

2023



A YEAR OF GROWTH & COURAGE



Building a Legacy, Embracing the Future

Welcome to our Annual Report, a showcase of our achievements, progress, and commitment to justice throughout the year.

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Acknowledgement Of Country



Representation by Maureen Ilangi of Women Travelling & Dreaming

Thank you for sharing with us the hurt of your unmet hopes. We read with reverence and admiration as your community graciously reaffirms First Nation strength and resilience. We walk in solidarity with you.

Statement From Baabayn About the Outcome of the Referendum

We, the Elders of Baabayn, are deeply hurt. We are in mourning. We appreciate it when people ring to offer condolences—it shows they recognise what we are going through.

This is really hurtful. **But we don't feel like we've lost the fight.**

We would like to send our best wishes to everyone who voted yes. We thank Mr Albanese for putting recognition and the Voice on the table. Now we know how the Australian people actually think.

We pay our deep respects to Malarndirri McCarthy and Linda Burney and all the strong Aboriginal women out there who campaigned for “yes.” Women are fighters.

We appreciate the people we met on the journey through the referendum campaign— young warriors like Thomas Mayo. He is such a lovely person, with his humility and generosity. He struck us as such a humble person, although he had such a heavy weight on his shoulders. He was like a lone warrior—and too straightforward for the people on the other side.

We met the Sikhs and we met the Kurdish people, and it brought us all together. The Kurds treated us to a beautiful meal and opened their hearts and their Centre to us. We thank all the people from the Sikh, Kurdish, Irish and other communities who gave us whole-hearted support.

We rebuke the “no” campaign's use of our own people against us, with Jacinta Price and Warren Mundine up front and centre being used by the opposition for a political agenda against giving Aboriginal people a voice.

We come from the missions and the riverbanks, and now we hold our Eldership. In Aboriginal society, we listen to Elders, not elite types. **Why weren't the voices of the Elders listened to?**

Aboriginal people don't need to be told—we just know how we're treated. We know what colonisation did to us.

Why were Australians so fearful? Why be fearful of people who have always looked after this country and made such a great contribution in the modern age?
We haven't lost the fight.

All the things that Baabayn does we will continue to do regardless, to take care of our people in our own way, physically, culturally and emotionally. We're not just about arts and crafts and dancing. We draw on the deep wells of our spirituality.

Our culture is strong. When people have that strong cultural background, it carries us through.

A Message of Hope

We will find a way to make a way out of no way – John Lewis

There is not the slightest doubt that we have been challenged at momentous moments this year *to make a way out of no way*. As we come to the end of what has been a truly significant, and in many ways disturbing, period in the life of our country and planet, we have been called once again, as Josephites, to revisit our vision and goals so that we can place both the grim realities and the tiny seeds of hope within the heart of our Josephite commitment.

We continue to be confronted each day by the frightening images of war, atrocities, and violence in the Middle East and the war in Ukraine. We have grieved with our First Nations brothers and sisters for the fear, doubt, and racism that still lie deep within our national psyche. We have been scandalised by the actions of both major Parties who have shamelessly used asylum seeker policy as a political weapon and wedge. We've been confronted by the contradictions and yet small hopes at COP28, aware that Australia is the third largest fossil fuel exporter in the world, spending \$11.1 billion a year subsidising the fossil fuel industry. And at home, we have witnessed relentless cost-of-living pressures, rising interest rates, and an accelerating wealth gap.

There have been, even amid these atrocities, however, signs of hope. 153 nations (including Australia) voted at the UN for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

Over 6 million Australians voted YES in the referendum, and inspiring leadership has emerged to carry forward the Uluru invitation to voice, treaty, and truth. As well, the call for a Royal Commission to examine asylum seeker policy is gaining strength, and COP28 also contains seeds of hope. At home, there are voices of protest about the inequities that particularly beset those who have been structured out and made poor in our society.

This Report summarises the work of the Josephite Justice Network in the past twelve months. We present it for your information and reflection. The witness and diversity of the group's efforts are impressive. So often, while we have felt paralysed in the face of unimaginable brutalities and relentless political wrangling, JJN members have worked unremittingly to live the Josephite charism in what often seems a ruthless and self-interested world. In the support that is our gift to each other, we persist in working *to make a way out of no way*.

We pray for all of us, that the longing of so many may become more of a reality in GAZA in Ukraine, and across our country and world this New Year.



Sr Jan Barnett

Josephite Justice Network Coordinator

Leading with Vision Inspiring Change

Vision

We are committed to serve the mission of God, with an emphasis on gospel justice and integrity, responding to the cry of earth and the cry of those made poor.

This calls us to minister with those on the edges, and to confront unjust systems, which perpetuate discrepancies of wealth, privilege and power.

In the spirit of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods, we are challenged as Josephites to live simply, travel lightly and make room for all.

Goals

- To network with Josephites ministering in situations where people are oppressed by systems, structures and misuse of power
- To provide collaborative opportunities for those involved in the Josephite mission and ministries to gather – to share and be re-energised
- To join with, and share resources, with other religious and community groups in initiatives of justice.

The Josephite Justice Office seeks to serve with all those who have been marginalised by unjust structures, but will have a particular focus on:

1. First Nations peoples
2. Asylum Seekers & Refugees
3. Care for Earth
4. Issues of poverty, homelessness & Human Rights

JAG Josephite Action Group

Fostering community connections built on the pillars of service and hospitality since 2014.

The Josephite Action Group (JAG) gathers together young people - particularly Josephite alumni - who are inspired by the Josephite Charism as well as a desire for authentic community, a passion for justice, a search for greater meaning in their lives, and a willingness to serve those on the margins of our society. JAGers are invited:

- To identify the core values of the Josephite tradition as embodied in their own lives.
- To build community
- To explore the needs of the 21st century that call us as Josephites today
- To plan ways to respond to the needs in meaningful ways.



My first JAG training weekend was life-changing...the skills and knowledge I gained were things I didn't know I ever needed until being exposed to them. Being able to delve deeper into a variety of social justice issues and having the opportunity to hear from existing JAG members reaffirmed my desire to be of service and change the world around me.

- Emilia Nicholas



How grateful we are to be part of such an enthusiastic and selfless group. Volunteers drive over an hour to help out at our Bunnings Sausage Sizzle, without any hesitation or complaint!

- Violet Cabral

JAG Training Events

Our team also conducts training events for prospective young people interested in joining JAG. Often these weekends take place at Josephite retreat centres at Baulkham Hills and Kincumber. During these training weekends, participants are introduced to the vision of JAG and have the opportunity to hear from existing JAG members about their experiences.

Participants are also presented with the opportunity to delve deeper into what the Josephite charism means to them and how they can carry this charism with them throughout their lives. Often, participants leave these JAG training weekends feeling inspired and refreshed because of the connections and knowledge they have gained. Throughout the year, we also held refresher days to recalibrate and refocus our energy as a group.





Bunnings BBQ Fundraiser

The Josephite Action Group proudly signed up for the incredible initiative, Bunnings Sausage Sizzle to raise funds for local refugees and asylum seekers. We were proud to partner with Bunnings as they have been supporting not-for-profit grassroots community groups for over 25 years. Our JAG volunteers once again, banded together to prepare food, drinks, and good vibes for the day.

We were supposed to start at 10 am, but Sr Jan was so enthusiastic that she started to sell our goods 30 minutes before opening, calling out: "Do you want the world's best sausages and brownies?..." Our laughter filled the entire car park. Josephite spirit was among us all!

- Violet Cabral

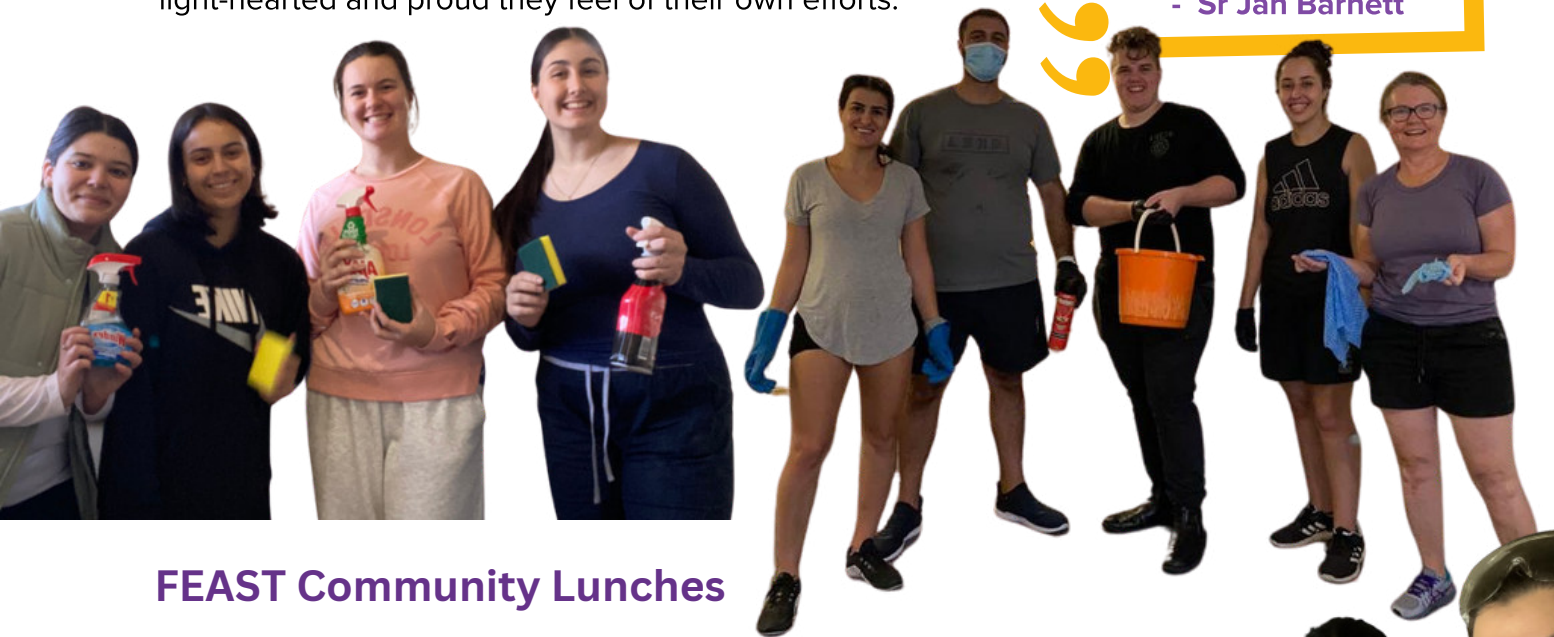
The HoW’s Welcome Start Transitional Housing Program

Throughout 2023, our JAG members have generously given up their time to participate in the House of Welcome’s ‘Welcome Start Transitional Housing Program’. The program provides safe and stable accommodation to people seeking asylum who have no access to traditional government and non-government supports such as emergency, social, public, and affordable housing.

Thus, our JAGers are invited to warmly refurbish vacant houses into homes. Refurbishing these properties comes in many forms from cleaning and scrubbing kitchen cupboards to assembling furniture such as beds and dining tables. Refurbishing the homes becomes especially fun (and quite messy) when we have the chance to re-paint the homes. During these times many of our JAG members express how light-hearted and proud they feel of their own efforts.

In the kitchen, the aim when we started was to scrub out one cupboard within the space of one song. We laughed as we managed to achieve it in the space of two and a half, with the ultimate record at two – giving great delight. We still didn’t finish everything, so these generous young people have offered to come back yet again.

- Sr Jan Barnett



FEAST Community Lunches

Once a month the House of Welcome hosts its monthly FEAST (food, engagement, access, support, together) community lunches to bring together their asylum-seeking and refugee clients with HoW donors and partners. JAGers have enjoyed volunteering during these lunches as it has been an opportunity to fulfill their love of service and form genuine relationships through the universal language of food. Thus, mingling with the HoW clients and staff over a delicious meal became the perfect way to volunteer in 2023.



The love and joy present in the room was moving. There was continuous laughter and chatter throughout the whole day, except when it was time to eat...the chefs never fail to impress!

- Violet Cabral



HoW Christmas Party

Supporting the House of Welcome through various ways of volunteering is an amazing opportunity for our Josephite Action Group members to showcase our many gifts and commitment to service and justice. Our JAG members were honoured to be a part of the House of Welcome’s annual Christmas Party this year. A group of our JAG members generously volunteered their time to facilitate some activities such as face painting, jewellery making and outdoor sport activities. It is our hope that all guests felt welcomed, comfortable and respected throughout the duration of the gathering.

Volunteering with JAG has truly been one of my 2023 highlights. I loved every moment of the House of Welcome Christmas party - from food prep with other volunteers to the long hours spent face painting butterflies and mistletoes on eager participants of all ages! I loved talking to every child and adult who came to have their face painted as we shared many laughs and memories. This Christmas party filled me with bounds of Christmas cheer and I, just like all the children there didn’t want to go home at the end of the night. I am grateful to JAG for the opportunity to share in this unforgettable experience among other JAG volunteer opportunities throughout 2023. I feel endlessly grateful and optimistic as a member of JAG entering into 2024.

- **Vittoria Albanese**

Advocacy

2023 has been a significant one for many of us as Josephites. The polarisation of debate around the Voice referendum has challenged us in many different ways, and the crises in the housing market, low wages, inadequate welfare payments and the devastation facing Earth have both tested and galvanised us. We've been conscious of the efforts right across the entire Josephite community to respond. Our advocacy has involved a number of involvements:

Submissions to Government

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum
- Federal Human Rights Act
- Ongoing reference to the UPR Report

Media statements

- Aged Care
- Support for "The Voice" referendum
- Royal Commission into Immigration Detention

Letters to Political leaders

- Hope for the environment
- Support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- The age of criminal responsibility
- Possibilities for COP28
- Impact of budget on those most vulnerable
- Housing emergency
- High Court decision on refugees who are stateless
- Gaza ceasefire: Australian Vote at UN General Assembly

Letters to media

- Uluru Statement from the Heart
- West Papua
- Wealth gap
- Climate crisis
- Royal Commission into asylum seekers
- Environment
- Timor Leste

Enews

- Crises facing refugee families
- Accelerating gap between rich and poor
- Why we support the YES vote
- Explore, Embrace, Embody and care of Earth
- Post referendum reflections
- Trafficking in Australia
- Crisis in the Middle East
- Treehouse Theatre
- Writing Rings for Righting Wrongs

Inspiring Change Risk and Dare Conference

Mary MacKillop Place opened its doors to more than a hundred young people across Australia and New Zealand to attend this year's Risk and Dare (RAD) Conference. We gathered as Josephites – and as social justice allies – to energetically accept our call to action and confront the challenging experience of what it means to live the gospel in the 21st century.

For the young attendees, on fire with the urgency and thirst for a fair deal for all, the call of Jesus to bring good news to those who are poor and to work for freedom for those who have been oppressed, found practical expression in the listening, learning and action-packed experiences of our days together.

As we arrived, we were welcomed to the land of the Cammeraygal people and shared in a moving smoking ceremony led by Isaac Bamblett, a Bundjalung and Wiradjuri man and an ex-student from De La Salle Ashfield led by United by the circular breathing of the Didgeridoo, we planted our Sea of Hands around the sculpture of Mary MacKillop and sang with Dominique Farah our longing for a world accepting of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Darcy Godden, a Kamilaroi and Wonnarua man, led the Acknowledgment of Country reminding us of the 65,000 years of footsteps gone before us on the sacred land now known as Mary's Place. Bishop Vincent Long had reminded us at the launch of the Catholic Bishops' Statement, that the Uluru Statement is a moral and social issue, and so we prayed in that spirit for a reconciled and just Australia that will listen to its unsung custodian.

There was no doubting the passion and commitment of our keynote speakers – Madeline Gleeson from the Kaldor Centre and John Falzon who led Vinnies for 20 years – as they named for us what they believe is the call of the Gospel today, and how young people can respond, as Jesus did in his time.

Led by Nick Lahey, our ever-dynamic and expert facilitator, we listened, shared, and grabbed ideas from each other, before gathering around a panel of young people who shared their justice involvements – describing why they do what they do, and what ideas they had about the ways that RAD participants could contribute their gifts and passions. Our topics and respective panellists included:

- For an inclusive church – Maddy Forde
- For a reconciled Australia – Darcy Godden
- For those made homeless – James Sherriff
- For refugees – Zaki Haidari
- For multicultural Australia and YCW – Marilyn Bellet



Complementary workshops were offered in a range of justice areas that enabled us to share more deeply the possibilities open to us. Our attendees were particularly struck by the testimonies from Sr Susan Connelly (who spoke about the forgotten plight of West Papuans) and Sr Mary Leahy (who spoke about human trafficking at sea), as they reminded us of Mary MacKillop's pioneering, practical, and courageous spirit that has stood the test of times.

The day finished with the young refugees from Treehouse Theatre sharing their stories of life before and after their journey to Australia. We agreed that there was nothing like the stories they shared to call us to commitment and action. Our attendees were inspired by the courage and raw passion displayed by these young storytellers and their desire to turn their struggles into strength.

Day two began with the stirring presentation by CaSPA (directed by James Long), calling us to have the courage to create visions for change and take joy in the dreaming of journey. The three dynamic politicians who joined us for the morning (Felicity Wilson from the Liberal Party, Jenny Leong from the Greens, and Trish Doyle from Labor) humanised the political reality as they shared their stories of justice and day-to-day involvements with the community. We were moved by their focus on the role of women in politics, their candid reflections on the Uluru Statement and the invitation by the majority of First Nations peoples to vote YES.

The remainder of Day Two led us to work in groups to determine ways forward and how to effectively use our voices for change, with the help of Julie Macken, Social Justice Facilitator at the Justice and Peace Office for the Archdiocese of Sydney. School Assemblies, small group initiatives, letters and visits to politicians, rallies, table talk possibilities were some of the named possibilities and resolutions. And finally, Pope Francis spoke to us in our final session, reminding us of the importance of both dreaming and action, and the reassurance that the Church is for "everyone, everyone, everyone."

Lead Josephite organisers Emilia Nicholas and Violet Cabral observed RAD was a transforming experience that enabled us to understand more deeply that the gospel is a reality for this time. *It was inspiring witnessing the way young people were led to exercise their role as democratic citizens, practice big picture thinking, and live their faith in action,* says Liesje Barratt, Mission Formation Coordinator at Catholic Mission. This was echoed by Daniel Prichard, Social Justice and Youth Advocacy Officer at Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, noting RAD *was a motivating experience that made me feel a part of something so special.*

The call and witness of Jesus in his life, and of Mary MacKillop in hers, urge us to a life centered on the gospel, fully alive in both faith and action. As they were in their time, so we too, are called to risk and dare as we live RADically today.

Our young people entered as passionate dreamers but left as learned storytellers ready to become powerful drivers of change. Sometimes we must risk shaking the structural barriers around us that obstruct access to justice and dare to dream a new reality founded on hope and courage to protect the dignity of all humanity.







Care for Earth Tree Planting & Laudato Si'



In 2022 the Josephite Justice Network was granted over \$20,000 from the Commonwealth Government of Australia to plant 1,000 trees in the Watson electorate of Sydney, NSW. These trees were to be planted to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Mary MacKillop Callistemon trees were chosen as the primary trees of distribution for this project as they are regarded as remarkably effective forms of carbon capture. The *Callistemon Collaboration* project has been initiated by the Josephite Justice Network in association with Holy Spirit College, Lakemba. This project has strengthened community spirit, celebrated the beauty of the environment, and involved people of diverse ages and cultures.

To launch this project JJA together with Holy Spirit College Lakemba hosted the *Sprouting Change - Planting Across Boundaries* launch in November 2022. Attendees included representatives from Lakemba Mosque, Lebanese Muslim Association, students from local primary schools as well as leaders from all three levels of government.



Explore, Embrace, Embody

7 year plan for care of Earth

Everything is connected. Everyone is connected.
The whole of creation is connected.

All of us concerned for the environment were devastated in 2022 when it was announced that millions of plastic bags being saved for recycling were destined for landfill. And to be told that despite plastics recycling programs being common for many years, production of single-use plastics continues to surge, raised huge questions for which there seem to be few answers.

The question for us as Josephites became: *What can we do? What will we do?*

We set goals for ourselves for 2023.

- To maintain hope against hope in the goodness of people.
- To acquaint ourselves with the reality of the dangers and the possibilities facing us and all of creation (see previous [newsletters](#), ideas like "[doughnut economics](#)," and the [Voting for the Good of Earth Kit](#)).
- To approach the managers at our local supermarkets and discuss with them (and the staff with whom we chat at the checkout) to talk about the issue and urge change.
- To sign petitions from environmental groups and conservation councils
- To ask for a meeting with our local politicians to urge changes to government policy



Indigenous Outreach Honouring Silenced Voices

Pre-Polling Referendum Campaigning

Many of our JJN members were involved in pre-polling activities prior to the Voice to Parliament referendum on October 14. Volunteering at polling booths, train stations, and letter-boxing was our Network’s way of speaking truth to power. During the Referendum campaign, many were horrified by the prominence of misinformation and disinformation that poisoned Australian communities particularly the immigrant and non-English speaking communities of Sydney.

In 2023, the YES Campaign was the largest grassroots campaign Australia has ever seen. The Josephite Justice Network utilised the art of conversation and hard-fact education to ensure all who crossed our paths in the lead-up to the referendum and on voting day were truthfully informed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people deserve to be recognised in the constitution with a Voice.

Although the referendum was lost, all JJN members who were privileged enough to volunteer at pre-polling and polling booths have been re-energised with the thought that our nation will forever be changed by the outcome of this referendum. We have been recommitted to our mission to continue to walk alongside our First Nations brothers and sisters to achieve equality and justice.

It was an honour to work as a polling volunteer during the referendum. It was an opportunity for me to exercise my democratic right to help my fellow Australians see the many benefits of a YES vote in the October referendum.

- Emilia Nicholas



Referendum Table Talks

Referendum table talks were designed and presented by members of the Josephite Justice Network during the lead-up to the 2023 Voice Referendum to empower participants to take meaningful action towards Indigenous reconciliation. These table talks aimed to unpack all elements of the Referendum and provide participants with genuine knowledge for them to place an informed vote on Referendum day.

During the table talks participants were given the chance to delve deeper into the history and context behind the Voice to Parliament and the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The group had an opportunity to look into other forms of Indigenous Treaty in countries such as New Zealand and Canada. By the end of the table talk participants were able to acknowledge that this referendum has been the result of never-ending and tireless lobbying by Indigenous Australians.

Group discussions enabled all to gain a holistic understanding of the Voice to Parliament. They were an opportunity for all participants to put forward their concerns and queries about the referendum. It was an opportunity to quash any misinformation or disinformation that was disseminated during the Voice to Parliament campaign.



Video Campaign

In 2021, JAG decided to make an Uluru Statement from the Heart Video, which successfully reached a large number of viewers in Josephite communities. When the 2023 referendum was announced, the video was edited to include statements from the referendum. Over 100 students, teachers and individuals from the Josephite Community created an inspiring and invigorating video that speaks to all on the vitality of Voice, Treaty and Truth.

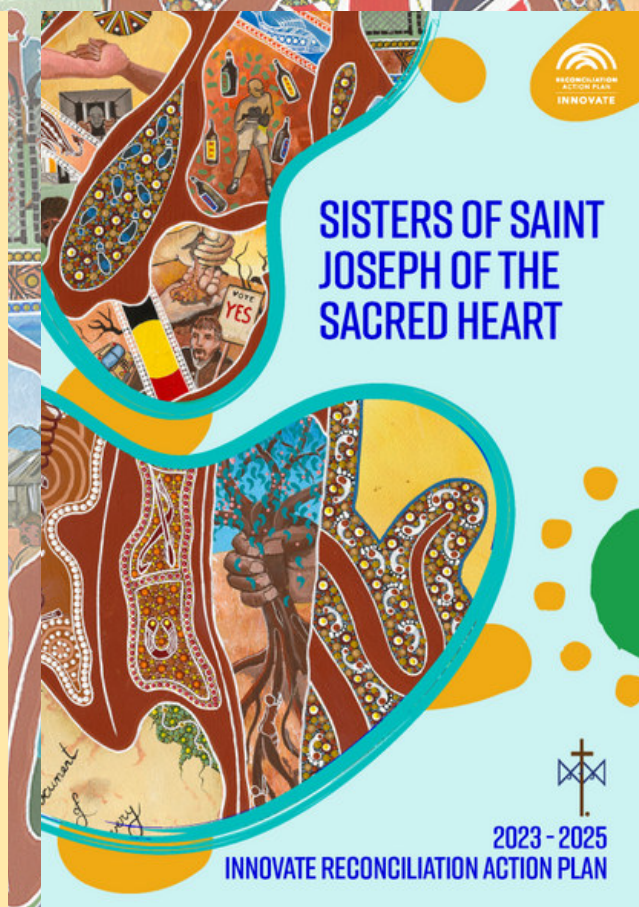


Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

A number of JJJN members have been part of the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan for the congregation. Driven by a vision for a reconciled Australia, RAP is designed to explore and act on new initiatives through relationships, employment opportunities and supply networks. It is hoped that these strategies will contribute to a more reconciled and just Australia.

We continue to grieve with First Nations people as they mourn the results of the referendum, and we recognise the ongoing call to all of us, as Josephites and as Australians, to persevere in deep listening so that together we can find new ways to respond to the Uluru invitation to “Voice, Treaty and Truth”.

RAP will be part of this ongoing movement.





Canterbury-Bankstown YES Event

We were honoured to attend the Canterbury Bankstown for Yes Event hosted by Hon Tony Burke MP and Hon Jason Claire MP in the lead-up to the referendum vote. Our Josephite representatives were among a diverse group of community and faith leaders who joined together to support and more deeply understand the Voice to Parliament.

It was a privilege to hear from Hon Linda Burney MP and Noel Pearson as they so passionately spoke their truth and commitment to Indigenous justice. We left the event feeling empowered by the spirit of community and hopeful that our fellow Australians would join us on the path to reparations and reconciliation.

Australia has a right to know

Campaign for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention

Members of the Josephite Justice Network (JJN) have proudly been a part of the working committee driving the campaign for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention. After several months of preparation, we took to Canberra to launch the campaign for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention, hosted by Independent MP Kylea Tink. Greens Senator Nick McKim, and Independent MP's Zali Steggall and Andrew Wilkie were also in attendance and showed their support for the campaign.

Alongside the Justice and Peace Office, for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the House of Welcome, Granville, and refugee and asylum seeker support organisations alike, the JJN stood firm against the atrocities carried out in the name of privatised detention policies and called for these international law violations to come to light.

The launch cemented the need for a royal commission more than ever, as stories were shared of trauma-induced self-harm, medical negligence, sexual assault, and countless legal protection breaches. We were privileged to hear the lived experiences of: Behrouz Boochani, acclaimed author, and journalist; Zaki Haidari, from Amnesty International; Farhad Bandesh, musician, and artist; and Human Rights activists, Thanush Selvarasa and Betelhem Tebubu. Each testimony began with a reclaimed reciting of their detention ID tags – a policy mechanism used to strip them of their humanity and cultural identity.

The power of storytelling should not be underestimated. Upon listening to these harrowing stories of survival, I was transported to their cold, inimical detention camps. I heard of the unscrupulous abuse which informed their past, present, and future, as they were forced to comply with prison-like conditions in the hope of receiving basic human rights, said Joelle Sassine, youth Josephite Justice Network member.

Young Josephite activists, Vittoria Albanese, and Joelle Sassine, helped create a video showcasing the voices of young Australian workers and their families traumatised by the horrors of mandatory offshore processing facilities. Inhibited and silenced by federal legislation, they too have been failed by the highly politicised detention regime.

We heard just a small percentage of the offshore processing crimes committed and sustained by means of Australian taxpayer money. All these stories – and those not yet told – must be platformed, using the weight of a Royal Commission, to display to the Australian people, the brutal actions unknowingly sanctioned by their wages, said Joelle.

Dr Julie Macken, campaign lead from the Justice and Peace Office, noted that, *we need a Royal Commission as it will give protection where needed, enforce politicians and security companies to produce transparent documentation, and will remove this [detention] policy from the political arena that it is in and place it in the legal space, as we have seen by the High Court ruling against indefinite detention, to where it needs to be.*

We have a right to know the truth. How do we reconcile ourselves with the past so that we might find future pathways that make Australia a more just nation? Behrouz, Zaki, Farhad, Betelhem, and Thanush, I do not want to call you refugees, people seeking asylum, or any other names that you have been demonised as. I want to call you friends and people who are welcome in this country said Fr Peter Smith, Promoter for Justice and Peace for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

The proposal for this bill has demonstrated a push to reform draconian anti-refugee policies and legislation in Australia. Discussions from the press conference displayed solidarity and conviction from the diverse coalition of refugee advocates present.

It is the passion of these services agencies and on-the-ground workers that inspire the confidence and sustainability of this campaign. Their selfless dedication to fill the gap and failures of the public service, does not go unnoticed said Violet Cabral, youth Josephite Justice Network member.

This campaign launch is just the beginning of our advocacy journey in raising awareness about the silenced voices seeking shelter on Australian shores. Together we must apply pressure on the appropriate powers to make this royal commission happen, said Emilia Nicholas, youth Josephite Justice Network member.

Together, as advocates for justice, we must work to free innocent lives, who look to Australia for compassion and protection. We must emerge from the ashes of successive governments' pitfalls and demand for truth before it is too late. Australia has a right to know.



Using Our Voices

Tooling up the next generation

The political advocacy seminar, *Using Our Voices*, has been designed to educate and tool up young people with high-level civil engagement skills to harness their passion for justice. The catalyst for this training series was the Voting for the Common Good Federal Election Campaign, launched alongside the Justice and Peace Office (JPO) for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. During pre-polling and polling discussions in the lead-up to the Federal election, we identified gaps in socio-political understanding and felt the despair amongst young people regarding their undermined status in the civic arena. If these future voters mean so much to party and non-party representatives, why are they relegated to a secondary role?

This is precisely where *Using Our Voices* comes in.

To platform the voice of young people to seed aspirations for change, this seminar trains participants to exercise good citizenship by virtue of opposing adverse social challenges. To workshop such skills, our team chose to highlight the power of visiting a Member of Parliament (MP) and the effective functions of social media in advocacy work.

Our team welcomed collaboration from the dedicated staff at the JPO and the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education to disseminate and facilitate these seminars. This year, we were honoured to have the support of Nick Lahey, Deputy Principal from Sacred Heart College, New Town, Tasmania, who marvelously played the role of ‘politician’ for our seminar.

This seminar took attendees through the most effective ways to lobby for justice and how to best leverage key political players to dismantle structural barriers breeding inequality. *Using Our Voices* modeled such skills on topics such as the overbearing use of non-renewable energies and tackling the growing wealth gap between rich and poor.

First, we role-played conversations with ‘politicians’ to understand the power dynamics underlying citizen-parliamentary relations and to expose entry points for change influencing. What may seem a simple conversation to some, could change the course of history forever. The performative elements of activism continued to be understood via the mechanism of social media strategising. We looked at creative ways to develop, curate, and disseminate content that would best suit the audience, context, and interaction in mind. The two are not mutually exclusive and are needed to work in unison to successfully jolt primitive structures of justice. Once our future voters are equipped with the tools to make informed decisions, they can cross the threshold from being dreamers of truth to becoming practical change agents.

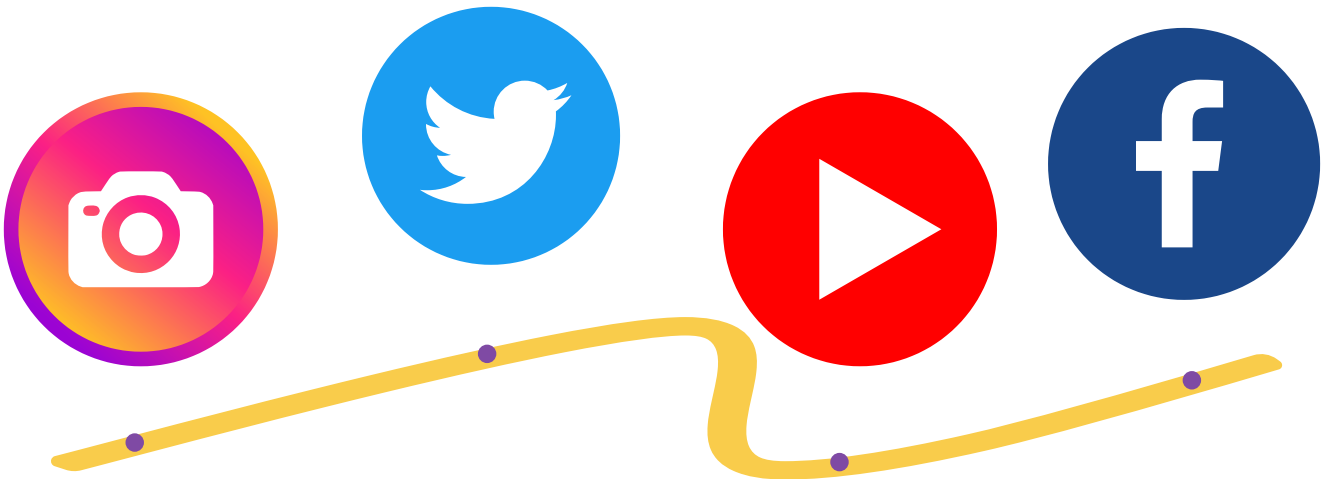
We seek to continue these seminars into 2024 and hope to widen our demographic to all ages who are looking to sharpen their political advocacy skills and most effectively harness their passion for justice.



Roadmapping Social Media

Being able to share the accomplishments, works, and passions of the Josephite Justice Network through social media has been an enormous privilege and a great success throughout 2023. Social media has enabled people of all ages to become aware of all the amazing work we have done throughout the year. The presence of JJN on social media has also enabled us to further inform our online audience on topics concerning First Nations peoples and Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

- Emilia Nicholas



The Gap Between Rich and Poor

Housing and Homelessness

The Josephite Justice Network firmly and unequivocally believes that human life is sacred and human dignity is the foundation of our moral vision for society. Without a home, no one can live in dignity. It is also our firm belief that the role of the Australian Government is critical in ensuring that the housing rights of all people are met, particularly for those on low incomes and those with special needs. Access to affordable, appropriate, and secure housing, which offers safety, privacy, and reasonable security of tenure, is fundamental to housing provision.

As Josephites, we firmly believe that the just allocation of resources ensures that the benefits and burdens of society’s institutions are distributed in ways that are fair and equitable. We believe that the Australian Government must understand that now is the moment for significant change and a daring new strategy and that the people's basic needs and rights should take precedence.

We have demonstrated our commitment to those made poor as a result of the housing crisis and the accelerating wealth gap through our partnership with the Sydney Alliance. During the NSW state election, our team advocated alongside the Alliance for Renters reforms and a boost in the construction of social and affordable housing. For more information on our stance check out our [State Election Kit](#).

We reaffirmed our commitment to learning about this precarious and ever-changing issue by attending a variety of forums and discussions. Events such as the “Rob Stokes Unleashed: Reconstructing the Australian Dream” hosted by Faith Housing Alliance and the “Vinnies Rosalie Rendu Forum – Cost of Living” hosted by the Vinnies Social Justice Network enabled our team to hear more deeply about the complex nature of poverty and the housing crisis in our society.

In 2024 the Josephite Justice Network is determined to continue to strengthen our relationships with these organisations to achieve justice for all people who have been burdened and made poor by structural inequalities.



West Papua

Reflections from Susan Connelly

West Papua, the western side of the island of New Guinea, is about the most ignored place on the planet. Foreign journalists are prevented from entering so the news that filters out is through private and unfunded channels.

The region was taken over by Indonesia in 1969 through the so-called “Act of Free Choice” where just over 1000 Papuans declared their acceptance of Indonesian sovereignty at gunpoint. The other 800,000 people had no say. Australia, the US, other western nations all continue to comply with Indonesian claims. Significantly, the takeover was conducted under UN auspices.

The Papua region is enormously rich in gold, copper, oil and gas, with extensive and lucrative forests. Its contribution to the Indonesia bottom line is inestimable.

Hundreds of thousands of people have died violently, and the transmigration from Java has reduced the Papuan population to just under 50 percent of the total. There are periodic uprisings, all quelled by the large Indonesian military and police presence.

Currently, there are about 10,000 refugees from Papua over the border in Papua New Guinea, and another 60,000 taking refuge in the forests in Papua itself. The PNG Church is trying to assist the refugees.

There are deep misgivings about the future of the Papuan people if Prabowo Subianto is elected President of Indonesia on 14 February. During his four tours of duty in Timor-Leste during its occupation by Indonesia, Prabowo oversaw massacres and other human rights violations.

Last year Pope Francis appointed a Papuan priest, Januarius Theofilus Matopai You, as Bishop of Jayapura, the capital. On 30 January 2024, the Bishop called again for peaceful dialogue. He supported the identification of the root causes of the conflict: development failures, marginalization and discrimination against indigenous Papuans, state violence and allegations of human rights violations, and controversies over the history and political status of Papua.

The area is so close to Australia, and yet we hear little, if anything, from our government or the media. The West Papuan situation lies heavily on the Australian conscience.



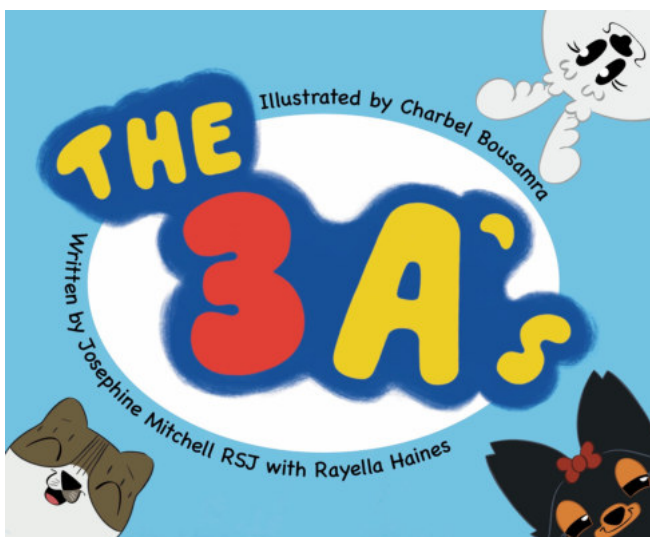
The first submission will concern the 2004 Australian spying on the government of Timor-Leste where members of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) dressed up as AusAID workers and installed listening devices in the walls of Timorese government meeting rooms. The plans and decisions of the Timorese negotiators regarding the sharing of the resources of the “Greater Sunrise” area of the Timor Sea were thus known by the Australian negotiators, putting Australia into an advantageous position over the Timorese. A Treaty was signed on the basis of that fraudulent operation, a Treaty that was later changed once the truth was made known.

The second submission involves earlier events when Australia and Timor-Leste were negotiating the Timor Sea Treaty in another section of the Timor Sea. Unbeknown to the Timorese, the contracts signed omitted the words “and inert gases”. This huge omission meant that the lucrative, rare and medically necessary gas helium was not contracted for, and so all the helium revenue went to the oil companies – Conoco Phillips and BOC Australia. The Timorese got nothing, and neither did the Australian people.

Billions of dollars are involved in each of these events. Given the state of education, health, life expectancy, political experience and economic prospects of the Timorese people after the occupation and the violent withdrawal of the Indonesians, these covert actions by Australia are deeply troublesome.

The 3 A’s Picture Book

Josephine Mitchell has continued to support the Maubara Orphanage in Timor-Leste through her creation of The 3 A’s picture book. Together with Illustrator, Charbel Bousamra, and the support of Rayella Haines and Joelle Sassine, a children’s book sprang into existence to support the ongoing needs of the children in Timor-Leste. The book acts as both an educational tool - teaching young ones about the importance of learning, friendship, and showing compassion in everyday life - and a fundraising opportunity for our young neighbours in need.



Staff Spirituality & Student Leadership Days

Fostering Charism Building

Our team has had the privilege to present and facilitate educational and spirituality programs across Australia. We have graciously accepted the invitation from these Josephite schools and religious organisations to not only offer our approach to justice but to support these groups as they move forward in accepting their call to serve.

Our focus for our Josephite Staff Development and Leadership days this year has incorporated two questions:

Who are we? Whom are we for?

The awareness that we are facing huge shifts across the globe – in our attitudes to care of Earth, the plight of those made poor, the referendum on the Uluru Statement, accelerating violence, and the pressures being faced within communities – has led us to begin with something of what we see to be at the heart of Josephite commitment, and then exploring the implications of this heart for our living today. It has necessitated new questions and new possibilities. One of our Josephite Justice networkers has summarised the situation succinctly:

The ground has shifted; the context for all our work is different. We need to transform our way of life so that it is in harmony with the universe to ensure that all the solutions we seek are sustainable and contribute to the integrity of creation.

- **Lee Tan**

It is an honour to be welcomed into the intimate experience of professional and spiritual development. Being called a witness to a team's hopes, fears, and dreams tethers us to their dormant potential. Our role is to help each group find their true north for the journey ahead and to equip them with the tools needed to overcome any obstacles that may come their way. We are their invisible partners, moving with them to achieve their aspirations for change and success.

- **Joelle Sassine**

Josephite Colloquium

Invitation to Share and Learn

Both our Constitutions and the General Chapter Documents urge us to share the gift of the charism with those who walk with us in ministry and life. We are reminded that God continues to gift us with the charism given to Mary and Julian and their early companions.

The Josephite Colloquium is a specific program that enables us to respond to the spirit of the call to us as Josephites. In 2023, we were grateful that we were able to offer this experience twice to people who work and minister in the tradition of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods. Over the three days, individuals explored the stirrings and challenges in their own hearts and lives, in response to the call of Mary and Julian in a new age. Participants spoke of it as a valuable opportunity to meet and share their experiences of ministry, and their particular ways of interpreting the spirit of Mary and Julian in the world of the twenty-first century.



The diversity of participants and the range of ministries from which they come consistently provide both inspiration and challenge. Participants spoke of the ways that the Colloquium has given new life and energy to their journey, reinvigorating their passion for their ministry and challenging them to make life choices that reflect the Josephite charism. The Colloquium continues to be a life-changing experience for many participants.

As we continue to explore this 'movement', and various Colloquium groups gather on a regular basis, we appreciate that the charism is bigger than we are and that together, all of us in Josephite ministries are called to live the vision and mission in a new world.

JJJ Gatherings

Reflect, Renew & Recommit

The Josephite Justice Network is committed to upholding the reverence and human dignity of each person, to respond to the cry of Earth and the cry of children. We strive to live in the consciousness of our place in this evolving universe.

The Josephite Justice Network (JJN) was established to share the Josephite vision by walking in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison-Woods in our world today. This Network includes both vowed religious members and Josephites living the charism in different ways. The Network gathers twice yearly to share ideas, initiatives, and strategies, to strengthen relationships, to endorse each other's work in social justice, and to communicate across Congregations.

Our focus areas include:

- Justice for First Nations peoples and full endorsement of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- Justice for Asylum Seekers including firm support for a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention.
- Justice for our Earth and promoting hope for our deteriorating planet.
- Justice for those affected by the housing and homelessness crisis and those who are directly affected by the unjust accelerating wealth gap between Australia's rich and poor.

JJJ gatherings aim to recommit ourselves as a network to our call to compassion for those who are poor. We strive to work with those with shattered lives who are isolated at the edge of our societies. When we gather as a network we plan and discern new ways that can bolster our involvement in political advocacy. As Josephites, we are determined to lobby and advocate against exploitation and systemic injustice. Our ability to build relationships with key political leaders as well as justice groups such as the Sydney Alliance provides our voice with the appropriate leverage to take part in changing the unjust structures of the world around us.

As time goes by we are constantly discovering new mechanisms that reflect our evolving consciousness of our place in the Universe and the changing demands of justice. In order to achieve this the Josephite Justice Network will continue to strive to develop the skills and courage to speak truth to power.



JJAMM Leadership Retreat

Learning to lead with purpose

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.

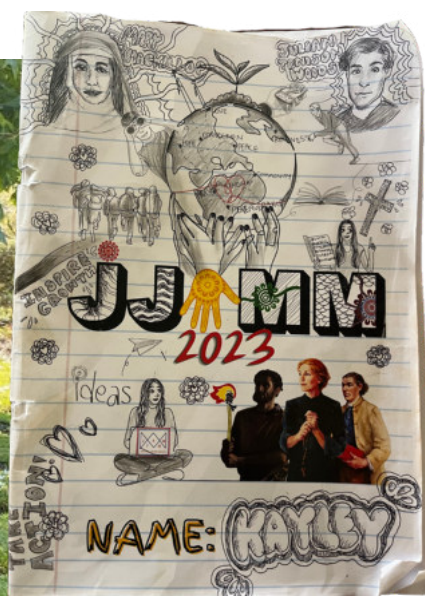
– John Quincy Adams

Our annual Joseph, Julian, and Mary MacKillop (JJAMM) leadership gathering welcomed Josephite student leaders across Australia and New Zealand to join forces in their collective pursuit of justice in the name of the Josephite tradition. JJAMM presented leaders with the opportunity to forge new relationships with other like-minded Josephite student leaders whilst learning about the courageous social justice pioneers who have gone before them. Our team was privileged to watch such gifted and insightful young leaders reinvigorate the dormant light within them and channel their newly kindled charism into the world of social justice.

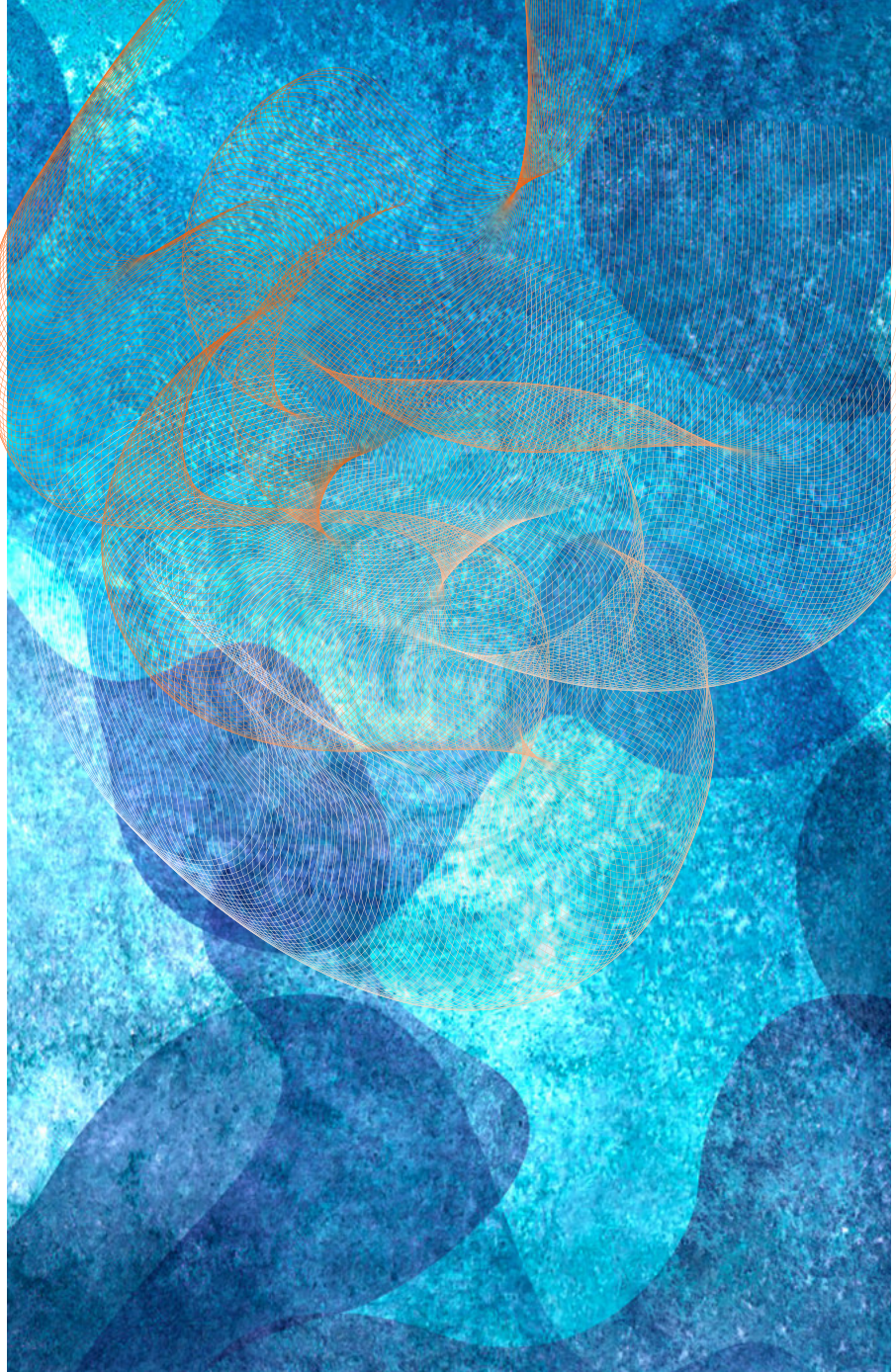
As we laughed, dreamed, learned, prayed, strategised, and JJAMM-ed together, we truly felt the spirit of St Joseph, Fr Julian Tenison Woods, and St Mary MacKillop with us. The days we shared not only enriched our understanding of what it means to be a creative, vision-forward Josephite leader but also highlighted the importance of connection within the community to achieve our just visions.

We are thankful to our creative collaborators on the JJAMM facilitation team – Nicholas Lahey, Carly Richardson, and Maria Boyd – for their inspirational, poignant, and selfless display of Josephite Leadership. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Bernice Quinn for her tireless administrative efforts and to Karen Oxley for her treasured and enduring wisdom. Lastly, we are indebted to the extraordinary hospitality offered by Sr Ellen Daniel, and by the staff at the St Joseph's Spirituality and Education Centre at Kincumber South and Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney.

Thank you to those who attended JJAMM, for putting on the armour of courage – modelled by Mary MacKillop – and for accepting the call of the Josephite legacy.



Reflections Across Seas Offerings from New Zealand



Please read reflections from our JIN members based in New Zealand as they speak about their experiences of charism building and advocacy campaigns.

Reflections from Adrienne Giallie

New Govt. set to reform and roll back Finance Industry Regulation

For the last year we have been anticipating changes to the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act/Regulations (CCCFA) if a new government came to power after the October 2023 election. The eventual coalition of three parties formed in November is considered the most right-wing government in decades in Aotearoa. I share one of my colleagues concerns that 'this is a government of business/capitalists and for business/capitalists. It will use innovative forms of debt such as public/private partnerships to pay for its big infrastructure plans, because it is not willing to raise taxes to pay for them. In the same way it wants to encourage the growth of private debt to pay for private investment and consumption. There's not much room in this vision for caring for people or the planet.'

Desiring an 'easy the flow of credit' has replaced the concern over the harm and damage irresponsible lending has wrought in the community. Words like debt and child poverty are no longer in the narrative. Rolling back the much-needed amendments to curb irresponsible lending is being seen as urgent reform. The financial mentoring sector, as the countervailing power in this area, finds itself fighting to defend the hard-won changes to the CCCFA and regulations as they are an effective tool in getting redress for and overturning irresponsible lending for the people who are deluged by unaffordable debt.

Financial Mentoring Sector

Given the complexity of the issues being presented to financial mentors across the country the sector is looking to have the level of expertise acknowledged and to provide more support. Looking to our colleagues in Australia, Financial Counsellors, I joined a group (pictured) - from across the sector representing Debt Relief Foundation, FinCap, Good Shepherd NZ, Salvation Army, Christians Against Poverty and Christian Budgeting Service NZ as the Aotearoa NZ contingent at the FCVic Annual Conference in Lorne. FCVic is known in Australia for their expertise addressing systemic injustice in the lending industry and strengthening consumer protections. They are closely supported by the Community Action Law Centre in Victoria and AFCA, their one dispute resolution scheme, with a hefty reputation for effectively addressing injustice.

The financial mentoring sector here in Aotearoa are interested in learning from FCVic how to organise ourselves in a way that ensures the people we work with are getting the best and most appropriate support.

Progress is being made to establish a Financial Rights Legal Centre, reduce our four dispute resolution schemes to one for greater consistency of outcomes and professionalizing the role of financial mentoring.



Reflections from Lee Tan

Some may have wondered what exactly I was doing in ministry firstly on the East Coast (Tairāwhiti) of Aotearoa Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently with Te Oranganui Māori Health Trust in Whanganui. The core responsibility was to support the health care of people in areas of high deprivation, that are isolated, rural and poor community. Ngāti Porou Oranga (the second largest Māori tribe) Board had invited me to return to explore trends in the area's health statistics and as a member of the Research Ethics Committee to offer advice on data sovereignty issues. I brought my abilities in terms of data analysis but also the spirituality of service nourished among the Sisters of St Joseph to accompany the health and community workers of the rural East Coast.

The results have been used at the local and national levels in Rural Health Symposium held at Iritekura Marae, and in briefings to the Minister of Health and health officials. My prayer is that I have assisted the spiritual and material well-being of the area.



On Mary MacKillop's feast day on 8 August 2022, I had the opportunity to meet with the CEO of Te Oranganui. Sr Makareta had arranged for us to meet to explore a new ministry based in Whanganui. Just two months later, during the interview with both the CEO and general manager of Te Oranganui, I was promptly offered a full-time position. Consequently, I drove nearly 600km from the East Coast across to Whanganui on the west coast of North Island.

This journey to Whanganui follows the footsteps of the pioneering spirit of the Whanganui Sisters alongside local flax roots Māori leadership. Sr Makareta wrote:

We chose health as a focus because most of us had sick people at home. We started with a few questions. Why do Māori people die ten years earlier than non-Māori? Why do so many young Māori males end up in mental institutions, prisons or both? Why do Māori women smoke themselves to death? Why do young Māori people kill themselves? Were we born bad, dumb and stunted? We began a deep in-depth study, looking at root causes, going back, going deep. Maori health problems are often seen as a person's poor choices. A change in lifestyle, diet and exercise would fix everything – a mantra that is echoed by some doctors today. But this is only partly true. Communication is a huge problem; people easily talk past each other; health professionals are poorly prepared, and there are real differences in perception of health status and cultural practices. Addressing health at a systemic level is not easy.

Back then a group of us decided to have a go at putting Māori health on the agenda. We lobbied for funds to employ a Māori Community Health Worker. We started to build infrastructure; an office, an office worker, a car, a bigger building, another worker, a budget, a contract, and then an iwi (tribal) health authority, with three iwi giving birth to Te Oranganui Iwi Health Authority. Today, Te Oranganui is one of the biggest iwi health authorities in the country, with a staff of over 200 employees.

Ministry with Te Oranganui also encompasses profound spiritual ties with the Whanganui River. This river serves as the binding lifeforce connecting Whanganui Māori to the land, offering a profound sense of place and heritage for families whose roots intertwine with its bends and tributaries. The Whanganui River is their tupuna awa—their ancestral waterway, and to navigate its ever-changing currents is to embrace the collective history that has gone before. As the saying goes: Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au — I am the river and the river is me.

We start each year with Awa Hikoi, a ceremonial pilgrimage along the river in canoes, a ritual aimed at preparing us for the year ahead. It is a full-on experience of total immersion into the heart of the wilderness, where we confront the unpredictable nature of the river. Amidst navigating rapids and delving into its depths, we develop a strong camaraderie among pilgrims that will last for our lifetime.



Gratitude, Collaboration, and Continued Success



We are overwhelmed by the generous display of support and encouragement we have received from the wider Josephite community and its allies. Thank you to the Congregational Leadership Team, CAS Staff, Mary MacKillop Place Team, Josephite Action Group, Mary MacKillop Today, and the amazing staff and students across our Josephite schools for consistently answering our call to justice. We thank them all for their unwavering support and dedication.

As we have ventured into the new and unknown terrain of the digital age and a more polarised socio-political landscape, we have been comforted by the empowering words of our dear friends who similarly walk in the light of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tension Woods. Anchored by the trusting spirit of St Joseph, our team has been able to take fresh courage and become change ambassadors and actors of truth.

This would not be possible without the formidable leadership modelled by the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

We are humbled by the thought of being navigated by the same Southern Cross that inspired so many amazing women who came before us. As we look up into the stars and feel the aura and richness of Indigenous traditions, we are connected to our predecessors who built a timeless legacy of love, hospitality, and justice for all.

Thank you and goodbye for now. We will see you very soon as we embark on the year 2024!

Editor: *Joelle Sassine*

Editorial Team: *Emilia Nicholas, Jan Barnett, Violet Cabral, and Vittoria Albanese*