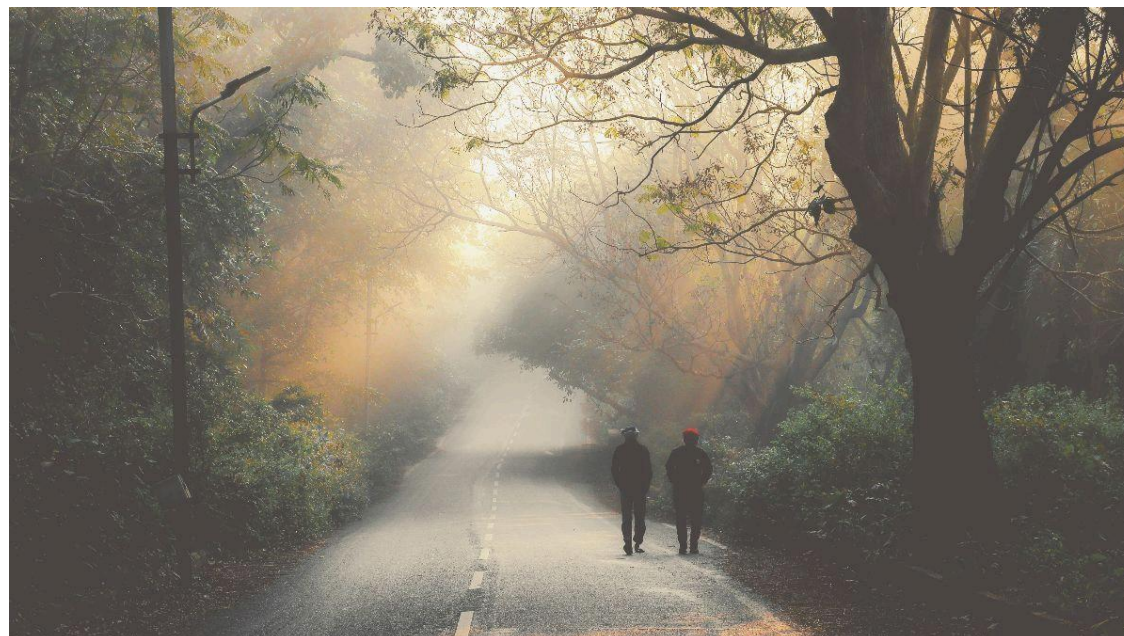


September 2025



September Reflection: Extending the Cloak of Mercy

Anthony Loschiavo, Executive Officer MMC

Every year, on September 24, the global Mercy Family celebrate Mercy Day, marking the opening of the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin.

I was struck by the 2025 Mercy Day theme of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas: The Cloak of Mercy. The theme invites us to reflect on the image of God's mercy as a cloak: sheltering, uniting and calling us to extend compassion to others.

It draws on Catholic Social Teaching themes and reminds us of the message of Jesus "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25:35-36

[Read more](#)

Mercy Ministry Companions

2025 MMC Conference explores hope and hospitality

Annette Schneider rsm, Chair, Conference Planning Committee

On September 15 and 16, approximately 120 participants gathered at the Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne, to explore our MMC Conference theme '*Extending Horizons as people of Hope and Hospitality*'.



Day 1 - Welcome and Key Note Speakers:

Wurundjeri man, Colin Hunter Jnr Jnr, led a beautiful Welcome to Country in Celtic Hall. Unfortunately, due to strong winds, we could not hold the smoking ceremony outside.

In her Welcome to this fourth MMC Conference, Chair of the MMC Trustee Directors, Margaret Bounader, invited participants to immerse themselves into the program:

"Our Annual Conference is a significant ongoing formation opportunity. I hope you find these days personally and professionally enriching and that our potential for collaboration in mercy, to become more synodal in living our mission, will be strengthened through your interactions with each other."

The Conference enabled participants to engage in a wide range of activities including addresses from a number of key note speakers, workshops covering a broad range of topics and facilitated reflection and strategic planning sessions.

[Click here](#) for the full Conference Schedule.



Keynote Speakers included, on Day 1, Archbishop Shane Mackinlay, who focused on 'Hospitality, Synodality and Hope' and on Day 2, Dr Sonja Hood, who shared experiences and insights into the 'The Power of Inclusion'. Both Shane and Sonja also contributed to a panel conversation with facilitator, Angela Scaffidi, where aspects of the conference theme were developed further.

As part of the Conference Dinner on Monday evening, brief 'tasters' were offered to introduce each Workshop being run on Day 2. Many people could be heard saying they wanted to attend all six workshops, rather than selecting only two!

What participants said about their experience of the two days:

"Connecting with people and sharing the common goal of living the Gospel of Christ in the charism of Catherine."

"Gathering with like-minded people with hearts for Mercy and justice who make a difference, especially to vulnerable groups in our world."

"Learning more about Mercy – I am reasonably new to Mercy so it was great to see it alive through the people and their passion."



Day 2 - Reflection and Workshops

Our **Morning Reflection** on Day 2 was led by 46 students and five staff from St Aloysius College, North Melbourne. The choir and ensemble offered everyone the gift of music, stirring the heart, mind and spirit as we began a new day together, reflecting on the Values of MMC.

Two rounds of **Workshops** were also offered throughout the day. We are grateful to the Workshop Convenors who introduced participants to various ways in which our MMC ministries and the broader Mercy family are striving to be sources of Hope and Hospitality through their engagement and outreach activities.

What participants said about the Workshops:

"It was encouraging to see that collaboration is a priority and being encouraged. It reinforces the work we are doing."

"The Workshops were valuable because they encouraged personal reflection as well as conversations and collaborations with other ministries. Having smaller and more focused groups I found valuable."



Cross-ministry collaborations are already happening within MMC and there seems to be a growing desire for such initiatives to expand to meet emerging needs.

Comments about ways we can build on the momentum evident at the Conference included:

“Targeted facilitation of cross-ministry collaboration – having activities for the inception of ideas, with action plans for commencing this work.”

“Encouraging visiting and sharing onsite in each other’s programs.”

“Further exploration of the cross-Tasman Indigenous Alliance.”

“Pondering and revisiting the question of where else are the truly unmet needs in our society, leveraging our capabilities and assets in adjoining areas of need.”



MMC Trustee Directors would like to express their gratitude to the members of the **Conference Planning Committee** for their preparation over the past six months and their practical assistance during the Conference – Rosie Busuttil (Mercy Connect); Amanda Robertson (MacKillop Family Services); Cathy Jenkins (Mercy Health); Lucie McCrory and Rachel Valentine (Mercy Education), Belinda Cooney and Annette Schneider rsm (MMC). We are also grateful to Trustee Director, Carmel Ross, for her support through attendance at meetings.

With gratitude to each participant and to our ministries for enabling their colleagues to attend, we invite you to ponder this extract from our Conference Closing Prayer:

“As we reflect on the theme of extending horizons, we are invited to move beyond what is familiar or comfortable. To extend horizons is to step into new spaces and spheres, to welcome new people, and to embrace new challenges with hearts full of hope and hospitality.”



MMC Celebrates Mercy Day 2025 with McAuley

On 24 September, MMC staff celebrated Mercy Day by volunteering at McAuley House, Footscray. McAuley House provides safe and stable longer-term accommodation for women and provides programs to develop skills and reconnect women to food and cooking.

The MMC staff helped to prepare a 'high tea' style lunch for residents, former residents and staff at McAuley House. It was a wonderful morning, working alongside the staff of McAuley and spending time over lunch with residents and staff.



Mercy Education



Mercy Day Celebrations with St Aloysius College, North Melbourne

On Tuesday, 9 September, Sisters of Mercy, parents and Trustee Director Gabrielle McMullen AM joined the students and staff of St Aloysius College, North Melbourne to celebrate Mercy Day. The occasion commenced with Mass in the College hall celebrated by College chaplain Fr Thang Vu, followed by the announcement of the 2026 prefects whose badges were blessed and distributed to them.

The College then brought its festival of visual arts, STEM, social justice and performing arts to a close with prizegiving to the first, second, third and fourth place getters in each category. With the conclusion of the

formalities, students moved from the hall to continue their celebrations with food, treats, games and fund-raising activities in support of the good causes sponsored by each of the College Houses, Fallon, McAuley, Scully and Vernon.



Mercy Day at the Academy

On Friday, 12 September, students and staff from the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy walked across to St Patrick's Cathedral in East Melbourne to celebrate Mercy Day. They were joined by Sisters of Mercy, parents, College Advisory Council members and representatives from Mercy Ministry Companions. Mass was celebrated by College chaplain Fr Michael McEntee.

Student singers and musicians led the community in singing the Mass of Creation. Other hymns and the readings reflected the annual theme of 'Paving the Way'. Of particular note were the Prayers of the Faithful during which twelve students, two from each of Years 7-12, explored in turn the Mercy values of Hospitality, Courage, Respect, Compassion, Service, and Justice and how they had been put into action in 2025 by the respective year level. It was a joyous celebration of a strong and united Mercy community.



Mercy Education Partnerships

Mercy Ministry Companions has two significant educational ministries in Geelong – Sacred Heart College and MacKillop Education Geelong. Sacred Heart College is a Catholic secondary school for girls located in Newtown. MacKillop Education Geelong is a Foundation to Year 12 school for students with unique learning needs, many of whom have social and emotional challenges that mainstream schools find difficult to support.

On Wednesday, 20 August, Sacred Heart College celebrated its Arts Day Festival in the College grounds. MacKillop Education Geelong's colourful Bittersweet food truck was invited to contribute to the festivities. The MacKillop students sold toasties and hot soup to the College students – it was perfect fare for a winter's day. The Bittersweet food truck offers a creative learning opportunity to students at MacKillop Education Geelong.





Listening to Country at Lake Mungo

Charles Reis, Chair Mercy Community Services Australia

During September, the Board of Mercy Community Services Australia Limited (MCSAL), the CEOs of MacKillop Family Services and Mercy Connect, and our Senior Executives responsible for First Nations practices and partnerships, undertook a cultural immersion at Lake Mungo in New South Wales – made famous in the 1970's with the discovery of skeletal remains of Mungo Woman and Mungo Man, proving that Aboriginal people have continuously inhabited Australia for 40,000 years.

Our leader was Vicki Clark OAM, a proud Mutthi Mutthi woman whose clan, along with the Paakantji and Ngiyampaa clans, are the traditional owners of Lake Mungo. Vicki, a former Board Member of MacKillop Family Services and later Mercy Community Services Australia, explained the cultural sensitivity of removing bones of Aboriginal people from Lake Mungo; and the cultural significance of their return and reinterment.

[Read more](#)



Mercy Health



Mercy Health Bethlehem celebrates 60 years of care

In September, Mercy Health Bethlehem Home for the Aged in Bendigo marked a diamond milestone — 60 years of providing compassionate care to the community.

To celebrate, Mercy Health hosted a Diamond Jubilee High Tea bringing together residents, families, staff and friends for a memorable afternoon. Guests were welcomed with a formal recognition service in the chapel before enjoying a sparkling high tea with delicious treats and champagne.

[Read more](#)

From the Formation Coordinator

Middle Leaders’ Projects from the 2024 Cohort

Six Middle Leaders who completed the Program in 2024 have volunteered to provide a snapshot of their projects for readers of Connections. This month, we are delighted to share a snapshot of **Rebecca Garreffa’s** project.



Mercy Jigsaw Puzzles at St Joseph's College Mildura - Rebecca Garreffa

In the past 12 months, I have introduced a variety of Mercy and Catholic inspired jigsaw puzzles to the staff rooms across both of our college campuses. I stepped into the role of Director of Faith and Mission at St Joseph’s College at the beginning of 2024, and as part of this role, I wanted to focus on engaging staff in a social way, encouraging a sense of community and conversation, all whilst keeping our college vision in mind.

I was inspired by artwork we had around the college, particularly a piece titled “Guadalupe” by artist Jen Norton. I soon discovered she offered her artworks as Jigsaw puzzles, and so my mini project came to life.

[Read more](#)

Part 4 of the 2025 Middle Leaders' Cohort in Perth

Our fourth Cohort of Middle Leaders will conclude their four-part Program with a one-day gathering at St Catherine’s House of Hospitality in Perth on October 16. As part of the day, each participant will provide a ‘work in progress’ report on their project. On the following day, we will be visiting Mercedes College and MercyCare Wembley Aged Care Home, hosted by Middle Leaders from those Mercy ministries.

The evaluations from both of the 2025 Cohorts will help shape the 2026 ongoing formation opportunity. Details of the 2026 Program and the nomination process will be sent to ministries in early October.

Please share this Mercy Ministry Companions Newsletter with your colleagues and [opt-in for further communications.](#)

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Ministry Companions acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the country where we live and work today.

Copyright © 2025 Mercy Ministry Companions, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.