



MERCY CONNECT

A PROJECT OF
MERCY WORKS

CONNECTIVITY

Mercy Connect Sydney

8 December 2020

*Merry
Christmas!*

WE WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES MANY
BLESSINGS OF PEACE AND GOODWILL DURING THIS
CHRISTMAS SEASON!

FROM ALL OF US AT

Mercy Works



Welcome to the 2020 Christmas edition of CONNECTIVITY.

In a year when the phrase “annus horibilis’ has become a cliché, I feel blessed in many ways, as Mercy Connect Coordinator, to have witnessed the exceptional determination, resilience and resourcefulness of the Mercy Connect Volunteer mentors.

At last count, because of COVID, we have just three volunteers flying the Mercy Connect flag in Sydney, only able to enter their schools with special permission.

This certainly does not mean our other wonderful volunteers have been idle.

I pay tribute to the Mercy Connect providers of online support for HSC students and adult conversation classes, the writers of cards to sixth graders who they started mentoring in kindergarten, the carers for elderly relatives, the on-line story readers, the helping hands at charity kitchens, the minders of grandchildren and the listening ear at the end of the telephone when friends and family are all feeling it is a bit too much.

Although 2020 is a year that we will be glad to put behind us, I look forward to better times and a 2021 that will rightly be seen as an “annus mirabilis”.

What’s next?

As I write **it is anticipated that Mercy Connect volunteers will be able to return to mentoring in schools in Term 1 2021.**

At the moment, with some exceptions, schools are continuing their policy of restricting non-essential external providers to schools and accordingly this has meant that Mercy Connect volunteer mentors have been unable to return to volunteering. Three volunteers of the more than 50 current active volunteers have been able to come to an arrangement with the principal and return to supporting children under the school’s protocols.

Most of the current Mercy Connect volunteers have indicated that they wish to return to volunteering in 2021 while some volunteers have chosen not to return because of ongoing health concerns or because a family member has health concerns.

Only a few volunteers were able to start volunteering in schools in 2020 before the **COVID19 pandemic** saw lockdowns put in place and the introduction of on-line learning in schools in Term One.

If there are no further COVID waves it is anticipated that schools will return to normal and by early March 2021, volunteers should be in schools supporting refugee students. As the health and safety of our volunteers are most important to Mercy Connect, we are asking volunteers not to visit any of the campuses involved in the Mercy Connect project until approval has been given by the school principal for volunteering to resume.

The decision to return to volunteering is a personal one based on each volunteer’s circumstances.

If you decide you wish to return to volunteering and approval has been given for volunteering to begin, we ask each volunteer to confirm with the school the following before they enter any school campus:

- That you have not travelled overseas, Victoria or to cluster locations in NSW within the last 14 days;
- That you are not showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (fever; flu like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat or headaches; or have difficulty breathing);
- That you have not had close or casual contact* with a person who has been confirmed with COVID-19; and
*** Casual contact is having been face-to-face for less than 15 minutes, or in the same closed space for less than two hours, with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 when that person was infectious. Close contact is having been face-to-face for at least 15 minutes or been in the same closed space for at least two hours, with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 when that person was infectious.**
- That you will follow the school's directions regarding hygiene practices while on campus. That is
 - You may be asked to have a temperature check
 - Sanitise your hands when entering the school and at regular intervals.
 - Wash your hands regularly for 20 to 30 seconds.
 - If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
 - Hand sanitiser does not replace washing your hands after using the bathroom.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or cough into your elbow.
 - Dispose used tissues into a bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
 - Practice social distancing:
 - Keep a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people
 - Avoid crowds and large public gatherings
 - Avoid shaking hands or any other physical contact

Other news...

We have just readvertised for new volunteers and all **on-going training and development for the foreseeable future will be delivered remotely via Zoom Workshop.**

Two new volunteers, Dianna Simmons and Robyn Cosier, successfully trialled the newly developed online training package delivered via Zoom over three consecutive weekly sessions (about two hours each). I thank Diana and Robyn for their enthusiastic and informed involvement and observations. As a result I feel confident that this is an effective and COVID safe way of delivering training.

MOST IMPORTANTLY I have been working on the development of online training modules to ensure all new and current volunteer mentors have been trained in the revised MWL Child Safeguarding Policy and the MWL Code of Conduct Policy .

PLEASE NOTE All new and current volunteer mentors must undergo training in the revised MWL Child Safeguarding Policy and the MWL Code of Conduct Policy .

Once you have completed training, **DELIVERED BY ZOOM WORKSHOP**, will sign a declaration form to indicate that training in child safeguarding has been completed.

In a separate email all details regarding this training will be sent to you with an invitation to attend the mandatory training workshop.

If you are unable to attend the live Zoom workshop or lack the technology to participate alternative training opportunities will be offered.

All new and current volunteer mentors will be asked to sign a declaration form before commencing or returning to their placement in an educational setting to indicate their intention to comply with the **MWL Child Safeguarding Policy**

I have also been involved in

- Maintaining contact (email, text message and phone calls) with active Mercy Connect volunteer mentors and educational settings to ensure a smooth transition to full return of the Mercy Connect program once COVID restrictions are lifted.
- Updating of volunteer mentor details on ETapestry data base ensuring WWCC accreditation is current.
- Updating the Mercy Connect Volunteer Handbook and Mercy Connect Volunteer Coordinator Handbook including all application forms, Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Development of a new volunteer training module (to be presented via Zoom) that was trialled in November 2020 with new applicants.
- Training of Mercy Connect Sydney staff via zoom workshops in new policies rolled out as part of ACFID compliance requirements. Policies include Code of

Conduct, Development and Non-Development, Financial Wrongdoing, Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Money Laundering and Fraud Control and Corruption Prevention.

- Training of Mercy Connect Coordinators in Ballarat, Melbourne and Perth via zoom workshops in new policies rolled out as part of ACFID compliance requirements. Policies include Code of Conduct, Development and Non-Development, Financial Wrongdoing, Counter-Terrorism and Anti-Money Laundering and Fraud Control and Corruption Prevention.
- Visiting the King’s School to speak with Year 3 about the work of Mercy Connect in support of the class’s fundraising efforts.
- Writing of articles for publication in the Mini-Bilum and on Facebook. Most recently - the experience of volunteering in the COVID era through the eyes of Harry Stephens, volunteer mentor at Delaney College, Granville.

Mercy Works
November 10 at 2:36 PM · 🌐

Need something to read? Find our Stories of Change from 2020 in our 'Mini' Bilum - there are five issues to choose from!
Find them all on our website: www.mercyworks.org.au/bilum-magazine/

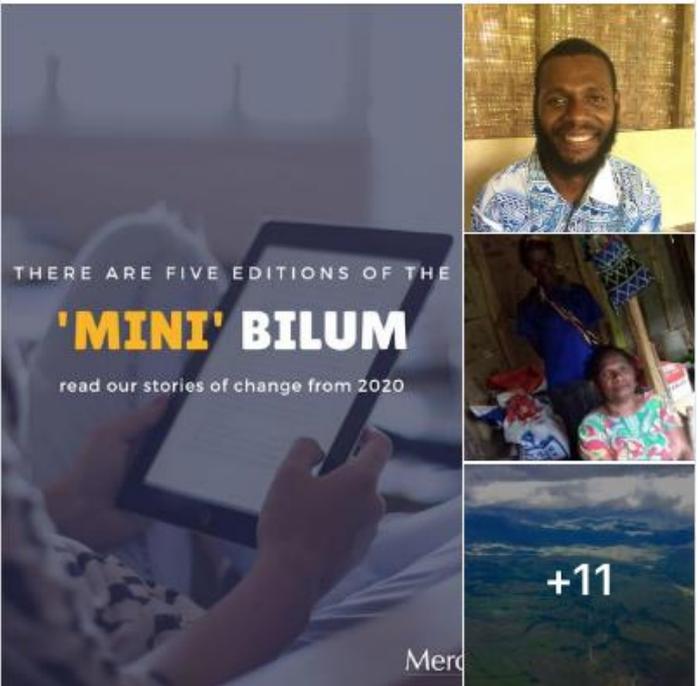


Mercy Works
November 3 at 5:00 PM · 🌐

This year we said hello to the 'Mini' Bilum, sharing the same stories of change just in a different way!

Mercy Works
November 5 at 7:00 PM · 🌐

This year we said hello to the 'Mini' Bilum, our newest publication. Sharing our stories of change just in smaller pieces!
In our first five editions we have shared the journey of our programs and projects from the beginning of lockdown to now.
Missed an edition? Find them all on our website: <http://ow.ly/U4IE50C3tZb>



The latest edition of “Bilum” is scheduled for publication before Christmas.



On Wednesday 18 November, our communications manager, Lauren conducted a detailed interview via zoom with Fatima and Fadi, students at Bankstown Senior College, about learning in COVID times and how Mercy Connect can help when schools back to some kind of normal after the pandemic.

You will be able to see the full interview soon on the Mercy Works facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/MercyWorksLtd/>

On behalf of Mercy Works, I wish you a very merry Christmas and I look forward to working with you again next year.

*Sincerely
Paul*

PS And just in case the jokes in the bon bons are not of a high enough standard.

*What do snowmen eat for lunch? Icebergers!
Who's Rudolph's favourite pop star? Beyon-sleigh!
Why did the turkey cross the road? Because it was the chicken's day off!
Why did no one bid for Rudolph and Blitzen on eBay? Because they were two deer!
What do angry mice send to each other at Christmas? Cross-mouse cards!
Why couldn't the skeleton go to the Christmas Party? Because he had nobody to go with!
What do you call a bunch of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby? Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer!
What did Adam say the day before Christmas? "It's Christmas, Eve!"
What is the best Christmas present in the world? A broken drum, you just can't beat it!
What do snowmen have for breakfast? Snowflakes!
What do snowmen wear on their heads? Ice caps!
What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar? He got 25 days!
What did the stamp say to the Christmas card? Stick with me and we'll go places!
Why is it getting harder to buy Advent calendars? Their days are numbered!
Who is Santa's favourite singer? Elf-is Presley!
How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born? They had a weigh in a manger!
Why did Santa's helper see the psychiatrist? Because he had a low elf esteem!
What do you get if you cross Santa with a duck? A Christmas Quacker!
What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? Claus-trophobia!
Why was the turkey in the pop group? Because he was the only one with drumsticks!*