



## 30 YEARS OF COMPASSION IN ACTION

During the 30 years, many Sisters of Charity have been part of the Outreach (Open Support) team as a staff member or a volunteer. We sincerely thank each one for their continuing and significant contribution to the development and mission over the years.

To our many volunteers, donors and supporters who, over the last 30 years, have stood with us side by side, to deliver our services to the vulnerable in our community.

A time to remember, a time to Celebrate, a time to be grateful.

### **From The Sisters of Charity Outreach Annual Review 2015**

*The optimism of Sisters of Charity Outreach's first Executive Director, Sister St Jude Doyle, played an early role in the long-term success of the organisation. From the start, she went to work to develop real, practical services to meet the needs of society while quickly gaining support from the St Vincent's Clinic Board. Outreach can also attribute its success to the firm values it shares with the Sisters of Charity and Mary Aikenhead Ministries, including a commitment to serve the poor and vulnerable in society. Under the leadership of Sisters Clare, Deirdre, Margaret and Pauline; Outreach continued to keep pace with the needs of the community by reallocating resources to services that best fit the needs of its clients, particularly women and children. It is with great pleasure that on behalf of the Sisters of Charity Outreach Committee and St Vincent's Clinic Board, I congratulate all those who have been involved with Sisters of Charity Outreach as supporters and benefactors, volunteers, leaders and governors. I thank them for 25 years of valued service to our community and I look forward to the next exciting phase of growth and development under our new General Manager, Gary Sillett, Sisters of Charity Outreach's first lay leader.*

*Michael Thornber  
Chair – Sisters of Charity Outreach  
Committee 2015*

*“Today we are full of gratitude – grateful to God, and to each one who ministers in the Clinic today, and to all those who have contributed in any way to the building up of the Clinic and its spirit. As we give thanks we ask a blessing on our ministry in Outreach, as a new year commences, and we express again our gratitude for the past 25 years.”*

*Sr Mary Maguire  
Celebration Mass 25 years Outreach*

## **HISTORY OF SR M ST JUDE DOYLE OAM and SISTERS OF CHARITY OUTREACH (NOW OPEN SUPPORT)**

*"I need my religious women to respond to new needs, to keep time to a different rhythm. I want you to leave the security of what you know, and what you have, and go once more where no one else has gone. To the people that today's society doesn't want to know."*

A message from Sr Mary Maguire, the Superior-General of Sisters of Charity Australia, to her fellow Sisters in 1987.

In 1988 Sr M St Jude Doyle, together with Mrs Pauline Noyce and Mr Garth Doyle, were commissioned by Sr Mary Maguire, Superior General of The Generalate of the Sisters of Charity, with the task of building Outreach into a Centre for Women. Together they conducted research and compiled a great many ideas, friends and supporters to ensure the program would be a beacon in the community.

In June 1989, Sr Jude presented the first position paper to Sr Mary Maguire, who endorsed her recommendation to establish the Sisters of Charity Outreach Centre for Women.

The committee's resilience, along with Sr St Jude's tenacity, made a formidable team which was instrumental in the establishment of the Sisters of Charity Outreach program in 1990, reaching across the greater Sydney region to support women and families. The objective of Sisters of Charity Outreach was to raise the status of women and families in NSW, guided by the core values of compassion, justice, excellence, human dignity and unity.

Now known as Open Support, the organisation has diverse services, each responding to a social need in the community. Through these efforts, staff and volunteers continue to embody the motto 'Compassion in Action', and live up to the urging of Mary Aikenhead, the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity, the 'Love of Christ urges us to go where no one has gone before.'

### **THE REALITY – February September 1990**

Outreach offices accommodated at Volunteer and Associates of the Sisters of Charity (VASCA). First religious staff were Sr Maree Henderson rsc, Sr Eileen Browne rsc, Sr Elaine Lum rsc and Sr Clare Askew rsj, a qualified accountant who provided her services in an honorary position. Mrs Gloria Mallon salaried clerical staff from 1990 - 1998.

### **THE DREAM COMES TRUE - 25 September 1990**

Outreach took up residence in St Vincent's Clinic Darlinghurst. To celebrate, an inaugural function was held in the function room of the Clinic. Mrs Sinclair, wife of NSW Governor, was the official guest while Sr Mary Maguire rsc Congregational Leader, gave the occasional address.

November 1990 the Sisters of Charity Congregation appointed the inaugural Outreach Committee, responsible to the St Vincent's Clinic Board, with Mr Jim Baillie (Chairman), Sr St Jude Doyle rsc (*Director*), Mrs Margaret Robinson (Volunteer Representative), Sr Rose Holman rsc (*Congregational Representative*), Mr Garth Doyle (Honorary Treasurer), A/Professor James Biggs and Mrs Pauline Noyce (Committee Members). The first committee meeting of Sisters of Charity Outreach was held 14 January 1991.

### **FIRST PROGRAMS – early 1990's**

- Occasional Child Care Centre Mt Pleasant (1990 - 1995)
- Volunteer training program
- Accommodation programs for young people coming to Sydney. By March 1992, 75 young women and 13 young men were placed
- First Fundraising for Outreach
- Telephone support and information service and counselling
- Family Services at Kooloora Community Centre (1991 – 1992)
- Education program for Timorese Australian women (March 1991 – December 1994)
- Court Support Services. Attorney General's Department approached Sr Jude requesting that Outreach establish court support services to women who were victims of domestic violence (1991)

- Centre opened in the Lewisham Street St Vincent de Paul Building offering educational training in living skills, exercise for health, crafts groups, language courses, computer training, and by appointment, counselling by the Coordinator, Sr Meagan Brock rsc, psychologist. It was from this Centre that 'shut ins' at home and those in the local Nursing Homes were visited (1992).

### **COUNTRY CARE LINK - The Adventures of Sr Jude, Pauline and Carolyn**

During the severe drought in the early 1990s Sr Jude travelled throughout rural NSW in a four-seater plane with the flying Padre, Rob Rutzou, Mrs Carolyn Lyons and Mrs Pauline Noyce, listening to people from Wilcannia, White Cliffs, Wanaaring, Tibooburra and Broken Hill to find out how Outreach could assist and was dubbed 'Care from the Air'. As a result, Country Care Link (CCL) was established on the 3 August 1992 as a valuable and extensive service.

In November 1992, as a means of advertising CCL to remote areas, Sr Jude, Pauline Noyce and Carolyn Lyons travelled well over 1800kms by four-wheel drive to Gulargambone, Lightning Ridge, Engonia, Goodooga, Weilmoringle, Burke, Louth, Cobar and Nyngan. It took a busy week and was called 'Country Care Link Caper'. There was also the 'Southern Comfort Tour' visiting southern NSW to spread the word. Each tour became well known by its particular name and the travelling group used UHF in their vehicle to connect with property owners as they drove towards towns. ABC Radio was used for interviews.

These three remarkable women, Sr Jude, Pauline and Carolyn were affectionately known as the 'Three Peculiar Women', a nun, a grandmother and Carolyn. These three women were good at handling all types of situations. They were dignified, strong and gracious with a 'never say die' attitude. Fittingly, all three outstanding and remarkable women were awarded Order of Australia Medals at different times for their service to community.

As a means of advertising to get the word out there, Mrs Carolyn Lyons OAM arranged a slot on the 'Midday Show' with Ray Martin. "The purpose was threefold: The show went to the Far West to those who may not be aware of CCL, it would be heard and seen by those who may be motivated to offer financial assistance to the project and thirdly, to those who are in a position to offer voluntary assistance at the centre in Sydney. Support came from many areas; the NSW Premier donated \$3,000, the CWA \$1,000 and the Midday Show segment proved a most important medium. There were many offers of assistance, money, new counsellors, vehicles and venues."

CCL continues to operate successfully to the present time.



1992 - Sr Jude with Mrs Pauline Noyce

### **FURTHER PROGRAMS DELIVERED**

- Established a low-cost coffee shop at Enmore (1993 – 1996) that provided a place for support and companionship for lonely men and women

- Newborn program established in the Liverpool Council Community Hall (May 1994). A follow up program 'Hope Renewed' began its operation later known as Parent Support Program (1997) and later closed
- Legal and personal telephone service commenced dealing with refugees and immigration advice, domestic violence and isolation (1994 – February 1999)
- Outreach Gift Shop opened (1994)
- Eastern Area Visit Program established (February 1996).

### **SAFE HAVEN (Domestic Family Violence Unit) – 1995**

One of Sr Jude's major achievements was when she was approached by Liverpool police (1993) to undertake a feasibility study to provide a safe place for women and children who were victims of domestic family violence. Sr Jude and her committee were tasked with raising money, finding a suitable house and staff/volunteers to run it. This resulted in Safe Haven's first clients taking up residence in May 1995. Safe Haven still operates today, 25 years later, as a core part of Open Support's Domestic Family Violence program.

### **INVITATION TO SPEAK IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Sr Jude was invited to present a paper 'Australian – Generous Volunteers' at the 1996 International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) World Conference in Cape Town South Africa.

### **SERVICES CONTINUE TO BE ESTABLISHED**

Outreach Training Program was accredited by NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (1997) and is still operational.

### **CHISHOLM COTTAGE – 1996**



Chisholm Cottage was officially opened on St Patrick's Day 17 March 1996, after it was purchased by the Catholic Women's League and established by the Diocese of Parramatta to provide short-term accommodation for people from regional areas attending nearby Westmead and Sydney Children's Hospitals.

Named after Caroline Chisholm, who was renowned for helping the disadvantaged, she had a connection with the first five Sisters of Charity who had arrived from Ireland in December 1838 immediately commencing their mission in Parramatta at the Female Factory. The Sisters' work for convict women was complemented by that of Caroline Chisholm for female immigrants.

A member of the inaugural committee who started Chisholm Cottage, recalls how she and her fellow volunteers scouted the area for a suitable house for the service. "We were the ones who went around and found the house and approached the Sydney Archdiocese Catholic Women's League who lent us some money, which we repaid. We had to find a house within walking distance of the railway station and the hospital. The volunteers found a novel way to pay back the loan on Chisholm Cottage. The Catholic Women's League was quite well established and we had branches in nearly all the parishes in the Parramatta Diocese. The idea was that we would borrow the money and each member of the Catholic Women's League paid \$2 a month toward the repayment and that went on for years."

It was formally donated to the Sisters of Charity Outreach in 2011.

### **Celebrating its 200 volunteers – 2000-2001**

International Year of the Volunteer and Outreach celebrated by acknowledging the huge contribution of its 200 volunteers. Sisters Clare Nolan and Deirdre Hickey highlighted the fact that volunteers are "*ordinary people making an extraordinary contribution*". They reminded the volunteers that they have unique role models, in the five Sisters of Charity who volunteered to come to Australia in 1838. A Mass of Thanksgiving for Volunteers from St Vincent's & Mater Health Sydney and the Sisters of Charity Outreach was celebrated by Bishop David Cremin DD EV at St Mary's Cathedral in May.

### **Planning with a Vision – 2002-2003**

Outreach's five-year Strategic Plan was commenced with a focus on developing major aspects of the Vision. In October 2002, a public billboard was displayed at the St Vincent's Campus for a week, reminding all who saw it that Sisters of Charity Outreach is an organisation of *Compassion in Action*. This slogan has since become the Open Support Action statement.

### **15 Years Together – 2004-2005**

Sisters of Charity Outreach celebrated '15 years Together' with a special graduation celebration for our volunteers. Sr Mary Maguire, who was the Leader of the Congregation when the proposal to build the Clinic was initiated, was guest speaker. Sr Mary spoke openly about the struggle and pain that resulted not only in the building of the Clinic but also the birth of Outreach.

### **Untold Stories – 2010**

Through the theme *The Untold Stories*, Sr St Jude Doyle shared her memoirs, through a printed booklet, of the years from 1987-1997.

Mr John Wilcox who had expertly led the committee as its Chairman for nine years was farewelled. Mr Michael Thornber was nominated as the new Chairman of the committee.

### **The mission continues to grow with Chisholm Cottage – 2011-2012**

Outreach took on the management of Chisholm Cottage at Westmead from the Catholic Women's League Parramatta, adding to a portfolio of services that follow the charism of Mary Aikenhead to serve the poor and the sick.

### **Continuing to read the Signs of the Times – 2014**

A new service *Time out for carers*, working in partnership with the Social Work Department at St Vincent's Hospital, began. The service provided personal contact, support and social gatherings for carers staying in St Vincent's Hospital accommodation.

A project Officer was appointed to the Miller Centre to research opportunities in the Liverpool LGA and to establish new Outreach services to meet community needs in line with the Mission, Values and Strategic Direction of Outreach and Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

### **Celebrating 25 Years – 2015**

The celebration of 25 years began with an Opening Mass attended by a large group of volunteers, friends, colleagues, Sisters and staff from across St Vincent's Campus. Father Darryl Mackie celebrated the Mass with Sister Angela Burke leading the singing. Sister Mary Maguire gave a frank and moving homily recalling the painful discernment that she and her Council felt prior to approving St Vincent's Clinic. Mary expressed her gratitude by saying:

*"Today we are full of gratitude – grateful to God, and to each one who ministers in the Clinic today, and to all those who have contributed in any way to the building up of the Clinic and its spirit. As we give thanks we ask a blessing on our ministry in Outreach, as a new year commences, and we express again our gratitude for the past 25 years."*



Sr Deirdre Hickey, Sr Clare Nolan, Sr Mary Maguire,  
Sr St Jude Doyle and Sr Margaret Fitzgerald

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS 1990 – 2015

Sr St Jude Doyle 1990-1997

Sr Deirdre Hickey and Sr Clare Nolan Co-Directors 1998-2003

Sr Margaret Fitzgerald 2004-2012

Sr Pauline Nicholson 2013-2015



## GENERAL MANAGER OPEN SUPPORT 2015 - 2020

Mr Gary Sillett



### Extract from the Sisters of Charity 'Keep in Touch' June 2015 newsletter

#### The end of an era: appointment of General Manager – 2015

Since 1990, a Sister of Charity had been appointed as Executive Director of Outreach.

During the first 25 years many Sisters of Charity were part of the Outreach team as a staff member or a volunteer. We sincerely thank each one for their continuing and significant contribution to the development and mission over the years.

In 2015 Mr Gary Sillett, recently appointed General Manager of Sisters of Charity Outreach, was the first lay person appointed to the position.

#### OUTREACH BECOMES OPEN SUPPORT – 26 April 2018

In mid-2017, Outreach was requested by the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, – which oversees both Open Support and St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) – to propose a new name for our organisation which no longer included the words 'Sisters of Charity'. After much consultation and stakeholder involvement the name Open Support was chosen. Notwithstanding the name change, what came through loud and clear, was that the original foundation of this organisation is rock solid, and the history and legacy of the Sisters, and their foundress, Mary Aikenhead, remains the impetus for our mission to assist the poor and vulnerable in the community.

So, while our new name has marked a fresh look and a new era, it is this foundation we continue to build on.

## 2019

There were 178 volunteers enabling Open Support to operate its various services: Domestic Family Violence Unit supporting women and children in need, Country Care Link services for regional families to access medical treatment in Sydney, East and West visit programs and the Gift Shop located in St Vincent's Clinic.

Through our volunteers, donors, our staff and friends of Open Support we have been able to make a difference in the lives of thousands of families through the services that we provide in the community.

## 2020

Sr Jude's Platinum Jubilee January 2020

With Sr Clare Nolan, Congregational Leader, Sisters of Charity

