



October Reflection: An ongoing story that began with one child

Belinda Cooney, MMC Formation Support Officer

One of the many rewarding aspects of supporting the formation programs for Mercy Ministry Companions has been the opportunity to meet staff across the ministries and other Mercy heritage Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (MPJPs). In October, I had the pleasure of attending site visits arranged for Group 2 as part of the 2025 *Middle Leadership: Empowering Middle Leaders* program offered in Western Australia.

On Friday, 17 October, we began our day with a tour of Mercedes College – Ursula Frayne's first school, founded in 1846. Our guide, Vedette Lendich, Director of Faith & Mercy Charism, Mercedes College Perth, shared the remarkable story of the school's opening: despite Ursula being told, before she left for Australia, that hundreds of children needed education, only one child arrived at the beginning of the first day, with five more arriving during the day. Undeterred, Ursula and her sisters took to the streets, encouraging families to send their children. Slowly numbers increased and the school's legacy began to take root.

[Read more](#)



Acknowledging the contribution of Cathy Jenkins to MMC's ongoing formation programs

On 2 October, members of the MMC Mission Coordinators' Network farewelled Cathy Jenkins who is concluding her role with Mercy Health as Executive Director Mission Leadership this week. Cathy was a foundation member of the Network and has been an active contributor to the development and implementation of ongoing formation resources and new programs over the past three years. Cathy was also a member of the 2022, 2023 and 2025 MMC Conference Planning Committees. We will miss the warmth, encouragement, generosity and reflective insights she brought to her involvement with MMC. We wish Cathy many blessings as she embarks on the next stage of her ministry journey.

News from the Formation Coordinator

Following the recent visit to Perth for Part 4 of "*Mercy Leadership: empowering Middle Leaders*", MMC's three main cross-ministry offerings for 2025 have concluded. We have been affirmed and encouraged by the very positive feedback on the Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage, the Conference and the Middle Leaders' Program. These offerings involve collaboration with many people across the planning, implementation and evaluation stages so we are very grateful to everyone who has contributed during this year. Further information about our 2026 offerings will be included in next month's Connections.

Mercy Education



Mercy Education 2025 Frayne Speech Festival

On Friday 29 August, students from across Mercy Education schools gathered at the Mary Moloney Theatre at Sacred Heart College, Kyneton for the 2025 Frayne Speech Festival – honouring Mother Ursula Frayne, a pioneering Sister of Mercy and founder of Mercedes College, Perth: the first Mercy school in Australia.

Now in its 29th year, the festival featured three categories: Public Speaking, Debating, and Voice Choir. Students explored contemporary issues including politics and government, environment and sustainability, technology and ethics, and the power of play.

Sacred Heart College Kyneton Principal Dr Darren Egberts said "In a world overflowing with communication, it's easy to mistake volume for value. The Frayne Speech Festival provides a platform to return to what matters: listening, understanding, and embracing different perspectives that challenge, inspire, and connect us."

Congratulations to all participants for their outstanding contributions to this event.

[Learn more about the winners and runners up in each category](#)

Mercy Community Services



McAuley's Car Park Sleepout at Melbourne Airport

On 16 October, McAuley partnered with Melbourne Airport and Juno for the 2025 Car Park Sleepout, raising vital funds and awareness for those facing homelessness due to family violence. Sleeping in their cars on the T4 car park rooftop, 130 participants were offered a small glimpse into the vulnerability and uncertainty women and children face when forced to leave their homes in search of safety. Those who took part were privileged to hear about this directly from people with lived experience, including McAuley's Lived Experience Advisor, Diana Connell, who courageously shared her stories. The event raised more than \$90,000 for McAuley and Juno.



Mercy Connect Celebrates Mercy Day 2025

Mercy Connect teams celebrated Mercy Day in the final week of September, taking time to pause and appreciate the incredible contributions of staff, participants, and community, and to reaffirm the values that guide their work: dignity, respect, inclusion, and kindness. This year teams used the theme of "Lighting the Way", to remind them that everyone has the power to uplift others and create a culture of care and connection.

As part of the Mercy Day celebrations, Mercy Connect launched Lamp Lighter Cards - blank cards designed to write a personal message of appreciation, encouragement, or recognition to a colleague. Whether to say thank you, a kind word, or a shout-out for a job well done, teams were encouraged to highlight everyday efforts that might otherwise go unnoticed. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and the cards are already being actively used across Mercy Connect to create moments of joy and connection throughout the working day.



Mercy Connect Shining Lamp Award

Each year on Mercy Day, Mercy Connect recognises the outstanding achievements of a staff member nominated by their peers.

This year, **Jessie Straughair, Assistant Team Leader Community Inclusion – Albury**, received the Shining Lamp Award for her dedication to her team and participants. Jessie runs the Bottlebrush Café program, supporting participants to achieve their goal of running a Friday lunchtime café. Jessie was nominated for her commitment beyond day-to-day responsibilities and consistently lighting the way for others through compassion, leadership, and dedication. Jessie's commitment to Mercy Connect's values and the positive impact they have on those around them truly embodies the spirit of Mercy Day.



Mercy Connect Celebrates the Opening of a New Office in Orange, NSW

Mercy Connect was thrilled to announce the official opening of its brand new Mercy Connect office in Orange, NSW. To mark this exciting milestone, the team hosted an Official Opening and Community Meet and Greet on 30 September, welcoming local organisations, community members and the Mercy Connect team.

The new Orange office is designed to support collaboration and innovation and will house members of the Operations, Behaviour Support, People and Culture, and Rostering teams. A standout feature of the new space is a bespoke training and meeting room, purpose built to host team workshops, professional development sessions, and collaborative planning.

Mercy Health



Mercy Health Drives Sustainable Healthcare

With support from the Mercy Health Foundation, four team members from Mercy Health's sustainability, quality improvement, infection prevention and control, and pharmacy teams recently participated in the University of Melbourne's Sustainability in Quality Improvement (SusQI) Workshop: aiming to integrate environmental sustainability into healthcare quality improvement.

Mercy Health is now working to embed SusQI principles into its existing improvement framework, helping staff consider and measure the environmental, social and financial impacts of their initiatives. Team members are now applying their learnings to tackle some of healthcare's most pressing sustainability challenges including reducing unnecessary glove use, cutting waste from expired medical consumables, rethinking inhaler use and building capability for sustainable quality improvement.

[Learn more about Mercy Health's sustainability projects](#)

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.

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