



***DEPARTMENT OF MU CARITAS AND
PROMOTION & DEVELOPMENT***

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NEWSLETTER No.2 JULY 2008

**TO DIOCESAN P & D CO-ORDINATORS AND CARITAS LEADERS,
STATE DELEGATES, DIOCESAN PRESIDENTS AND AUSTRALIAN
EXECUTIVE.**

Dear MU friends

By now this should have been my 3rd Newsletter to you, but somehow I find there are only 24 hours in a day, no matter how much I try to stretch the day. I do find it helps to get some sleep at times!!!

*WHERE TO START.....*As I read the paper, watch the T.V., listen to the news, talk to people and look around me, I can see there is so much **NEED** in the World.....
**Poverty...Illiteracy...Natural Disasters...Gender Inequality...Loneliness.....
Rejection...Conflict....Domestic Violence...Family Breakdown...Secularisation...
Economic Injustice...Time Impoverished Parenting...Discrimination...Bullying**
(to name some of the needs of people)

*HOW CAN WE AS MEMBERS OF MU AUSTRALIA DO OUR PART IN HELPING
TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE NEED?*

OUR PEP COURSES....I know in some Dioceses the Courses are being run successfully. However in other Dioceses nothing is happening, even though they may have the trained Facilitators. I would urge you to promote these Courses not only in your Parishes but in the Community. Approach the Schools....Advertise in the local paper.....Talk to other Groups and other Churches....Ask to put up notices in or ask permission to talk to parents at Kindergartens and Pre-schools. Participants do not have to be MU members, Anglicans or church attendees. It should not be left to the Facilitators to organise the parenting groups. Maybe family breakdowns, child abuse and domestic violence could be prevented, by involving parents in the PEP.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY....The Worldwide Mothers' Union has covered many of the above "NEEDS". What are we in Australia doing about this. I know there are

many Branches who work with those in need and this is great.....however there are others who don't do anything because they don't know where to start. My suggestion is that you have a Social Responsibility Co-ordinator in your Diocese and that he or she should be in touch with every Branch to encourage them.

There is a great Toolkit available at present "STRAIGHT TALKING...Fair Dinkum". This was launched by the Aust. Social Responsibility Co-ordinator Rev'd Canon Libbie Crossman in Brisbane in March 2008. Every Diocesan President and Diocesan Social Responsibility Co-ordinator has been issued with one. **I DO TRUST YOU HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO READ THIS.**

Remember when you choose to take on a Project you must IDENTIFY THE ISSUE.....RESEARCH THE ISSUE....EXPLORE THE ENVIRONMENT....TAKE ACTION....MONITOR & EVALUATE.

As Australia faces further on-going drought conditions, have your Branches in the City areas given any thought to helping those people on the land, no matter who they are? Can you identify issues relating to the impact of drought? Can we as MU Australia members help to prevent Suicide, Family break-downs, Abuse, etc. by thinking outside of our Parishes???

WEB PAGE FOR YOUNG FAMILIES...This idea was first brought to Australian Council in May 2006 and again in October 2007. It was decided that the MU Caritas and P & D Co-ordinator would look into this. Kaye Healy (Aust. Jnr. Vice President) and I have now commenced work on the Project and will keep you informed as to our progress. I feel there is a need for something to help young mothers. This became even more apparent to me recently in Brisbane with the death of twin girls who were supposedly left to starve when the mother "lost control of her life". *Are members of Branches reminded to look at their neighbourhood to see if there are young families in need of a kind word or offers of help???*

NEW PROMOTION MATERIAL...During the Aust. Executive Meeting held in March 2008, I discussed with Elaine and Reg Bailey the idea of using some of the very good Promotional material produced by MSH. Reg was quite happy that we use this and adapt it to our use. Elaine has now been to MSH and assures me she has everything in hand to give us new material later this year. You'll all be saying "At long last"!!!

GRANTS...When you have decided on a Diocesan Project, have you considered applying for a Grant from the Government? There is a great deal of paper work and other regulations, but it is worth consideration. Approval would have to be sought from the Australian Executive. Maybe a Grant to help run PEP courses could be a possibility.

DIOCESAN NEWSLETTERS...Thank you to all those Dioceses who have sent me copies of their Newsletter. I find them very interesting and they give me an idea of how your Diocese is working. It is interesting to note the Themes for the year eg. "Are we Meeting the Challenge"....."Mission Unlimited"...."Making a Difference".. "Faith in Action. Empowered by the Spirit"... "Make Time for Relationships". I find it helps to have a Theme for the year, as it encourages everyone to look for specific projects rather than just drift aimlessly through the year.

During 2007/08 The Worldwide Mothers' Union had as its focus "Time for Relationships" and looked at.... *Loving God-Loving our Neighbour...Reaching Out.. Time for Relationship with God... Worth of Relationship....Defend the Weak... Care for the Stranger...Relationship with Community...Justice in Relationship..*

All of these relate to our Aim and Objects and I would suggest you look at them to see if your relationship with your community can improve.

In our Diocese I am an MU delegate and Executive member of the NCWQ. At the request of the NCWQ President, a sub-committee has been formed, comprising MU Aust., CWA, Rural Women's Network and Catholic Women's' League. Our role is to ascertain at State level, where the work of our Groups overlap and to see where we can incorporate our resources to best serve our organisations and the community. Each group is aware of the rules and regulations under which we work. Have you something like this in your Diocese or State?

I read in a magazine recently the query of a member regarding why the Mothers' Union in the UK. has such a high profile and is involved in so much outreach and large Projects, while MU in Australia seems to be in the doldrums and fading away. Those of you who were at SWWRM of course realize that ..

- (a) There are some paid workers at MSH.
- (b) Income is derived from Membership, Diocesan Donations, a Trading Company, General Donations & Legacies, Fundraising and Marketing, Rent and Investments.
- (c) Money is spent on Campaigning, Community Development, Training, Families in Adversity, Prayer & Fellowship, Membership Resourcing, etc.
- (d) The Mothers' Union has a high profile in the UK and is acknowledged by the whole Church Community and Government for its work on behalf of the African Nations and other major projects undertaken in the UK and in other developing countries.

You might well say "How can we hope to present such a "face" in Australia"? We can't follow the example of the UK as we don't have the financial resources. However, we can accomplish more and become better known in the community if only we are prepared to accept CHANGE. Think for a moment of Saul's experience on the road to Damascus. God gave him an instruction and he said Yes, and although he didn't know what to expect he accomplished so much. God can CHANGE us into what he wants us to become, if only we give Him a chance and are prepared to let go of a great deal of baggage and be open and enthusiastic.

How often has someone suggested a project and the response has been "Oh we can't do that, it would cost too much **or** we haven't got the resources **or** the rules don't allow it." Did anyone think to say "We'll research and evaluate the project and see what can be done". RULES (which in actual fact may only be Guidelines) so often get in the way of worthwhile Projects. RULES are often quoted without the slightest idea of why they are there. "Blanket" RULES can cause friction and misunderstanding.

Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. RULES are very necessary in life and in organisations and MU Australia is no exception. However there are times when the RULES need to be looked at in relation to the situation. Sometimes a rule can be waived if it means someone or something will benefit from the outcome and it will not harm the organisation.

Too many RULES & REGULATIONS can stifle an organisation, especially if they are not relevant to to-day's society. Look at the RULES you have in your Diocese and in some of your Branches. Are they ones that would make prospective members feel they are back in the "hats and gloves at every meeting" era? Is there room for relaxation of a Rule if it would benefit a situation? Unfortunately RULES are sometimes used as a Power tool without regard for the negative or positive outcome. In the blue MU Handbook there are GUIDELINES (these are just that...suggestions to Guide you).....THE RULES OF THE COUNCIL OF THE MOTHERS' UNION IN AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED and THE BYE-LAWS (these must be followed)

Caritas Groups as part of MU Australia are bound by the MU Aust. Rules & Regulations. However they are more relaxed, and are encouraged to reach out into the community to give Christian friendship, help and encouragement to those in need (with no strings attached). I realize that at times some MU Branches may think Caritas Groups are out of line because they do things differently, but if they are encouraging people to join them, does it matter? This is why we need MU Branches and Caritas Groups to work together and not stand alone. Past hurts and misconceptions must be forgotten, as we all strive to help and encourage families and those in need and to understand and help one another.

Did you know that Mary Sumner started the Young Wives League in 1917 which now 90 years on is still functioning in the name of Caritas? Of course it has had a couple of name changes but still exists with the original idea of offering friendship and open membership.

If you don't have Caritas Groups in your Diocese and you are concerned about your membership, why not consider looking at the possibility of Caritas. When I was Diocesan Caritas Leader I realised that there was no actual admission service for Caritas members. With this in mind I wrote a dedication service and this was used during a normal Sunday service to admit the members. This showed the congregation that this was a new Parish Group which was supported by the MU Branch. Of course with Caritas there are always others who only attend their gatherings from time to time, but this is acceptable and is all part of the openness of the Groups.

In closing I would like to say there is no quick fix with the problem of falling membership, and no—it's not just about the young people not being interested anymore. It's not about them, but it could be about you!!!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance to you at any time.

With prayers and best wishes as you work in His name.

Marjorie (Voss)

MU Caritas and Promotion & Development Co-ordinator(Australia)