



# Sisters of Charity Foundation

*Under the Patronage of Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir,  
AC Governor of New South Wales*

*The love of Christ impels us... Mary Aikenhead*

**December 2009**

## Farewell Message from the Executive Director

**A**s the time approaches for me to move on to a new venture I reflect on the many extraordinary projects that the Sisters of Charity Foundation has supported over the past four years – projects where ordinary people are providing extraordinary services to disadvantaged people in their communities right across Australia. The mission of the SCF is to provide financial assistance for groups providing such service, especially where these groups have few resources of their own and would struggle to find funds from other sources.

As I have visited projects and read of the achievements of programs funded by the SCF I am inspired by the amazing goodness of ordinary people who through their outreach to others bring hope to them and to the world.

Hope can come to us in many ways, through people or through natural events. The image in the banner of our newsletter was inspired by one such event. Very early on a bleak and sad morning in February 1986, having just received news of my father's death, I was driving home from Canberra to be with my family. Overwhelmed with grief I looked through my tears over Lake George and



suddenly the sun broke through the clouds sending beams of light onto the surface of the lake. I was filled with awe, comfort and hope – images of my father in the company of friends and relatives that had died before him flooded my mind bringing solace to a very heavy heart. Such hope and comfort we can all bring to others in need. The Christmas event which we are about to celebrate is a time of hope. I pray that we can all be hope-giving people, and that the Foundation will grow in its ability to provide the resources

that community groups need to provide hope to others. Thank you to the many supporters of the Foundation whose generosity is a source of hope to those who benefit.

May I conclude by thanking the Chairman, David Handley and the Board, for their generous and sound governance of the Foundation; Sandie Mackey, my assistant, for her invaluable work; and finally the Sisters of Charity whose commitment to the poor and marginalized is inspirational. The process for the appointment of a new Executive Director is being completed as I write. ●

# Broome Diocesan Family Support Worker

**I**n 2008, the Board of the Sisters of Charity Foundation sought out an important and worthwhile project which could make a difference in a community where needs were great and unsatisfied. After considerable consultation, the Board decided to commit \$180,000 over three years to support a family worker in the Broome Diocese who would be involved with Aboriginal Communities in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Sr Alma Cabassi, RSJ, a former school principal in schools in the Kimberley, has provided us with a snapshot of the work this year. This project is being substantially funded from a donation made by the McGrath family to the Sisters of Charity Foundation Fund, and from other tax deductible donations from our loyal and generous supporters. Thanks to you all.

*Tanami Road*



*Mary & Rosie point out the work of the day that was displayed*



*Magda and Sons*

## Sisters of Charity Remote & Rural Group

**O**ne of the functions of the Sisters of Charity Foundation is to support unfunded ministries of the Sisters of Charity. Last year a group of Sisters, aware of the plight of so many families in remote and rural NSW decided to explore ways they could provide assistance. With the support of the Foundation, and using various networks this group of Sisters has been able to provide specific financial assistance to families in a wide range of circumstances.

We cannot ignore the climate factors which appear to be diminishing the reliable productivity of much of our rural land, but we also cannot ignore the people whose livelihoods are also threatened by these changes. The Sisters in their outreach are providing immediate short term assistance to these families. Let us hope that wisdom will prevail as world leaders grapple with the best way to combat the long-term impact of climate change on so many communities around the globe, especially our near Pacific neighbours under immediate threat from rising sea levels. ●

# Broome Diocesan Family Support Worker



Baptism Ringers Soak

“Oh I know you. You come back.” This was the greeting of a young boy from a remote Aboriginal community.

The spectacular east Kimberley is the location for my ministry as the Broome Diocesan Family Support Worker which is sponsored by the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

In this the first year of engaging pastorally with families, linking with agencies, networking with school principals and staffs as well as working with other Sisters of St Joseph in the region I am aware that being visited and having someone interested in them is appreciated. Aboriginal Communities though simple in their structure have many complex issues to live and with which to deal.

On the surface I have an overwhelming sense of the dysfunction in many families and communities due to alcohol, unemployment, mental health and well being issues. I am aware that there are many dealing with huge issues of grief and loss, keeping their children safe and getting them to school as well as caring for their elderly relatives.

The findings of the Billard Blank Page Summit on Suicide, which I attended recently, confirmed the information I have been gathering from my listening to the various communities.

Mary O’Reeri presented the following points to State Parliament at the outcome of the summit.

- There is a need to help families be families,
- the need to choose life, which meant a decision for zero tolerance of substance abuse and violence and
- the communities need long term programs that they initiate or agree to,
- the people need help in the form of education with people working together and only gradually withdrawing.
- A conscious decision to have life generating communities.

[www.blankpagesummit.com.au](http://www.blankpagesummit.com.au)



Sr Alma and Children

During the year I accepted roles as relief teacher and acting Principal. These times in isolated and remote communities were a reality check for me and an opportunity to be in a working situation with the children I needed to get to know. It also provided Teachers and Principals with someone from outside their social situation to listen to their concerns, problems, and anxieties, and in some cases conflict. The extended time enabled me to relate in a significant way with families and to hear their stories of e.g. dispossession, life on cattle stations, relocation, mission schools, massacres.

As a way of supporting those who work with the children and families in these isolated Communities I organised reflection and personal development weekends, training in the Good Grief Program, Seasons for Growth and a few days spirituality for the Aboriginal women from Ringers Soak and Halls Creek.

As the year draws to a close remote planning begins for next year. Negotiating the wet season, unsealed roads, preparing to listen at a deeper level in a sensitive way to the different Language and Cultural groups with their issues, consideration of what education and healing experiences as well as what protective structures are needed, will be a priority.

I am grateful to the Sisters of Charity Foundation for the privilege of being in this ministry, which I believe brings encouragement and comfort to many. ●

By Sr Alma Cabassi, RSJ



# Rockdale Adult Leisure Learning Centre

**R**ockdale Adult Leisure Learning Centre offers seniors in the community of Rockdale a range of classes including Yoga, Tai Chi, Belly Dancing, Italian classes and Craft Classes.

There motto is "Survive and Thrive" and with the assistance of a grant provided by the Foundation they have seen an increase in the number & morale of students attending their classes.

The centre has now become a valued way of life to approximately 80 students and 10 teachers. With it's location in the Rockdale Uniting Church the centre runs with harmony and love and a strong feeling of peace among their students from many nations. ●



## CentaCare Wilcannia-Forbes



*Photo courtesy of Fiona Basile*

**T**he Strong Young Mums program supports young Indigenous mothers to pursue education as well as to grow in confidence as young parents.

Since 1995, CentaCare has been offering the Strong Young Mums program in Bourke in response to the large number of teenage mothers in the community who drop out of school once they learn they are pregnant.

CentaCare has been concerned about this hard-to-reach group for a number of years. Through the careful nurturing of relationships with the young women, asking them what they wish to do in their lives and then finding creative and tailored responses, CentaCare has now developed an effective and replicable model, Strong Young Mums successfully engages isolated young mothers, encouraging their motivation to pursue training and consistently attend groups and classes, while simultaneously improving their parenting. ●

## Briar Terrace



**B**riar Terrace is a service of Sisters of Charity Community Care in Melbourne. Situated in a narrow street near St Vincent's Hospital, and staffed mainly by volunteers, Briar Terrace provides a place of hospitality and friendship for lonely and alienated people in the local community who know they can just drop in for a chat and a cup of tea. Briar Terrace also provides an outreach service of visitation. The staff gets to know the patterns of their regular visitors and if someone is not seen for a while then someone will call or visit to make sure they are OK. This service is invaluable as too often we read of people who are forgotten at a critical time of their lives and discovered too late. As with many of the services that seek the support of the Foundation, Briar Terrace is always seeking financial assistance to keep it doors open. Call Peter Hudson at Sisters of Charity Community Care on 03 9325 4322 if you can help. ●

# Project Dreaming Tracks

**P**roject Dreaming Tracks is a Cross Cultural Outreach Program. It is an holistic project that is flexible in delivery and structure, which allows the provision of a creative service.

Over one year they have hundreds of approaches for assistance. Often a friendly ear is all that is needed but, at other times, it could be advocacy, assistance in finding the appropriate agency or place where practical help can be provided.

A Pot Plant Program has been established and is an aspect of the Cross Cultural Outreach that provides practical learning opportunities for participants so they can propagate plants at home. It encourages those who have no garden to use containers to grow vegetables and herbs.

The funds provided by the Foundation have allowed Sister Margaret Costigan RSC to continue her role with this program by assessing realistic needs and sensitively responding and more importantly providing training for others so they continue this work into the future. ●



*The Pot Plant Program*

## The House of Welcome



**W**ith every report of another boat load of asylum seekers heading towards Australia we can be tempted to harden our hearts and wish they would all go away and leave us in peace. Some in the Australian community believe we cannot be tough enough on these people who dare to challenge our borders. We choose to ignore the misery, violence and oppression from which these people have fled, leaving family, friends and what they used to call home, for an unknown and potentially dangerous future. The recent stubborn refusal of Sri Lankan Tamils to get off an Australian ship that rescued them engendered strong feelings in us all – anger, sympathy, frustration to name a few. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas we will again focus on the child born in a stable “because there was no room at the inn”, the child who as a man would exhort his followers to welcome the stranger. This is exactly what the House of Welcome does with the support of the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation and many other groups in Sydney and across Australia. I encourage you to support them in whatever way you can . ●

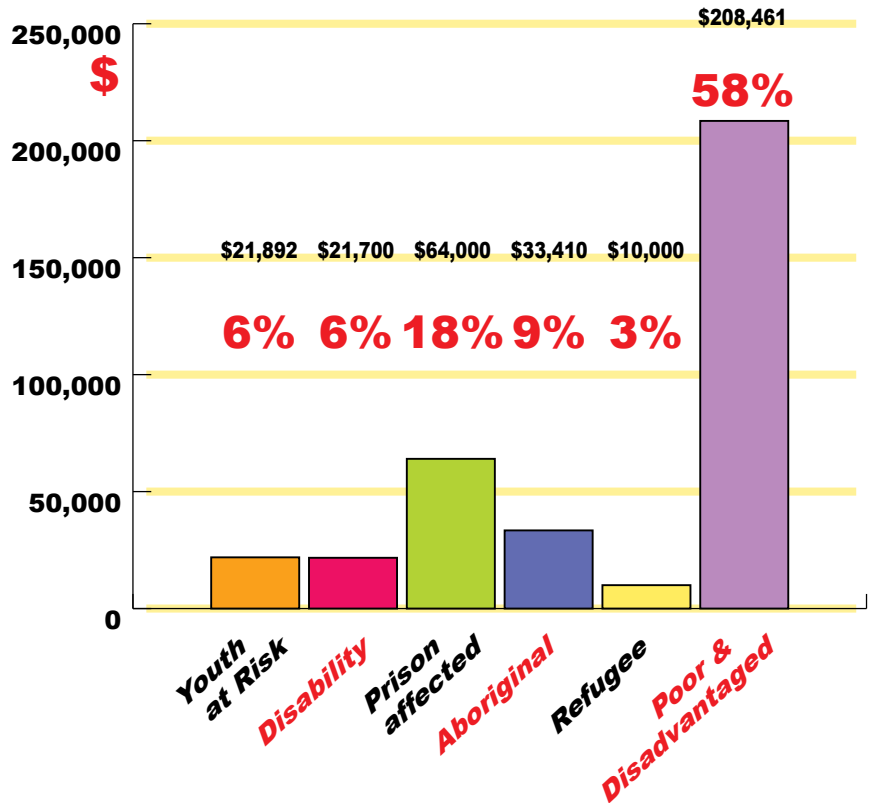
# Distribution of funds

2008-09 has been a big year for the Foundation. 42 projects were funded amounting to a total distribution of \$359,463. The chart below shows how the funds were distributed to various community groups. The types of activities funds included, sports & health programs for youth at risk, emergency food parcels for the poor & disadvantaged, assistance to drought affected families in remote & rural NSW, Breakfast Programs and shelter and care for Refugees and Asylum Seekers just to name a few. Let us hope, that in these continuing difficult times, those who can, will continue in their generosity for the sake of those suffering poverty and disadvantage. A donation to the Foundation can make a difference by enabling communities to help themselves.



Geoff George  
Executive Director

Happy Christmas and God's blessings to you and your family in 2010. ●



## I would like to support the Sisters of Charity Foundation

### Please send me details on:

- how to include the Sisters of Charity Foundation in my Will
- Organising a representative from the Sisters of Charity Foundation to visit me and discuss how my gift will help in the current and future mission of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Information you give will be treated as confidential

### OR

- I would like to make a tax-deductible donation now to the Sisters of Charity Foundation

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please debit my  Mastercard  Visa

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Expiry Date: □ □ / □ □

Card Holder: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Level 1, 75 Grafton Street Bondi Junction NSW 2022

Tel: (02) 9367 1211 ■ Fax: (02)9367 1213

Email: [foundation@rscoffice.com.au](mailto:foundation@rscoffice.com.au)

Web site: [www.sistersofcharityfoundation.com.au](http://www.sistersofcharityfoundation.com.au)

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