



**The year is getting away and Mercy Day on 24 September is on our doorstep once more.**

Mercy Day is always a wonderful time to reflect on our Mercy tradition and story. This story is still so challenging for today, as it continues to both disturb and comfort us in the face of so much inequality and injustice to humankind and all of creation.

So many of our primary and secondary schools in the Mercy tradition are doing fantastic fundraising and we are thrilled to be top of mind as part of the one 'Mercy family' for fundraising activities. I took a trip to Perth in July, and I had lovely connections and visits with 17 schools as I presented our stories to hundreds of students and teachers. I was given a warm welcome and received extravagant Mercy hospitality. Mercy is most certainly alive and thriving.

I believe "indeed the true spirit of Mercy [is] flowing on us." (Catherine McAuley - founder of the Sisters of Mercy - Letter to Elizabeth Moore Easter Monday, 1841).

I trust that you will be both disturbed and comforted by the following stories, and that the true spirit of Mercy will flow on you this coming Mercy Day!

**Sally Bradley RSM**  
Executive Director

PHOTOS: (Above) Sr Sally visits students at OLMC Australind in WA and (below) St Brigid's College Lesmurdie.



## From Little Things Big Things Grow

**Our Nunga Babies Watch Project (NBW)** in Adelaide continues to advocate and work together with Aboriginal people to ensure their voice is heard and their Rights are respected when interacting with the Department for Child Protection in South Australia.

There have been small progresses forward, including the February 2023 delivery of Auntie Pat Waria-Read's powerful speech in the South Australian Parliament House by local member Connie Banaros. The NBW team are working with the University of SA to bring Social Work students to Tauondi Aboriginal College in Port Adelaide to do a more intensive cultural awareness program and the Aboriginal Voice to SA Parliament Bill was passed at a special sitting on March 26th.

However, there is still much to be done. The NBW July update highlights the glaring inconsistency between what the Department for Child Protection (DCP) say they will do as opposed to what they actually do when interacting with Aboriginal families.

Among the list of common complaints about the Department for Child Protection (DCP) in SA is, what NBW calls, "Opportunistic behaviour by DCP". The report states that "informing a family member of DCP plans to take a child before the required process of Child Safeguarding Due Diligence and or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is not meaningfully accounted for.

"No substantive involvement of family, Aboriginal practitioner support person or sharing of necessary information will create the opportunity for this type of behaviour," report NBW. "The DCP appearing to do whatever they want, when they want with no accountability... No evidence is forthcoming to show active efforts have been genuinely and actively used, to achieve the priority of placing a child in kinship care."

*"And no translator or Aboriginal practitioner present - not knowing what is being signed, not wanting to say anything, for fear of saying the wrong thing, resulting in trauma of not understanding why a child is taken. DCP repeatedly do not have Aboriginal practitioners or support persons present."*

NBW, supported by Mercy Works, exists to support Aboriginal families' voices when interacting with DCP. "If Aboriginal Voices aren't heard, engaged with or encouraged, or silenced, and due diligence applied to the process, an opportunistic behaviour by DCP becomes evident. With no accountability, there seems a rushed predetermined agenda toward long term 'orders,'" say the group.

A recent Summary Statement of Investigation by the Ombudsman SA, highlights DCP issues in response to complaints. NBW describes this as "another example as a culture of mis-guided use, or non-compliance of social work practice and statutory obligations."

One summary statement included in this report <https://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/publications/investigation-reports/2023-investigation-decisions> stated: "While not legislatively incorrect, the department's actions and omissions created a risk of the child being disconnected from family and culture long term, contrary to the intended outcomes of the ATSICPP (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle). This matter highlights the risks associated with superficial compliance with the ATSICPP."

The Ombudsman also concluded that the department erred in its handling of the complaint.

Mercy Works is proud to continue to support this important project to stop "another stolen generation" from occurring in South Australia.

TOP PHOTO: Auntie Pat's speech was delivered in South Australian Parliament House in February.

BOTTOM PHOTO: Auntie Pat Waria-Read heads Nunga Babies Watch.







(Top) Wednesday's are for reading with "Miss" Flo and (below) Miss Jan.

## Classroom Connections with Mercy Connect

Ukrainian student Khrystyna, 6, loves kangaroos and the library in her new school, but misses her cat, Jessie. Her friend, Daneliia, 6, misses her old Kindergarten class back home, but loves the Opera House and the beaches in Australia.

Both girls have been in Australia for a year after having to leave their homeland in the Ukraine, due to the war. They are now happily settling into their new classroom at St Joachim's Catholic Primary School in Lidcombe.

Khrystyna and Daneliia are part of the Mercy Works Mercy Connect program in Sydney. This program for people from Refugee, Asylum seekers and Humanitarian backgrounds has been operating in schools since 2008 to assist school students, groups of adults and their families adjust to a whole new life in Australia, which presents many challenges. Many arrive in Australia after having experienced lengthy periods of dislocation, grief and trauma.

We recruit and train 128 volunteer mentors to support 1,000 students in 58 schools in Western Australia, Victoria and NSW as well as five adult literacy classes.

Two of our trained MC volunteers, Sr Flo Snell RSJ and Jan Finkelstein, have been working at St Joachim's every Wednesday for seven years, currently helping in the Kindergarten classroom with literacy, reading, writing and numeracy.

*"We've been fortunate and lucky enough to have Mercy Connect work in our school and have two wonderful volunteers, who we are so grateful for," says Maria Mairoana, Principal at St Joachim's.*

*"They are so loved in the school, the children absolutely adore them, and they are constantly asking when is Miss Flo coming? When is Miss Jan coming? Is today their day?"*

Maria says Lidcombe is in a prime position to accept students from The Ukraine because they are so close to the Ukrainian Church which is only a few doors down from the school.

*"Because of that community we have been very fortunate to have some Ukrainian students come to join our school community, and some of those little ones are also in our kindy room and they have also had the benefit of being involved with Mercy Connect.*

*"The most important aspect is the way they connect with the student and that special sense of care that's offered that everybody belongs. It's good for the students to see we have the youngest students and we've got the older members of society together all working for the same thing," says Maria.*



To read the full story or volunteer with Mercy Connect click or scan here:



Photo: (L) Principal Maria Mairoana says Mercy Connect is invaluable in the classroom.

Photo: (R) Happy times in Kindy Gold!

## TAX APPEAL THANK YOU!

Mercy Works would like to say a big thank you for the overwhelming support we received for our June 2023 Tax Appeal to create Economic Empowerment in PNG.



Your generous donations well exceeded our target of \$10,000 for this project, reaching a wonderful \$19,160.

This money will go to our Simbu Project in PNG where our microfinancing initiative, the Leave No One Behind Village and Life Savings Association (LNB - VSLA) is creating economic empowerment and improving the lives of the people of Simbu.

Essentially, the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals, families and communities is enhanced by promoting a saving culture and increasing access to credit to enable them to embark on income generating activities to sustain and improve their livelihoods. It is a collaborative effort taken by the local community towards financial freedom.

Sr Maryanne Kolkia RSM, who heads up the initiative, says she is incredibly grateful for the support.

*"The Leave No One Behind Village Savings and Loans Association is inspiring and exciting," says Sr Maryanne. "Every month, more requests are coming from people of all walks of life. The impact of their stories is spreading like wildfire.*

*"Our sincere word of gratitude and deep appreciation for your generosity. Without your support, our financial journey towards economic freedom and empowerment would not be possible. Your reaching out is our strength and motivation. Thanks for being part of our journey in generating an income through the LNB-VSLA."*

TOP PHOTO: PNG Tax Appeal.

RIGHT PHOTO: Mamma Ula and Josepha are part of our Savings Association in Simbu.

BOTTOM PHOTO: Sr Maryanne is helping create economic empowerment for women in PNG.



**MercyWorks**

SISTERS OF MERCY  
IN AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

**MERCY WORKS**

PO Box 2023, North Parramatta NSW 1750

Phone +61 (0) 2 9564 1911

Fax +61 (0) 2 9550 9683

Email [mercyworks@mercyworks.org.au](mailto:mercyworks@mercyworks.org.au)

Website [www.mercyworks.org.au](http://www.mercyworks.org.au)

ABN 37 147 042 466

**Editor**

Jo Casamento,

Communications and

Fundraising Coordinator

Design Carter & Co. Creative



**ACFID**  
MEMBER

We are a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and as such committed to the ACFID Code of Conduct for Australian aid and development organisation. See [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)