



*DEPARTMENT OF MU CARITAS AND  
PROMOTION & DEVELOPMENT*

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**NEWSLETTER NO.2 - May 2011**

Dear Friends,

My apologies in having such a gap between newsletters but somehow time has slipped away. I had thought that after our Australian executive meeting I would produce a newsletter but left it to do until after I had spent time with the Victorian State Council in Holy week. Just following Easter, to my delight I received several bags of wonderful paperwork from Marjorie, with much information I wanted to digest. I then had a few days away followed by our Synod. You will realise that between this, work and family commitments I have not really been slouching.

You will have all received the promotional material for both MU and Caritas and will be busy spreading the good news to all those around you, I know. Thanks go to Marjorie for all her work in getting this material out to you all, even when her time in office had finished. Having started the process it seemed right that she should be able to follow it through to the end.

You have heard from other members of executive how important our time in Brisbane was, as we learnt more of our roles and each other, enabling us to work as a team supporting each other and our membership. I had had some important questions to take with me, to ask on Caritas members' behalf, and after speaking with Victorian Diocesan Caritas leaders as well I know there are still questions that need addressing.

There are 4 areas that seem to be standing out at present, these being: Definition of Caritas membership, Subscriptions for Caritas members, Caritas news in Mia Mia and use of our website.

1. **Definition of Caritas membership:** How do we define membership? Is it that people have paid subscriptions? Is it because they attend a certain amount of meetings? MU members can also be Caritas members – are they counted in figures? From a statistical point of view it seems necessary that we are all including (or excluding) the same groups of people.

**Action:** A questionnaire is attached.

2. **Subscriptions for Caritas:** This has proved to be quite a contentious issue! Once again there are many varieties: there are MU/Caritas members who pay their subs once through MU only. There are Caritas members who pay a "Full" subscription i.e. the same as MU members, and receive Mia Mia. There are those who pay a smaller subscription and who do not receive Mia Mia and there are those who pay no subscription at all. Some dioceses appear to pay Caritas subscriptions to MU Australia, while others do not. It would again seem necessary to standardise this area Australia wide.

In the Caritas Guidelines (1986) from the Caritas "What is it?" booklet it says "*Financial membership of a group to be voluntary but encouraged, and may be decided at group level or Diocesan level, bearing in mind the Diocesan and Australian levies which should be included. A high subscription may embarrass or deter some members even if not compulsory.*"

When the structure of Caritas at Australian level changed in 1998, things appear to have become a little less clear. Caritas fees do not appear to be set, in writing at least, from this time. It seems that that it was thought that Caritas members would pay the same as MU members, but that was not put into any guidelines. In the current MU Australia – By-Laws, revised December 2009, it states in By-Law 10: Caritas Groups: (vi) “*Financial membership of a group to be voluntary but encouraged, and may be decided at group level or diocesan level, bearing in mind any Diocesan levy.*” This appears open to interpretation and dioceses are asking for guidance.

It needs to be remembered that there are costs involved at branch, Diocesan and Australian levels and these costs need to be covered. Affiliation itself also has many advantages.

**Action:** Questionnaire attached.

3. **Caritas news in Mia Mia:** People have indicated that they would like to read more of Caritas in Mia Mia. The Mia Mia editor, Liz Harris, is keen to promote Caritas through the pages of Mia, but needs items and photos for publication. I am happy to try and provide information as well but need you to help me out with ideas of what you want covered and also photos, please. There are so many good ideas in Mia that can be adapted to suit many varied communities and many great sharing stories that can help us in our personal journeys, so I encourage you all to use this wonderful resource.

**Action:** Groups and dioceses to liaise with Caritas Leader and Mia Mia editor.

4. **Website:** I know that there is an urgent need to update the P&D website and to create a Caritas page and I have plans in my head about what I want to do. I would like to have something like the old “Caritas What is it Booklet?” available online.

**Action:** Ongoing. Watch the website!

It is exciting to have updates and contacts from people I have met in the past. One such person is Denise Lay, who has recently taken over P&D as well as Caritas leader in Ballarat diocese. Denise is an “ideas” person and she has asked if it is worthwhile considering “Lone or Diocesan” Caritas membership at Australian level with the thought that it is an idea to keep membership if groups close or members move to areas where there is no Caritas or MU. It could be an opportunity for people to look at starting new groups, if they could continue their membership, even to receive mail-outs and information on Caritas so they would still feel part of things. She points out there is a percentage of Caritas members who are from a non Christian background or from another denomination and live for their Caritas night, and that they could also stay in touch and be kept informed if they were move to a new area, by retaining membership, if it was available. My belief is that dioceses would be able to do this themselves if they wish to, as part of their own structure. **What do others think of this idea?**

I have just received the latest copy of “Families Worldwide” and I quote from Page 6 “*Together with CARITAS – an outreach arm for those on the fringe of church and community.....*” The article goes on to describe Jessie’s story and what Caritas has meant for her. It is great to know that the worldwide membership will read this very impressive article and see an example of Caritas – Friendship in Action! Well done “Befriend a family” programme! **Please let me know if you would like a copy of the article.**

I have also attached a form with last year’s details for your diocese. Can you please look at this, update it and get it back to me as soon as you can.

There are some exciting new initiatives in the wind, such as the exciting prayer partnership with the Australian Defence Force, so we need to make sure we are communicating with other members of our executives, using the MU website and passing on the new information to our membership as quickly as we can.

Once we get all the details above sorted we can move into the future and continue the work of reaching into and serving the communities we live in by showing our Christian faith in action. What an exciting prospect! Thank you one and all for your hard work, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Love and prayers

Jan