

Marist Association Mission Assembly August 2015

What's New in MYC that reflects the interplay between the core works of the Ministry and our Priorities

Cate Sydes, CEO Marist Youth Care

Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists are MYSTICS because: *We make visible the Marian face of the Church.....*

Marist Youth Care in the spirit of Marcellin Champagnat stands in solidarity with young people at risk in their struggle for wholeness of life. We endeavour to nurture these young people with care, love and understanding and work towards reconciling them with their families. In working with these young people and their families, we are prepared to go beyond recognised limits of care and tolerance. Through a variety of innovative activities we support these young people on their path to personal, social and economic independence.

Marist Youth Care has continued to respond to new challenges emerging for vulnerable young people in our ever evolving world. We have worked hard to ensure our programs and services provide a safe haven for at risk young people to grow in life recognising that it is often the small things that are so significant. This has been especially evident in our work with young unaccompanied minors (under 18) seeking asylum who have come to Australia without any family.

These young people are amongst the most vulnerable of asylum seekers, often suffering emotional trauma, isolation and mental illness. They have all endured periods of time in immigration detention and in most instances have witnessed shocking atrocities within their own families, including loss of their primary carers.

Keeping the gospel values always in focus in responding to the needs of these young people, MYC has established a comprehensive residential service which is feminine in its attitudes and appearance. MYC's trained and experienced staff work with the young people with compassion whilst they are awaiting the outcome of their visa determination process. MYC's service ensures that these young people attend school and have access to the full range of health and community services and develop skills so that they can make a successful transition to living independently in Australia. In the last year (to July 1, 2015), MYC has provided services for 48 unaccompanied minors.



Our dream is that people will recognise that we Marists are PROPHETS because: We have moved out of our comfort zones, and are ready to go to the peripheries of our world, impelled to proclaim and build the reign of God

With God's dream to keep imagining and keep on heading out to new lands and to go where others are unwilling to go, MYC has expanded its service provision to states outside of New South Wales and is now delivering services in Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and in August 2015, will begin operations in Queensland. Services provided in these states include employment and training and status resolution services for unaccompanied minors.

MYC's Skills Development Centre in Brunswick, Victoria has achieved remarkable results over the last twelve months with 70% of the young people undertaking accredited vocational training being placed into sustainable employment. Two successful social enterprises have also been established *Pink Lightning*, a mobile nail and beauty service and *Hammertime* which is providing employment in non traditional trades for females and creates products for sale through the upcycling of discarded items of furniture and garden equipment. A new service to be established in Inala, QLD in August 2015, will provide employment and training opportunities for long term unemployed and at risk young people in the home and community care sector.



Working in Solidarity

Marist Youth Care's work is underpinned in advocating for the poor and marginalised and living in solidarity with vulnerable young people, respecting their dignity and developing their capacity to transfer their lives and communities. Our dreams for the future are based on the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people as we commit to doing things that go beyond being ordinary.

MYC has continued to use its network and connections to advocate for social change and to influence government policy on issues that affect young people in their everyday lives including: education, housing, employment, unemployment, health, income, recreation and human relationships so that they are in a better position to be responsible for themselves and more able to deal with society's demands.

MYC's strong collaborative relationships with business, government, community organisations, education and training providers, youth welfare agencies, legal services and health centre's, has also enhanced its capacity to assist disadvantaged young people.

MYC's work with the Aboriginal Community in Western Sydney, illustrates the significant work we are doing in this area. In partnership with Elders and significant others in the community, we are

working to deliver four Aboriginal specific services which cater for their most vulnerable young people. These services include supported accommodation for 15-18 year olds who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless; providing support for young people aged 12-18 years who have been involved with court, police or juvenile justice, referral services and vocational training and employment services with ongoing casework support and a guaranteed job. MYC housed 23 homeless people this year and our Aboriginal Community Links Support Program assisted 350 Aboriginal people to get the help they needed.

In addition, MYC's Aboriginal Trainee Support Worker Program has now provided employment opportunities for 42 local Aboriginal people and in total, 53 Aboriginal staff are employed by MYC overall. MYC also runs an Aboriginal Job Club and has placed 199 people into permanent employment. This program has been invaluable in creating employment for local Aboriginal people and in ensuring that MYC's programs and services are culturally relevant.

Over the past twelve months MYC's *Daramu* program which is a specialist Aboriginal youth justice program has been very successful in diverting young people from ongoing offending and contact with the juvenile criminal justice system. *Daramu* staff engage and support Aboriginal young people and their families in a suite of culturally specific, offence focussed programs as well as intensive criminogenic case management. These interventions are intended to address the identified need and risk factors associated with Aboriginal youth offending which often include substance misuse, family conflict, managing emotions, peer relationships, education or employment, financial assistance, accommodation, interpersonal violence, mental illness, cognitive disability.

The *Daramu* staff team also offer specific support to young people and their families to attend Children's Court appearances, assistance to access, enter and comply with court ordered bail conditions and support and case management both pre and post release to assist with positive reintegration into the community following a period in custody; promote cultural participation by young people. During the last year, *Daramu* has assisted 47 Aboriginal young people and has observed a decrease in the number of young people re offending and having contact with the juvenile justice system.



Over the next twelve months, MYC will continue at Mary's invitation.. *to do whatever he tells you* and will be open to new and emerging ways to develop the Marist spirituality, life and mission within our daily work.

Photo 1: Mystics

“We set aside quality time and space to deepen our sense of who we are, so as to give meaning to what we do” (dot point taken from International Mission Assembly Final Statement)



Champagnat Day provides an opportunity for staff to stop and reflect on what it is we do and who we do it for. It also enables staff to network and form relationships with other hard working and committed colleagues. A true sense of family spirit was present on the day.

Photo 2 - Prophets

“We give public voice to the promotion and defence of the rights of children and young people, in the social and political forums” (dot point taken from International Mission Assembly Final Statement)



Marist Youth Care workers advocate for young people through participation at forums and sharing our good news stories. The most recent publication of ‘Shining a Light on Good Practice’ in NSW featured a story about (Jason) who lives in one of MYC’s residential programs. This story tells us about the power of being ‘psychologically held’ and supported by a skilled residential team. “*We have all hung together with Jason and he is hanging in there with us just as tightly*” (a workers quote from the article).

Photo 3 – Communion

“We are a charismatic family with new and diverse expressions of community”
(dot point taken from International Mission Assembly Final Statement)



Marist Youth Care employs professional staff who come from various culturally diverse backgrounds. Our staff care for and support disadvantaged young people and families also from various culturally diverse backgrounds. Each staff member attends an Orientation Day which provides information about Marist Youth Care with links to Marcellin Champagnat, the Marist network and St Vincent's Boy's home Westmead.