

mini MercyWorks Bilum

SISTERS OF MERCY IN AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA | AUGUST 2021



Due to the pandemic the marathon

that is 2021 is far from over. A few states around the Australia have come to a standstill yet again, but Mercy Works is still moving forward as best we can with our plans for the year. We believe it is most important to stay connected with all our staff, volunteers, and projects in these difficult times.

In this edition, our focus is on **'Connection'**. We bring you the next chapter of our Mercy Connect Photography Day. This story shares how it brought together Year 10 students and their teachers, from two different schools in Sydney, who have very different life journeys. We also share how we are keeping the Mercy Works mission alive and connected with schools across Australia.

We are most grateful for your continuing support of Mercy Works and all our projects, especially as we continue to face the challenges and uncertainties that COVID presents. Thank you!

Sally Bradley RSM
Executive Director

FROM VISITING IN PERSON TO MEETING ONLINE

Making connections

BY LAUREN STARIHA &
SALLY BRADLEY RSM

2021 has presented a challenge, where we need to learn to balance the demands of living with a pandemic. The fragility of our world today reminds us that life is unpredictable, and we have to keep adapting. Forging connections remains as important as ever for Mercy Works. Keeping in contact with schools, sharing our stories with these communities and the unwavering faith that our program coordinators have in their work, all come together to create an indelible connection.

At the invitation of Claire Easton, Director of Mission at All Hallows' School, Brisbane, we visited in person in April and spoke at their whole school assembly. We shared an update on the Mercy Works projects the school is fundraising for in Simbu and Kiunga in Papua New Guinea. This year they've chosen to support PNG projects which particularly focus on women and girls. They range from Teacher Training to Life Skills Training in prisons.

In July our plans for the future were suddenly put on hold just as our school visits seemed to pick up. Even though we weren't able to physically visit schools anymore, technology provided another

option. Zoom has become the backbone of almost all our interactions from social gatherings to business meetings, and in our case, became the way we continued connecting with schools.

Santa Maria College in Attadale, Western Australia is celebrating 175 years of Mercy Education this year and invited Mercy Works to be a part of their celebrations. From behind different screens in our homes in Sydney, we were delighted to be able to present to the teachers of Santa Maria College. We especially focused on sharing our stories of our work with Indigenous communities in Australia and or new work with trafficked young women in the Philippines. Sharing our good news stories is always a special privilege for us.

The shared commitment and sense of mission present within the school communities is truly inspiring to see. A BIG thank you to all our supporters in schools across Australia. ■



Mrs Clare Easton, Director of Mission All Hallows' and Sr Sally Bradley RSM Executive Director with the schools Paving the Path Banner

Two parts to the story

BY LAUREN STARIHA & PAUL TAYLOR

Today most of us don't leave the house without devices that can access the internet and take photos. In 2019, Mercy Connect had the idea to build on this relationship with technology to foster a human connection between two schools from different parts of Sydney.

In 2020, the global pandemic put these plans on hold. This year, however, it was all systems go for the students of Mary Mackillop Catholic College, Wakeley and Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College, North Sydney to learn how to take better photos and explore Parramatta together.

Day One | Monday 3rd May

Ten students from each school made their way to our offices for the first Mercy Connect Photography Day. If the cold air and fog didn't wake them up, the walk up to the third floor of the building to the Board room certainly did.

As the small talk began the first sparks in a new connection started to flicker around the room. The day started with a welcome from Sr Sally Bradley RSM, our Executive Director, before jumping into learning about the camera on their phones. After learning how to take better photos, the students paired up (one from each school) and headed out on their walking tour of Parramatta. Together they explored Parramatta from a new perspective, with its extraordinary blend of cultures, and its

history as an important place of cultural significance for First Nations people.

Most of us have a basic understanding of how to use these devices but we often overlook cheats and shortcuts that would improve our user experience and produce better photos.

Day Two | Tuesday 15th June

After a rare long weekend, winter had truly set in with a cold crisp morning wrapping Parramatta in small rays of heat from the low hanging sun. The students from Mary Mackillop and Monte Sant' Angelo again made the journey to the Mercy Works offices for the second part of Photography Day.

Today, it was time to learn how to edit photos with existing tools and apps. These students have been editing in some way or another for years whether they've realised it or not. The skills learnt from apps like Snapchat and Instagram are so ingrained in the younger generation that they often forget that they are transferrable to older digital mediums like photos.

Connecting these students to bring out the best in their imagination is the ultimate goal of the day but fostering new friendships is a close second. Re-partnering in the pairs from day one, they began choosing their favourite photos. Narrowing down their photos to five seemed like an impossible task but after an hour each pair settled on five captioned photos that would form the photobook entitled 'Click & Connect'.



Clockwise from top: Selection of photos from the day; First Day Group Photo!

Seeing things differently can be challenging sometimes but a willingness to embrace new perspectives builds an understanding that connects people. Students and staff with very different life journeys connect and grow in their understanding of each other's stories, especially of those with refugee backgrounds.

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