via email.

## Rockhampton 2018 Plans...

Following Mass during which Associates renewed their commitment for twelve months, Sr Beryl Amedee RSM offered a response to the question: What does it mean to be an Associate? Healthy discussion followed and one strong point that arose was the importance of recording the lives of the Rockhampton sisters.

Meetings promise to be very diverse in their nature for the coming year. We will:

1. listen to a panel of people from different faiths. Discussion and a question time will follow;
2. learn more about Mercyworks with Sr Ailsa McKinnon;
3. be introduced to Jan Heath at our combined meeting with the Josephite and Presentation Associates;
4. celebrate 'Mercy Day' with the sisters;
5. have a remembrance day for deceased Associates and their family members.

**Beryl Mills, Rockhampton Mercy Associate**



**What does it mean to be a Mercy Associate?**

## Tuart Hill (Perth) Mercy Associates...

Our year started well with almost the total group present at our first meeting. It gave us a good chance to focus on Lent and I was grateful for the Lenten resources received via the CEO. They were very well received.

We also spent some time with Formation Resource book. We have two people who are currently considering making a first commitment later in the year. We are working towards getting a formation program in place for them. Other members were keen to read the book and we are aiming to have all members read it over the next few months.

We continue with our recruiting program, extending it to present and former Mercy school communities. Not a lot of success at the moment, but we intend to keep trying.

Plans are in motion for our next Mercy Works fund-raiser and members will bring their ideas to the next gathering.

Living 'Mercy Lives' to the best of our ability is our constant focus. Our plan is to keep striving for the ideal...

**Jan O' Connor,  
Tuart Hill Mercy Associate**

## Formation Resource and Administrative Handbook

Many groups have received copies of the Formation Resource and Administrative Handbook. All groups will receive them before the end of March. The **Formation Resource** is intended to be the foundation of the initial formation programme for aspiring Mercy Associates. The process is for one or two current Mercy Associates to work through this resource with new candidates over a period of some months, discussing it as they go.

The **Administrative Handbook** is the framework for Mercy Associates groups. It contains a great deal of information, intended to guide groups in areas such as meetings, ministries, record-keeping, etc. It also contains the Mercy Associates Code of Conduct, and details of Commitment Ceremonies and related procedures.

There are many Mercy Associates groups, and the two books are intended to ensure all follow the same framework and formation processes, but they are not intended to stifle local identity or initiatives. If your group needs more copies, contact your Network Facilitator (Chris in NSW, Anne in VIC, Carmel in other locations), and copies can be made available.

Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' John 20:21-22

