

They did what they were asked to do:
An historical analysis of the contribution of two women's
religious institutes within the educational and social
development of the city of Ballarat, with particular reference
to the period 1950-1980.

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Statement of sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

ABSTRACT

This thesis covers the period 1950-1980, chosen for the significance of two major events which affected the apostolic lives of the women religious under study: the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and the progressive introduction of state aid to Catholic schools, culminating in the policies of the Whitlam government (1972-1975) which entrenched bipartisan political commitment to funding non-government schools. It also represents the period during which governments of all persuasions became more involved in the operations of non-government agencies, which directly impacted on services provided by the churches and the women religious under study, not least by imposing strict conditions of accountability for funding. As a contextual history, the thesis draws heavily on explanations of the social, economic and cultural features of the period of time and takes into account the argument of the American sociologist, Todd Gitlin, that the 1950s were “a seedbed as well as a cemetery (because) the surprises of the sixties were planted here”.¹ The period provides “...a vantage point for viewing twentieth century Australian Catholicism... a time when significant movements of the century had reached a kind of a balance, and before the turmoil of the 1960s”.²

Scope of the thesis

Two of the four congregations of women religious who worked in the city of Ballarat will be studied: the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy and the Loreto sisters.³ Two other congregations contributed directly to the Ballarat community – the Sisters of Nazareth who conducted orphanages and aged care facilities, and the Sisters of St John of God who managed the private hospital. Their contribution will not be attempted in any detail, due in part to the difficulty of accessing their archives, but more importantly, because an attempt to cover all four congregations is beyond the scope of one thesis.⁴

¹ Todd Gitlin, *The 60s: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, Bantam, New York, 1987. I am grateful to Dr. Val Noone for introducing me to the ideas of Gitlin.

² Ian Howells, SJ, 'Preface: Vantage Point' in Val Noone (ed), *Golden Years, Grounds for Hope: Father Golden and the Newman Society 1950-1966*, Golden Project, Melbourne, 2008, p11.

³ Other institutes of women religious involved in the diocese included the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, Presentation Sisters, Brigidines, Good Samaritans, Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Brown Josephites), Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny. In 2009, the following women religious are represented in the diocese: Loretos, Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of St John of God, Sisters of Nazareth, Brigidines, Sisters of St Joseph (Brown Josephites), Dominicans, Good Samaritans, Sisters of Sion.

⁴ The archives of the Mercy and Loreto sisters are housed in Ballarat; St John of God archives are in Western Australia, and a thorough study of the Sisters of Nazareth would require access to their central archives in London.

The study is set in the city of Ballarat, as a manageable geographical area, although reference will be made to the contribution of the Sisters of Mercy throughout the whole Ballarat Diocese and to the Loretos in Portland. In addition, because the Loreto congregation is a national one, reference will be made to the contribution of a number of Loreto sisters whose leadership and/or influence impacted directly on their members in Ballarat, even though they may not have been based in the city itself. Material and interviews are included about women in this category whose contribution was deemed to be central to change and adaptation within the institute.

The thesis does not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of either institute, nor a history of the schools in which they taught. Rather it will evaluate their contribution to the community within a defined period, setting their lives and work in the context of secular changes of that time (government policies and critical social movements) and the changes required of all women religious following Vatican II. The study is not a comparative analysis of the two congregations. Any comparisons that may arise from the data are incidental to their combined contribution, and will be analysed within the context of their canonical structures, the visions of their foundresses and their response to the work they were asked to do by the Church.

The major focus of the study will be interpreted in terms of the nature and the scope of the changes to their apostolic work, with limited interpretation of spiritual changes. The thesis is not a theological exploration of the lives of the women involved. As an “outsider”, the spiritual life of the women involved can be respected, but understood with all the limitations of an “outside” researcher. One historian argues: “It is hard to speak of a person’s spirituality. In its intensely personal character it remains ultimately untouchable. And yet it becomes transparent in a person’s life”.⁵ It is hoped that the spiritual dimension of the lives of the women will clearly emerge from the telling of their own stories through interviews, and through the analysis of their work.

⁵ Roland Faley, ‘A Personal Memoir: The Arrupe Years’, *Review for Religious*, Vol. 50, No 2, March/April 1991, p167. See also, Bruce Mansfield, ‘Writing Religious History in Australia’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 27, 2006, p11.

Key research questions

Key research questions include the following:

- What was the nature and the extent of the contribution of women religious to the church and the broader community? In what ways did their contribution change and how was the change managed?
- In what ways were their lives affected by second-wave feminism or indeed, did they help shape feminism themselves and/or through the young women they taught? In what ways, if at all, were the experiences of these women similar to those experienced by women active in the second-wave feminist movement beginning in the late 1960s?
- To what extent were their apostolic priorities constrained by external forces outside their control? In what ways did women exercise their own agency as they adapted to these political, social, economic and religious forces?
- What was the importance and the nature of the leadership of the women who steered and lived out those changes?
- What were the barriers facing women religious who sought to contribute different skills to the Church after Vatican II, and did these barriers amount to a squandering of the resources the women could bring to the Church?

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the untiring support and advice of my three supervisors: Dr Rosa MacGinley pvbm, Dr Sophie McGrath rsm, and Dr John Molony, each of whom showed meticulous concern for my work and offered unstinting personal encouragement. Special thanks are offered to the community leaders of the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy and the Loreto sisters, Sister Veronica Lawson rsm and Sister Christine Burke ibvm respectively, whose permission to undertake the research was but one indication of their generosity of spirit and the trust they showed to an outsider accessing their respective archives. A special thanks is owed to Sister Margaret Scully ibvm and Sister Anne Forbes rsm, both of whom provided a special welcome into their communities. The archivists, Ms Robin Scott at Loreto and Sister Lesley Dickinson rsm at Ballarat East, provided invaluable support and unending patience, as did each of the sisters and other friends of both institutes who agreed to be interviewed for the work. Both communities offered generous and warm hospitality over the three year period, as did many friends in both Ballarat and Melbourne. In particular, I would like to thank my sister, Carmel, and her family in Ballarat, Jenni and Barry Mitchell in Melbourne and my daughter, Anne Wilson and her family in Canberra. I also acknowledge the friendship and professional advice of Ms Mary Ryllis Clark with whom I spend many profitable hours in the Loreto Province archives as she completed her own work on the Loretos in Australia.

Finally, I offer my thanks and love to both my children, Anthony and Anne, who have always shown me the greatest love and respect, not the least during the period of this research.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------------|
| STATEMENT OF SOURCES | I |
| ABSTRACT | II |
| SCOPE OF THE THESIS..... | II |
| KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... | IV |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | V |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | VI |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED | X |
| EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED | XIII |
| LATIN TERMS..... | XIV |
| PERSONAL STATEMENT | XV |
| INTRODUCTION..... | XV |
| PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY AND PERSPECTIVE..... | XV |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| <i>Methodology employed</i> | 1 |
| AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO SECONDARY SOURCES..... | 2 |
| THE USE OF ORAL HISTORY | 3 |
| THE USE OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY OTHER RESEARCHERS | 4 |
| ARCHIVAL RESEARCH..... | 5 |
| SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS..... | 6 |
| THE USE OF CASE STUDIES: CHANGE, CONTINUITY AND ADAPTATION | 7 |
| ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS | 7 |
| CONTENT OF THE THESIS..... | 8 |
| <i>Literature review</i> | 10 |
| WOMEN'S HISTORY | 12 |
| THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS TO HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING..... | 16 |
| THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION | 17 |
| CATHOLIC CHURCH HISTORY IN AUSTRALIA | 19 |
| LOCAL HISTORIES..... | 23 |
| CONCLUSION | 25 |
| CHAPTER 2: THE GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT: THE CITY AND DIOCESE OF BALLARAT ... | 26 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 26 |
| HISTORICAL CONTEXT | 26 |
| ECONOMIC STRUCTURE..... | 28 |
| POLITICAL STRUCTURE | 29 |
| GOVERNMENT AND NON-CATHOLIC SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE IN BALLARAT | 31 |
| BALLARAT'S ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE | 34 |
| THE CLASS DIVIDE IN BALLARAT | 34 |
| THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BALLARAT - HISTORY..... | 38 |
| THE BALLARAT DIOCESE BY 1950..... | 39 |
| THE CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES BY WOMEN RELIGIOUS..... | 40 |
| <i>The Sisters of Nazareth</i> | 41 |
| <i>The Sisters of St John of God</i> | 43 |
| WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATION SERVICES..... | 44 |
| THE LIFE OF BALLARAT CATHOLICS IN THE 1950S | 45 |
| ANTI-COMMUNISM IN BALLARAT | 50 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| CONCLUSION | 53 |
| CHAPTER 3: THE TWO INSTITUTES UNDER STUDY: INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (IBVM – LORETO) AND THE SISTERS OF MERCY (RSM- BALLARAT EAST CONGREGATION) | 55 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 55 |
| THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENT CANONICAL STRUCTURES..... | 55 |
| THE ARRIVAL OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN BALLARAT..... | 59 |
| ESTABLISHMENT: THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOUNDERS AND EARLY PIONEERS..... | 61 |
| COMMITMENT TO PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS | 63 |
| <i>Loreto in Portland.....</i> | <i>65</i> |
| <i>The Sisters of Mercy in Birchip.....</i> | <i>65</i> |
| CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION | 66 |
| THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS TO INFRASTRUCTURE AND HERITAGE IN BALLARAT..... | 67 |
| THE ROLE OF LAY SISTERS..... | 69 |
| CONCLUSION | 79 |
| CHAPTER 4: THE INTERFACE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND THE CITY OF BALLARAT: THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC | 80 |
| INTRODUCTION | 80 |
| THE MUSICAL CONTEXT IN BALLARAT | 80 |
| THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH STREET COMPETITIONS..... | 83 |
| MUSIC IN THE CHURCHES..... | 85 |
| MUSIC IN CONVENT AND PARISH SCHOOLS..... | 86 |
| MUSIC IN THE BALLARAT CONVENTS..... | 89 |
| LORETO AND MUSIC IN BALLARAT | 93 |
| TWO INSTITUTES, TWO ERAS, TWO PROFILES..... | 95 |
| <i>Gertrude Healy rsm (Sister Catherine of Sienna, 1894-1984).....</i> | <i>96</i> |
| <i>Deirdre Brown ibvm.....</i> | <i>97</i> |
| CONCLUSION | 99 |
| CHAPTER 5: THE WOMEN UNDER STUDY | 100 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 100 |
| PRE-VATICAN II LIFE OF RELIGIOUS AND THEIR FORMATION PROCESS | 100 |
| VATICAN II | 105 |
| PROFILE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN THE TWO INSTITUTES | 115 |
| EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE WOMEN RELIGIOUS | 118 |
| LEADERSHIP AMONGST WOMEN RELIGIOUS PRIOR TO AND DURING VATICAN II..... | 120 |
| <i>Leaders of the Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East.....</i> | <i>120</i> |
| <i>Leadership of the Loretos</i> | <i>122</i> |
| CONCLUSION | 124 |
| CHAPTER 6: EXTERNAL PARADIGM SHIFTS IMPACTING ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS | 125 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 125 |
| THE SHIFTS IN SECULAR CULTURE - THE 1950S..... | 125 |
| THE 1960S AND 1970S..... | 128 |
| THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA | 129 |
| EDUCATIONAL CHANGES..... | 136 |
| <i>The struggle for state aid.....</i> | <i>136</i> |
| <i>The growth of a Catholic education system.....</i> | <i>140</i> |
| CONCLUSION | 147 |
| CHAPTER 7: POST-VATICAN II CONTRIBUTION: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE | 148 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 148 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| CONTINUITY IN CORPORATE APOSTOLIC WORK: WOMEN RELIGIOUS WHO STAYED ON IN THE SCHOOLS..... | 149 |
| THE GRADUAL SHIFT TO LAY CONTROL..... | 150 |
| THE ROLE OF THE MELBOURNE CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE (CEO) IN RELATION TO THE STATUS OF LAY TEACHERS | 154 |
| HANDING OVER TO THE LAITY: INTERNAL DECISION MAKING..... | 157 |
| POST VATICAN II LEADERS AND AGENTS OF CHANGE: NONI MITCHELL IBVM AND VALDA WARD RSM | 163 |
| CONCLUSION | 169 |
| CHAPTER 8: CASE STUDIES OF CONTINUITY, CHANGE AND ADAPTATION | 171 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 171 |
| A CASE STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: MERCY TEACHERS' COLLEGE | 172 |
| <i>Background</i> | 172 |
| <i>The battle to save Aquinas</i> | 174 |
| <i>Planning within the Ballarat Diocese</i> | 176 |
| <i>Government Planning</i> | 179 |
| <i>Conclusion</i> | 185 |
| THE CLOSURE OF BOARDING FACILITIES AT MARY'S MOUNT..... | 186 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 186 |
| <i>Background</i> | 187 |
| <i>Composition of the boarders, and boarding fees</i> | 187 |
| <i>National planning and policy development</i> | 188 |
| <i>The role of the Major Superiors</i> | 190 |
| <i>Planning at state level</i> | 191 |
| <i>Planning at the diocesan level</i> | 192 |
| <i>Internal decision making</i> | 194 |
| CONCLUSION | 199 |
| CHAPTER 9: INTO THE EIGHTIES | 201 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 201 |
| VISIBLE CHANGES IN CATHOLIC BALLARAT | 201 |
| A NEW PROCESS FOR FORMATION POST VATICAN II..... | 203 |
| PROFILES OF TWO WOMEN WHO ENTERED IN THE LATE 1970S..... | 205 |
| <i>Sister Liz Moloney rsm</i> | 205 |
| <i>Liz Hepburn ibvm</i> | 206 |
| NEW FORMS OF GOVERNANCE | 207 |
| HOW THE WOMEN SAW THEMSELVES BY 1980..... | 209 |
| THE SIGNIFICANCE AND DIVERSITY OF INDIVIDUAL APOSTOLIC WORK | 210 |
| <i>Contribution to policy making in secular education</i> | 217 |
| <i>Contribution to Catholic education – administration and planning</i> | 218 |
| <i>Adult education, catechetics and pastoral work</i> | 220 |
| <i>Contribution to the parish and the diocese</i> | 222 |
| <i>Professional development and further education</i> | 224 |
| <i>International presence</i> | 225 |
| GROWING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE INSTITUTES..... | 225 |
| CONCLUSION | 228 |
| CHAPTER 10: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FEMINISM..... | 229 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 229 |
| SOCIAL JUSTICE..... | 229 |
| THE SOCIAL JUSTICE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA | 230 |
| WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND THE OPTION FOR THE POOR | 234 |
| THE VOW OF POVERTY | 236 |
| FEMINISM AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS..... | 244 |
| PARALLELS WITH THE SECULAR WOMEN'S MOVEMENT | 246 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| FEMINIST RELIGIOUS: MERE IMITATORS OF A SECULAR TREND? | 256 |
| A SQUANDERED RESOURCE? WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN THE WAKE OF VATICAN II | 258 |
| CONCLUSION | 260 |
| CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION: THEY DID WHAT THEY WERE ASKED TO DO..... | 262 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 262 |
| THE CULMINATION OF CHANGE FOR WOMEN RELIGIOUS | 264 |
| CONCLUSION | 268 |
| APPENDICES..... | 270 |
| APPENDIX 1: PUBLICATIONS BY LORETO SISTERS WHO TAUGHT IN BALLARAT AND PORTLAND BETWEEN 1950-1980..... | 270 |
| APPENDIX 2: DETAILS OF LAY SISTERS | 276 |
| APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY LEADERS | 277 |
| APPENDIX 4: BISHOPS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF THE BALLARAT DIOCESE, 1950-1980 | 279 |
| APPENDIX 5: WOMEN WHO ENTERED RELIGIOUS ORDERS FROM WITHIN THE BALLARAT PARISH... | 280 |
| APPENDIX 6: THESES AND ACADEMIC WORK COMPLETED BY LORETO AND SISTERS OF MERCY WHO TAUGHT IN BALLARAT, 1950-1980 | 281 |
| APPENDIX 7: MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL AND DECISION MAKING BODIES..... | 284 |
| APPENDIX 8: INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS. | 286 |
| APPENDIX 9: INFORMED CONSENT FORM | 288 |
| APPENDIX 10: HR ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM..... | 289 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY:..... | 290 |

List of Abbreviations Used

| | |
|-------|--|
| ABC | Australian Broadcasting Corporation |
| ACLRI | Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes |
| ACOSS | Australian Council of Social Services |
| ACTU | Australian Council of Trade Unions |
| ACU | Australian Catholic University |
| ADB | Australian Dictionary of Biography |
| AEC | Australian Education Council |
| ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| ANZUS | Australia, New Zealand and United States Alliance |
| AAP | Australian Assistance Plan |
| ATVCS | Association of Teachers in Victorian Catholic Schools |
| AUC | Australian Universities Commission |
| AWD | Action for World Development |
| AWEC | Australian Women's Education Coalition |
| AWU | Australian Worker's Union |
| BCAE | Ballarat College of Advanced Education |
| BDEB | Ballarat Diocesan Education Board |
| BIAE | Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education |
| BTC | Ballarat Teachers' College |
| CAE | College of Advanced Education |
| CACAE | Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education |
| CEO | Catholic Education Office |
| CEAB | Central Advisory Board |

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| CECV | Catholic Education Commission of Victoria |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CPA | Communist Party of Australia |
| CRA | Conference of Religious of Australia (Formerly ACLRI) |
| CWA | Country Women's Association |
| DLP | Democratic Labor Party |
| EAB | Educational Advisory Board |
| IBVM | Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| ICE | Institute of Catholic Education |
| ISMA | Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia |
| KSC | Knights of the Southern Cross |
| MCEB | Melbourne Catholic Education Board |
| MHR | Member of the House of Representatives |
| MLA | Member of the Legislative Assembly |
| MLC | Member of the Legislative Council |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NCC | National Civic Council |
| NCEC | National Catholic Education Commission |
| NCGM | National Catholic Girls Movement |
| NCRM | National Catholic Rural Movement |
| OAM | Order of Australia Medal |
| PACSS | Principals' Association of Catholic Secondary Schools |
| PLC | Presbyterian Ladies College |
| PM | Prime Minister |
| SEATO | South East Asia Treaty Organisation |

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| SJ | Society of Jesus (Jesuits) |
| SMB | School of Mines Ballarat |
| SPC | St. Patrick's College (Ballarat) |
| SCV | State College of Victoria |
| SHC | Sacred Heart College |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| TLC | Trades and Labor Council |
| VCEC | Victorian Catholic Education Commission |
| VCOSS | Victorian Council of Social Services |
| UN | United Nations |
| WAA | Women's Action Alliance |
| WATAC | Women and the Australian Church |
| WEL | Women's Electoral Lobby |
| WLM | Women's Liberation Movement |
| WWWW | Women Who Want to be Women |
| YCS | Young Catholic Students |
| YCW | Young Catholic Workers |

Explanation of terms used

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Charism | A spiritual gift possessed by a person for the benefit and progress of the Church |
| Consultors | Professed sisters who advise and assist the Provincial in matters of government and administration of the province. |
| Encyclical | Formal pastoral letter from the Pope to the whole Church on social, moral, doctrinal or disciplinary issues. |
| Kairos | Moment of vulnerability, opportunity and choice |
| Laity | Those who are not ordained |
| Nuns | The term “nun” according to Roman Catholic Canon Law can only be strictly applied to those women who are members of enclosed orders, that is those who live cloistered lives and who take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The term “sisters” applies to women religious professed by simple vows living in religious congregations, most of which were formed in the 19 th century. Though commonly inaccurately used canonically, nonetheless the term “nun” is often retained because of its regular use and popularity. |
| Religious Sisters | Strictly speaking, the title applies only to a religious woman professed of simple vows, temporary or perpetual, in a religious congregation, many of which were formed in the nineteenth century. |
| Synod | Meeting of Bishops from a region, or on a topic |
| Subsidiarity | Higher authority gives help to, and provides resources for, authority at lower levels, but not encroach on their competence. |

Latin Terms

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> | Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world |
| <i>Humanae Vitae</i> | On human life |
| <i>Lumen Gentium</i> | Dogmatic constitution on the Church |
| | |
| <i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i> | On the dignity of women |
| <i>Ordinatio Sacerdotalis</i> | On reserving priestly ordination to men alone |
| <i>Perfectae Caritas</i> | The Decree on the up to date renewal of religious life |
| <i>Rerum Novarum</i> | Of new things |
| <i>Sensus fidelium, sensus fidei</i> | Sense of the faithful, sense of the faith; doctrine of reception that teaching is confirmed when the Christian community affirms it. |

Personal Statement

*Feminist researchers ... begin with an issue that is both an intellectual question and a personal trouble.*⁶

Introduction

The intellectual questions which this thesis addresses will be placed within the context of an analysis of the contribution of women religious to the city of Ballarat between 1950 and 1980, analysed from the perspective of a feminist whose life in the wider community has paralleled that of the women religious. No attempt to address the key questions in the thesis in relation to women religious can ignore the spiritual base of their commitment to apostolic work, so that these ‘intellectual’ questions will be set alongside the importance of the spiritual lives of the women and their fidelity to the charism of the foundresses of their institutes.⁷ Through an examination of the reality of that period in the lives of religious women, I will address the questions which are of both intellectual interest and a ‘personal trouble’ to me as the researcher.

Personal biography and perspective

The ‘personal trouble’ which informs the research is based on my life story and experience. I was born in 1941 and raised in Ballarat, the second daughter of working class parents whose gift to me was a great love of music (from my father, George) and a great interest in politics (from my mother, Edna). From her I was constantly reminded that her father was a founding member of the Miners Union and the Labor Party, a personal friend of James Scullin, (and could have become Prime Minister himself according to my mother, except that he stood aside because of Scullin’s superior oratory skills), that her life was shaped by his death from miner’s lung disease, and that her greatest regret was her lack of formal education. By virtue of finishing school, becoming a teacher and avoiding for ever the horrors of the next Depression *when* it comes (not “*if* it comes”), in my mother’s view, there was no reason why I shouldn’t become Prime Minister myself, provided that I ensured a clean and orderly house before I embarked on the career: being a female was not seen as a barrier.

⁶ S. Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, pp259-260.

⁷ For a discussion of charism, see Rudolf M. Mainka, ‘Charism and History in Religious Life’, in *Women Religious at the Service of a New Humanity: Select Reprints from the Bulletins of the International Union of Superior Generals (Women) Rome from 1979-1983, (Book One)*, Asian Trading Company, Bangalore, 1984.

From my father I learnt that on the final day on earth, the one thing you could be sure of was that someone would be listening to Mozart and to Louis Armstrong, that you must listen to all live music with respect for the musicians, regardless of the standard of the music, because they were all trying (although a badly played cello was barely tolerable) and that you must always listen carefully to the bass players. His own mother was widowed before he was born and raised him with her earnings from music lessons she gave at the Ballarat East Mercy convent and playing piano for the weekly dances held at St Patrick's Cathedral hall. Although so far, I have not found evidence of her employment at the convent, I have a distinct memory of him telling me the story, because, even though not a Catholic himself, he spoke of the nuns and music with great respect, in the same way that my mother, also not a Catholic until later in life, spoke of Mother Brendan at Mary's Mount kindergarten which my sister and I attended along with many non-Catholic children from the community.

I became a Catholic at age 16 and attended Loreto Mary's Mount as a boarder for Year 12 in 1958, when Mother Antoinette Hayden was Mistress of Schools and taught me two history subjects; Mother Gerard (Bernadette Ziesing) taught me English Expression and Literature, and Mother Andrew (Bell) came out of retirement to teach myself and three other girls geography. In my eyes, Mother Antoinette's formidability was in equal measure because of her bearing and manner and the fact that she was a member of the Hayden family, one of the richest in Ballarat and one far removed from our working class lives.

The year boarding was the happiest of my young life, and I was bitterly disappointed when Mother Antoinette (and other sensible adults in my life) dissuaded me from entering the convent, advising me to complete my teacher training at the Ballarat Teachers' College and teach for three years, fulfilling the requirements of my studentship, then return to her if I was still determined to enter. Needless to say I didn't, but if I had been accepted, I would now be amongst Mary Ward's "circle of friends" who are a subject of this thesis, which explains my interest in the choices they have made as religious women. My own choices were shaped by a marriage entered upon at a much too early age, years of isolation with two young children in the outer suburbs and arguing with the parish priest that we didn't necessarily need a school – we needed family support, especially for those couples wrestling with the Church's teaching on contraception (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968).

This was also the time of the hanging of Ronald Ryan and what we saw as the acquiescence of the Church despite so much agitation on his behalf, the beginning of the anti-Vietnam Moratoriums, student unrest at Monash to which I had returned as a mature-aged student in the politics department, and the tentative beginnings of the women's movement, which was to flourish from 1970. Politically, we collectively despaired at the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, but domestically there was optimism amongst many that the long years of conservative government would end, and, that, under the leadership of Gough Whitlam, Australia would enter a new world, not least for women.

Like thousands of other women, I saw the vehicle for change being not in the Church, which seemed to want me only for my fund-raising capabilities, but in the women's movement which offered endless opportunities for involvement in social change. It also had the huge advantage of offering a new community at the time when even mildly radical views were most unwelcome in our parish, epitomised by our (Irish) parish priest warning that I would "read myself out of the Church" if I continued my studies at Monash, and that when confronted with our delegation arguing against a new school, banged the table and shouted, "It's my church" – and in my view, it was indeed.

While all this turmoil was confronting lay women, religious women were engaged in equally tumultuous times: in what way were they similar? Was the "problem with no name" identified by Betty Friedan as the explanation for the frustration of women in the suburbs mirrored by women in convents?⁸ What was the significance for them of the new opportunities to return to study; was it the same as for us as "Whitlam women" once tertiary fees were eliminated? What support did they get from each other (as well as from their leaders) when they broke away from traditional roles in their working lives – was it similar to the support we found in other women who were also re-entering the work force or diversifying their careers? Or did they face the same hostility as many of us did from priests, neighbours, mothers-in-law when we "put down the tea-towels"? Or, as I suspect, a mix of both.

⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, New York, 1963.

If the most challenging and painful change, but also the greatest freedom for many religious, was modifying or discarding the habit, can it be equated in any way to the freedom we felt when we no longer had to have matching bags and shoes, wear gloves and hats to the Ballarat Cup or to go shopping in Myers? Jean Shrimpton's appearance at the Melbourne Cup without hat, bag, matching shoes and wearing a mini skirt and Joan Kirner appearing in Parliament in a pant suit received more column inches than did the new look nuns.⁹ I am grateful that one sister raised this issue with me – I would not have thought there was any parallel until we discussed it. She also told me that she was shocked the first time she realised that some of her married women friends did not have money of their own to go out to lunch with her – at least by that time she was on a limited personal budget allowed by the congregation after Vatican II. For many secular women, money of their own was in the same unthinkable league as Virginia Woolf's "room of one's own".¹⁰

Another sister commented that being allowed out at night for meetings and some social events was of great importance after Vatican II; how many lay women had to seek permission from their husbands to go out at night, or get them to agree to "baby sit" their own children so that she might attend a meeting or join her friends for dinner? How many were "allowed" to use the family car? One woman I taught in 1982 in a Women's Studies course was only allowed to come if she provided her husband with a roast meal on lecture nights; another friend came home after lectures to find that the meal she had left her husband was unacceptable and had been put in the washing machine, along with all her notes for a major essay.¹¹ These were not isolated or unusual instances of the constraints, barriers or obstacles facing women of our generation. At the risk of appearing victims, I would argue strongly that lay women were under enormous pressures to conform to the 1950s stereotypes of wives and mothers, in much the same way as women religious were more acceptable and comforting in the guise of the "good sister" rather than as strong, independent, educated women, which many had always been and even more were to

⁹ For a detailed account of the issue of clothes, femininity and the constrictions on women's freedom imposed by the dictates of fashion, see Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1984.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1974. Marilyn French, *The Woman's Room*, Andre Deutsch Limited, London, 1977, which dealt with these issues, became a best seller and was widely used in women's studies courses and book groups in the 1970s.

¹¹ On the issue of women returning to study, see for example, Gwen Wesson, *Brian's Wife, Jenny's Mum*, Dove Communications, Mulgrave, 1975; Joan Martin, *Second Chance: Women Returning to Study*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988; Michelle Lonsdale, *Insistent Voices: The Story of the Diamond Valley Learning Centre*, Diamond Valley Learning Centre Inc, Greensborough, 1993; Carolyn Landon, *Cups with no Handles: Memoir of a Grassroots Activist*, Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 2008.

become after Vatican II. How both religious and lay women achieved these changes, what parallel paths they trod during these three turbulent decades are both intellectual and personal questions.

As a young woman growing up in Ballarat I was well aware of the oft-quoted description of the two institutes of teaching sisters: “You send your daughters to Mary’s Mount to learn how to get in and out of a car gracefully; you send them to Sacred Heart to learn how to make a living in order to buy the car”. There is little doubt that the geographic positioning of the convents contributed to this perception – the Mercies in Ballarat East, a traditional working class area of Ballarat, the Loretos in the West in the heart of the “big end of town”. The architecture of the two convents was also in stark contrast – the monastic setting, high walls and heritage chapel of the “Ladies of the Lake”, contrasted, not only with the Mercy convent, but to many other buildings in Ballarat. The fact that the Loreto students were predominantly boarders at this time and seldom seen, while the strictly enclosed nuns who taught them were seen even less often – all contributed to the perception of a class division that did in fact have some basis in reality.¹² Many of Ballarat’s Catholic elite sent their girls to Loreto, but this was not a universal choice – the Mercies also attracted their share of daughters of the leading Catholics.¹³

A more rounded analysis of the two congregations requires an appreciation of their differing histories, canonical structures, visions of their foundresses and above all, an understanding of what they were asked to do, and in fact did; like all congregations of women religious, they were established to meet a particular need – they responded to the stated needs of the church authorities and the Catholic communities in which they worked, within the context of the times. Ballarat in the 1950s was a class ridden society, similar to other regional centres. The distinction between the reality and the perception of this class distinction is beyond the scope of this thesis, but will be touched upon in the opening Chapter. What will be demonstrated is that both convents offered sound education for girls, underpinned by broader cultural offerings – music, art, languages and deportment, which prepared them well for both car ownership and entrance and exit to same.

¹² For a discussion on this point, see Christine Trimmingham Jack, *Growing Good Catholic Girls: Education and Convent Life in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003.

¹³ For an overview of the issue of class and social status in relation to women’s religious orders, see Beverley Zimmerman, ‘She Came from a Fine Catholic Family’: Religious Sisterhoods of the Maitland Diocese, 1867-1909, *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 115, October 2000.

Finally, although expressed in a different context, the words of Father Denis Dwyer are appropriate in terms of how I will approach the writing of this thesis: “There are many disadvantages in one who is not a religious addressing a group like yourselves (as you gather in Chapter). It means, amongst other things, that those reflections come not from the inside, but from the outside...I speak as one who loves and respects your vocation, and I ask your forgiveness for any ignorance I display of your lives”.¹⁴

¹⁴ Father Denis Dwyer, ‘The Religious Order in the Local Church’, quoting Metz, *The Future Ex Memoria Passionis*, in (ed) Ewart H. Cousins, *Hope and Future of Man*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972, cited in Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Provincial Chapter 1980*, Item 15, Appendices. For an overview of the arguments relating to ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ writing Catholic history, see Patrick O’Farrell, ‘Historians and Religious Convictions’, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No 68, April 1977.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Dr Paul Collins, well known for his commentaries on the Catholic Church in Australia, is of the view that “In the English speaking world, no other local Catholic Church has built such a comprehensive knowledge of its past. The field has been so well worked over that it is hard for students to find Australian Catholic topics broad enough to justify major dissertation work”.¹⁵ This has not been my experience in writing this thesis as it relates to the role and contribution of women religious. As a newcomer to the history of the Catholic Church in Australia reviewing the literature to establish the context for my research, I found a surprising lack of attention to the subject, although serious scholarship has been undertaken in the past ten to twenty years to address the imbalance between the attention given to clerical history and to an analysis of the role of women beyond the stereotype of those described as “the good sisters”, many of whom are at least mentioned in histories of parishes and centenaries of schools.

Methodology employed

This thesis is a narrative history, drawing heavily upon archival material, supplemented by the oral and written testimony of women who have worked within the institutes. These have been supported by interviews with people who were active observers and partners in their work, and those whose lives they shaped as students of their schools and/or through their adult apostolate. The validity and reliability of sources have been addressed by a range of independent and corroborative interviews and attention to secondary sources. The narrative is set within the social and economic context of the times, drawing upon political, sociological and economic histories, as well as those directly related to the Catholic Church in Australia, in the belief that an interdisciplinary approach enables the researcher to move beyond one-dimensional institutional history.

The perspective from which I have approached the thesis is that of a committed feminist, with a long term interest in women’s history and a commitment to justice for women which I have pursued both professionally and as a volunteer. My stance as a researcher in this sense has not been a neutral one, but it does seek to eliminate personal bias, and most

¹⁵ Paul Collins, *No Set Agenda: Australia’s Catholic Church Faces an Uncertain Future*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1992, p.173.

importantly, to avoid judgment of the past based on today's standards and understandings.¹⁶ I have also drawn upon my experience in public policy development to better understand the significant changes to education with which the women religious had to adapt during this period.

In the production of the thesis, it is hoped that a model will emerge which may be useful for other studies concentrated on specific geographical areas.

An interdisciplinary approach to secondary sources

My research proceeded from an initial examination of secular historical, sociological, economic and cultural texts pertaining to the era under study. I then proceeded to sources which covered the changes within the Catholic Church, particularly those relating to Vatican II and for women religious within Australia and, to a lesser extent, overseas. Local histories relating to Ballarat and other Australian provincial cities provided the geographical and political background, while a re-examination of the major feminist writings covering the early days of the second-wave women's movement allowed me to reacquaint myself with the literature, but more importantly, to begin to draw parallels between the changes and experiences of religious and secular women. All secondary sources were examined in the context of the societal changes which occurred during the three decades under study, including international events which directly affected Australian society.

I also benefited from reading (or re-reading) a number of novels written about the experience of Catholics who lived through the era, as well as those which helped shape the cultural context of the times.¹⁷ As one eminent historian has noted, "Many will form a sense of this country's past by reading novels, since literature has created influential versions of Australian history from well before it was consolidated as an academic discipline".¹⁸ Seen from the perspective of four decades on, many of these now seem either quaint at one extreme, or virulently critical and bitter at the other. Nonetheless, the

¹⁶ I acknowledge the distinction drawn by Anne McLay between "feminist methodology" and a "feminist perspective", the latter being the approach which I find more compatible with writing a narrative history. Anne McLay, 'Writing Women's History: One Feminist Approach' in Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion, *Long Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity*, The Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, Sydney, 1994.

¹⁷ On the advice of Dr. Paul Collins and a number of women religious, I also re-watched the ABC series, *Brides of Christ* (released in 1991).

¹⁸ Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2004, p21.

‘literary sub-genre’ provided valuable insights into much of the hurt and indeed anger which was directed at the Church from the generation who lived through pre-Vatican II educational experiences, often under the care of women religious. What was starkly absent from this body of work was any account of the period from the point of view of the women religious themselves (or indeed from any of the male religious teachers).

The use of oral history

The research has been conducted within a feminist perspective, which is not intended to produce ‘a history with men left out’, but utilizes a methodology which redresses the balance by examining the world as it is experienced by women, in the belief that explanations are best provided by the women who were involved in experiencing and indeed bringing about change. Oral history as a technique has become particularly suitable for women’s history and has been used throughout the thesis to support evidence and insights gained through the initial archival research.¹⁹ One of the strengths of feminist histories has been to broaden the definition of ‘historical significance’ by presenting the personal, subjective experience of women. While social history, including that of Australian Indigenous communities, has been criticized for heavy reliance on oral testimony, often unable to be corroborated by original documents, this criticism ignores the fact that white male history has traditionally drawn on the memories (written or spoken) of men, and that “...observation and memory form a continuum of historical testimony that the historian has to appraise”.²⁰

The limitations and the strengths of oral history have been taken into account, including the danger of the interviewer shaping the final product of the discussions. Oral history as a methodological tool in this thesis has been placed alongside similar material – written reminiscences, biographies and (limited) autobiographies, plus obituaries written as tributes to sisters in the institutes. The use I have made of oral testimony has, as far as possible, been to provide me with personal insights, and to assist as one of several research techniques used simultaneously, in a method known as “triangulation”.²¹ This term refers

¹⁹ See for example, Macphail, J and Taylor, H, ‘Oral history; A vital dimension in the history of women’, *Second Women and Labour Conference Papers*, Vol. 2, 1980.

²⁰ Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars*, p46.

²¹ On the issue of triangulation and its inclusion in much sociological research, see Judith Cook and Mary Margaret Fonow, ‘Knowledge and Women’s Interests: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociological Research’ in Joyce McCarl Nielson, *Feminist Research Methodologies: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*, Westfield Press, Boulder, 1990.

to the analysis of archival material, considered alongside sociological and political texts which seek to explain social change, and in the light of the oral testimony of a range of people (including lay people and male clerics) as well as women religious who lived the experience. This method adds depth to the story.

From previous experience, I decided to conduct the formal interviews after I had done considerable work in the archives and with secondary sources. The benefit of this approach was that I was much clearer about the information I was seeking from individuals and felt that I was not wasting their time by seeking basic background information. This allowed the interviews to be more open-ended, while minimizing the danger of “side-tracking”. On the other hand, I became aware of the danger of having too much background in some cases, bringing to the interview too many of my own pre-conceived ideas. Of greater importance was that the delay in conducting key interviews, brought about in part by the delay in gaining ethical clearance, meant that I missed the opportunity to interview two important women who died in the meantime – Sister Valda Ward, rsm and Sister Joan Nowotny, ibvm.²²

Once the stage was reached where I began formal interviews, I attempted in all cases to contact the interviewee by phone or in person, followed up by emailing the approved information letter and where possible, a summary of information relating to her life already available through archival and other material for amendment if necessary. At least one or two weeks before the interview, I forwarded a number of open-ended questions for the person to have time to consider before the interview. Use of email proved to be particularly effective in clarifying my own thoughts and in ensuring that I made the best use of the valuable time of participants.

The use of interviews conducted by other researchers

During 2008 I acted as research assistant to Mary Ryllis Clark for her commissioned history, *Loreto in Australia*. In this capacity, I read well outside the parameters of my own thesis, and also had access to the interviews which Ms Clark conducted with the majority of living Loreto sisters in Australia; I also assisted her with a survey she conducted with

²² Religious of the Sisters of Mercy – rsm; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (better known in Australia as Loreto) – ibvm.

ex-pupils of Loreto.²³ In some instances, I contacted women religious and asked for permission to use selected material from their interviews as background material or as direct quotes, with due acknowledgement to Ms Clark appearing in the thesis. Reading the replies of ex-students gave me a deeper understanding of their impressions of a Loreto education, but I have not drawn directly on this material due to difficulties in gaining permission from the large sample of students contacted by Ms Clark. Also as voluntary work for the Loretos I am editing a number of short biographies of deceased sisters, work being produced by Sister Mary Muirhead, ibvm, and the Provincial archivist, Ms Robin Scott. Again, any reference made to this work will be acknowledged with thanks to both these researchers.

Archival Research

In September 2009 a conference was held for Sisters of Mercy archivists at which a paper was presented by Sister Caroline Ryan rsm in which she writes:

...our congregation's archives are repositories of sacred memories [which] have a dynamism which gives them enduring relevance. They have as much to do with the future as with the past. The sacred memories they hold have formed and continue to form each congregation's identity and self-understanding...They are custodians of experiences that continue to evoke joy, pride and gratitude, as well as those which cause shame and regret. They keep account of the contribution made to our various endeavors as co-workers, volunteers and our partners in ministry.²⁴

Archives have proved to be a rich and valuable resource in shaping this thesis. However, there has been considerable variation in the archival holdings accessed in Ballarat. The diocesan archives have only recently begun to be professionally organized under the direction of a volunteer, and provide useful, but uneven records. The Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy have their archives housed in Ballarat, but without a formal guide to the holdings and with limited knowledge of the institute, my progress has been slower there. There is only limited archival material relating to Aquinas Teachers' College in the Ballarat campus of the Australian Catholic University (ACU). The Loreto Provincial archives are

²³ Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009.

²⁴ Sister Caroline Ryan, rsm, *Towards a Spirituality of Archives*, Paper presented at the Australian Mercy Archivists' Conference, September 8-11, 2009, provided to the researcher in February 2010. Caroline was at the time of the conference vice-president of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia; she belongs to the Parramatta community.

housed at Mary's Mount, as the founding convent of the institute, and have an excellent guide to a very well organized collection to which I have had virtually unlimited access with assistance from their full-time archivist, and the hospitality of the Loreto sisters who allowed me to stay in the convent. In addition to specific information about the Loreto Province, the archives also contain considerable material of a generic nature in relation to women religious which proved to be invaluable background to an "outsider".

In writing the thesis, I have come to the understanding that the archival material provides an essential, but incomplete, reference point. As one commentator has observed, "The statue, it is sometimes said, was always there inside the block of marble. All the sculptor did was to chip away the surplus marble to reveal the statue within. There is a helpful image here for the historian confronted with his [sic] mountain of verified or verifiable facts".²⁵

Sociological insights

Selective use has been made of sociological literature, particularly that available in relation to change management, and I have drawn on a number of theses written by women religious in relation to changes made within their communities. Particularly useful was the work completed by Sister Valda Ward rsm, one time Superior of the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, which provided invaluable insights into the changes undertaken by the Australian Sisters of Mercy as they worked toward unification in 1980.²⁶ I am also mindful of the change management insights provided by Fr Gerald Arbuckle, particularly in relation to the processes needed to confront difficult choices within religious orders, and from mainstream texts relating to the sociology of religion.²⁷ However valuable the sociological insights into the management of change were in writing the thesis, as a researcher I have remained firmly within the tradition of historical research. The thesis does not attempt to provide an in-depth sociological study of the women's institutes, although as the research proceeded, I could readily identify the value of such studies for

²⁵ David Thomson, *The Aims of History: Values of Historical Attitude*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969, p99.

²⁶ Valda Ward rsm, 'The relationship between selected organizational characteristics and the process of change leading to a new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981: A case study', PhD thesis, *Centre for Administrative Studies*, Armidale, University of New England.

²⁷ Gerald A. Arbuckle, *From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Life Formation*, St Paul's Publications, Homebush, 1996, and *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1988. See also, Betty R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion*, Hutchinson and Co, London, 1970; Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971; Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966.

future researchers, particularly those who are able to bring out more forcefully the dimensions of class and family backgrounds in relation to women religious.²⁸ Another fruitful research area would be the extent to which women religious have added to the social and economic capital of particular cities or regions, an issue I have touched on, but which largely lies outside the scope of this thesis.

The use of case studies: Change, continuity and adaptation

Two case studies have been chosen to demonstrate change in the apostolic priorities of the two institutes: the closure of the boarding school at Loreto Mary's Mount in 1982 which had been operation since its opening in 1875 by M. Gonzaga Barry, and the development into a campus of the Australian Catholic University from its original operation as Aquinas Teachers' College under the control of the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, since its foundation under Mother Xavier Flood in 1910. In both cases, the changes have been set within the political, social and economic context of the times, and examined with particular reference to the agency which the women themselves exercised in the decision making. Both case studies are set against the background of the imperatives which faced women religious to adapt and to renew their corporate responsibilities in the light of Vatican II, the numerical decrease and the ageing of their membership and the political and social forces for change which lay outside their control. Throughout the thesis, examples from the work or lives of women in the two congregations will be juxtaposed to illustrate their similarities and differences.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the leaders of the two institutes in 2007, and ethical clearance from the ACU was obtained in 2008. Each participant who contributed to the research was provided with an information letter and ethical clearance documents, approved by the ACU, and where necessary, an approval letter to allow me to use material included in interviews conducted for other research. In the event of a sister or other participant being named in the thesis, approval was gained through the procedures approved by the ACU. I have maintained regular contact with the leaders of the institutes to inform them of my progress and of my schedule of interviews with congregational members. I have remained conscious of the ethical issues involved in interpreting the

²⁸ This observation is based to a large extent on the work of Beverley Zimmerman, "She came from a good Catholic family": Religious sisterhoods of the Maitland diocese, 1867-1909', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 115, October 2000.

memories of other women to assist me to complete the thesis, and of the privilege they have granted me to interpret and locate their lives in a context of my own research interest. I have been guided in this by conversations with my supervisors, particularly in relation to the sensitive issues of researching the lives of women religious, and by the words of Joan Sangster, who asks that feminist researchers "... continually analyse the interview as an interactive process, examine the context of the interview, especially inherent power imbalances, and always evaluate our own ethical obligations as feminists to the women we interview".²⁹

Content of the thesis

The study is set within the context of Ballarat as the centre of one of Victoria's four Catholic dioceses. The city itself is steeped in history and, like many provincial cities of this period, underwent significant social, economic and cultural changes, resulting in its transformation from a manufacturing and agricultural centre to one which, by 1980, relied heavily on the service, cultural and tourist industries. The contribution of the Catholic community, and in particular, the women religious, will be shown to have been highly significant in building the infrastructure and the social capital which helped shape this transformation through their ownership, management and/or staffing of a significant number of educational, health and welfare organizations. In addition, they educated generations of young women, well equipped to take their place amongst the professional workforce required for the transformation, and also gifted to the city several of its more outstanding examples of buildings which help make up its attraction as a tourist centre based on the historical interest in the region.

An examination is made of both the external and internal paradigm shifts which occurred between 1950 and 1980, covering major cultural shifts, including the women's movement and other instances of social protest and change. The Split in the Labor Party was particularly bitter amongst Catholics in Ballarat, a number of whom were key figures during the debate. The resolution of the state aid debate and the gradual emergence of a Catholic education "system", although driven from the Melbourne Catholic Education

²⁹ Joan Sangster, 'Telling our Stories: Feminist debates and the use of oral history', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, 1998, p 94. See also, A. Oakley, 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms' in H. Roberts (ed) *Doing Feminist Research*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981; S. Berger Gluck and D. Patai (eds), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Routledge, London, 1991, and Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992.

Office, directly impacted on schools and administrative structures in the suffragan dioceses, as did the broader changes to secular educational policy, including the growing prominence of parents, teachers and unions as key shapers of education policy. Each of these factors had a direct bearing on decisions about apostolic priorities for the women religious. It will also be shown that individual women religious helped shape these changes at national, state and local level as instances where women exercised their own agency and were not merely passive recipients of the decisions of others.

The internal paradigm shifts examined include those arising from Vatican II, particularly the shift to adopting ‘the option for the poor’ and social justice as the touchstone for change. This thorough re-examination of both religious life and of apostolic priorities led to significant changes in the apostolic priorities of the two institutes. Two issues will be examined as case studies of change and adaptation as noted above, documenting the changes in public policy as well as changing public expectations. The case studies will also include the hand-over to lay staff, set alongside the effect of the numerical decline in the number of religious, as contributing factors to the changes.

The corporate work of the two institutes will be examined within their historical and canonical structures, with a description of the profiles of each and of the leaders (elected and informal) who steered the changes. This will include an examination of the importance of their professional development and further education, the move by some into academic life, educational administration, diocesan and parish work and their growing involvement in secular organizations, at home and overseas. Parallels will be drawn with the changes experienced by secular women during this period, within the broader context of the effects of the women’s movement, particularly the widening of educational opportunities during the 1970s. Continuity of their corporate commitment will demonstrate the on-going, albeit changing, nature of their contribution to the Catholic community and to the city. The objective is to demonstrate the ability of the sisters to diversify their work beyond the classrooms, driven by their commitment to fulfil the visions of their foundresses and their pioneering leaders, and to maximize their contribution as professional, highly educated women while at the same time, managing the hand-over of their schools to the laity.

Literature review

*History attempts to analyse what happened rather than just uncovering it. I don't mean it can be used to understand exactly why the world developed in a certain manner, but it can tell us how various elements coming together within a society serve to create an historical dynamic, or conversely, fail to cause it.*³⁰

Research for this thesis has benefited from the insights I gained from reading a range of contemporary historians engaged in the history debates which have dominated the discipline and, in some cases, the popular media, over the past three decades. Many of these debates have their antecedents in the work of Australian “new left” historians in the post-Second World War era, notably Manning Clark, Brian Fitzpatrick, Russel Ward, Ian Turner, Bob Gollan and Humphrey McQueen. Their work challenged the traditional conservative view of history as being the recording of the lives and importance of great men, the “history from above” which was so vehemently criticized by a new generation of historians, many of them feminists, and many of whom began to incorporate sociological techniques into their historical analysis of such subjects as race, class, gender, family and sexuality.³¹

The demand that history be objective, telling “how it actually happened”, became a central point of contention in the so called history wars in Australia.³² Opponents of the “objective school” argued that all history is viewed from the particular point of view of the researcher; furthermore, history is no longer the sole preserve of the “professionals” and

³⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *The New Century*, Abacus, London, 2000, p6. E.H. Carr in his most quoted work, *What is History?* sums up many of the central arguments between those in the “objective” school versus those who seek a more nuanced version of history. “The facts are really not at all like fish on a fishmonger’s slab. They are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use – these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch. By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants. History means interpretation”. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* Penguin, Camberwell, 2008, p23.

³¹ See for example, Jill Julius Mathews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

³² For analysis of the history wars in Australia, see Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004. See also by the same author, ‘History, politics and philosophy’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 123, April 2004, and *Historian’s Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004; Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2000; Ann Curthoys and John Ducker, *Is History Fiction?* UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000; G. Osborne and W.F. Mandle (eds), *New History: Studying Australia Today*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1982; Robert Manne, *Whitewashed: On Keith Windshuttle’s ‘Fabrication of History’*, Black Inc. Agenda, Melbourne, 2003.

inter-disciplinary approaches, which draw upon economics, sociology and literary criticism form a legitimate approach to historical research.³³

Australian journalists including Don Watson and Greame Freudenberg clearly outsell most published academic historians. Through writing ‘histories of the present’ in relation to Australia’s contemporary political leaders, their contributions have added immeasurably to national history.³⁴ Similarly, films, TV series and novels bring to life aspects of Australia’s past that otherwise may have remained buried in the halls of academia. In relation to the subject of women religious, the ABC series, *Brides of Christ*, reached many thousands of viewers of prime time television, portraying the journey of one congregation through the changes brought about by Vatican II. The image of the distraught older nun begging to be told what to do rather than being asked to make decisions, because she’d never made decisions in her life, and the tensions depicted surrounding the change from the traditional habit, conveyed in a few minutes more clearly than thousands of words could, the traumas of the period. And it was the popular novels, plays and memoirs of Catholics in the 1960s and 1970s that captured the attention of the wider reading audience.³⁵ Perhaps because of the times in which they were produced, many depicted nuns (and male religious) as bitter, cold and dehumanised on the one hand, or as long-suffering, saintly “good sisters”, simplistic characterizations that have ignored the complexity of their lives and of their times.

Another bitterly contested front in the history wars was that centering on denial of the reality and/or the extent of violence and murder against Jews during the Second World War, of the Chinese at the hands of Japan. Denial history in the case of the Catholic Church has most publicly been debated around the issue of sexual abuse by priests, both here and overseas, and to a lesser but growing extent, in relation to physical abuse by religious in charge of schools and orphanages. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson has been

³³ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of History*, provides an interesting analysis of the categories of history defined by Friedrich Nietzsche in his classic, *The Use and Abuse of History (1873-1876)*. Using the categories of monumental, antiquarian and critical histories, Davidson then applies the categories to current historiography, particularly as they apply to Australian historians. See Chapter 1, ‘Introduction: Australian history on the eve of the millennium’.

³⁴ For an outstanding example of the benefit of academics writing as journalists, see Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present: Essays, Sketches and Despatches from Europe in the 1990s*, Penguin, London, 2000.

³⁵ For example, Thomas Keneally, *Three Cheers for the Paraclete*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968; Morris West, *The Devil’s Advocate*, Pan Books, London, 1966; David Lodge, *How Far Can You Go?* Penguin, London, 1980.

subjected to attacks, but also to praise, for his ground-breaking book which received widespread public coverage when it was released.³⁶

In the instance of the Church's response to the *Bringing Them Home* Report, the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission initiated a research project which would include the records of all Catholic organizations that had been involved in caring for children, including those who had participated in the care of Aboriginal children removed from their families, "... with the desire to assist Indigenous people re-establish their family and community links and in a spirit of reconciliation".³⁷ Rather than deny their part in the forced removal of children, the bishops and the leaders of religious congregations began the process of healing by providing critical information to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children who had been taken by government authorities from their families and placed in Catholic institutions. Nonetheless, there is still great sensitivity about this episode in Church history, with many stressing the good will and intention of those involved, denying in some cases the harm that was done by the removal itself and more importantly, by the abuse suffered by children in care. A balanced history of children in the care of all Australian Churches and non-government agencies is still to emerge.

Women's History

Prominent Australian historian, Ann Curthoys, argued as early as 1970:

A 'history of women' should do more than restore women to the pages of history books. It must analyse why public life has been considered to be the focus of history, and why public life has been so thoroughly occupied by men...the concepts usually operating in historiography, defining what is important, must be considered...we should be careful that we do not confine our analyses to the

³⁶ Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*, John Garrat Publishing, Mulgrave, 2007. His opening lines read: "Sexual abuse of minors by a significant number of priests and religious, together with the attempts by many church authorities to conceal the abuse, constitute one of the ugliest stories to emerge from the Catholic Church. It is hard to imagine a more total contradiction of everything that Jesus Christ stood for, and it would be difficult to overestimate the pervasive and lasting harm it has done to the Church." p7.

³⁷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Canberra, 1997; Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission and the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes, *'A Piece of the Story': National Directory of Records of Catholic Organisations Caring for Children Separated from Families*, Canberra, 1999, p3.

‘position of women’ but are able to integrate analyses concerning women with the mainstream of historical enquiry.³⁸

It was left to the new generation of feminist historians in the 1970s to ensure that women would no longer remain “the background to history” and to set in train a new era of historical research that put women at the centre of their critical enquiry.³⁹ As Stuart Macintyre has argued:

Women’s history grew rapidly in response to the feminist movement and as an important aspect of it. It generated a large literature on the lives and activities of earlier generations of women that spoke to feminist interests while it guided feminist endeavors. It was in fact the first branch of the discipline where the practitioners were both the subject and the object of their own historical knowledge, the first form of identity history.⁴⁰

Historians in the early days of the women’s movement sought to record women’s history under a number of broad categories, the first of which was women in organizations, particularly those which fought for women’s political and social rights; the second category employed was biography and third, the inclusion of women under the broad umbrella of the histories of social ideas. Finally, there arose a category of social histories concentrating on the interaction between women and their social environments, including how women resisted restrictions placed on them by prescribed societal roles and the connections between a woman’s role in the home and the work she may have performed in the paid workforce.

A concentration on writing the lives of ‘great women’ who, by definition, were exceptional in their social context, became prominent as feminists sought to redress the

³⁸ Ann Curthoys, ‘Historiography and women’s liberation’, *Arena*, No 22, 1970. For an analysis from this same period of historical trends in women’s historiography in Britain, see M. Hartman and L. W. Banner, *Clio’s Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1974, and, Mary Evans (ed), *The Woman Question: Readings on the Subordination of Women*, Fontana Paperbacks, Oxford, 1982.

³⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women’s Consciousness, Man’s World*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975, p.34. See also by the same author, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women’s Oppression and the Fight Against it*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1975.

⁴⁰ Stuart Macintyre, *The History Wars*, p42.

balance of male dominated history.⁴¹ Biographies of “great women” were quickly followed by attempts to include working class women in historical records, particularly through the efforts of those organizing the *Women and Labour Conferences* of the 1980s.⁴² Contributions to these and other women’s conferences and publications, including the burgeoning movement to publish women’s journals concentrating on both theory and practice within the women’s movement, constituted a more sophisticated ‘social history’ of women, with parallels appearing in the interests of the working class and the history of Indigenous Australians.⁴³ Launched in International Women’s Year, the ABC radio program, *The Coming Out Show*, gave voice to women from all walks of life.⁴⁴ The *Accent* column in the *Age* newspaper became an invaluable source of news and views across a broad range of issues for women. *The Woman’s Room*⁴⁵ was the chosen book for many of the women’s consciousness raising groups, as were the rediscovered novels of Virginia Woolf (particularly *A Room of One’s Own*⁴⁶), Simone De Beauvoir and Doris Lessing and a host of re-discovered and emerging Australian women writers, supported by feminist presses which were established across Australia, totally more than a dozen by the 1980s.⁴⁷

⁴¹ One of the earliest examples was Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969. Others include: Peter Sekules, *Jessie Street: A Rewarding but Unrewarded Life*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1978; S. Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women: A Biography of Catherine Helen Spence*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney, 1985.

⁴² See Elizabeth Windshuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Fontana, Auckland, 1980; Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, (eds) *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney 1982, both of which consist of papers given at the conferences mentioned. The most contentious of the women’s conferences of this period were *The Women and Politics* Conference held during International Women’s Year (1975) supported by funds from the Whitlam government, and conferences held in association with the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

⁴³ The most widely distributed journals of the time included *Areña* and *Labour History*, both of which progressively included more articles relating to women’s history and politics; women’s journals included *Refractory Girl*, *Mejane*, *Hecate*, *Scarlet Woman* and *Lilith*; By 1992, the journal, *Australian Feminist Studies* devoted an edition to women’s biographies with an introduction by Susan Magarey in which she writes of the “...feminist endeavor to recover the lives and work of individual women from the resounding silence in the established historical record, and in doing so to rewrite the histories of the culture in which those women lived. This has been one of the goals of feminist scholarly practice since feminism re-surfaced on the stage of public politics at the beginning of the 1970s.” *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 16, 1992. See also, Jill Julius Mathews, ‘Writing women’s history’, *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives from Refractory Girl* (editor unknown), 1993, and Ann Curthoys, ‘It was 1975: Visions, nightmares, dreams: Women’s history, 1975’, *Australian Historical Studies*, No 106, April 1996. For a detailed account of the development of women’s history, with particular emphasis on America, from the 1960s through to the debates relating to poststructuralist analysis, see Joan Scott, ‘Women’s history’ in Peter Burke, (ed) *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. For an extensive coverage of the lives of both “leaders” and “ordinary” Australian women, see Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly, (eds) *Double Time: Women in Victoria – 150 Years*. Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1985.

⁴⁴ See Julie Rigg and Julie Copland (eds), *Coming Out! Women’s Voices, Women’s Lives: A Selection from ‘The Coming Out Show’*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1985.

⁴⁵ Marilyn French, *The Woman’s Room*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1975.

⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account, see Louise Poland, ‘The devil and the angel? Australia’s feminist presses and the multinational agenda’, *Hecate*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2003 and in the same edition of *Hecate*, Diane Brown and Maryanne Lynch, ‘Creating a space: Sybella Feminist Press, 1988-2003’. For the contribution of leading feminist publishers, see Gael Knepper, ‘Hilary McPhee and Diana Gribble’ in *Women of Power: Playing it by their Own Rules*, Hutchinson Australia, Milsons Point,

The widely acknowledged pioneering works of Germaine Greer, Miriam Dixson, Anne Summers, Edna Ryan and Ann Conlon, and Beverley Kingston provided the basis from which a burgeoning industry of feminist writing and research emerged.⁴⁸ There followed serious attempts to devise a methodology that could overcome the problems inherent in treating women as either ‘passive victims’ or as a ‘force in history’ both methodologies criticized for their failure to analyse either the distinctions between women, or how women interacted within their particular social settings, as wives, mothers, daughters, workers or indeed, women religious.⁴⁹ By 1982, Kay Daniels was challenging the view of women as victims providing an excellent overview and critique of the seminal texts of the 1970s in *New History*.⁵⁰ She summarises the central issue relating to the writing of women’s history by arguing forcefully that:

Politics and writing women’s history have been closely interrelated. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the growing women’s movement in Australia *generated questions about the position of women which could only be answered historically*. Traditional historical writing was clearly incapable of providing answers to these questions... the new women’s history ... was a product of the debate about current feminist issues, of a critique of traditional history and of a theoretical discussion about its own goals, problems and priorities.⁵¹ (*my emphasis*)

1990. See also Jennifer Ellison (ed), *Rooms of Their Own*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986; Debra Adelaide, *Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographical Guide*, Pandora, Press, London, 1988; Dale Spender, *Heroines: A Contemporary Anthology of Australian Women Writers*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991.

⁴⁸ Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, Paladin, London, 1971; Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1976; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975; Edna Ryan and Ann Conlan, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1975; Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (eds), *Uphill all the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980. Their work was reassessed twenty years later by Ann Curthoys, when she wrote that “History is not just what we do in a scholarly sense but something we live through. What these texts did is to help inspire a new generation to work within the sphere of women’s history and to develop a lively feminist history.....In imagining a new past, their books were truly gifts for the future.” Ann Curthoys, ‘Visions, nightmares, dreams,’ p13.

⁴⁹ Mary Beard, *Woman as Force in History*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1971. For commentaries on Mary Beard, see Carl Degler, ‘Woman as force in history by Mary Beard’, *Daedalus*, Vol.103, No. 2, Winter 1973 and Bernice A. Carroll, ‘Mary Beard’s woman as force in history: A Critique’, in Berenice Carroll (ed), *Liberating Women’s History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1976.

⁵⁰ Kay Daniels, ‘Women’s history’, in Greame Osborne and W.F. Mandle (eds) *New History: Studying Australia Today*, George Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1982.

⁵¹ Kay Daniels, ‘Women’s history’, p32.

Joan Scott argues that as the women's movement progressed by the mid to late 1970s, "Women's history spent less time documenting women's victimization and more time affirming the distinctiveness of 'women's culture,' thereby creating a historical tradition to which feminists could appeal for examples of women's agency, for proof of their ability to make history".⁵²

In this tradition followed *Creating a Nation*, in which the authors assert the agency and creativity of women as well as men in nation building – women's contribution is written as central, set within the context of Australia's Indigenous and non-indigenous history, no longer written in as "extra" nor standing outside their historical time or social/cultural context.⁵³ Shifting the perspective of women religious as long suffering, victimized "good sisters", to women exercising their own agency, central to the history of the Church in Australia, is a major objective of this thesis.

The contribution of women religious to historical understanding

In 1974 a resolution was put to the Provincial Chapter of the Loretos that:

We recognize that the Institute's special charism derived from Mary Ward's affirmation of the contribution of women are able to make to society and to the Church, and her consequent concern for the education of girls (Cons. P45) is directly related to the contemporary demand for the liberation of women as a matter of social justice and as essential to the humanizing of mankind that Christ urges us to bring to completion... We further recommend that our Institute make a serious contribution to the study and development of the theology of woman.⁵⁴

Although it appears that the resolution was not passed, Sister Noni Mitchell has written by hand a note on it that reads: "Of interest for the future?" Looking back over three decades, we can see the dream begin to be realized in the published work of women religious across Australia, not least amongst those connected with Ballarat. By the 1970s, collections of works written by women involved in Christian churches began to be produced for general

⁵² Joan Scott, 'Women's history', in Peter Burke (ed), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, p53.

⁵³ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marion Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1993.

⁵⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial chapters/Congregations*, Item 12, Province Chapter 1974: Membership and minutes.

dissemination, the most widely read amongst secular feminists being *Women, Faith and Fetes*, followed by the even more popular, *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids*.⁵⁵

Veronica Brady ibvm has regularly contributed to collections of work relating to women and religion in Australia, dating from the 1980s, most importantly in Margaret Ann Franklin's collection.⁵⁶ Both she and Roberta Hakendorf ibvm wrote chapters for the widely read, *Changing Women, Changing Church*. Throughout the writing of the thesis, I have found particularly valuable the contributions made by Sister Christine Burke ibvm, current Provincial of the Loretos, and Sister Mary Wright ibvm whose thesis and subsequent book on the canonical history of the Loretos provided the important structural context.⁵⁷ There were a number of theses completed by Ballarat women religious which, again, provided particularly relevant background to this thesis.

Building on the work of international women religious, publications began to emerge in Australia in the 1990s, some of which resulted from the support provided by Women and the Australian Church (WATEC). Of particular interest was the collection *Freedom and Entrapment*, which, in the view of its editor, Joan Nowotny ibvm, "...is one of the first serious attempts by a group of Australian women scholars to present a cohesive feminist voice in the area of Christian theology and feminism".⁵⁸ Three of the women who contributed to this important collection were from Ballarat – Veronica Lawson rsm, Veronica Brady ibvm and Joan Nowotny ibvm.

The History of Education

Also relevant to this thesis is the history of women's education, which, until the 1970s, had largely been written by men, with a strong emphasis on the administration of education in particular, the politics of government versus church, and/or the lives of 'great

⁵⁵ Sabine Willis (ed) *Women, Faith and Fetes*; Kate and Dominica Nelson (eds), *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids: Journeys from Catholic Childhoods*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986.

⁵⁶ Mary Ann Franklin (ed), *The Force of the Feminine: Women, Men and the Church*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986.

⁵⁷ In particular, see Christine Burke, *Freedom, Justice and Sincerity: Reflections on the Life and Spirituality of Mary Ward*, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2009; 'Changing patterns of leadership', *Compass*, No. 35, Autumn 2001, 'Glimpses of glory: Defence and propagation of the faith in ways congruous to our times', *Religious Life Review*, January/February 2009; Mary Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*, Sydney Crossing Press, Darlinghurst, 1997. For a listing of publications by both the Loretos and the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy referred to in this thesis, see Appendix 1.

⁵⁸ Maryanne Convoy, Dorothy Lee and Joan Nowotny (eds), *Freedom and Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology*, Dove, Blackburn, 1995.

administrators' of government departments or schools.⁵⁹ Biographies of women involved in education are often embedded in school histories, but fail to provide a comprehensive account of women's contribution to education. Novels and films which give some idea of the socialization of girls have arguably been more effective in conveying the perspectives of young women themselves: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, *My Brilliant Career* – all provide accessible stories about the provision of education for girls prior to second-wave feminism.

Again, it was the second-wave feminists who ensured that women's role in education as both teachers and students would assume a central position in women's history in the 'new history'. Joy Hooton provides an anthology of childhood experiences of Australian women which includes the importance of their schooling, including the influence of nuns on their development.⁶⁰ Publications appeared on girls' schools,⁶¹ on the role of women teachers and their struggles to achieve professional equality with their male counterparts,⁶² on the education of girls and the sexism inherent in much of the school curriculum,⁶³ and on the position of women academics.⁶⁴ As the first woman to become Federal Minister for

⁵⁹ There were very few accounts of individual women educationalists, although Julia Flynn, chief inspector of Victorian schools (1936-1943) and later schools advisory officer at the Catholic Education Office (CEO) in Melbourne, is acknowledged for her educational leadership. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Vol. 8, 1981, p534. For an account of the barriers faced by Julie Flynn in her professional life, see Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, *Uphill all the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia*, p 250-251.

⁶⁰ Joy Hooton, *Stories of Herself When Young: Autobiographies of Childhood by Australian Women*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990.

⁶¹ For example, see Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *PLC Melbourne: The First Century 1875-1975*, The Presbyterian Ladies College, Burwood, 1975; Marjorie Theobald, *Ruyton Remembers 1878-1978*. Hawthorn Press, Melbourne 1978; A. Zainu'ddin, *They Dreamt of a School: A Centenary History Of Methodist Ladies' College, Kew, 1882-1982*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1982; L. Gardiner, *Tintern School and Anglican Girls' Education 1877-1977*, Tintern, Ringwood, 1977; R. McCarthy and M. Theobald (eds), *Melbourne Girls' Grammar School: Centenary Essays, 1893-1993*, Hyland House, Melbourne 1993; Esther Tuckey, *Fifty Years at Fensham: A History of an Australian School*, Winifred West Schools, Mittagong, 1963.

⁶² See for example, Deborah Towns, 'Equality of opportunity for women teachers' in Bevege, James and Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt*; R. Harold, 'Discrimination in teacher employment: A case study of change', *The Australian Journal of Education*, 22, No. 1, March 1978; Y. Henderson, 'Affirmative action and the promotion of women teachers', *AWEC Conference Papers*, 1979.

⁶³ See for example, Shirley Sampson, 'The role of the school in sex-role stereotyping' in N. Grieve and P. Grimshaw (eds), *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983; Shirley Sampson, 'The role of women in leadership in Australian schools' in R. K. Browne and L.E. Foster (eds), *Sociology of Education*, McMillan, Melbourne, 1983. Shirley Sampson taught at Monash University; her status as the leading researcher into sex roles within school and family saw her appointment as the Chair of the Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Schools, 1975-77, of which Sister Elizabeth Nowotny ibvm was a member; see also Jean Blackburn, 'Schooling and injustice for girls', in Dorothy Broom (ed), *Unfinished Business: Social Justice for Women in Australia*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984. For a critique of the equal opportunity framework in relation to girl's education, see Lesley Johnson, 'Gender issues and education', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 11, Autumn 1990.

⁶⁴ See for example, Patricia Grimshaw and Lynne Strahan (eds), *The Half-Open Door: Sixteen Modern Australian Women look at Professional Life and Achievement*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney, 1982. A. Zainu'ddin, 'The admission of women to the University of Melbourne 1869-1903' in S. Murray-Smith(ed) *Melbourne Studies in Education 1973*, MUP

Education, Susan Ryan's autobiography provides valuable insight into the role of women as shapers of public policy in education.⁶⁵

Catholic Church History in Australia

An overview of Australian Catholic Church history is provided by John Braniff, with a particular emphasis on the history of education,⁶⁶ ranging from Cardinal Moran's *History of the Catholic Church in Australasia*, through the limited research subsequently undertaken, until the ground-breaking work of Brother Ronald Fogarty as the first nationwide account of Catholic education.⁶⁷ Braniff briefly considers the importance (or otherwise) of commissioned school histories, but in his judgment, "It is generally agreed that the serious academic history of Australian Catholicism begins with O'Farrell's *Short History* in 1968".⁶⁸ Speaking of the expanded editions of O'Farrell's work, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, Braniff says, "... he attempted to redress the masculine and clerical imbalance of the original, but despite the assistance of female research assistants and doctoral candidates, he professed himself unable to alter the intractable, historical reality".⁶⁹ (Little more need be said about the need for a feminist history than what can be gleaned from this statement!)

Braniff lists all the studies relating to bishops, male clerics and male congregations, followed by a comprehensive list of major works devoted to Mary MacKillop, to the biographies of both Mothers Vincent Whitty and Ursula Frayne, and to Geraldine Byrne's *Valiant Women*; he pays particular tribute to Rosa MacGinley's *A Dynamic of Hope*: "a major contribution to Australian Catholic historical studies...she has added a new dimension to our understanding of the institutes and – so – of the Church's work in this country".⁷⁰ He acknowledges the importance of the literary contributions of Vincent

Melbourne 1973; A. McKinnon, *The New Woman: Adelaide's Early Graduates*. Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986; P. Maddern, *St Hilda's College: Forerunners and Foundations*, St Hilda's College, Melbourne, 1989; F. Kelly, *Degrees of Liberation: A Short History of Women in the University of Melbourne*, The Woman Graduates Centenary Committee, Melbourne, 1985; L. Gardiner, *Janet Clarke Hall, 1886-1986*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1982; Bettina Cass, *Why so Few? Women Academics in Australian Universities*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1983.

⁶⁵ Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves: Life In and Out of Politics*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 1999.

⁶⁶ John Braniff, 'State of play: A survey of current Australian historiography in Catholic Church history and the history of education', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 84, No 2, April 2007.

⁶⁷ Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1959.

⁶⁸ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia: A Short History 1788-1967*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1968.

⁶⁹ Braniff, 'State of play', p159. See also, John Gascoigne, 'Catholicism, Australia and the wider world: The historiographical legacy of Patrick O'Farrell and Tony Cahill', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 83, No 2, April 2006.

⁷⁰ Braniff, 'State of play' p152; a similar tribute comes from Tom Boland, 'Australian Catholic history – Developing or declining? The growth of Australian Catholic historiography', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 27,

Buckley, Gerard Windsor, Edmund Campion and Morris West, but neglects those of Sabine Willis, Kate and Dominica Nelson and Josie Arnold.⁷¹

The particular history of women religious in Australia has been slow to emerge, but as Stephanie Burley has so competently demonstrated, there is now a growing body of research into the lives of women religious and the enterprises they staffed and managed for the broader benefit of the community.⁷² As with secular women's history and given the disproportionate energies that have gone into maintaining the Catholic education system since colonial times, research has tended to concentrate heavily in this field, although as Burley demonstrates, there is a move from the earlier highly clerical Catholic histories to those which encompass general, cultural and social histories.

Again, in parallel with secular research, early studies of women religious included biographies of 'great' women, including a biography and article about Mother Vincent Whitty as leader of the first group of Mercy sisters in Queensland,⁷³ a number of studies relating to Mother Mary MacKillop⁷⁴ and of some of her sisters,⁷⁵ while a biography has been written of M. Patricia O'Neal rsm, Superior General of the Australian Union of the Sisters of Mercy.⁷⁶ Maree Allen rsm has an entry on Mother Ursula Frayne in *Double Time: Women in Victoria – 150 Years*.⁷⁷

Congregational histories have received special attention in recent times, the standard of which has varied from hagiography to detailed historical accounts, including valuable information about individual women within the orders and their professional and spiritual

2006; he writes, "Sister Rosa MacGinley's *Dynamic of Hope* is a necessary read for an understanding of the Church in Australia." P57.

⁷¹ Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes*; Kate and Dominica Nelson (eds), *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids*, Josie Arnold, *Mother Superior, Women Inferior*, Dove Communications, Blackburn, 1985; Jennifer Dabbs, *Beyond Redemption*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987.

⁷² Stephanie Burley, 'An overview of the historiography of women religious in Australia', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 26, 2005.

⁷³ Frances O'Donoghue, *Mother Vincent Whitty: Woman and Educator in a Masculine Society*, MUP, Melbourne, 1972; 'They never marry: The life of Mother Vincent Whitty' in Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes*.

⁷⁴ Paul Gardiner, *Mary MacKillop: An Extraordinary Australian*, E. J. Dwyer, Newtown, 1993; William Modystack, *Mary MacKillop, A Woman Before Her Time*, Rigby, Dee Why West, 1982; Osmund Thorpe, *Mary MacKillop, The Generalate*, Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, North Sydney, Revised Edition, 1994.

⁷⁵ Anne Henderson, *Mary MacKillop's Sisters: A Life Unveiled*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 1997.

⁷⁶ M. Mildred O'Brien, rsm, *Mother Mary Patrick O'Neill*, The Sisters of Mercy of the Australian Union, Melbourne, 1976.

⁷⁷ Maree Allen, rsm, 'Mother Ursula Frayne: Caring for the children' in Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (eds), *Double Time: Women in Victoria – 150 Years*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985, p 61.

lives.⁷⁸ Questions in relation to writing congregational history, including asking for whom and for what purpose is it being written have been posed by Paul Chandler.⁷⁹ Is it for the congregation itself, its ex-students or those affected by its life and works, for specialists and academics, as part of broader church history or as part of regional history? Secondly, who should write it – an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’?⁸⁰ When should it be written and what should it be like, taking into account that by definition, researchers will almost always be dealing with recent history, affecting persons still living in many cases? He argues that biographies should now pose much more difficult questions for researchers. The following are a selection of his questions which I believe are relevant to this study: How were they agents of their own history? Were there ways in which they resisted authority? What aspects of the congregation’s ideal did they choose to internalize, and which not? How did adaptation happen, if it did? What books did people read and how were they interpreted and what personal influence did they have?⁸¹

Ground-breaking research which has taken into account class and status, sacred symbols and convent architecture, includes work by Christine Trimmingham Jack, Kathleen Massam and Beverley Zimmerman.⁸² One gap in the history of religious has been identified by Rosa MacGinley:

⁷⁸ For example, M. G. Allen, *The Labourers’ Friends: Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania*, Sisters of Mercy of the Australian Union, Melbourne, 1989; Margaret Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan 1857-1969*, John Garatt, Melbourne, 2001; Mary Ryan, *For Whom We Go Forward or Stay Back: A History of the Sisters of Mercy, Wilcannia-Forbes Congregation 1884-1959*, Sisters of Mercy, Wilcannia-Forbes, 2004; Rosa MacGinley, *Roads to Zion: Presentation Sisters in Australia 1900-1960*, Presentation Convent, Brisbane, 1983; Sophie McGrath, *These Women? Women Religious in the History of Australia; The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta, 1888-1988*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1989; Morna Sturrock, *Women of Strength, Women of Gentleness: Brigidine Sisters, Melbourne Province*, David Lovell, Melbourne, 1995. Other congregational histories are acknowledged by Rosa MacGinley in the comprehensive bibliography included in *A Dynamic of Hope*.

⁷⁹ Paul Chandler, ‘Writing congregational history: Beyond the institutional model’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 83, No 2, April 2006.

⁸⁰ The ‘insider/outsider’ issue has been well encapsulated in the comments of Sophie McGrath, *These Women?* In her Introduction she comments, “I am insider, being a member of the Parramatta congregation, and this is both an asset and a liability to me as an historian...I have a lived knowledge of the culture about which I was writing and could speak ‘the language’...(on the other hand) I had to live with the published truth, as I saw it, which could be unpalatable to individuals in the group.” Pxi. On the ‘insider/outsider’ issue and on the issue of whether religious conviction is necessary for those writing religious history, see Patrick O’Farrell, ‘Historians and religious convictions’, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No 68, April 1977.

⁸¹ An outstanding model of a Jewish congregational history has been produced by Rabbi Raymond Apple, *The Great Synagogue: A History of Sydney’s Big Shule*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008.

⁸² Christine Trimmingham Jack, *Growing Good Catholic Girls*, and ‘The lay sister in educational history and memory’, *History of Education*, Vol. 2a, No.3, 2000, pp181-194; Kathleen Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1996; Beverley Zimmerman, ‘She came from a fine Catholic family’.

An adequate economic history of [such] Catholic building enterprise in Australia [also] remains to be written; the funding of convents will feature largely in it, not only for their utilitarian permanence, but for architectural styles reflecting the expectations and contributions of individuals whose cultural baggage carried long European traditions.⁸³

Another glaring gap in published material relates to individual leaders of congregations, during the turbulent times of Vatican II, although through the published congregational histories, a picture is emerging of the contribution of some. An article by Stephanie Burley detailing the life of Sister Carmel Burke rsm,(1907-1995), provides a model for seeing the life of a religious leader as “a reflection of historical change” and is an invaluable guide to future research of these “giants” of the Vatican II era.⁸⁴ Alison Mackinnon wrote a brief tribute to Sister Deirdre Jordan (Sister M. Campion) which offers personal recollections, but nothing of the achievements of this outstanding educationalist.⁸⁵

In relation to the Loretos and the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, a limited number of women have brief biographies in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.⁸⁶ Mother Gonzaga Barry’s life features prominently in the recently released commissioned history of the Loretos in Australia.⁸⁷ An essay on her work is included in a collection commemorating the centenary of the Adult Suffrage Act in Victoria,⁸⁸ and is also the subject of an article by Brother Herbert Beach.⁸⁹

⁸³ Rosa MacGinley, ‘Irish women religious and Australian social history: An aspect of 19th century migration’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol.17, 1996.

⁸⁴ Stephanie Burley, ‘Sister Carmel Burke, rsm (1907-1995)’ in *WomenChurch: An Australian Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, No. 40, Final Issue, 2007.

⁸⁵ Alison Mackinnon, ‘A Woman of Conviction: A Tribute to Sister Deirdre Jordan, 22 October 1999’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, No 31, March 2000.

⁸⁶ Healy, Eileen Mary, [Mother Bonaventure, RSM] (1888-1966). *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition*, www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs accessed 9/3/2007; Benson, Louisa [Mother M. Hilda, IBVM] (1845-1920) accessed 31/3/2007; Barry, Mary Gonzaga, IBVM (1834-1915), accessed 31/3/2007; Patricia O’Neill also has an ADB entry in the online edition, accessed 23/2/2008. M. Stanislaus Mulhall ibvm, second Provincial of the Loretos following the death of M.M Gonzaga Barry, has a short bio accessible through www.loretonh.nsw.edu.au; there is a record of M. Catherine Goddard ibvm [1870-1954]: ‘The Story of Mother Catherine Goddard of Loreto Abbey’, by M. F. Borgia-Tipping, IBVM in the National Library, Record Id: 22223955, *Australian Library Collections*, and a sound recording interview with Sr. Veronica Brady ibvm, interviewer, Stuart Reid, Record Id: 7405317, *Australian Library Collections*.

⁸⁷ Mary Rhyllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*.

⁸⁸ Loretta Ryan-Dynan, ‘Mother Mary Gonzaga Barry ibvm: A vision for women in times of change’, in *They Are But Women: The Road to Female Suffrage in Victoria*, Suffrage City Press, Melbourne, 2007.

⁸⁹ Brother Herbert Beach, ‘Mother Gonzaga Barry: Pioneering educationalist 1834-1915’, *Central Highlands Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, 1994; see also by Beach, ‘They came to Ballarat to teach: The story of secondary education, 1860-1890’, *Central Highlands Historical Journal*, 1989; ‘The beginnings of Catholic education in Ballarat’, *Ballarat Historian*, Vol. 4, No 6, March 1990 and ‘The Metternick connection’, *Ballarat Historian*, Vol. 2, No 2, March 1984.

In 1975 the Loretos published an overview of their contribution to schools in *From Ballarat to Broome*,⁹⁰ while a history of the Loretos, covering the period 1950-1974 is the subject of a Master of Arts thesis, both of which have provided useful factual material.⁹¹

The Ballarat East Mercies have no comprehensive history either written or in the process of being written, although Sister Anne Forbes has written a short history of Sacred Heart College, Ballarat East⁹² and there is some information about selected aspects of the work undertaken by the Mercies in a publication relating to their local parish in Ballarat East.⁹³ Both these congregations and the other teaching institutes have been covered by Jill Blee in her valuable record of their contribution to education in the Ballarat diocese.⁹⁴

As an example of the ‘post-structuralist’ approach to history, Braniff cites Christine Trimmingham Jack’s use of “post-modern categories of discourses and subjectivities and deconstructing the iconography as the architecture of the campus” (of the convent at Kerever Park) and Sr. Naomi Turner who “...not only defends eschewing a continuous narrative and her revisionist agenda, (but) uses language remarkably close to the position of Foucault and the post-modernists”.⁹⁵

Local histories

Historians such as Graeme Davison and Janet McCalman have incorporated social, cultural and economic factors to produce outstanding local histories, demonstrating the richness of inter-disciplinary approaches and the importance of the everyday experiences of people and their local communities.⁹⁶ The definitive history of Ballarat from the time of its establishment up until 1980 has been written in two volumes by Weston Bate; both

⁹⁰ Sister Mildred Drew, ibvm, *From Ballarat to Broome: One Hundred Years of Loreto in Australia*, 1975. Also published for the Loreto Centenary was a small booklet by Margaret Barry, *Loreto by the Lake: Mary's Mount 1875-1975*; see also, Anne Carter, ibvm, *Beyond All Telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia, 1897-1997*, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Perth, WA, 1997.

⁹¹ Deborah R. Zion, *Order and Disorder: A History of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1950-1974*. Faculty of Arts in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History, University of Melbourne, February 1987.

⁹² Anne Forbes rsm, *They Came Uninvited: A Short History of Sacred Heart College Ballarat East, 1881-1994*.

⁹³ Author unknown, *People of Golden Faith: Windows into St Alipius, A History 1853-1993*, St Alipius Church, Ballarat 1993.

⁹⁴ Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese*, Catholic Education Office, Ballarat, 2004.

⁹⁵ Braniff, ‘State of play’, p166; Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A Social History*, 2 Vols., Collins Dove, Melbourne, 1992.

⁹⁶ Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvelous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981; Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Portrait of an Australian Working-Class Community, 1900-1965*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1984.

volumes have provided invaluable background material for this thesis.⁹⁷ Colin Cleary (sponsored by the Australian Workers Union) recently published a history of the Labor movement in the city, which has the virtue of providing a gender balance not usually featured in such histories.⁹⁸

In terms of education in Ballarat, local historian, Anne Beggs-Sunter has written an excellent study of the development of the University of Ballarat,⁹⁹ expanding on the earlier work of Warren Perry, whose history of the School of Mines is a detailed account of the city's iconic educational institution.¹⁰⁰ School histories are much more mixed in terms of coverage and quality.¹⁰¹ Philip Roberts' histories of Ballarat High School and Ballarat and Clarendon Colleges are outstanding examples of how school history can transcend hagiography and the narrow interests of ex-pupils.¹⁰² St Patrick's College is the only Catholic school in the city to have commissioned a history, but its value is more in recording its sporting prowess than in presenting a rounded history of the school.¹⁰³ Another local historian, Jill Blee, has provided a solid overview of Catholic education in the Ballarat diocese, with a heavy emphasis on the provision of schooling, and a good overview of the training of teachers for the diocese.¹⁰⁴ Biographies of two clerics of central importance to the thesis are available, neither of which amount to great scholarly works, but have provided basic details of their lives.¹⁰⁵ John Molony's recently published biography includes an excellent chapter on the life of a curate in Ballarat in pre-Vatican II

⁹⁷ Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation of Ballarat 1851-1901*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1978 and *Life After Gold*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1993. See also by the same author, *Victorian Gold Rushes*, The Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Ballarat, 1999, and 'Gold: Social energizer and definer', *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol. 72, No.1 and 2.

⁹⁸ Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor: From Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age*, Colin Cleary, Epsom, 2007.

⁹⁹ Anne Beggs Sunter, *Rich Vein of Learning: The Origins of the University of Ballarat*, University of Ballarat, Ballarat, 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Warren Perry, *The School of Mines and Industries, Ballarat: A History of its First One Hundred and Twelve Years, 1870-1982*, the School of Mines and Industries Ballarat Limited, Ballarat, 1984.

¹⁰¹ Incomplete and/or short histories have been published on non-Catholic private schools in Ballarat: M.J.W. Boyle, *A Short History of Ballarat Grammar School, 1911-1971* (publisher and date unknown); W. Gordon Mein, *History of Ballarat College, 1864-1964*, Ballarat College Council, Ballarat, 1964, and Susanne White, *Mainly about Girls: A History of Queen's, Ballarat, 1876-1972*, Ashwood House, City Unnamed, 1990.

¹⁰² Philip Roberts, *The History of Ballarat High School, 1907-1982*, The Ballarat High School Council, Ballarat, 1982; *High School: A Hundred Years, Thousands of Footsteps*, The Mud Group, Geelong, 2007; *Golden Heritage; History of College and Clarendon, 1864-2004*, Mud Group, Geelong, 2005. See also, *Ballarat: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, The Mud Group, Geelong, 2010.

¹⁰³ Brother B.P.C. Naughton, *History and Heritage 1893-1993: St Patrick's College, Ballarat*, Spectrum Publications, Richmond, 1993.

¹⁰⁴ Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea*.

¹⁰⁵ Tess Livingstone, *George Pell*, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 2002; W.J. McCarthy, *James Patrick O'Collins: A Bishop's Story*, Spectrum Publications, 1996.

Ballarat, with particular insights into the barriers confronting the development of an independent adult lay apostolate.¹⁰⁶

Overall, there is a surprising lack of serious study of the city (with the notable exception of Weston Bate's works and numerous studies on the importance of Eureka), and of the role of the Catholic community within it.

Conclusion

Reviewing the historiographical and methodological debates outlined above elicited much valuable background and contextual material. It also confirmed my initial supposition that the contribution of women religious to Australian society generally would still be undervalued in the historical record, and that a thesis which attempts to place women religious firmly in the centre of the story of at least one geographical area would prove to be a fruitful area of research.

¹⁰⁶ John Molony, *By Wendouree*, Connorcourt Publishing, Ballan, 2010.

Chapter 2: The geographic context: The city and diocese of Ballarat

*A city “sustained by a blend of idealism and self-interest”.*¹⁰⁷

Introduction

The city of Ballarat has been chosen for this thesis as an example of a provincial city, transformed from a manufacturing and agricultural centre to one heavily reliant on service industries, particularly health and education, and tourism, based largely on its historical and heritage values. Between 1950 and 1980 the city also experienced significant changes in its political and cultural life, and as the centre of one of the four suffragan dioceses in Victoria, Ballarat exhibited all the characteristics of post Vatican II change within the church, including the effects of declining numbers of religious who had provided the overwhelming numbers of teachers and nurses for the community. By 1980, the changes were irreversible, arguably unprecedented and highly visible in terms of both infrastructure and the make-up of its workforce. It is within this context that the additional changes brought about through Vatican II reforms should be analysed.

Historical context

Ballarat is part of an area of land under the traditional ownership of the Wathaurong people who belong to either the Waa or Bunjil groups, covering an area from Smythesdale to Geelong and around the towns of Mt Emu and Skipton. Ballarat was a favourite camping site, and,

according to Weston Bate, draws its name from the Aboriginal Balla-arat meaning “elbow place”. When pastoralists began moving into their lands in 1835, smallpox, flu and other European diseases almost led to the total destruction of the Indigenous inhabitants.¹⁰⁸ Added to the physical clashes with the white settlers, this meant that “... on the eve of the momentous gold discovery of 1851, confrontation with the blacks was over”.¹⁰⁹

European settlement began in the area two years after the founding of Melbourne in 1835, when the early pioneers, Thomas Learmonth, followed by William Cross Yuille and Henry Anderson formed a sheep station at Lake Wendouree (1838), thus establishing the

¹⁰⁷ Weston Bate, *Life After Gold: Twentieth Century Ballarat*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1993, p176.

¹⁰⁸ Today's descendents have sought to revive their Indigenous culture through the establishment of Kirrit Barrett, an Aboriginal art and cultural centre and with the University of Ballarat through its Aboriginal Education Centre.

¹⁰⁹ Bate, *Life after Gold*, p4.

first small settlement of pastoralists in the area. Gold was discovered by Dunlop and Reid in July 1851, and by 1853 there were 20,000 diggers on the fields, bringing many urban tradespeople and professionals, some of whom stayed on to build the city from its “tent” status. In 1852 the town was laid out by Urquhart and by 1868 the population had reached 40,121. In 1871 Ballarat was gazetted as a City and continued its stable growth between 1871-1900, with the population remaining at about 40,000 with few significant changes to either the economy or the society until the turn of the century.

Weston Bate maintains that many skilled tradesmen and business people who came to Ballarat for the gold stayed on to become the civic “fathers”, philanthropists and builders of the diverse economy that enabled Ballarat to maintain its growth as an industrial centre. He argues that gold attracted mostly young and vigorous migrants drawn from the middle class and better off sections of the working class, most of whom were in their early twenties, and whose “... adaptability ... seemed to reflect not only their youth but also comparatively high levels of education and skill”.¹¹⁰ He further maintains that the early settlers were not resented in the same way as squatters and the transplanted British aristocracy were in other regions. The early pioneers, according to Bate, experienced power “... not theirs by inheritance or privilege but by the conquest of their environment...inherited capital hardly existed”.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, social divisions and distinctions were to become apparent, for example between the Masons and Catholics and with the emergence of the pastoral elites in the surrounding farming districts. For example, all members of the original Ballarat West Council were Masons. Potential (male) members of the exclusive Ballarat Club, established in 1872, were subject to “blackballing” which ensured that no Jews and few Catholics were members by 1889, although members of the Chirnside, Russell and Clarke (non-Catholic) families and others from Melbourne and interstate, were to be found on the membership lists.¹¹²

Ballarat is most famous for the rebellion at Eureka, which led to the only European land war, however brief, ever fought on Australia’s soil. The city’s heritage as one of the major centres of the Gold Rushes and the Eureka rebellion were to provide Ballarat with the basis of a tourist industry which was to help transform the city between 1950 and 1980.

¹¹⁰ Bate, *Life after Gold*, p29.

¹¹¹ Bate, *Life after Gold*, p148.

¹¹² Bate, *Life after Gold*, p260.

Economic structure

Built on the gold rushes of the 1850s, Ballarat rapidly developed a diversity of industries, some of which were associated with mining such as heavy engineering works. It also became a central location for the developing railway system, linking its fortunes with a railways workshop which was to employ generations of workers and prove to be central to many of the political battles during the period under study. Ballarat did not rely solely for its wealth on the industries within the city boundaries. It was the doorway to the rich broad acre farms of the Wimmera and the Mallee, the potato farms around Bungaree and the sheep areas of the Western District. In the days when Australia “rode on the sheep’s back” and a pound of wool was worth a pound, many of the riches flowed into Ballarat to support stock and station agents and other businesses, and through providing a stream of young children who came to board in the Catholic and non-Catholic schools.

The centenary of the discovery of gold in Ballarat was celebrated in 1951. The same year also marked the beginning of what was to become a long battle to rescue the city from inappropriate development with the establishment of the “Save Sturt Street” Committee and the push to build on the educational strengths of the city by issuing the first proposal to establish a University College. As a forerunner to promoting Ballarat as a tourist destination, the first Begonia festival was held in 1953 and in 1956 the new Civic Hall was opened, reflecting part of the post-war building “boom”. This was the same year that Ballarat hosted the Olympic rowing competition on Lake Wendouree, another sign that the city could host events and promote its natural and historical advantages as part of a new economic strategy that could supplement what was still a strong, but changing manufacturing economic base.

In the 1960s Ballarat workers were still to find employment in 335 factories ranging from heavy iron foundries to garment manufacturers, the largest of which was Lucas and Co, where “the girls” constituted the largest manufacturers of women’s clothes in Australia. In 1965, Ballarat opened its own TV station; Sovereign Hill was opened as the central attraction of the Historical Park; and the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education was established in Mt Helen. In 1970, Ballarat elected Jessie Scott as its first woman mayor, but it would not be until 1999 that Karen Overington would be returned to the Victorian

parliament and 2001 that Catherine King would win the federal seat, both firsts for Australian Labor Party women in Ballarat.

The economic structure, the composition of the workforce and the physical infrastructure of Ballarat underwent significant changes between 1950 and 1980, reflecting national and international trends that transformed cities and regional centres around the Australia. Ballarat was able to build on the strong health and educational infrastructure it had inherited from the nineteenth century, a significant proportion of which was provided by the Catholic community, as well as its manufacturing, cultural and tourism strengths.

Political structure

According to the local Member of the House of Representative (MHR) for Ballarat, Catherine King:

We are a city that is at its heart steeped in politics and political history. It is all around us, from our gold mining history and Eureka, to the foundation of the Australian Workers Union, the Railway Workshops, the great Split and the great characters who fought, shaped and developed the Australian Labor Party in Ballarat and had such influence on the city itself.¹¹³

She would have had in mind Labor leaders, Jim Scullin (Prime Minister (PM), October 1929- January 1932), John Curtin (born in nearby Creswick, PM October 1941-July 1945), and Steve Bracks, ex-student of St Francis Xavier Primary School and St Patrick's College and staff member at Sacred Heart College (Premier of Victoria, September 1999- 2007).

She could have added leaders of the conservative side of politics such as Alfred Deakin, the first Federal member for Ballarat, Robert Menzies, (PM April 1939- August 1941, December 1949-January 1966), Robert Joshua (leader of the Federal parliamentary wing and president of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), Sir Thomas Holloway, Premier of Victoria (November 1947 – June 1950) and Sir Henry Bolte from nearby Gordon, (Premier of Victoria from 1955-1977), educated at Ballarat Grammar, and who, according to Bate, was a “great political champion of Ballarat”: all claimed Ballarat and its surrounds as home.

¹¹³ Forward to Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor: From Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age*, Colin Cleary, Epsom, 2007.

Conservative politicians dominated Ballarat at both State and Federal levels between 1955 and 1980, with the brief exception of the State Labor candidate J.J. Sheehan, a Catholic, who was Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Minister for Housing in the John Cain government (1952-1955) prior to the Split in the Labor Party. Public opinion was largely shaped in Ballarat by the local newspaper, *The Courier*, which was first published in June 1867. According to Colin Cleary, it remained consistently anti-Labor until the 1980s when for the first time, non-conservative candidates acknowledged fair coverage of their campaigns.¹¹⁴ Local government in Ballarat reflected the generally conservative nature of councils and shires in non-metropolitan Australia, its conservatism arising from a number of factors, including franchise limited to rate payers, non-compulsory voting, (often) non-payment of expenses or allowances for elected members, and day time meetings which excluded people working in normal nine to five occupations.¹¹⁵

It is no surprise that local government in Ballarat was dominated up until the 1980s by landowners (in the case of the Shire Council) and prominent businessmen in the case of the City; many of these men remained on Council for long periods, often being returned in uncontested elections. An examination of the records of local Councillors on both the City and the Shire Councils of Ballarat between 1950 and 1980 shows a consistent pattern of the voters, when they actually had an opportunity to vote for alternative candidates, returning businessmen, several of whom came from “pioneer” families, local land-owners, real estate agents, developers and wealthy tradesmen, the latter group particularly prominent in the push for Ballarat to become a designated regional growth centre and whose motives were described as “sustained by a blend of idealism and self-interest”.¹¹⁶ Their determination to develop Ballarat’s traditional strengths in manufacture and as the regional centre of a prosperous farming district were supported by the strong links they maintained with the long-serving local state and federal members (and with Premier

¹¹⁴ Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, p188.

¹¹⁵ Amanda Sinclair, *Getting the Numbers: Women in Local Government*, Hargreen Publishing Company, North Melbourne, 1987, p1. As late as 1976, 80.9% of Councillors on rural shires in Victoria were farmers, while there were no elected “housewives”, even though they comprised 39% of the population: see Margaret Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States*, Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, AGPS, Canberra, 1976, p39. In addition, in Victoria universal suffrage for local government was not introduced until 1982, prior to which spouses who were not property owners had to make written application to be on the electoral roll. Furthermore, until 1968 plural voting ensured that owners of valuable property had three votes and that women, unless property owners in their own right, had none.

¹¹⁶ Weston Bate, *Life after Gold*, p176.

Bolte), all of whom shared similar backgrounds. Social ties were reinforced through membership of the Ballarat Club, the Ballarat Golf Club and the racing fraternity in a pattern which reflected that of other small towns and regional centres around Australia.¹¹⁷

There was a recognisable Catholic “aristocracy”; Catholic families prominent in real estate, legal and accounting firms, plus leading and respected doctors, dentists, chemists and businessmen. With the notable exception of Murray Byrne, Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) and three generations of the Coghlan family, few of these sought public office, although their names frequently appear as local leaders in civic affairs, fundraising and charitable pursuits.¹¹⁸ Many were also prominent members of the local “elite” establishments such as the Golf Club, Ballarat Club and in particular, the racing industry. Their financial and pro-bono support for Catholic institutions was critical, although equally matched by smaller contributions from the broad base of the Catholic community. With a few exceptions, none could be classed as “philanthropists” to match prominent families based in Melbourne, but nonetheless, their support for both the Catholic and non-Catholic communities in Ballarat stretched over more than one generation, and extended into major civic initiatives such as support for the establishment of Sovereign Hill and other commercial and tourist developments in Ballarat.¹¹⁹

Government and non-Catholic service infrastructure in Ballarat

Seventeen state primary schools were built in Ballarat from 1847 to 1880, the first being at Bakery Hill (No. 34) in May 1853, followed by Brown Hill (No 35) four months later. In

¹¹⁷ See for example, Ian Gray, *Politics in Place: Social Power Relationships in an Australian Country Town*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; Warwick Eather, 'District trades and labor council, Trade unionism and the Wagga Wagga community, 1943-1960', *Labour History*, No. 72, May 1997. For a history of the Ballarat Golf Club, see Phillip Roberts, *Golf at the Arch: A Centenary History of the Ballarat Golf Club, 1895-1995*, Ballarat Golf Club Inc, Ballarat, 1995, in which he demonstrates that certain families, many of them Catholic, dominated club membership and leadership, and that the Club imposed very strict rules relating to membership, dress code and visitors. Mr Frank Quinn was the long serving Secretary Manager of the Club: his daughter, Veronica, was educated at Loreto, became a Good Samaritan sister and currently works for the Catholic Education Centre.

¹¹⁸ Two generations of Coghlan's were Councilors between the 1880s and 1929, a member of the fourth generation was elected to the City Council in the 1980s.

¹¹⁹ For example, membership of the appeal committee for the Ballarat Historic Park included both Mr TE Byrne and his son Murray, Mr Basil Hayden (brother of M. Antoinette ibvm), Mr Ozzie Coghlan and Dr Jens, whilst on the planning committee were Murray Byrne and Mr John Hayden, Basil Hayden's son. Ballarat Public Records Office, *Series 2500, Unit 290*. Mr Murray Bryne was Chair of the *Save St Joseph's* Committee which unsuccessfully fought to retain the boys' orphanage, finally closed in 1981. Mr Robert Dobson was the pro-bono legal adviser to St John's Hospital and a government appointed visitor to the (then) Mental Home; he and his wife Mary provided both financial and moral leadership within the Catholic and broader community. The Ladies of Charity, formed by Mother Gonzaga Barry in 1889, conducted home visitations and fund-raising for Ballarat charities; three of its four Presidents between 1909 and 1974 belonged to the Coghlan family.

1880 the Minister of Education, Mr Ramsay noted that “no locality had more thoroughly identified with the principles of the 1872 Act than Ballarat”.¹²⁰

Ballarat High School was one of the earliest secondary schools established in Victoria, beginning its long history in the town from 1907 when it was opened as an Agricultural College in temporary quarters in the city, moving to its current location in Ballarat West in 1925, to become one of the State’s first district high schools open to both girls and boys.¹²¹ Structured along the lines of an English Grammar school, it was highly regarded within the city and quickly established itself as one of Victoria’s leading high schools in terms of academic achievement.¹²² Even though Ballarat High School from its inception enrolled girls and boys in almost equal numbers, the slow development of government provision of secondary schooling, particularly for girls, highlights the importance of the Catholic convent schools established by the Loretos and the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat, a phenomenon repeated across Australia.¹²³

As one of Victoria’s most prestigious tertiary institutions, the School of Mines Ballarat (SMB, established 1870) like its counterpart in Bendigo, was to have a huge influence on the generations of students, many of whom graduated with skills critical for local (and national) industry. From the early years of its inception it set up a network of day and evening classes for adults wishing to enter trades, and, during the period under study, also

¹²⁰ Weston Bate, *Life after Gold*, p235.

¹²¹ Philip Roberts, *The History of Ballarat High School, 1907-1982*, Ballarat: Ballarat High School Council, 1982 and *High School: A Hundred Years, Thousands of Footsteps*, The Mud Group, Geelong, 2007. The High School has an enviable record of successful ex-students, including Professor Geoffrey Blainey, journalist Wilfred Burchett, Russell Forsyth, who was Ballarat’s first Rhodes scholar, Wes Walters, who was a winner of the Archibald Prize, and many key local power brokers such as Sir Arthur Nicholson, Edgar Bartrop, Ewan Jones and generations of local MPs, doctors, lawyers, scientists, teachers, musicians and artists and sportspeople.

¹²² Within the city there was also Ballarat Girls’ School and Ballarat Technical School for boys, with both Ballarat East High School and Ballarat North Technical School opening in 1955. The 1970s saw a further expansion of state secondary schools in the region – Mt Clear Technical School, Sebastopol Technical School and Wendouree High-Technical School.

¹²³ There were a number of colleges established by the non-Catholic communities, including Grenville College founded in 1860 for Wesleyan children; it went out of existence in 1910 and claims as its most famous pupil Sir Robert Menzies who entered on a scholarship from Humffray Street Primary School. Ballarat Queen’s Girls College (Anglican) began in Dana Street in 1876; Clarendon College, founded in 1868 as a private concern for girls, soon had close associations with the Presbyterian Church and shifted to Clarendon Street from the private home of Mrs. R Kennedy in 1880. Ballarat College for boys was established by the Presbyterian Church in 1864, while the Anglican community also supported a secondary grammar school for boys. Each of these schools was providing boarding facilities as well as day schools for both primary and secondary pupils in the 1950s.

offered preparatory classes for years eleven and twelve.¹²⁴ SMB also had a very strong art school, which was a critical component of the city's cultural life.

The Ballarat Teachers' College re-opened permanently in 1946 after a decade of closure between 1932-1946. It was transformed into the State College of Victoria at Ballarat in 1973 and moved to the Mt Helen Campus in 1978 as part of the Ballarat College of Advanced Education (BCAE), which, along with the School of Mines, became the basis from which the University of Ballarat would be established in 1994. In addition, Ballarat had a Mechanics Institute to provide education, skills and care of the "moral welfare" of working people; it was to be one of the forerunners of a growing adult and community based education system for the district and was, for many years, the sole library serving the community.¹²⁵

The Ballarat Base Hospital was established in the 1860s and opened its school of nursing in 1884, becoming a major regional hospital serving not only the city, but much of the surrounding region. Ballarat also had a large psychiatric hospital in Wendouree, an equally large aged care facility originally established as the Benevolent Institution in 1859 and a state run orphanage in Ballarat East (established in 1866 and demolished in 1959).¹²⁶ Some institutionalised care was provided for people with disabilities, but in keeping with a lack of provision across Australia, it was limited, and the gap in the services was often filled by admitting people either into the benevolent or psychiatric institutions, as was the practice across Australia well into the 1970s.

Each of these institutions had originally been established by the Ballarat "pioneers" in the 19th century, with strong support from the community; all were heavily reliant on community fundraising. Each survived on limited government funding and limited government policy intervention until well into the period under study, when changes to public policy led to the push for deinstitutionalisation, a movement which was to have equal effects within Catholic services. It was not until 1970 that Victoria had a separate welfare ministry when the state government commenced planning on a regional basis. Of

¹²⁴ Warren Perry, *The School of Mines and Industries, Ballarat: A History of the First One Hundred and Twelve Years, 1870-1982*, The School of Mines and Industries Ballarat Limited, Ballarat, 1984.

¹²⁵ The Ballarat Mechanics Institute is said to be possibly the best example in the world of a still functioning 19th century Mechanics Institute; in recent years it has undergone extensive renovations, with the intention of re-opening the complex as it functioned in the 19th century.

¹²⁶ A W Strange, *Ballarat: A Brief History*, Lowden Publishing Company, Kilmore, 1971, pp30-36.

greater importance was the introduction by the Whitlam federal government of the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP) administered by the Social Welfare Commission. These initiatives set in place public policy and funding requirements that would directly impact on both Catholic and non-Catholic services, and would basically shift the emphasis away from traditional charity towards a recognition that social welfare was a right of all citizens.¹²⁷

Ballarat's architectural importance

Numerous buildings in Ballarat have National Trust classification: the art gallery, railway station, Old Colonists club, the George hotel, several banks, the School of Mines, Craigs hotel, the City Hall and Loreto College; several of these and other important local buildings trace their establishment back to the gold rushes, and to the wealth retained in the city when the rushes ended. As early as 1871, Anthony Trollope recorded his surprise when he visited Ballarat, "...because it was so solidly built and so well-endowed with hospitals, libraries, hotels, public gardens and other amenities."¹²⁸ The early philanthropists who funded much of the heritage infrastructure which still exists today, were greatly assisted by the fact that the economy of the city remained largely in the hands of local ownership, generating local capital managed through Ballarat's own stock exchange. In the opinion of Weston Bate, "...the importance of local capital (helped) an extraordinarily self-reliant community to develop."¹²⁹ The city was also to benefit from outstanding architects over many generations, and people skilled in garden design, installation of statues and classic bandstands in accessible public places, most notably, Sturt Street and the Lake Wendouree precinct.¹³⁰

The class divide in Ballarat

Ballarat was a conservative city, divided along class lines, well into the period covered by this thesis, and the perceptions of difference between Mary's Mount and Sacred Heart College held by those within the city reflected this divide. To add to the complicated picture was the fact that Loreto Dawson Street was perceived (and perceived itself to some

¹²⁷ See Jenny Wills, *Local Government and Community Services: Fitzroy – A Study in Social Planning*, Hard Pressed Publications, Melbourne, 1985. This radical rethinking of how to deliver services to the poor and marginalised in the secular society would parallel the debates within the church and religious congregations following Vatican II, to be dealt with in Chapter 10.

¹²⁸ Weston Bate, *Lucky City*, p53.

¹²⁹ Weston Bate, *Lucky City*, p54.

¹³⁰ For an overview of Ballarat's historic buildings, see Jan Neil and M.C. Sayers, *From Bullion to Begonias*, A Mullaya Book, Canterbury, 1973. For an account of Ballarat's leading philanthropist of the 19th century, see Edgar Bartrop, 'The life and work of James Oddie', *Ballarat Historian*, Vol. 1, No. 5, June 1982.

extent) as inferior to Mary's Mount, but in turn, kept a distinct distance between the private day school and the adjoining parish school, even though it was also staffed by Loreto sisters. Mary Wright ibvm, in a paper delivered in 1981, argues that the identification of Loreto schools with the higher socio-economic sections of Australian society is

all the more frustrating in view of the concern for both the poor and the rich which has been in evidence in our apostolate since the very first schools were set up by Mary Ward, and in view of our long association with many parish primary schools...indeed, the numbers of students in Dawson Street and Redan have always outnumbered the privileged few residents at the Abbey boarding school.¹³¹

The Loretos were a community of women religious more heavily involved in day and parish schools than the image they had as women responsible for one of Victoria's most elite boarding schools. There can be little doubt that the architecture and the imposing (and enclosed) nature of the Abbey shaped this view, even though the reality is that the contribution of the institute was spread across the city and reflected the professional lives of other teaching orders – staffing parish and day schools with large numbers of children from very diverse economic and social backgrounds. For example, Christine Daly ibvm, a teacher and later principal at Redan recalls big numbers of students in each class: “I had 75 children in my class – three to a desk; it was only meant to be 45.”¹³² This is also borne out by the numbers attending the two Loreto schools in 1973, when 360 girls were at Dawson Street and 282 were at Mary's Mount.¹³³

However, the numbers alone cannot overcome the perception of the class divide between the two Loreto schools, which was felt by both the students and the teachers. For example, Elizabeth Cham, an ex-student of Dawson Street and of the Commercial College, clearly remembers the lack of contact between the two schools, and the strong feeling of a class divide present in the late 1950s and 1960s; sport was the most obvious point of contact.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Mary Wright ibvm, *Educating for uncertainty*, Sydney November 1981. Available in Loreto Province Archives.

¹³² Loreto Province Archives, Series 324, *Oral Archive*, Sister Christine Daly, interviewed by Sister Jane Kelly, 4th November, 2004.

¹³³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 33, *Dawson Street*. At the same time, there were 341 students at SHC and 219 at St Martin's in the Pines.

¹³⁴ Ms Cham is a prominent and highly regarded professional woman whose work has been with the philanthropic sector, most recently as CEO of Philanthropy Australia. Until recently, Ms Cham was Chair of Loreto International.

The physical and personal barriers between Dawson Street school and the adjoining parish school of St Joseph's were finally addressed in 1970 when a letter was sent from M. Antoinette and Monsignor McKenzie from the Cathedral, stating that the anomaly of two primary schools divided by a fence, uniform and scale of fees resulted in an inefficient use of available classrooms, staff and limited playing area had been addressed.¹³⁵

Even more important in the folklore of Ballarat is the belief that there was a class divide between the two convent schools, which persisted amongst young women interviewed for this thesis who attended school as late as the early 1980s. An ex SHC student (1974-78) had a strong sense that the Loretos were "the ladies of the Lake", compared to St Martins, which she described as "every woman's school".¹³⁶ Two young women who became friends at university, one from SHC, the other from Mary's Mount, initially thought their friendship would not be possible because of their different school experiences; both were adamant that the perception of class difference was still prevalent in the 1980s. Their conversation during the joint interview was peppered with good natured banter about who was the most "ladylike".¹³⁷ When asked about their memories of the sisters who taught them, both women were equally grateful for the encouragement they were given to see themselves as women who could achieve to their greatest potential, which, as senior public servants in Ballarat, they obviously have done. They also acknowledged the importance of service to others, although both were ambivalent about the relative roles that family compared to teachers played in their understanding of social justice.

In summary, the city of Ballarat in 1950 exhibited all the characteristics of post-war Australia: a strong but changing manufacturing base, heavy reliance on the rich surrounding farm communities, a slowly changing demographic with the influx of post-war migrants, and a business community dominated by a small number of civically active men whose presence on local Council ensured that business interests, including rapid housing development, would dominate local politics. Promoted as somewhat unique to Ballarat was the physical beauty of the city, laid out and funded by its wealthy founders,

¹³⁵The letter stated, "Accordingly the decision had been reached to a) continue St Joseph's as a parish primary school from prep to grade 6 and b) phase out Loreto primary school over time. To implement the policy from 1971, Loreto school will not enrol prep children, all other classes will continue unchanged at both schools". Loreto Province Archives, Series 33, *Dawson Street*, Item 39, Correspondence relating to the closure of Dawson Street.

¹³⁶ Genevieve Barlow, Personal interview, Newstead, Victoria, 12th March, 2009.

¹³⁷ Interview with Melissa MacInerney and Adrienne Annear, Ballarat, 21st October, 2008.

and the heritage value of the gold rushes and Eureka which laid the basis for tourism, destined to become one of its major industries by the 1980s.

Ballarat between 1950 and 1980 can be studied as a “microcosm” if not of all Australia, then certainly as a study of provincial cities which for years relied on either their own local industries and/or their proximity to wealthy farming and pastoral regions. From the time of the split in the Labor Party in 1955 it continually returned conservative politicians at both State and Federal level. Local councils (both City and Shire) exhibited all the conservative traits of similar non-metropolitan councils across Australia – white male conservative property owners dominated up until they were gradually replaced by representatives of the new professional classes in the 1980s. The shift from heavy industry to light manufacture, tourism and service industries over the three decades brought into play a new demographic which would provide educated and competent candidates for public service, but this was not translated into political representation until 1980. The city had its own recognisable local “aristocracy”, both Catholic and non-Catholic, whose membership dominated the “select” sporting and other clubs. The local newspaper was notoriously conservative, as was the local Catholic monthly newsletter, *Light*, a major difference being that the *Courier* was not known for any criticism of capitalism, unlike *Light* which reflected Catholic concern for the effects of both capitalism and socialism.

Women conformed by and large to the expectations shaped by the post-war return to domesticity and pride in home ownership, which for the first time was widely available to the growing middle class. If and when a woman did enter public or civic life, it was more likely to be as support/helper, unpaid fundraiser and/or as the backbone of the many voluntary agencies which dominated community life prior to the introduction of government grants for agencies such as community development and support. The arts, music and sport were areas where perhaps men and women from different social backgrounds met, but even so, the Turf Club, the Ballarat Golf Club and the Ballarat Club remained firmly in the hands of the local gentry, and, as with the rest of Victoria, football dominated sport. So even in these areas, gender and class presented barriers to equal public participation in Ballarat, as it did in Australia in general.

Ballarat in the 1950s could be described as a somewhat self-satisfied, comfortable city, dominated by conservative elected officials whose power and influence was challenged

but not threatened by a Labor movement steeped in history, but mired in division from the mid-1950s. This conservatism, balanced against a long history of working class struggle within the city, was to help shape the nature of the Catholic Church and its institutions, just as it did the rest of the community over the three decades under study. In all aspects of the city's life, the contribution of the women's congregations can be seen: from service delivery to preservation of infrastructure, from cultural life to building the social capital and skills of its citizens. A central argument of this thesis is that women religious maintained a continuous contribution to the city, despite the fact that the nature of their work was to change radically in the 1970s and 80s.

The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat - History

*The historical heritage [of the diocese] consists of a tightly knit community of priests, religious and people built around the triangle of presbytery, convent and home, intermarrying and stimulated by Melbourne leadership and influences... the diocese has been exempt from the pressures flowing from the massive urbanization and large scale industrialization which so many parishes in Australia have had to struggle... the community need no longer maintain its traditional defensive posture...*¹³⁸

The Ballarat Diocese spreads from the River Murray to the Southern Ocean, 260km from Ballarat to the South Australian border. Established in 1874, it became the most extensive of the four Victorian dioceses, stretching as it does “from the Murray to the sea” and covering most of the western half of Victoria. One year after its establishment, the diocese comprised eleven parishes, twenty-three priests, eight nuns, six churches, fifteen chapels and fifteen schools. By 1880, the first bishop of the diocese, Bishop O'Connor, had opened schools catering for 5000 children across the diocese.¹³⁹ Catholic secondary schooling was first provided in the city of Ballarat in 1875 with the arrival of the Loreto sisters, followed one year later by the Christian Brothers who opened a school for boys in Skipton Street and later St Patrick's College, which they took over from the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1892, and in 1881 by five Sisters of Mercy who located in Ballarat East.

¹³⁸ 'Report of Survey of the religious attitudes of the people of Ballarat', Commissioned by Bishop Mulkearns and the diocesan senate of priests, May 6, 1975. Located in Loreto Province Archives, Series 159, *Ballarat Diocese*.

¹³⁹ These were in addition to twelve parish schools operating prior to the establishment of the diocese, and ten within Ballarat itself and its nearby districts. Fr D. F. Burke, *A History of the Catholic Church in Victoria*, Melbourne, Catholic Bishops of Victoria, 1988, p123-126.

The Sisters of Mercy, Poor Sisters of Nazareth, Sisters of St John of God and the Loretos were the only four congregations of women to permanently settle in Ballarat, but within the diocese several other congregations made significant and long term commitments, particularly to education. In addition to the women's communities, Ballarat was to benefit from the arrival of the Redemptorist Fathers in 1891 when they established their first Victorian monastery in Wendouree where the broader Catholic community could attend mass.¹⁴⁰

As with dioceses across Australia, the main focus of the building programs and the deployment of religious were in support of the Catholic education system. Two years after the establishment of the Ballarat diocese, Bishop O'Connor stated a policy to place all schools as soon as possible under the control of religious, which, according to Fogarty, "was more than a policy – it was a crusade" and reflected the pattern of establishing Catholic schools across Australia as the first priority of the bishops.¹⁴¹

Ballarat's second bishop, The Most Rev. James Moore, succeeded Bishop O'Connor in 1884, and continued the expansion of the diocese. Following a successful trip overseas in 1887, he returned with twenty-six men and women to serve the needs of his parishioners: four diocesan clergy, one Loreto nun, five priests and four brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, one Redemptorist priest, six Sisters of Nazareth and five Brigidine sisters who established a foundation in Ararat in 1889.¹⁴²

The Ballarat diocese by 1950

Ballarat remained the one parish until 1963, when Sebastopol was formed as a separate parish, followed by others in the urban area between 1964 and 1971. Although St Alipius in Ballarat East was not a separate parish, the priests there appeared to have more autonomy from the Cathedral and its Administrator, Fr Fiscalini, whom the pope named a Domestic Prelate with the title of Monsignor in 1954 in recognition of his work. St

¹⁴⁰ The monastery was still taking students up until 1972 and had over 100 men living there in to the 1970s. It was sold in 1997.

¹⁴¹ Brother Ronald Fogarty, FMS, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950. Vol. 11: Catholic Education under the Religious Orders*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1959, p267. The push for schools, however, did not deter the Ballarat hierarchy from launching into other projects; in 1877 the Bishop's Palace in Ballarat West was completed at the cost of £8000. It was eventually listed on the National Trust in 1980, two and a half acres of its grounds were sold, and the building no longer used as a residence for the Bishop; it is now privately owned.

¹⁴² It was during Bishop Moore's term that St Patrick's Cathedral was completed and consecrated, free of its debt of £40,000 in 1891.

Patrick's Cathedral was home to the remaining priests under the direction of the Monsignor, serving the district churches at Redan, Sebastopol, Ballarat North and the "Little Flower" church on the Lake close to Mary's Mount.¹⁴³ The growing area of Wendouree West gained its new church in 1966.

Additional Catholic infrastructure included parish primary schools in Sebastopol and North Ballarat (staffed by the Mercies) and in Redan (staffed by the Loretos), a technical college run by the Christian brothers, a day and boarding school run by the Sisters of Mercy in Mt Clear, just outside the main city of Ballarat, opened in 1967.¹⁴⁴ With approximately one quarter of the population during this period identifying as Catholic, the infrastructure the Catholic community built, maintained and supported with little or no public money, represented a large proportion of the education, health and welfare services available to the population of Ballarat and its surrounding districts.

By the 1950s the Catholic community had developed to the point where it virtually duplicated all the educational, social and healthcare services provided by government, with the overwhelming responsibility for staffing the institutions being in the hands of the women religious. Minimal assistance was provided by lay staff (and these in the main, worked for lower wages than their State counterparts) and minimal, if any, government money was provided, a situation which would continue until the mid-1960s when the first tentative steps were taken to introduce state aid for non-government services.

The contribution to health and welfare services by women religious

This thesis focuses on the two teaching congregations which operated in Ballarat; a more rounded picture of the contribution of women religious to the city would include a full analysis of the role of both the Sisters of Nazareth and the Sisters of St John of God, but this larger task is beyond the bounds of one thesis. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that both these congregations played a vital part in the history of Catholic life in the city, and both provided infrastructure, skills and professional competence which continue to the present day.

¹⁴³ The Church of the Little Flower was closed in April 2000, and has since been purchased by the Loreto community for use as a music venue for Loreto College. For an "insider's" view of the life of a curate pre-Vatican II, see John Molony, *By Wendouree*, Connorcourt, Ballan, 2010, Chapter 8, Ballarat.

¹⁴⁴ Additional parish schools would be opened and staffed by the Mercies in Wendouree in 1969 and in Alfredon, staffed for one year by the Loretos in 1980.

The Sisters of Nazareth

Led by Mother Mary Benedicta Brady, six Sisters of Nazareth were sent from their mother house in Hammersmith, London, to Ballarat in November 1888, to begin their Australian Foundation from which another nine communities would be founded. As well as caring for the aged, they also took over the education and housing of orphans who had previously been under the care of the Mercy Sisters in Warnambool.¹⁴⁵ Their site on Lake Wendouree was purchased for £3300, buildings were added totaling £14,000 allowing the orphanage to be officially opened by Bishop James Moore on 30 August 1891. One of Ballarat's best known Catholic philanthropists, Martin O'Laughlin, died in 1894, leaving £2,500 to the sisters, enabling them to build accommodation for boys, bringing the number of inmates to 150, a number which was to increase to 300 by the turn of the century.¹⁴⁶ In addition, in 1911 the bishop brought the Leckie mansion known as "Blythewood Grange" in Sebastopol, which was to become home for 90 boys under the care of six sisters.

In the 1950s, there were 140 boys and 500 girls in the care of the Sisters of Nazareth in Ballarat. The girls' orphanage was gradually phased out and closed in the 1970s and the remaining forty children placed into foster care, in line with government policy and changing community attitudes regarding the appropriate care of children and people with disabilities. Large institutions were being progressively closed across a range of services, costs were rising and issues such as occupational health and safety were placing considerable strain on the provision of services, particularly those housed in 19th century buildings. In the case of Nazareth services in Ballarat, "an inability to adapt to new government policies, [and criticism of management for their] limited response to change, low standards and too much emphasis on residential care", meant that by 1980, both their orphanages were closed.¹⁴⁷ However, aged care services continue to be delivered on the original Lake Wendouree site and constitute an important component of aged care delivery for the district. The site has been added to over the years, but in the main, additions have conformed well to the original design, making the buildings important in terms of local heritage and architecture.

¹⁴⁵ Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*, Crossing Press, Darlinghurst, 2002, p264.

¹⁴⁶ Rev. W. Ebsworth, *Pioneer Catholic Victoria*, The Polding Press, Melbourne, 1973, p268.

¹⁴⁷ Weston Bate, *Life After Gold*, p209.

In the years of its operation between 1913 and 1981, St Joseph's boys' orphanage housed 2,275 boys, many of whom went to work for Catholic families on the land when they turned 13 or 14. These boys were known as "sitchies" or "situation boys", leaving school without their Merit certificate, and bound for lives as itinerant workers. The community was largely self-supporting, through the income from their farm which ran livestock and delivered products to St Patrick's College and Nazareth House. There were three sections within the orphanage : a nursery for babies which catered for over 20 babies and infants, a school for the younger children and the farm for the boys over 14. One boy per year went to St Patrick's College and two to the Christian Brothers in Drummond Street.¹⁴⁸ Over the years of its operation, St Joseph's operated as a charitable institution reliant solely on donations, fund-raising and the unpaid labour of the Sisters of Nazareth, gradually attracting some government assistance by the 1950s as it took under its care children deemed to be wards of the state, and in the last decades of its operation, able with the assistance of government, to update some of its buildings and pay more lay staff.¹⁴⁹

However, by 1976 the policy of the Victorian Liberal government was to phase out large institutions, and in 1978 Premier Dick Hamer announced that no more funds or referrals of boys would be made to St Joseph's. Despite a spirited public campaign protesting the closure, St Joseph's closed in 1981, with the last 42 children being placed in foster homes.¹⁵⁰

It is important to note that the Sisters of Nazareth provided schooling for both boys and girls of primary age in their care. As the children reached secondary level, arrangements were made with the local teaching institutes to provide secondary education for girls and boys who they judged would benefit from the experience, and it appears from conversations with both Mercy and Loreto sisters, that fees were either waived or highly discounted to facilitate their education.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Marlowe, *One Hundred Brothers*, Australian Nazareth House Association, 2004. Mr Marlowe was an old boy of St Joseph's and recipient of an Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

¹⁴⁹ The orphanages were regular recipients of money raised in the annual Charity Sunday Appeal sponsored by the local council; along with St Vincent de Paul, they appear to be the only Catholic charity which shared in this public fund-raising. Ballarat Public Records, *Series 2500, Item 282*.

¹⁵⁰ The buildings were sold and converted into a convention centre for the use of the Ballarat community, restoring the site to the original Blythwood Grange.

The Sisters of St John of God

In 1915 the Congregation of the Sisters of St John of God was the last of the four major women's congregations to be established in the city of Ballarat. Arriving from Western Australia, they occupied the mansion built by a wealthy miner, William Bailey in 1883. It was purchased by the Church for £4000 and became the foundation for St John of God private hospital, which commenced operating in 1915.¹⁵¹ The overwhelming majority of the sisters were Irish women; their dominance would remain up to the 1950s when they still constituted 80 percent of the congregation's membership in Ballarat. The hospital remained a modest enterprise for their first two decades in Ballarat. By the late 1930s it slowly began to grow, and after the Second World War, plans were implemented to construct a new five-storey structure, supported by donations totaling £40,000, culminating in August 1952 when the new hospital was ready, with 100 beds and room for 100 more, thus relieving what had become a serious shortage of hospital beds in Ballarat. According to the historian of the Ballarat Base Hospital, by 1952, Ballarat as a whole simply had not enough hospital beds of any sort, and the only relief in sight was the still unfinished new building at St John's. There was underlying tension between the Base hospital and St John's due to the strong culture of freemasonry present amongst doctors and board members of the Base hospital, and the reluctance to appoint doctors from the differing faiths at the respective hospitals.¹⁵² Doctor Walter Richardson, father of Australian author, Henry Handel Richardson, was a founding member of the Ballarat Lodge, and as a leading Mason, laid the foundation stone of the Ballarat Base Hospital and was also an active member of the committee which established the benevolent asylum and the Ballarat Horticultural Society. Both his medical career and public life in Ballarat were largely shaped by his Masonic membership, not untypical of many of his class and profession during that period when Ballarat was emerging as a wealthy provincial centre.¹⁵³

Further expansions to the hospital was undertaken in the 1960s with the addition of a nursing home, with strong support from Bishop O'Collins who urged the sisters to "build

¹⁵¹ The Sisters went on to establish a second hospital in the diocese in Warnambool, and by 1955, they were operating eight hospitals in WA, three in Victoria, Ballarat, Warnambool and Brighton (in Melbourne), one in NSW and one in New Zealand.

¹⁵² Anthea Hyslop, *Sovereign Remedies: A History of the Ballarat Base Hospital, 1850s to 1980s*, Allen and Unwin, 1989, p309.

¹⁵³ For an account of Walter Richardson's life in Ballarat, see Michael Ackland, *Henry Handel Richardson: A Life*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, Chapter 1.

now and worry about the money later”, according to his biographer.¹⁵⁴ The bishop also funded equipment for the operating theatre at St John’s, stating that “The sisters deserve the highest praise. Their only return for all their mighty work is three meals a day and a bed”.¹⁵⁵

As with the Sisters of Nazareth, the Sisters of St John of God played a significant but largely unrecognized role in education through their training of generations of nurses, commencing in 1958 as the only non-metropolitan centre for nurse training in Victoria. This contribution continued until 1988 when the Australian Catholic University (ACU) phased in nurse education, working closely with St John’s and sharing some facilities with the BCAE.¹⁵⁶

Women religious and education services

The central focus of this thesis is on the two teaching congregations in the city of Ballarat which will be dealt with in detail in later chapters, but as a summary of the combined contribution of the teaching orders in the diocese, Jill Blee’s account of the extent and the ad hoc nature of the provision of teaching services by women religious provides a useful overview:

Brown and Black Josephites, Sisters of Mercy belonging to the amalgamation and those from Ballarat East who remained outside it, Good Samaritans, Brigidines, Presentations and Loretos crossed paths all over the Diocese. There was no pattern to the expansion which took place in the first half of the century. Children in neighbouring towns were taught by nuns who wore different habits, lived according to different rules and employed different teaching methods.¹⁵⁷

The Catholic community could boast of a network of parish and congregation owned schools, providing primary and secondary education for girls and boys, orphanages for both boys and girls (which included provision for primary education), a primary teachers’ college and kindergartens attached to both the Loreto and Mercy convent schools. The

¹⁵⁴ William J. McCarthy, *James Patrick O’Collins: A Bishop’s Story*, Spectrum Publications, Melbourne, 1996, p93.

¹⁵⁵ William McCarthy, *James Patrick O’Collins*, p94.

¹⁵⁶ Additional renovations and new buildings were undertaken in 1986; the convent and chapel were decommissioned in April 1998, and further major renovations completed in 2010.

¹⁵⁷ Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese*, Ballarat, Catholic Education Office, Ballarat, 2004, p118.

school population for the diocese grew from 7500 in 1951 to 15,800 a decade later, during which time seven new parish schools, two further secondary schools and six new parishes were established, none of which would have eventuated without the contribution of the women religious. Little or no “system” of planning, either for education or for other Catholic services existed outside that provided through the Bishop’s Palace and through the efforts of Fr Jack Shelley as inspector of religious education within the schools.

The Life of Ballarat Catholics in the 1950s

In 1942 when Bishop O’Collins arrived in Ballarat from Western Australia, his diocese was well established with 55,500 practising Catholics whose church life was dominated by public displays of piety, and as an examination of its newsletter *Light* reveals, equally impassioned pleas to fight communism in all its forms, a “crusade” that had resonance of the battle lines drawn during the Spanish Civil War.¹⁵⁸

In Ballarat, 1951 marked the visit of the Statue of Fatima to schools and hospitals with accompanying prayer for the conversion of Russia, and in 1953 the International Rosary Crusade and a Family Prayer Rally conducted at the Ballarat Oval attracted 30,000 people. In 1954, proclaimed as Marian Year, a public reception of novices was held “at the command of the Bishop” and saw three girls entering the Sisters of Mercy as “Brides of Christ”, and another five making their Final Profession, in the hope that the display would attract further vocations.¹⁵⁹

Ballarat’s displays of public piety were in no way unusual. These public manifestations of the “Church Triumphant” were repeated all around Australia, as were St Patrick’s Day marches and Eucharistic festivals. As well as the above mentioned, large irregular demonstrations of the uniqueness of the Catholic community, the Church provided a range of sporting, cultural and entertainment opportunities that again replicated those enjoyed by the non-Catholic community; sporting clubs, youth clubs, Saturday night dances, opportunities to volunteer through organisations such as St Vincent de Paul Society, and to

¹⁵⁸ Mary Kneipp, ‘Australian Catholics and the Spanish civil war,’ *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 19, 1998. Colin Cleary recounts that when the Ballarat Trades and Labor Council launched a relief appeal for Spanish workers, the Bishop at the time, Bishop Foley, was “outraged... and considered that the TLC was subsidizing savages.” Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, p103.

¹⁵⁹ A further report of public profession held on 10 December 1956 appeared in the *Light* on 19 January 1957. The Loretos did not have public ceremonies marking entry or profession into the institute, nor did the women enter as Brides of Christ.

participate in the Church apostolate in the Young Catholic Workers (YCW), monthly communion for sodality members, and (male) membership of the Knights of the Southern Cross, which in many ways replicated the local Masonic Lodges.

All these activities helped create a tightly knit community which gave unstinting support to the institutions that the Church operated, largely free of government money. Their inventiveness in finding ways to raise money again reflected what was happening in every parish across Australia – the usual fetes and bazaars, St Patrick’s Day race meetings, Golden Circle and other raffle tickets, planned giving programs, bequests from estates and annual “spud drives” from the Bungaree farmers supporting the orphanage. Other Churches in Ballarat were equally engaged in fundraising, minus the gambling efforts in the case of some Catholic endeavours.

The pinnacle of leadership of the local church was firmly in the hands of the bishops and their appointed administrators; Bishop O’Collins, the first Australian-born bishop of the diocese, ruled from 1941-1971 followed by Bishop Mulkearns 1971-1997.¹⁶⁰ In the pre-Vatican II structure of the Church, male and female religious occupied the rung below the male hierarchy. According to John Molony, who was a priest of the diocese in the 1950s,

Bishop O’Collins in a manner then regarded as fitting, was the embodiment of his diocese. He was said to possess the quality of common sense in abundance, but he was a thoroughly Romanized authoritarian whose Australian characteristics did nothing to lessen his inflexible control over, and general remoteness from, his priests. That control was much less evident in his relations with the religious priests, nuns and brothers in his diocese. They had their own sources of authority to which they were subject and to which they could appeal if they felt discriminated against or otherwise unjustly treated.¹⁶¹

Molony’s “insider” view of the life of a curate at the time highlights the strong contrast between the priests, whose communal life was minimal, relying almost solely on personal friendships, and those of the women religious for whom community provided a strong

¹⁶⁰ Administrators at the Cathedral included Monsignor Fiscilini (1952-1964), Fathers T. O’Brien (1964-1966), J. Martin (1967-1968), F. McKenzie (1968-1972), P. Culligan (1972-1976) and F. Madden (1976-1982).

¹⁶¹ John Molony, *By Wendouree*, p223.

basis from which they would face the challenges about to emerge in the 1960s. Again, in contrast to the women religious, Molony comments that the intellectual life of the priests “...lay entirely in their own hands with no incentive to foster it”.¹⁶²

At the bottom of the pre-Vatican II “ladder” came the laity, amongst whom was an internal “hierarchy” defined by their status as doctors, lawyers, chemists, dentists, real estate agents, businessmen, local political figures, hotel owners and SP bookies. Their support for the Church and its institutions was not only in the form of the money and the pro-bono services they contributed. As accepted members of the broader local “elite”, they added prestige to the schools to which they sent their children and to the hospital where, as private patients, they were able to send sick members of their families.¹⁶³

A “second tier” of laity comprised the local Catholic tradesmen and smaller business operators, the former of whom supplied untold hours of unpaid time and materials to organizations within the Church, often in partnership or through St Vincent de Paul’s Society, for which they often benefited by gaining paid contracts.¹⁶⁴

The broad base of the laity constituted the working class and lower middle class of Catholic Ballarat who consistently raised funds, dutifully sent their children to overcrowded and under-resourced parish schools, joined the sodalities and charitable organisations, attended mass rallies and accepted the local Catholic newsletter, the *Light* as expressing the views of the hierarchy. Along with the Catholic Truth Society pamphlets, *Light* and the Melbourne *Advocate*, for many, provided the bulk of “adult education” in the Catholic faith in the pre-Vatican II church. Katharine Massam’s study of Catholic spirituality in Australia with its theme of an almost infantile spirituality is repeated in

¹⁶² John Molony, *By Wendouree*, p224. Both these issues will be pursued later in the thesis. Molony was at various times, chaplain at St Patrick’s College and at St Joseph’s orphanage and confessor to the sisters at Loreto Mary’s Mount.

¹⁶³ One informal comment was made by a Sister of Mercy that the decision of one of the leading doctors in Ballarat to send his daughters to the Mercy convent was seen as a “coup”, as another equally “elite” doctor had sent his daughters to Loreto.

¹⁶⁴ One local Catholic chemist for example was at least for some years the only one used by St John’s, despite some patients listing others they preferred. The most obvious example of a Catholic service being used widely was a local undertaker whose business was next door to the Cathedral. It is interesting to note, however, that the largest non-Catholic building firm in Ballarat won the big building contracts for each of the convents and the hospital, a pattern that was to continue well into the 1980s.

popular books written by Catholics who emerged from that period,¹⁶⁵ and again, with more academic rigor by Paul Collins, Gerald Arbuckle and others.¹⁶⁶ However, an important qualification to this widely held view of “infantile spirituality” has to be made in the case of Ballarat, which was an early centre for the Campion Society, and which was home to an active and effective adult apostolate through the Young Catholic Workers (YCW) and Young Catholic Students (YCS) before Vatican II. In both formal interviews and informal conversations, a number of women religious have mentioned their experience in the YCW or YCS as being critical to the formation of their lives as religious.¹⁶⁷

Fr Molony was responsible for organizing the first Christian Social Week in 1962, the proceedings of which were printed for circulation as *A New Age for the Human Person*.¹⁶⁸ In his introduction to the book, Fr Molony wrote:

Ballarat can lay no claim to possess men (sic) who are vitally interested in the reconstruction of the social order according to the mind of the Church. It was in order to assist these men to come to a fuller understanding of the Church’s mind, especially outlined in Pope John’s encyclical “*Mater et Magistra*”, that the social week was held...Ballarat does not differ so very much from other provincial cities in Australia and elsewhere. Yet it was possible to obtain twenty-five speakers who were prepared to study their subjects, deliver papers and answer questions to a broad audience. Well over a thousand people attended the Week, some of them came every night...In the face of this, how can some people still maintain that the

¹⁶⁵ For example, Edmund Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing up Catholic in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1982; Jennifer Dabbs, *Beyond Redemption*, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1987; Josie Arnold, *Mother Superior, Woman Inferior*, Dove Communications, Blackburn, 1985; Kate and Dominica Nelson (eds), *Sweet Mother, Sweet Maids*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986.

¹⁶⁶ Paul Collins, *Mixed Blessings: The Crisis in World Catholicism and the Australian Church*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987; Bishop Geoffrey Robinson: *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*, John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, 2007; Gerald Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*, St Paul Publishing, Homebush, 1993; Richard Lennan, ‘Receiving Vatican II: The Australian experience’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 26, 2005. Each of these writers illustrates the problems which were to emerge following Vatican II when the laity as well as the religious would be forced to assume an adult responsibility for their understanding of spirituality and the true meaning of Catholic Action.

¹⁶⁷ Two past presidents, Cynthia Wright and Ellison Taffe became Loreto sisters. For a comprehensive account of Catholic Action in Ballarat, see John Molony, *By Wendouree*, Chapter 10.

¹⁶⁸ John Molony (ed), *A New Age for the Human Person*, The Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1963.

ordinary Catholic is not interested in the social order or in what the Church teaches on the social order?¹⁶⁹

The influence of Ballarat's progressive lay people went beyond the city. A key group of young men in the YCW established a housing co-operative in nearby Dunnstown, and with the assistance of Father John Molony, established Cripac Press.¹⁷⁰ Two of the Ballarat YCW leaders, Jim Ross and Frank Sheehan, went on to become national presidents of the organization.¹⁷¹ According to Mr Barry Mitchell, Victorian coordinator of Action for World Development (AWD) in the 1970s, he had his first experience of working with Catholics through AWD, and was impressed by the network of people formed through their earlier contacts in the YCW, not least those who came from Ballarat, including Jim Ross and Frank Sheehan: he ascribes much of the energy and the insights of the AWD to those people who emerged from the YCW, while "...Frank and Rosalie Sheehan were the natural people to talk to in Ballarat...they were able to interpret the world".¹⁷²

In the view of Dr Val Noone,

The Australian YCW of the 1950s and the 1940s, prepared the way for the Second Vatican Council, and indeed, with adaptation, prepared the ground for the sort of Church which I believe is needed in the twenty-first century. YCW promoted lay initiative and leadership, and sought to combat injustice in the world of work, and took everyday things seriously.¹⁷³

In Ballarat as across the rest of Victoria, there were forces working against this early and strong movement to involve lay leadership and participation, in part because of the fears of B. A Santamaria whose failure to control the YCW and the Newman Society in Melbourne

¹⁶⁹ John Molony, *A New Age for the Human Person*, p9. All of the speakers during the week were men, four of whom were priests of the diocese; topics covered included background to the papal encyclicals, rights and responsibilities of Christians, domestic and international issues of the time.

¹⁷⁰ The Ballarat people originally involved in starting Cripac Press were Fr John Molony, Gerald Caine, Jim Ross, Jim Barnes and Chris Haintz; it was granted \$3000 in 1963 as part of the adult lay apostolate, shifted from Ballarat to Melbourne in 1969 and became financially independent in the 1970s when it became associated with Dove Communications, and eventually merged into Collins Dove. See also, D. C. Nailon, 'Religion, society and 'Move out'', *Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No 3, December 1972.

¹⁷¹ Frank Sheehan was to become the Labor member for Ballarat in the Cain/Kirner governments, retaining the seat for the three terms of Labor government in Victoria.

¹⁷² Interview with Barry Mitchell, Melbourne, 25 March 2009.

¹⁷³ Val Noone, 'A new youth for a new Australia': Young Christian Workers around 1960', *Paper for the Australian Association for the Study of Religions National Conference*, ACU, Ballarat, 6-9 July, 1995.

influenced Bishop O'Collins to remove a mandate for a new adult lay apostolate in the diocese, leaving one prominent lay Catholic to report: "We all obeyed our chaplain and our bishop, and went quietly home. The next day we went back to cleaning windows."¹⁷⁴

Tied in with the reluctance to support an independent lay apostolate was the strong support given by the Catholic hierarchy in the diocese to the anti-communist movement.¹⁷⁵

Anti-communism in Ballarat.

The Catholic community in Ballarat was significantly shaped by the split in the Labor party in 1955, and the role played by Bishop O'Collins in his support of Bob Santamaria, the National Civic Council (NCC) and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Bob Santamaria himself frequently refers to the support he received from Bishop O'Collins, dating back to the 1940s when O'Collins was the delegated authority from the other Bishops to be the contact with the Social Studies Movement. The hierarchy in 1945 appointed three Bishops, Gilroy, Mannix and O'Collins, to maintain liaison with the organisation. According to Santamaria,

Partly as a result of strong representations by myself, the latter (ie O'Collins) was asked by the other members of the sub-committee to attend executive meetings of the Movement, now that it had become national in scope. There were three reasons for the choice of Bishop O'Collins. As a Victorian, he was close to the national headquarters in Melbourne. He had been an active unionist, a member of the Plumbers Union, before his entry into the priesthood. Furthermore, he was a close personal friend of Archbishop Gilroy.¹⁷⁶

Ballarat has a long Labor tradition and a strong Irish Catholic heritage, and thus the Split in the Labor Party became intensely personal for many people. Many Ballarat identities played leading roles in the unfolding drama. As stated, Bishop O'Collins was a leading clerical supporter of Santamaria's Movement; the federal MHR for Ballarat, Bob Joshua, a

¹⁷⁴ John Molony, *By Wendouree*, p315. See also, Val Noone (ed), *Golden Years, Grounds for Hope: Father Golden and the Newman Society 1950-1966*, Golden Project, Melbourne, 2008, and Race Mathews, 'Collateral damage: B.A. Santamaria and the marginalising of social Catholicism', *Labour History*, Number 92, May 2007.

¹⁷⁵ John Molony, *By Wendouree*, Chapter 10.

¹⁷⁶ B. A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1981, P87. According to Santamaria, O'Collins attended practically every quarterly meeting of the national executive for the better part of the next decade; he commented, "... and as far as I recall, only twice intervened on matters of substance." p87.

well respected accountant and member of the local Stock Exchange, was one of the seven “Grouper” federal members of parliament expelled from the Party.¹⁷⁷ He was elected leader of the federal DLP parliamentary party in the hope that a non-Catholic leader would help dispel the fears that the party was indeed a Catholic party.¹⁷⁸ By contrast, the Catholic State MP for Ballarat, Jack (J.J.) Sheehan, remained loyal to the ALP and was a minister in the dying days of John Cain’s Labor government. He lost his seat in the 1955 State election, and was to suffer painful recriminations from many in the Catholic community for a number of years for remaining within the ALP.¹⁷⁹

Ballarat had a strong Communist Party since 1931, and the ALP itself had two branches – one in Ballarat North, which was the anti-grouper branch, and the Ballarat City branch which met at the Trades Hall and was dominated by the groupers. Beau Williams, secretary of Trades Hall from 1955-1975, was previously a member of the Communist Party, but joined the ALP in 1952, and recalls the period as being “very bitter”, a time when Catholic families (such as the Carrolls and the Sheehans) who remained loyal to the ALP were ostracised in the Catholic community:

If you were a supporter of Jack Sheehan you sat on one side of the Church. As they came out of the Church one Sunday morning someone said to Bill Carroll: ‘About time you communists stopped coming to this place’. There wasn’t a word said. He (Bill Carroll) just dropped him, punched him, on the steps of St Pat’s Cathedral. That’s how they settled it in that period.¹⁸⁰

It is extremely doubtful that the animosity amongst Catholics at the time spilled over into physical confrontation of the type described here. However, families (and neighbours and friends) did divide quite strongly on the political issues and the role the Church authorities played in the shaping of those issues. The father of former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks joined the DLP, along with many other Catholic families in 1955, and, according to Barry

¹⁷⁷ “Groupers” was the title given to those who were members of the Industrial Groups, formed to rid the Labor Party of communist influence.

¹⁷⁸ After losing his seat in 1955, Mr Joshua went on to become the first president of the national DLP in 1957.

¹⁷⁹ J.J. Sheehan returned to teaching after his defeat in Parliament, serving as Deputy Principal at Ballarat East High, and Principal of Ballarat High School between 1972-77. He was honored by the community with the naming of the J.J. Sheehan Wing at the Ballarat High School in 1976 and named amongst the 100 people who helped shaped Ballarat in 2000.

¹⁸⁰ Ross Fitzgerald, *The Pope’s Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2003, p143.

Donovan, “Bracks junior admitted to many spirited political discussions around the family kitchen table during his teenage years and later”.¹⁸¹ According to the ALP candidate in the 1955 Federal elections, Mr Austin Dowling, “Mannix and Santamaria’s influence was critical...the local Bishop believed everything that Santa said... the pulpit became an anti-ALP political soapbox. Catholic families loyal to the ALP were shunned in Church and sometimes stormed out when a particularly vitriolic sermon was on.”¹⁸²

As a reflection of the seriousness with which the Church authorities in Ballarat viewed the communist threat, the diocesan newsletter, *Light*, devoted regular space to reporting on the activities of domestic and international communists and “fellow travellers”, whom they identified as particular unionists, politicians and peace activists. Its editorial page was followed immediately on page two with a regular one-page feature entitled “Industrial Front” which reported on the activities of the unions, while in 1952, the newsletter added a third page contributed by “The Man with the Candle”, alerting the community to the need to support anti-communist organizations, such as the NCC.¹⁸³

In his biography of Bishop O’Collins, Fr William McCarthy (the bishop’s nephew) says that in establishing *Light* in 1942, with Fr James McNerney as its editor, the *Light’s* comments on the news of the day were to reflect the views of the Church and the bishop, and confirmed the bishop’s strong support for (what were to become) the NCC and DLP.¹⁸⁴ Thus from the time of its inception in 1942 under Bishop O’Collins until 1984 under the editorship of Fr George Pell, *Light* was to remain a constant vehicle for anti-communist and conservative views.

Evidence from the Loreto archives suggests that the religious congregations were not immune from the influence of the DLP/NCC; Bob Santamaria and Mother Borgia ibvm,

¹⁸¹ Barry Donovan, *Bracks and Kennett: My Part in their Rise and Fall*, Information Australia, Melbourne, 2000, p191.

¹⁸² Fitzgerald, *The Pope’s Battalions*, p152-3.

¹⁸³A sample of the editorials during the 1950s includes that of August 1951 which called for support of the anti-communist referendum, with some obvious success as Ballarat as a whole voted overwhelmingly in favour of the proposition. In 1954, the editorial carried support for US Senator McCarthy for his efforts on the un-American activities crusade; in the same year, Bishop O’Collins used the opening of St Columba’s Primary School (Ballarat North) to urge support for the Industrial Groups and in May 1955 the editorial supported those groups which acted against the “policy of softness” of both Dr Evatt and Premier John Cain (Senior).

¹⁸⁴ William J. McCarthy, *James Patrick O’Collins*, p102. In 1979, Fr George Pell was appointed by Bishop Mulkearns as editor of *Light*, a position he was to retain for the next five years, continuing the long history of the paper being a strong advocate for “traditional” Catholic values. Fr Pell appointed Michael Gilchrist, who was on the staff at Aquinas College, as a regular contributor to *Light*; Gilchrist went on to become editor of *AD2000*, the successor to *Newsweekly*, which continued to provide a voice for Bob Santamaria. Babette Francis, convenor of the Women Who Want to be Women, a conservative women’s organization with strong links to the NCC, was also a regular contributor.

for example, were close friends and regular correspondents.¹⁸⁵ However, a significant difference was that as a national congregation, the Loretos who were born and worked interstate were not as affected as their Victorian sisters, and certainly not to the degree that local Catholic girls who joined the Ballarat East Mercies would have been, given the circumstances in Ballarat at the time. One non-Victorian Loreto commented that the Split and the DLP didn't penetrate as much for them as it did for the diocesan orders; it "was more of interest to the non-Victorians, rather than deeply affecting the congregation."¹⁸⁶ The situation for the Mercies was complicated by the fact that Arthur Calwell's daughter was a student at Sacred Heart, and Mr Calwell himself was respected amongst many of the Mercy sisters.¹⁸⁷ But as one Mercy sister commented, splits in the views of women within the institute in relation to politics probably reflected the broader community in terms of political affiliations.

The combination of a devastating political split, openly supported by some members of the clergy and the official diocesan paper, plus an immature adult education or formation of the laity, indicates that while the worst of the wounds were healed by 1980, the long term effect of a largely one-dimensional approach to Catholic Action did little to produce a laity equipped for the challenges of post Vatican II, notwithstanding the calibre of those trained through the YCW.

Conclusion

In terms of what was possible and acceptable within the Church and society, both the city and the diocese of Ballarat in the 1950s would have reflected the reality of the rest of the country – positions of authority were held by men. But the important exception were the women religious; the management of the large institutions which the women religious corporately owned and ran remained firmly in their hands as a visible sign of women's leadership when it was so painfully absent in most other areas. The girls who went through Catholic schools between 1950 and 1980 had constantly before them the models of women in control of large organisations (schools, hospitals, orphanages) which certainly was not the case for girls in government schools where head mistresses remained virtually

¹⁸⁵ See for example, letter written from Mr Santamaria to M. Borgia dated 25 April, 1991 in which he begins by stating, "I have regarded you as one of my closest friends for so many years that I would expect you to write freely." Loreto Province Archives, Series 233, *Personal Papers of M. Borgia Tipping ibvm*, Item 45, Letters to/from B. Santamaria.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Sister Libby Rogerson ibvm, Sydney, 8 February, 2009.

¹⁸⁷ Arthur Calwell was leader of the ALP from 1960-1967 when he was replaced by Gough Whitlam.

unknown until well into the 1970s. Whether the Ballarat Catholic schools produced leaders for the Catholic and broader community would require further sociological research. Nor is it clear that they in fact aimed for higher religious and civic leadership as an objective for their alumnae during the period under study. To be good Catholic wives and mothers, exhibiting strong roles for their children and local communities was taken as a given well into the 1970s. A leading role in civic life was not an articulated goal in Catholic and non-Catholic schools until the 1980s, by which time the debates about girl's equality of opportunity were being translated into mainstream educational policy.

The infrastructure the women religious managed and staffed formed a significant segment of the service economy which was to become dominant in the city over the three decades. Whatever the merits or the need for two parallel high-cost systems of education and human services running in a city the size of Ballarat, it could be argued that the infrastructure provided by the Catholic community was a critical factor which helped to transform the city from one reliant on heavy industry to one where over 35 per cent of its population would derive their income from the service sector by the 1980s. The fact that the majority of the Catholic services continue, albeit now staffed almost entirely by the laity, is one criterion for measuring the contribution they made to the transformation of the city of Ballarat into the educational, cultural and service centre that it was to become by the turn of the twentieth century. The achievements are also a tribute to the Catholic laity which for decades supported them, and which, with notable exceptions, was not well served by a hierarchy reluctant to support an adult lay apostolate.

Chapter 3: The two institutes under study: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM – Loreto) and the Sisters of Mercy (RSM-Ballarat East Congregation)

Introduction

The two institutes of religious women in Ballarat that are the subject of this thesis are the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy (RSM) and the Loreto sisters (IBVM), both of whom have been involved in education in the city since the nineteenth century. Their history and canonical structures are discussed to indicate how and why their apostolic work in the city developed along different lines, although as will be demonstrated, the similarities in their contribution to the community were striking. Prior to Vatican II and the changes in education policy and funding by the 1970s, their respective private schools were run as individual enterprises, with little contact between the two, and even less involvement in the planning of their work from people outside their institutes. Both had only limited numbers of lay staff in their secondary schools, but had always relied on lay staff in the parish schools where they taught. Neither had any advisory bodies providing community input into school administration or curriculum, although both maintained close ties with the parents and past students through various support associations. The local Catholic hierarchy had little say or involvement in the convents, outside inspection for religious education, but priests did have on-going contact with both institutes because the sisters also staffed the parish schools, and they were dependent on the clergy for the celebration of Mass, the Sacrament of Penance, now referred to as the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and spiritual direction of their novices, work shared to some degree with the local Redemptorist Fathers. All this was to radically change after Vatican II.

The significance of the different canonical structures

Rosa MacGinley has summarized the historical evolution of canonical structures for women religious in a recently released article, and more comprehensively, in her definitive work on religious congregations in Australia.¹⁸⁸ Beginning with the first effort to define religious life through the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) through to the twentieth century,

¹⁸⁸ Rosa MacGinley, 'Nuns and sisters - A question of historical evolution', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, No 85, Issue 3, July 2008; Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*, Crossing Press, Darlinghurst, 2002.

she clearly draws the distinction between solemn and simple vow institutes, the various attempts by the Church to impose strict enclosure for canonically recognized nuns, including those whose apostolic work involved establishing schools within their building precincts. Conflicts inevitably arose between the Church authorities and those foundresses whose apostolic visions extended beyond prayer and contemplation within strictly enclosed convents. The needs which they identified, particularly during the post-reformation era and the nineteenth century, demanded new forms of religious life which allowed them to meet the needs of the poor and the increasing number of those seeking education at various levels.

The lives and the work of both Mary Ward, (1585-1645) who founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, IBVM, and Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), foundress of the Sisters of Mercy (RSM) were shaped by these struggles. Neither woman desired to establish enclosed orders; both had a vision of religious women who would have the freedom to move about within the community, to work with the poor, using their own education and worldly resources to the advantage of the Church and to the communities which they would serve.¹⁸⁹ MacGinley has shown through her work how both the institutes they founded were forced to modify the vision of their respective foundresses in order to retain clerical approval.¹⁹⁰ It would not be until Vatican II that each was able to comprehensively revisit the founding vision, and recapture the essence of the charism expounded by Mary Ward and Catherine McAuley.

The major difference which marked the two institutes was that the Loretos were a centralized order, with the final authority resting with the Mother General of the Irish branch of the IBVM, whilst the structure of the Sisters of Mercy rested strongly on the independence of each of their autonomous congregations, with final authority resting with the Chapter of each.¹⁹¹ What this meant in practice was that the Loretos had to seek

¹⁸⁹ See for example, Roland Burke, SJ, *Catherine McAuley: The First Sister of Mercy*, M.H. Gill and Son, Dublin, 1950; Sister Marie Anselm Gaudry rsm, *Mercy from Generation to Generation*, ACTS Publications, Melbourne, 1981; Jennifer Cameron, ibvm, *A Dangerous Innovator: Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, 2000; Margaret Mary Littlehales, *Mary Ward: Pilgrim and Mystic*, Burns and Oates, London, 1998.

¹⁹⁰ For a detailed account of the canonical history of the Loretos, see Mary Wright, ibvm, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*, Crossing Press, Darlington, 1997.

¹⁹¹ The Irish branch of the IBVM from which the Ballarat Loretos came was founded in 1821 to meet the demand for further education for the daughters of Ireland's growing middle class who in earlier generations sent their young women to the continent for their education. A young heiress, Frances Ball, commenced training with Mary Ward's Sisters in York

permission from Ireland for any change to the rule which shaped their daily lives, whereas the Mercies enjoyed independence and flexibility, albeit within the constraints of their constitutions. For example, Mother Dympna ibvm, when Provincial in the early 1960s sought to abolish the class differentiation between sisters within the Australian province, but came up against strong opposition from Ireland; she only succeeded after threatening to separate the Australian province from Ireland.”¹⁹²

Mary Clark has documented what she (and others) have labelled “the terrible years” when the Loretos in Australia were under the direction of an Irish provincial, to the dismay and distress of many of the local sisters who fought to maintain the spirit of Mary Ward against those who wished to deny her role as foundress of the order.¹⁹³ Under her leadership and the provincial who followed her, fewer women were encouraged to undertake further education, and it was not until the advent of M. Dympna in the 1960s that the institute resumed widespread professional development of its members as part of the Loreto tradition.¹⁹⁴

The Loretos who established the first foundation in Ballarat understood that any expansion of the institute would involve moves into different dioceses, including those interstate, whereas the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy confined their corporate work to the Ballarat diocese. M. Gonzaga’s first expansion was to Portland in Western Victoria, where in 1885 she opened a convent school taking students to matriculation standard and with boarding facilities, as well as staffing All Saints Parish school. Following that foundation, she quickly moved to establish schools in every mainland state in the country, plus a kindergarten, a teachers’ training college and a university college for women in Melbourne (established after her death). Within the Ballarat diocese, the Loretos also had responsibility for the school in Hamilton from 1905 until 1923 when they relinquished control to the Good Samaritan Sisters.

and then introduced the institute into Ireland as an independent Irish branch. Each of their boarding schools for the well-to-do also had, in a long established pattern, a free school for the poor.

¹⁹² As a further example, when M. Dympna was approached to contribute nuns to a teacher training college in Papua New Guinea (PNG), she replied: “As Australia is only a province in our branch of the IBVM, our missionary activities are controlled by our Mother General in Ireland...up to date we have not made foundations from Australia.” Loreto Province Archives, Series 278, *General administration files of the Province centre*, Item 81, Requests for new foundations, Letter dated 27 December, 1967.

¹⁹³ Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, Chapter 9, ‘The Terrible Years’.

¹⁹⁴ In part, the drop off in tertiary opportunities being offered to women religious can be accounted for by the Great Depression and the Second World War. Nonetheless, it appears that the view of the Irish women in positions of authority during these periods was a contributing factor.

In direct contrast, as an independent foundation, the Ballarat East Mercies had their final authority in their own Chapter, without recourse to any central authority. This gave considerable power to their congregational leaders, allowing for example, Mothers Xavier Flood and Bonaventure to continue sending women to university and to persist in their determination to keep control of their own teachers' college.¹⁹⁵ It also meant that the distinction between two classes of sisters was abolished as early as the 1930s, and that the women were able to respond with greater flexibility to local needs, through establishing branch houses throughout the diocese, undertaking home visitation and home care as the need arose. Their expansion was both rapid and extensive, but confined to the diocese and largely confined to the provision of education; unlike many other Mercy congregations, they did not assume responsibility for either hospitals or protective care and aged care institutions in Ballarat, as these corporate works were undertaken by the Sisters of St John of God and of Nazareth respectively.

The direct result of the differences between the canonical structures of the two institutes was that the numerical contribution of the Sisters of Mercy quickly outstripped that of other groups of women religious in the diocese. Reflecting the pattern of all women's religious institutes, they drew heavily upon girls who had attended their own schools for the recruitment of novices, who understood that upon joining the institute, their lives would be confined to teaching within the diocese. The second major difference in terms of the nature of their commitment was that the Sacred Heart Convent (SHC) opened as a day school for 83 day students and four boarders. In contrast, Loreto Abbey Mary's Mount opened with only 30 students in attendance after the first year of operation, all of whom were boarders. Unlike Sacred Heart, the Loretos operated from the outset on two different campuses, with Dawson Street day school being some distance geographically from Loreto Abbey in West Ballarat, and of equal importance, but in a different world in terms of class perceptions. The Abbey was perceived as elitist, removed from the life of the parish and

¹⁹⁵This local independence and flexibility was responsible for the rapid spread of Mercy sisters throughout the Ballarat diocese, and of Mercy foundations throughout Australia, accounting for a large number of young women who entered religious life. The Sisters of Mercy became (and remain) one of the largest groups of religious women in Australia. According to Rosa MacGinley, reasons for this, "... seem to have laid, first of all, in the numerous independent foundations made from overseas, then further independent foundations made from at least some of those within Australia, and the subsequent development of branch houses from each of the autonomous foundations". This type of organization, according to her, was most suitable for Australian conditions, which were to benefit from the autonomy and flexibility inherent in their canonical structure and their willingness and ability to undertake a variety of apostolic works. Rosa MacGinley, 'Women religious in Australia: Choice at the crossroads', *Institute of Religious Studies*, 1989, p22.

available only to those with the money to pay for boarding facilities, with a significant proportion of these families coming from Melbourne. Finally, the strictly enforced enclosure of the Loretos was in visible contrast to the mobility of the Mercies, who were always able to maintain more contact with parishioners through home, hospital and prison visitations.

It is within their canonical structures and history that any assessment of the contribution of the two institutes should be gauged, also bearing in mind that the women did what they were asked to do by Church authorities at the time – provide staff to maintain their own private schools, while at the same time, providing teachers for the parish schools. In the case of the Ballarat diocese, both institutes answered this challenge.

The arrival of women religious in Ballarat

Mary Ward's sisters received and rejected two invitations to come to South Australia prior to accepting the offer made by Bishop O'Connor in 1875 to establish a school and convent in Ballarat.¹⁹⁶ The band of women, under the leadership of Mother Gonzaga Barry, landed in Melbourne on 19 July and stayed with the Good Shepherds at Abbotsford, traveling the next day to Ballarat by train.¹⁹⁷ Greeted with much public fanfare, they stayed at St Alipius in Ballarat East until September when the Bishop purchased a house on their behalf on the shores of Lake Wendouree.¹⁹⁸

The first Mercy foundation in Australia was made in Western Australia by Ursula Frayne and six companions in 1846.¹⁹⁹ Other foundations originating from Ireland quickly followed in Geelong, Warnambool and Bendigo, and in the pattern to be followed throughout Australia, branch houses were soon established, amounting to twenty-eight

¹⁹⁶ Brother Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia, 1806 -1950, Vol. 11: Catholic Education under the Religious Orders*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1959, p263. Bishop O'Connor had been a parish priest in Rathfarnham and chaplain to the Loretos there.

¹⁹⁷ Accompanying M. Gonzaga were Sisters Aloysius Macken, Gertrude Quinn, Xavier Youelle, Boniface Volker, Berchams Stafford, Dorothea Frizelle, Bruno McCabe, and two postulants – Helen Hughes and Margaret O'Brien.

¹⁹⁸ The house had belonged to a wealthy local businessman and failed politician named Edward Agar Wynne, and was purchased for £2750. The sisters moved in with eight wooden stools and packing cases for tables, and two guard dogs. A year later, the community from its own resources purchased a house in Dawson Street belonging to a Mr. Rowlands for a private day school.

¹⁹⁹ For an account of the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, see Geraldine Byrne, *Valiant Women: Letters from the Foundation Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, 1845-1849*, The Polding Press, Melbourne, 1981. The first Mercy foundation in Victoria (and the first established by any women religious) resulted from Ursula Frayne accepting an invitation to come from Western Australia to Melbourne where she established a convent in Fitzroy in 1857.

across the State over the following half-century.²⁰⁰ In contrast to the Loretos who came somewhat reluctantly to Australia (and Ballarat), the Mercies ‘came uninvited’ from Warrnambool, but the bishop agreed to their presence provided they received no pay and that they begin teaching in the parish school, which they did, in addition to opening the Convent of the Sacred Heart as a fee paying school.²⁰¹ The following information was supplied by Sister Anne Forbes, RSM, in a Power Point Presentation, “125 years of Mercy in Ballarat East”.²⁰² In it she states that the *Advocate* announced on 8 January 1881:

The community of Sisters of Mercy referred to by me some time ago as coming to Ballarat, will, I hear, arrive very shortly. The place selected for their residence, it seems, in the Melbourne Road. The locality is a very beautiful one, and, doubtless, the Catholics of Ballarat East will be glad to have the good sisters located among them. The refining influences of such exemplary and highly cultivated ladies cannot fail to have a most beneficial effect on society at large throughout the whole community.

The *Advocate* reported on 26 March 1881 that

Three of the sisters have care of the female students in St Alipius’ School – about 300 – and the other two remain at home and teach a ladies school, giving instructions in music to pupils from other schools. The good sisters engage in visitation of the sick on Saturdays and Sundays, and as soon as arrangements are made they will also visit the sick in the hospital.

Regardless of the views of the bishop, both groups of women were equally well received by the parishioners and general public who saw their arrival as yet another step in “civilizing” what had been the unruly tent city established only thirty years earlier by the miners.

²⁰⁰ In Victoria, there were eventually only two congregations – Melbourne and Ballarat East; by the early 20th century there were 51 independent Mercy congregations across Australia, several of which had branch houses and all of which had established convent high schools, largely modeled on those founded by the Ursulines, and some of which in regional areas took in boys. For a diagrammatic description of the establishment of each of the Australian Mercy congregations, see Sophie McGrath rsm, *These Women? Women Religious in the History of Australia: The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta, 1888-1988*, NSW University Press, Sydney, 1988, p27.

²⁰¹ Mother Mary Agnes Graham and five sisters came to Ballarat in 1881 from Warrnambool with her companions, comprising her sister, M.M Philomena Graham, Sister M Xavier Flood, Sister M. Joseph Howard, and Sister M. Brigid Cousins who returned to Warrnambool.

²⁰² Provided to the researcher by Sister Forbes in April 2007.

Establishment: the contribution of founders and early pioneers

Mother Gonzaga Barry was born in Ireland in 1834, entering Loreto at the age of 19. Upon her arrival in Ballarat, Loreto Abbey Mary's Mount was immediately established as a boarding school and divided into three divisions: the junior school catered for girls under 12, the senior school for 12 – 16 year olds, with a third division, the “first school” for young ladies who were free to spend their time acquiring “various accomplishments which would tend to render them agreeable members of their home circle and of society in general”.²⁰³ In the opinion of Mother M Oliver, ibvm,

In the domain of the liberal arts the girls at Mary's Mount were particularly privileged, for they had well-educated teachers, unhampered by the stranglehold of the public examination system...If religious like Mother Gonzaga had been called in to advise on a national scheme of education for girls, Australia would be the envy of the world.²⁰⁴

Mary's Mount first presented girls for Melbourne University exams in 1879, thus becoming, along with Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC), Melbourne the first school in Victoria to do so.²⁰⁵ Mother Gonzaga introduced the Sodality of Our Lady as soon as she established Mary's Mount; those seeking admittance had to prove through their conduct their “worthiness” to be called a Child of Mary, and had extra responsibilities of leadership placed upon them by the nuns who relied on them to support their work and maintain the spirit of the school. Membership was also designed to equip the girls for life after school, while, at the same time, building a sense of on-going community amongst past students, regardless of where they went to school. Contact was also maintained with the ex-students

²⁰³ Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia*, p378.

²⁰⁴ Mother Mary Oliver, ibvm, *Love is a Light Burden: The Life of Mother Mary Gonzaga Barry, IBVM*, Burns Oates, London, 1950. Allowing for the views of a presumably partisan IBVM supporter of M. Gonzaga and the largely uncritical account she writes of the early days of Mary's Mount, the point M. Oliver makes about the freedom and flexibility the nuns had to shape the education of girls for the years they were outside any “system” of education but their own, is one that will emerge later in the research.

²⁰⁵ It appears that the matriculation class was formed as much from the demands of the parents as from the nuns themselves who expressed reservations about the obligation to “keep exclusively to or at too early an age, to the text books prescribed for public examinations” in contrast to their aim of “educating the pupils, by forming their tastes, strengthening their judgment and encouraging the habit of serious reading”. Oliver, *Love is a Light Burden*, p 263. By 1887 approval had also been given to Sacred Heart College to prepare students for scholarship, matriculation, public service and primary examinations.

through the school magazine, *Eucalyptus Blossoms*, established in 1886 and said to be the first of its kind in Australia.²⁰⁶

In addition to the schools which the Loretos staffed and managed in Ballarat and their early expansion into Melbourne, Mother Gonzaga Barry founded the first Catholic Teacher Training College for young women in 1884 at Dawson Street in the centre of the town, appointing Mother Hilda Benson as the foundation principal.²⁰⁷ In part because of the success of the Loreto teachers' training college in Ballarat, and because of the new government regulations issued in 1905 which required the registration of all teachers, the Victorian bishops requested Mother Barry to establish a Central Catholic Teacher Training College in Albert Park in Melbourne which would be open to both lay and religious women, and which would "serve as an intellectual centre for all schools and colleges...as well as impart the highest training for all teachers."²⁰⁸

The establishment and maintenance of the teachers' college staffed by the Mercies in Ballarat will be treated in greater detail in Chapter 8, but it is important to stress that from their earliest days in Ballarat, women religious placed a high value on the professional development of their own sisters, and offered the same level of training to other women at a time when opportunities for post-school education were extremely limited, particularly for those living outside the major cities. For the Sisters of Mercy, the role played by M. Xavier Flood in relation to both the establishment of their schools, and in particular, the establishment of the teachers' college, parallels the vision and the commitment of M. Gonzaga. M. Xavier was one of the eight pioneer sisters who came from Warnambool; her role as major superior was to shape the contribution of Mercies to the diocese for the next century. Her support for the education of her sisters in the face of great logistical difficulties is demonstrated by the fact that from the early 1900s, she was sending women

²⁰⁶ When in 1888 Bishop Moore brought the Brigidines to the diocese to establish a school in Ararat, and the Sisters of Nazareth to establish the orphanage in Ballarat, both congregations stayed with the Loretos until their own convents were ready. Early records show that Mother Gonzaga formed a warm friendship with Mother Mary MacKillop, at whose urging she formed a Loreto foundation in Adelaide. There are indications throughout the archival material that Mother Gonzaga retained close friendships with other congregations, including the Sisters of Mercy.

²⁰⁷ Girls aged fourteen undertook a training period of five years; eleven such students were admitted in the first year, two of whom became Loreto sisters, one became a Sister of Charity, two became Mercy nuns and one entered the Brigidines; by the end of the year, 30 girls were enrolled at the college.

²⁰⁸ Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia*, p433. As principal, Mother Hilda was assisted by Miss Barbara Bell, a distinguished graduate from Cambridge. The college operated until 1924, at which time it shifted back to its original home in Dawson Street. Miss Bell's services were extended to the Sisters of Mercy in Tasmania and the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) in New Zealand. Her sister, Margaret, did similar work in Goulburn.

to Melbourne by train on a weekly basis to study at the University, and sent one sister overseas to study music to commence what was to become a long line of outstanding music teachers in both the teachers' college and at SHC.²⁰⁹ Amongst the sisters whose academic and leadership qualities she recognized and encouraged was M. Bonaventure Healy, who succeeded her as major superior, and was to play such a critical role in shaping later Mercy collaboration and development in Australia.

Both institutes also showed a strong commitment to pre-school education, again at a time when opportunities for early childhood development were extremely limited. The Loretos established the first free kindergarten in Australia in South Melbourne in 1912, staffed by volunteers drawn from members of the Loreto Past Pupils Association which Mother Barry had sponsored in 1898 (reputedly the first past pupils association in Australia.) The project, besides providing a much needed service, was also designed to save Mother Barry's past students from the dangers of spending their lives in "amusement or self-indulgence".²¹⁰ The contribution to kindergarten education by the Sisters of Mercy dates back to the time of M. Xavier Flood, who returned from a trip to Europe with the latest ideas on infant education, which she introduced into Ballarat as a model Froebel Kindergarten. The passion of both women for early childhood education laid the basis for a continuous commitment of their institutes to kindergarten education, which would be consolidated further in the 1940s.

Commitment to parish primary schools

From the outset of their establishment in Ballarat, both institutes committed staff to the local parish schools: the Loretos to St Joseph's, the cathedral parish school on the site adjacent to the Dawson Street private school, and to St Aloysius in the nearby suburb of Redan.²¹¹ They also had responsibility for the convent and parish school in Hamilton, but relinquished it to the Good Samaritans after 18 years service there. A separate Loreto community was formed at Dawson Street in 1882, sisters from which began staffing the

²⁰⁹ Sr. M. Phillip Welsh rsm, 'Mercy unto many', *Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education*, Vol. 6, November 1985. Sister Therese Morganti who was to have a long and distinguished life as a Ballarat East Sister of Mercy, won the Newman Scholarship in 1918, completing an MA Degree with honours, a rare honor for women in that era.

²¹⁰ Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia*, p451. The site of the first kindergarten was at the Albert Hall, South Melbourne; they moved to the Cathedral Hall in Fitzroy in 1917, returning to South Melbourne in 1922 in a cottage next to Emerald Hall. In 1937 a new building was erected, which was finally closed in 1961, the building reverting to use as part of the Loreto commercial college in South Melbourne.

²¹¹ Mother Hilda was the first principal at St. Joseph's which she planned along the lines of the Notre Dame sisters in England with whom she trained as a teacher; it became a model for parish schools throughout Australia.

Redan parish school.²¹² Loreto sisters continued their involvement at Dawson Street and in the two parish schools for the next 100 years, their contribution to these schools in terms of numbers of students, far outweighing the numbers involved at Mary's Mount.

The Mercies staffed St Alipius on a site opposite Sacred Heart convent from the time of their arrival in Ballarat and parish schools in Ballarat North (St Columba's, 1911), the Mallee and Wimmera districts. In addition, they opened St Francis Xavier's in 1910 as a private primary school and farm at nearby Mt Xavier to cater for primary-aged boys.

Over the next 70 years, the Sisters of Mercy were to take responsibility for staffing parish schools throughout the diocese, in addition to founding their own schools in country Victoria, some of which offered boarding facilities, opportunities for both girls and boys to complete their Merit Certificate and for some students to proceed to year 12, and for both Catholic and non-Catholics in their civic communities to learn music. Of particular importance was their opening of St Martin's in the Pines in 1967 as a senior campus for SHC students, the first separate senior high school in Victoria to cater for girls in years 11 and 12, some of whom boarded and commuted from SHC each day. At the time of its opening under the leadership of M. Genevieve, the staff consisted of seven sisters with no ancillary staff to assist with maintenance or cleaning – again, these tasks were the responsibility of women religious and the students, another example of the unremitting nature of their daily work.²¹³

Ballarat historian Jill Blee has documented the development of each of their schools, along with a record of the schools staffed by members of other women's institutes (Brigidines, Black and Brown Josephites, Presentations, St Joseph of Cluny, Good Samaritans, Our Lady of the Missions and Mercy sisters from Melbourne).²¹⁴ What is most striking about the Ballarat East sisters was their willingness and ability to take over from others when needed, and their relative distance and isolation in many of the small communities they served, so far from their mother house in Ballarat. Another striking feature of the work of

²¹² Up until that time, sisters had come from Mary's Mount each day in a horse drawn cab. The school took in students from preps to grade eight, with boys admitted up until grade two, at which time they were transferred to the Christian Brothers in Drummond Street.

²¹³ By the 1970s, St Martin's was catering for 155 boarders, and was to remain the last Catholic boarding school available to girls in Ballarat. Boys were admitted to the college in 1987.

²¹⁴ Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese*, Catholic Education Office, Ballarat, 2004, particularly Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 10.

both Mercy and Loreto institutes was the similarity of their work in country schools, an overview of two given here to demonstrate the importance of provision for students, both boys and girls, of quality education outside the major cities.

Loreto in Portland

An unpublished, undated account written by Mother Brigid Jones ibvm, reveals that the experience of the Loretos in Portland was typical of other congregations whose focus was country education.²¹⁵ She vividly describes the harsh conditions faced by the sisters in the 19th century – water only available from wells, carried in buckets by the sisters, no sewerage, wood fires, poultry and dairy animals tended from 4.30 am before the sisters went to teach, sisters assigned to look after the housekeeping needs of the parish priest. The sisters provided at various times education for both boys and girls and for many non-Catholic families, staffed the parish school and looked after generations of boarders, prepared students for Matriculation exams, and offered music lessons in and out of school hours, including establishing a school orchestra. In addition, sisters by the 1960s were responsible for catechetics in surrounding small towns where they also prepared young people for the sacraments. They organized night classes for adults, covering a range of the arts, supported the Loreto Art Club which exhibited publicly, camps for young people focusing on Christian living, gave extra assistance to children in the nearby town of Heywood and gave religious instruction to boys in the local High and Technical schools. Mother Brigid lists all the priests and religious educated in the parish, as well as some of its outstanding old girls and boys; twenty women religious are named, 16 of whom entered Loreto.²¹⁶

The Sisters of Mercy in Birchip

Birchip in the north west of Victoria was only one of the country schools run by the Mercies which provided secondary education for country students. Four sisters arrived in 1940 and the institute retained a presence in the town until 1985. One of the original sisters, Sister M. Philip Welsh, recorded her memories of the early days in the town, including the unrelenting work carried out by the women as they sweltered in the heat in

²¹⁵ Mother Brigid Jones ibvm, *Not Counting the Cost: History of Loreto Convent Portland*, available in the Loreto Province Archives. See also, Mary Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, and Sister Mildred Dew, *From Ballarat to Broome: One Hundred Years of Loreto in Australia*, IBVM Australia, 1975.

²¹⁶ Included amongst the ex-students are Sir Roy Grounds, noted architect, Kathleen Fitzpatrick whose biography, *Solid Bluestone Foundations: Memories of an Australian Childhood*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1983, includes her memories of her years boarding at Loreto Portland, pp78-100; Mary Crooks, current CEO of the Victorian Women's Trust, and international journalist, Damien Parer.

heavy serge habits, no fly wire or blinds, a small Coolgardie safe, no phone or car and primitive laundry conditions.²¹⁷ Large class sizes were the norm, and like many other institutes, the women taught music after school hours, undertook home visitation, catechetics to children and adults and were heavily reliant on the generosity of the local parishioners; they also supplemented their income with the sale of tomatoes from their garden. A new school, dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary was opened in 1956, taking students from prep to Year 10, peaking in 1965 at 195 students.²¹⁸ Like the Loretos in Portland, their school and presence in the parish were largely responsible for the education of future priests and women religious, the majority of whom joined the Ballarat East Mercies.

These two ‘snapshots’ illustrate that for both institutes, a small number of women made an immeasurable contribution to the life of country parishioners, not only to the children under their care in schools. The conditions under which they worked were equally taxing for both; regardless of the perception of class difference held in the city of Ballarat, when it came to their work in country areas, both the Loretos and the Ballarat East Mercies were equally generous and became an integral part of Catholic parish life in the country areas where they worked.

Consolidation and expansion

For the Loreto sisters, their expansion took place across Australia, but they maintained their early commitments to Ballarat and Portland, with the major initiative being the admittance of day scholars to Mary’s Mount in the early 1940s; because of the changing needs of the city of Ballarat, three girls were admitted “in the sacred precincts of the senior school” – Sonia Dillon (who entered the convent as Sr. M. Sonia) and the Joshua twins, Cecil and Lynette.²¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Mercies were expanding both within the city and the diocese, the most significant initiative being the establishment of St Martin’s in the Pines in Mt Clear, a developing suburb of Ballarat.

²¹⁷ Author unknown, *The Mustard Seed: Catholic History of Watchem, Birchip, Karyrie, Curyo and Watchupga*, 1881-1991, The Sunnyland Press Pty. Ltd. Red Cliffs, 1991.

²¹⁸ Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea*, pp125-26.

²¹⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 168, *Loreto College Ballarat Past Pupils*. The twins were the daughters of Robert Joshua who was to play a crucial role in the formation of the DLP; Mr Joshua himself was not a Catholic, but his wife and family were. The writer also gives vivid descriptions of the Ballarat cold and relates how the mothers’ club worked to secure a special hot water system in the dormitories so that “hot water bottles could be filled before retiring – a boon to all”.

The two institutes consolidated their commitment to kindergarten education which benefited both Catholic and non-Catholic families at a time of limited opportunities for free pre-school education. Mary's Mount opened a new kindergarten in 1942, under the direction of Mother Brendan who continued as Director until 1987. Three years later, the Mercies opened their new kindergarten, under the direction of Sister Mary Phillip who also remained in charge for the next 22 years.²²⁰ According to Sister Phillip:

To open such a kindergarten at St Alipius was an educational step forward, but the idea most likely had its roots in the fact that it was likely to be a lucrative proposition for the parish, for a Kindergarten Director's salary was considerable and the Sisters were paid no stipends. Moreover, there were, at that time, no domestic staff such as cleaners for the Sisters: they did everything themselves.²²¹

A fruitful area for further research would be to evaluate the importance of the two women religious who ran their respective kindergartens for over 20 years in the case of Sister Philip and 45 years, in the case of M. Brendan; these sisters were the "human face" of nuns to both Catholic and non-Catholic families and exerted considerable influence through their day-to-day contact with young families, while providing a service largely unavailable anywhere else in the city.

The contribution of women religious to infrastructure and heritage in Ballarat

According to the Statement of Significance which accompanied the listing of the Loreto Abbey Mary's Mount on the Historic Building listing, the complex of gardens, chapel and original buildings constitute:

One of the most architecturally intact convents in Victoria; ...the convent chapel is of architectural significance as possibly the largest and most elaborate convent church in Australia. The Abbey is of interest in the way it demonstrates a changing

²²⁰ Sister Philip was initially assisted by Miss Billie Watt (Mrs D. Roche).

²²¹ Author unknown, *People of Golden Faith: Windows into St Alipius*. p87. This account was written by Sister Philip after her retirement. The kindergarten was in the grounds of the primary school, and provided 50 places for children who paid sixpence per week "milk money". The Cathedral received the money which was available for the Director's salary from the government, but the sisters themselves carried the cost of their religious staff, with money from the Cathedral earmarked for the assistant and for minor repairs to the property. In 1971, Sister Philip was succeeded by Sister Maureen Molloy who had been trained as her assistant, and the kindergarten was finally removed to the Christian Brother's school and the first lay director, Mrs Carol Stewart, appointed.

pattern of architectural style and function, as the building evolved from private residence, to Abbey, to school.²²²

Sister Deirdre Rofe ibvm makes the point that civic pride amongst Ballarat pioneers emphasized aspiring middle and upper class cultural values, reflected in the willingness to contribute to buildings, statues and beautiful natural spaces. Similarly, M. Gonzaga's vision for the chapel arose more from her international outlook rather than her Irishness, determined that the building should be a Christian cultural icon, central to her view that the education of young women be imbued with beauty which would educate the senses "to provide a beautiful, familiar setting for garnering the memories: unique, personal memories that would strengthen each child for life...a very feminine church in which gracefulness takes precedence over grandeur".²²³

The construction was opened in December 1902 by Bishop Moore, its completion having been made possible through a £16,000 bequest from the Countess Elizabeth Wolff Metternich.²²⁴ The other feature of the Abbey was the development of the beautiful gardens in which the buildings were set.²²⁵ Generations of students, visitors and people determined to preserve the heritage nature of the buildings may have delighted in the surrounds of the convent, but one small piece of research remaining in the archives indicates that for at least some younger post-Vatican II sisters, the living and working conditions were far from ideal.²²⁶

²²² VHR Number H1017, File Number 600262. In 1942 the value of Mary's Mount was estimated to be £76,525, almost half of which was accounted for by the value of the chapel at £35,000. Loreto Province Archives, Series 35, *Records relating to Loreto Abbey*.

²²³ Deirdre Rofe ibvm, 'The building of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Loreto Abbey, Mary's Mount, Ballarat: A study of the interaction between culture and personality in late 19th century Ballarat', p.17, United Faculty of Theology, Parkville, May 1992, in Loreto Province Archives, Series 228.

²²⁴ The organ was built with a donation from Ada and Flo Buckley as a memorial to Mother Stanislaus Mulhall, the second provincial of the congregation. The convent was added to the Historic Buildings Council Register in 1994, recognizing the convent chapel as amongst the most elaborate in Australia.

²²⁵ The front lawns were converted to grow vegetables during the Second World War, but quickly reverted to the point where they were able to win prizes in the coveted Ballarat *Courier* Garden Competition in 1974 and 1975 under the care of Mr Hank de Jong.

²²⁶ Results of research undertaken sometime between 1976 and 1981 to answer the question: "What are the social consequences of the ecological characteristics of this convent/school territory for the six youngest Sisters of the community?", showed that all but one of the nuns interviewed were affected by the climate in Ballarat, none found the building "homely" because it was "too spread out, cold and lonely"; one who later left commented that "this place is too much geared to old people. The rest just hang in there and fit in." A further three expressed the hope that they "would not be asked to stay too long in this environment" and considered that the community room was not especially comfortable or inviting. Loreto Province Archives, Series 273, *Mary's Mount Community Records*, Item 36; paper by unknown author.

In terms of infrastructure contributed by the Sisters of Mercy, resources from their early properties have now been consolidated, along with those of the Christian Brothers, through the establishment of Damascus College, the largest co-educational secondary school in Ballarat. The physical infrastructure left by Mothers Xavier Flood and M. Bonaventure in particular bear out Rosa MacGinley's observation that convent and school buildings were "...concrete traces of history, if you like, that reveal a story of specific personalities, particular struggles and a final achievement".²²⁷

The Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy are the only women religious in Australia who are owners of a golf course, built by the redoubtable M. Bonaventure in 1949, with the assistance of her novices who shifted the stones and rocks in preparation for its construction. It has provided generations of golfers, including Mercy sisters and their students, with an affordable recreational facility in a town noted for the elitist nature of its private golf clubs.

The role of lay sisters

The formalized two class system persisted within the Loreto institute until the 1960s when Mother Dympna defied Ireland and abolished the system in Australia; the system was a major difference between the two institutes, a direct result of their differing social and historical traditions and experience.²²⁸ The domestic work of lay sisters was critical in supporting the professional lives of the first degree sisters in their work as teachers, and in their pursuit of further studies and careers which would take them into new and diverse apostolates by 1980. The Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy abolished any distinction between two classes of sisters by the 1930s, although women continued to enter the congregation with no intention of ever teaching, but of devoting their lives to domestic support for the teaching sisters. Information provided by Sr. Lesley Dickinson, archivist at Ballarat East, documents that of the total of 88 Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy in 1950, 15 were engaged in domestic work, even though in the case of one or two, they were qualified to teach.²²⁹

²²⁷ Rosa MacGinley, 'Irish women religious and Australian social history', p63.

²²⁸ Like these Sisters of Mercy, Presentation sisters abolished the two class system earlier in the twentieth century, the timing varying between the independent foundations; there was only ever one class of sister in Mary MacKillop's Sisters of St Joseph.

²²⁹ It should also be noted that all novices and professed sisters took their turn in assisting with domestic duties; one teaching Mercy sister describes how she was responsible for milking the cows because of her experience on the family farm; in addition, many sisters took up domestic duties when they retired. Interview with Sister Marie Vagg rsm, Ballarat, 17 May 2010. For a vivid description of the work of Sister Mary Brigid Burns (Melbourne congregation) in Colac, see Mary Francis Larkins, *A Mercy Way of Life: Colac, 1888-1988*, Colac Herald Press, 1988.

This freedom from the everyday tasks of cooking, cleaning, gardening, laundry and serving was one that echoed the wishes of many secular feminists who at the same time were frequently heard to wish for “a good wife” who could support them as they struggled with work, family commitments and study.

The presence of second degree or lay sisters is explained by Rosa MacGinley as originating in the Middle Ages, when a servant class was incorporated into the monastic domain to support the choral and other commitments of the choir or first degree sisters who were normally required to pay substantial dowries upon entry into these institutes. Often illiterate, the lay sisters did not pronounce solemn vows, nor were they obliged to pay a dowry, which for the Loretos in the nineteenth century was £1000, a large sum of money at a time when a Catholic denominational teacher in Australia in the 1860s could expect to receive £60” per annum.²³⁰ The domestic role of the lay sisters was indispensable to the operation of large convents and, in particular, to the boarding schools, even though as MacGinley points out, a servant class was fast disappearing in the broader community:

What were becoming anomalies and inequities were allowed to persist within religious communities for want of internal evaluation: all choir sisters, even the most junior, continued to take precedence in the community over experienced and mature lay sisters; the latter besides some differences in their religious habits, continued in many institutes to wear aprons, a badge of servanthood, as part of their usual dress. Lay sisters had a separate formation programme from the choir religious and a separate daily recreation period. In effect, two communities lived under the one roof, each impinging on the other through services and procedures regulated by ancient custom.²³¹

Catholic historian, Brother Ronald Fogarty, was able to write in 1959, without irony or comment, that the cost of maintaining the religious Brothers amounted to £130 per annum, while that for the sisters was £42.6.0, because the women were able to provide their own

²³⁰ Rosa MacGinley, ‘Irish Women religious and Australian social history’, p60. In a letter written by Sister Brigid Jones to the Mother Provincial, she reported that £500 had been paid for the dowry of Sister M. Gonzaga, plus a pension covering costs for the whole of the novitiate period; in the same letter she asked advice as to how she should respond to the request of the family of Sister Mercia, who asked “if £100 would do as the drought had struck them badly”. Loreto Province Archives, Series 89, *Records relating to Sister Brigid Jones*, Item 42, Letters relating to novices. Letter dated June 1945.

²³¹ Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*, p324.

domestic staff. But to put this situation in the context of the first half of the twentieth century, it should be noted that all secular and business institutions at that time relied heavily on the underpaid and/or voluntary labour of women who were deemed to be either uneducated or unskilled. In this sense the enterprises run by the sisters who relied on women confined to domestic support work were not dissimilar from businesses and non-profit organizations in secular society. Untold numbers of women worked for low pay in industry and commercial enterprises, while women formed the backbone of the volunteer sector, both secular and religious. Second-wave feminism sought to recapture the lives of many secular working class women, but as Christine Trimmingham Jack has observed, “Histories of Catholic education have tended to include scant reference to the tiered and hierarchical system of membership] and virtually no systematic exploration of its meaning in the culture of Catholic schools.”²³²

Despite official disapproval for the two class system as early as the 1920s, shown, for example, by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo, the situation continued in practice within the Loretos until 1961, being formally abolished only in the reform chapter of 1968. Many other religious institutes persisted with two classes of membership into the 1950s, when, according to MacGinley, gradual absorption into the one category of membership “... was not achieved without some initial misgiving on both sides in view of adjustments and expectations involved”.²³³ Asking why the initiative for change largely came from outside the institutes themselves, MacGinley explains:

The inertia of long establishment, it appears, together with papally-approved constitutions and the heritage of religious life-style, held almost sacrosanct, insulated them from changing realities in the society around them. There were also pragmatic considerations where large institutions had developed on the principle of division of labour; these acquired their own momentum as regards ethos and economic operation, creating a status quo in no seeming need of alteration so long as it functioned properly.²³⁴

²³² Christine Trimmingham Jack, 'The lay sister in educational history and memory', *History of Education*, May 2000, Vol. 29, Issue 3, P181-194; See also by the same author, 'What's in a veil? Discourses informing a study of lay sisters', *Change: Transformations in Education*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2001.

²³³ MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*, p325.

²³⁴ MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*, p325. The names of the second degree sisters who worked in Ballarat appear in Appendix 2.

An examination of the “pragmatic considerations” of life within the Loreto community in Ballarat bears out both MacGinley’s and Trimmingham Jack’s observations. As few as six or seven lay sisters supported the complex of operations at Mary’s Mount, which included the convent, the boarding school and facilities for sick or retired nuns, while generally two sisters undertook all the domestic work at Dawson Street. Their stated positions within the communities included cook, second in kitchen, laundress, care of priest and parlour and house duties; they were listed separately in community lists up until at least 1967. The indispensable nature of their work became even more apparent in the late 1960s and 1970s, when declining numbers and external forces highlighted the problems which would eventuate if their unpaid labour had to be replaced by the employment of secular staff. This was apparent in the preparation for the 1971 Chapter, when a survey was issued to all Loreto sisters questioning their personal and work satisfaction. In relation to the lay sisters, the results showed that of the 15 included in the responses, two were between the ages of 25 and 45; 12 were between 55 and 70, and one was over 75, indicating that:

There are very few nuns able to continue actively in domestic work. The wonderful years of service given by this group leaves the community a responsibility to face the question of their gradual release from active duty, and provision of leisure and relaxation. Investigation into their involvement in other forms of the apostolate could be made. Another major situation to be faced is the forward planning of domestic and kitchen services.²³⁵

By 1974 a Province Report clearly showed the economic implications of the demise of the two- tiered system, when it stated:

The group of religious whose domestic service in our boarding schools has made it possible for them to have a fee structure markedly lower than non-Catholic boarding schools, are close to, or past, the normal age of retirement. All but four were over 56 in 1973. Secular staffing in this area raises major problems (besides the difficulty in some areas of obtaining such staff), namely: finance, supervision

²³⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto education: Report on data survey (IBVM schools), 1973-1974*, p12.

and coordination and overlap of the living (and living quarters) of nuns and boarders.²³⁶

In relation to the future apostolate of lay sisters, of the options canvassed in the survey, those most frequently chosen were nutrition, sewing, nursing, marketing, geriatrics and clerical, nominated by 90 of the respondents, while social work, catechetics and art/craft were nominated by only three or four. Given the age and the work history of the lay sisters and the context of the times, it is probably not surprising that their perceived future would mirror what they had undertaken over their working lives. As some kind of concession or balance, it should be noted that when asked if the lay sisters “should be given the opportunities to attend courses in literature, music, art, theology, scripture for cultural and spiritual refreshment”, the majority (113) said yes’, with three saying no and 37 not giving an answer.

By the 1980s, the inequity and indeed injustice of the two class system was acknowledged in records relating to planning for new apostolic priorities, when lay sisters were acknowledged as “the heart of many communities”, often more approachable and “truly holy through suffering the experience of being ‘put down’ ...(needing) a good sense of humor to stay sane”. They were acknowledged as “often the ones ready to be kind to the children”; reference was also made to the “dark side and the hurt and anger that some still struggle to integrate”, including the “horrors of the two class system (which was) totally opposed to the gospel”.²³⁷

Few records of the lives and work of lay sisters appear in written documents, and few references to their contribution exist beyond a small number of personal recollections, one of which is the cryptic comment written by MM Aiden about an early lay sister, “Clare McGuinness Andrew – a dress maker before entering – rheumatics – laundry – both legs amputated.”²³⁸ However, we do know that one lay sister, Sister Bruno, accompanied M. Gonzaga from Ireland to Ballarat, and that the current project to record the biographies of deceased sisters being conducted by the Loretos will include as many details of their lives

²³⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Provincial Chapters*, Item 8, Provincial Chapter 1971, Apostolic Commission, p.1.

²³⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 262, *Apostolic Priorities of Loreto*, Item 9.

²³⁸ MM Aiden, hand written notes. Loreto Province Archives, Series 35, *Records relating to Loreto Abbey Mary's Mount*, Item 17.

as are available.²³⁹ Records show that the last sister came from Ireland in 1942, while the last Australian entry, Sister Carmel Cody, entered in 1947.²⁴⁰

The Register of Sisters in the archives covers second degree sisters who entered between 1895 and 1938, many of whom were still working in the convents and boarding schools into the 1950s and 60s. The register contains only basic information but reveals some interesting facts on the small number of second degree sisters recorded there. For instance, of the fifteen who appear in the register, five came from Ireland, one from England, six were Australian-born, two sisters were 'of German descent' (although their place of birth was not recorded), and one has her birthplace listed as "unknown". Their ages at the time of entering range from 20 to 39 years, (the average being in their mid-twenties), indicating that the majority had a significant number of years 'in the world' before entering, presuming that they left school at 14 or 15. Few have a previous occupation listed, but, again presumably, most would have had unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and basic education, in line with common practice for women of their time and class.

Amongst the fifteen were three sets of sisters, two of whom entered on the same day. Two from Ireland came on the same boat in 1939 as professed sisters; one of these was Sister Romould Sharkey whose funeral I attended at Mary's Mount in August 2008. Sister was 95 at the time of her death and worked as a cook at Dawson Street in 1949-50 and Mary's Mount from 1960-1964. She was not alone in living to a great age; Sister Mary Anne Reidy (Sister Bruno) was born in Parkes, NSW in 1906, died in 2000 at the age of 94 having worked in the 'children's dining room' at Mary's Mount from 1966-1983. Sister Anslem Ryan, born in 1875 died in 1971 at the age of 96; she worked most of her life in Portland in the laundry and infirmary; Sister Mary Clare Walsh who worked at Mary's Mount from 1941-1946 died at the age of 90; Sister Elizabeth Whelan also worked at Mary's Mount before she died in 1959 at the age of 86, while Sister Mary Majella White was recorded as being a dairymaid and also in charge of the fowls at Mary's Mount; she died at age 76. Sister Bernadette Green, who is currently (2009) living in Ballarat at

²³⁹ From the time of its establishment in Ballarat in 1875, the recorded number of sisters of the second degree in the IBVM Australian Province numbers 56, 34 of whom were born in Ireland; the majority (27) of these Irish women entered religious life in Ireland.

²⁴⁰ It was only after Vatican II that the Irish sisters had an opportunity to return home; when they left, none would have imagined seeing their family and friends again. While access to family and friends was limited for all professed nuns (across all institutes), for the Irish the loss was exacerbated by the limited opportunities for any family member to come to Australia to visit them, which presumably strengthened the ties between the expatriate women themselves.

Mary's Mount, is the only remaining lay sister, having come out from Ireland at the age of 17, worked in various Loreto communities, during which time, Mother Dympna encouraged her to attend East Sydney Technical College to learn basic cookery. Under the leadership of Noni Mitchell, Bernadette was sent to Adelaide to work with Vietnamese refugees under the direction of Jesuit Social Services, an example of a lay sister who was able to end her working career in a non-domestic service role.

Sister Carmel Cody was also to “reinvent” herself in her later years. Sister Cody is the only lay sister who has left substantial records of her life, excerpts of which are recorded below, along with the memories of two of her nieces who agreed to be interviewed.²⁴¹ Included in the collection is her autobiography from which I have taken the following information.

Carmel was born in Melbourne on the 15 July 1928, the second daughter of William and Catherine Cody (nee O'Connor); her siblings were Irene, Bernard and Monica who still lives in South Melbourne where she and her siblings went to school at St Peter and Paul's, a parish school run by the Loreto Sisters. On leaving school she obtained a job with the Commonwealth Bank where she stayed until she entered the institute in 1947.²⁴²

Describing the difference in dress between the two classes of nuns she wrote: “We wore a black dress to our ankles, a black cape buttoned down the front and a black net cap – no veil. It was different to that of the first degree, who wore a jacket, cap and veil. Later again there was a difference, with no fold in the veil, no cuffs and no long communion veil.” She was finally professed on the 23 December 1950: “I will never forget the short veil, and the long communion veil of the First Degree!”

Another difference was in that as the only lay sister in the novitiate, she always sat at the end of the other novices at meals and in the chapel; “Each year as the postulants came,

²⁴¹ Sister Carmel left a complete file for the Province Archives, in which are numerous cards and letters from friends and other Loreto sisters indicating the warmth and affection felt for Carmel from her family, friends and fellow nuns. Loreto Province Archives, Series 82, *Personal papers of Sister Carmel Cody*. Carmel's nieces told me that she was a prolific correspondent with her family. “She was a very positive woman who loved to know the small details of family life. Carmel was a joy to the family; she was keen on the Sydney Swans and cricket...Our mother was very unsettled when Carmel went on retreat and couldn't be contacted.” Interview with Julie Holdsworth and Kathleen Brasher, Bermagui, 11 February 2009. Her sister Monica (Monie) still lives in South Melbourne where her home is a monument to the Sydney Swans.

²⁴² War rationing was still in place, and, faced with the difficulty of obtaining all the things she was required to bring with her into the convent, she took the advice of a friend who said she should apply for the extra 50 coupons available to brides, as she was to become “a bride of Christ”. “I got the fifty coupons!”

they sat ahead of me.” In common with all the nuns at that time, she reveals her deep distress at not being allowed to attend the funerals of either of her parents, a great grief for her which is very obvious from the manner in which she speaks of them.

As an indication of how second degree sisters appear to have been expected to turn their hand to whatever domestic task was required, she was told by her Superior at Normanhurst that she would be required to cook – her comment being “Me, cook!; many a story could be told, but somehow I managed.” ‘Managing’ appears to be common for these women (as it was for newly wed wives and mothers.)²⁴³

After a short stay at Mary’s Mount in 1956, Carmel was shifted back to Normanhurst where she and three other lay sisters, (including Bernadette Green) were sent to East Sydney Technical College to undertake a cooking course, going by taxi each way every Monday: “It was a big day and then we had to study a certain amount of theory on other days. Everyone passed the exams at the end of the year.”²⁴⁴ Carmel records that 1961 marked the year when all Loreto sisters became one degree, under the leadership of Mother Dympna.: “This meant a lot of changes for the sisters. No more separate tables, second dinners, separate community rooms, living areas and of course, the change in dress.”²⁴⁵

By 1976, Carmel was back at Mary’s Mount working as a dispenser, portress and, in her words, “helping Mother Mildred in the archives.” Thus began for Carmel work for which she proved to be so eminently suited. Like many women, religious and secular, she discovered a talent in the latter part of her life for which she had no formal training.

Sister Ellen asked me to make an inventory of all that was in the archives – no small task. About a year later Sr Katherine Doyle was appointed Archivist. She did a tremendous job in making a catalogue of all. I learnt to type and typed all Mother Gonzaga Barry’s letters as well as M. Francis Tobin’s life (4 volumes), and of course anything else Sr. Katherine wanted done. For me this was better than any course of retreat, as I gained so much from it.

²⁴³Carmel’s friend, Sister Olivia Murphy, wrote to her when she took over the kitchen, “I never thanked God for you so much as I did today when I found the note-pad [on which Carmel had listed kitchen supplies and food measurements] I was in a real mess not knowing what to do”.

²⁴⁴ This is one indication that even before Vatican II under the leadership of M. Dympna, sisters, including those of the second degree, were being supported to upgrade their qualifications.

²⁴⁵ Second degree sisters now wore the folded veil and cuffs.

In her personal file are copies of letters sent from Loreto sisters, thanking her for her work in the archives. Sister Jan Barlow wrote from Rome:

I want to congratulate you on two things: your appointment as Research Archivist – for which you are eminently suited. Just think of all those things you have unearthed over the years, things that many would not have bothered to pursue. I also want to thank you and congratulate you on the way you “held” the archives and kept them going between Kate’s departure and Paula’s arrival on the scene. You are great the way you handled everything, and you will be an invaluable support for Paula and Johnie B.²⁴⁶

The ‘Paula’ referred to in Jan’s letter is Sister Paula Ziesing whose work in establishing the province archives is widely acknowledged. She well remembers Carmel as a meticulous worker, who “ferreted out” information and who made innumerable lists while sitting in front of the television at night.²⁴⁷

The contribution of the second degree sisters over such a long period in Loreto convents across Australia mirrors that of working class women in the secular society. They met the expectation that they could and would manage the running of large operations. In addition, second degree sisters often filled the gap of family for many of the young boarders, away from parents for long stretches; they ensured they were fed, waited upon and lived in clean and organized surroundings. Many women spent decades in laundries, washing and starching the habits of their co-religious, the sheets and towels of the boarders, and countless other household items. They prepared innumerable breakfasts for visiting priests and lunches for visitors, catered for funerals and feast days, and ensured that the beautiful surroundings of chapel and sacristy were maintained to everyone’s spiritual benefit.

An examination of the early work that is being undertaken by Sister Mary Muirhead and Ms Robin Scott, the archivist for the Loreto Province, to record the biographies of Loreto sisters up to the year 2000, reveals that lay sisters were not one-dimensional women whose

²⁴⁶ A second letter in the file from Sister Verna Hayes, dated October, but no year, acknowledged Carmel’s work in typing out Mother Gonzaga’s life and letters: “The whole thing is most professional and you ought to be proud of it; I am sure Mother Gonzaga will see that you receive a special blessing for all your devoted work.”

²⁴⁷ Informal conversation with Sister Paula October 2008 who now lives at Mary’s Mount, Ballarat.

lives were confined to domestic work. Reading what little remains of their histories quickly shows that, like their secular working class sisters, their lives were multi-dimensional. Many were keen gardeners, creating beautiful spaces for their communities; they were devoted family members, proud of the achievements of their nieces and nephews, avid sports fans, card players, animal lovers, daily followers of the national and international news. Most importantly, they lived out the mission of hospitality, not just to many priests and official visitors, but to their religious sisters and to each other. In the role of portress, they were the first “face” of the convent to the outside world as they greeted visitors at the door; just as the kindergarten teachers were an important link for non-Catholic and Catholic families, so too the woman who opened the doors to convent life carried out the mission of hospitality and human contact denied to many women in elected positions of authority in convents.

The strength of many friendships amongst the lay sisters, and increasingly after Vatican II, with the first degree sisters, comes through repeatedly in the documentation and memories of those who lived with them, and of ex-students. These were not submissive servants; just as often it was the “tea ladies” or the secretaries in large organizations who were the “heart” and source of information for front line workers, so too lay sisters were the engine of complex religious communities.

Of great importance, they cared for sick and ageing nuns, enabling many of them to die amongst their friends in their own convents. Many proved that given the opportunity they could remake their apostolic lives, just as so many of the first degree sisters did, and for this, a wider section of the community beyond school girls benefited, including refugees, parishioners and people in need of material aid. Many lived to a very old age, and are now remembered with great affection and treated with a great respect in life and in death.

For the people of Ballarat, the sister’s work was critical in maintaining the infrastructure from which the city has derived both economic and social value and prestige. Specifically, the Province Archives are a gift to the city, to the history of the Loreto institute, the Church, and to women’s history. Very few second degree sisters left the institute, many lived to an old age and maintained strong spiritual lives in the midst of relentless domestic labour. As with secular women, this domestic contribution has traditionally been undervalued, but without it, enterprises run by the religious women would have been

impossible; that they continued in these roles is a critical factor for understanding how the professed sisters were able to continue running schools, undertake professional development through further study and in some cases, change their apostolic work as described below.

Conclusion

The similarities between the two congregations are more striking than their differences, with the exception of the formalized system of the retention of two classes of sisters. Both have a history of strong leadership, an emphasis on education for their members which accelerated after Vatican II, but which stretches back to their foundresses, and pioneering sisters. Mother Gonzaga Barry, *ibvm* and Mother Xavier Flood *rsm*, were ahead of their times in seeing the need for sisters to be well prepared for their teaching responsibilities, in order to provide what was considered to be best education for girls in the late nineteenth century. While the Mercies by virtue of their numbers, contributed more numerically to the Ballarat diocese, both congregations staffed private and parish schools and kindergartens. They took sole responsibility for the care of their own aged and infirm members and for the novitiate training of their new members. The strongest similarity lay in the nature of the leadership exhibited first by their pioneers, M. Gonzaga Barry and M. Xavier Flood, and later by Noni Mitchell and Valda Ward. These latter two highly educated professional women, shaped by novitiate training in the 1950s which had seen little change over centuries, were nonetheless more than able to respond to the needs of the late twentieth century. Just as their pioneering leaders responded to the call to establish and consolidate schools, fund buildings and train members, so these later leaders responded to their particular call – to lead the renewal of religious and professional life of their members after Vatican II.

Chapter 4: The interface of women religious and the city of Ballarat: their contribution to music

[Women religious] took piano playing into the suburbs and country towns of every Australian state. They built and sustained the closest thing to a mass market in the performing arts which our history can boast.²⁴⁸

Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the contribution of women religious to music in Ballarat, a city known throughout Australia for the diversity and the quality of its musicians, both professional and amateur, and for the opportunities it has provided for live performance and competition, particularly through its renowned South Street Competitions which are highly significant in the cultural development of the city and of Victoria. The contribution of women religious has been central to the musical life of the community and the religious culture of the Church in the diocese, as other women religious have demonstrated throughout Australia. A distinction will be drawn between the opportunities provided to young people (both boys and girls) who received individual tuition from the sisters, and the liturgical and cultural experiences provided in the convents and parish schools as part of the daily backdrop to Catholic life and culture. The profiles of women from each of the institutes are included to demonstrate the importance of outstanding teachers, while acknowledging the relentless work of those who worked in the schools, often viewed as the indistinguishable “good sisters” providing music education in the local school. The contribution of women religious and the many hundreds of students who passed through their schools is widely acknowledged and has enhanced the cultural and civic life of the city, but like many other aspects of Ballarat’s musical history, has received scant attention from historians.

The musical context in Ballarat

Ms Prue Neidorf is the former music archivist at the National Library of Australia who stressed in an interview that “music was normalized in Ballarat” and that, in her view, shared with many students of music history, Ballarat is judged to be the leading provincial

²⁴⁸ Anne O’Brien, ‘Lifting the lid’, *Eureka Street*, Vol. 5, No. 6, August 1995, p32.

centre of both music education and performance, with the convents playing a crucial role in promoting music with regard to both individuals and the broader community.²⁴⁹

Surprisingly, very little research has been published about music in the city, an important exception being a PhD on early music in the town.²⁵⁰

Anne Doggett concentrates on the importance of music in colonial Ballarat, and the central role played by the local churches when she states:

Choirs and harmoniums provided sacred music on the Sabbath, while congregations in several churches listened to the music of large pipe organs imported from England. In Sunday schools children learned many of the church's teachings by taking part in sacred choruses. School children learned to sing at sight and demonstrated their wide repertoire of songs in their annual speech day presentations. People from various racial backgrounds practiced the music of their own cultures: the Chinese had their opera, the Welsh their choirs and eisteddfods and the Germans their *Liederkrantz*. Scottish music was an important part of the annual Highland gatherings. Some of the best overseas and colonial talent performed in Ballarat, presenting everything from comic songs to popular instrumental music to seasons of grand opera. Civic ceremonies were accompanied by music from Ballarat's own bands. The Ballarat Harmonic Society gave regular performances of oratorio and opera. Experienced musicians led music making and taught vocal, instrumental and theoretical music. Amateurs and professionals performed music written by resident composers.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Interview with Prue Neidorf, Bermagui, NSW 30 July 2008.

²⁵⁰ Dr Anne Doggett, *'And for harmony most ardently we long': Musical life in Ballarat, 1851-1871*. University of Ballarat, School of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Humanities, March 2006. See also, Anne Doggett, 'The old vexed question: Divergent attitudes and practices in the sacred music of early Ballarat', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 33, No. 4, December 2009; 'Beyond gentility: Women and music in Ballarat', *History of the Australian Historical Association*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2009. See also, Marilyn Brown, *Service Through Music: The Contribution of William Keith Young (1913-1995) to Australian Rural Musical Life in Ballarat*, Partial fulfillment for the Degree of Bachelor of Music (Honours), Faculty of Arts and Sciences, ACU, Fitzroy, February 2008 and Pauline Righetti, *The First 50 Years of Music in Ballarat*, Bachelor of Music Honours Thesis, University of Ballarat, 1963..

²⁵¹ Anne Doggart, *And for harmony*, p1. Weston Bate provides a brief overview of music in the late nineteenth century, giving particular credit to the Welsh community: "The influence of the Welsh was pervasive. They were always eager to sing and their Ballarat eisteddfods, unique in Victoria in the eighties, were held annually on St David's Day, encouraging choral, solo voice and instrumental performance and providing the framework for even more successful South Street competitions", Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation of Ballarat, 1851-1901*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1978, p230.

The Ballarat Harmonic Society also performed sacred music at Easter and Christmas, expanding their repertoire to opera, a move according to Weston Bate, “without precedent not only in the colony, but in Britain.”²⁵² As with the rest of colonial Australia, the ownership of pianos in Ballarat was a status symbol for the growing middle class and also constituted the pinnacle of working class aspirations.²⁵³ Music for the local music store run by Mr. Sutton was indeed money, as it was to be for many of the professional musicians who earned reasonable livings from a combination of performance in dance bands, in the orchestra pits for the silent movies and from visiting light opera and popular musicals to Ballarat’s Her Majesty’s Theatre.²⁵⁴ Sir Bernard Heinze, then a student at St Patrick’s College, gained performance experience in the pit for silent movies in Ballarat, which by the 1920s had four movie houses playing six nights per week.²⁵⁵

Many of Ballarat’s finest musicians learnt to read music as pit musicians or as members of any one of Ballarat’s numerous brass bands. According to Robert Pattie, brass bands were present at the Eureka Stockade, beginning a long history of street performance for major community functions, of which the Eight Hour Day procession was the most popular, but also included numerous laying of foundation stones, charitable functions, and, of greatest popularity, massed band competitions. 15,000 people attended the first South Street Band contest in 1900.²⁵⁶

Quite large dance bands accompanied ballroom and modern dances in the city and played regularly throughout the district for local balls, particularly those annual fund-raisers held

²⁵² Weston Bate, *Lucky City*, p230.

²⁵³ On this point, see Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1980, pp117-119. He reports that over 700,000 pianos were imported into the colonies in the 19th century.

²⁵⁴ Peter Freund with Val Sarah, *Her Maj: A History of Her Majesty’s Theatre, Ballarat*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, Ballarat, 2007. The original theatre was named the Academy of Music; the name was changed to Her Majesty’s to honour Queen Victoria. It was in private ownership from its inception until 1965 when it passed into the hands of the The Royal South Street Society. Since 1987 the theatre has been under the control of the City of Ballarat. Several Ballarat philanthropists and businessmen have contributed considerable sums of money to the theatre, including Sir William Clarke, Harry Davis, Johannes Heinz, James Coghlan, and the Reid family. As the oldest surviving theatre of its kind in Australia, Her Majesty’s has been listed on the Register of Heritage Victoria and the Register of the National Estate.

²⁵⁵ Interview with George Bell by Mal Jennings, 9 February, 1981. Mr Bell is my father and the transcript is in my possession. “Bernard was only a kid then; he used to come and sit in and play his violin with me and my mother for the experience.” Heinze was Director of the NSW State Conservatorium of Music from 1957; he was also chiefly responsible for the establishment of the ABC Youth Orchestral Concerts from 1948.

²⁵⁶ See R. Pattie, *The History of the City of Ballarat Municipal Brass Band, 1900-2000: One Hundred Years of Music to the Citizens of Ballarat*, Publisher and date unknown. World class musicians emerged including Percy Code and Frank Wright, while the bands provided on-the-job training for generations of young men and boys in Ballarat, turning out musicians who could and did easily cross over to other musical genres and whose training was equally strong in classical, modern and traditional brass band music. Women were not admitted to brass bands in Ballarat until the late 1970s, although Bob Pattie told the researcher there is evidence of one young woman playing in the 1920s or 30s.

in every Catholic parish hall throughout the diocese. By the beginning of the 1950s, there were five venues a week in Ballarat offering both old time and modern dancing, including St Patrick's Cathedral Hall, which attracted over 1000 patrons every Saturday night, this again, providing employment for musicians and the chance to hear live music for the patrons.²⁵⁷ The citizens of Ballarat had innumerable opportunities to hear music across all these genres, and most importantly, could access them easily through public transport or by simply walking. The contained nature of the city 'hub' in which were clustered the theatres, dance halls and major churches, plus cheap tram access to the gardens on Lake Wendouree, meant that cars were not needed to transport patrons to band-stands, to the South Street Competitions or to the city churches.

By 1950 Ballarat had its own symphony orchestra, led by Ms Lynette Kierce, a former student and later a teacher at Sacred Heart College. The city also boasted its own light opera company, a local theatre company, many highly successful brass bands which provided free musical education for generations of boys, and the Royal Street Society, all of which created a cultural climate that nurtured a host of home grown national musical giants, including Sir Bernard Heinze, the Lemke family and later, Genevieve Lacey and David Hobson.

The importance of the South Street Competitions

The strongest expression of Ballarat's commitment to music performance is found in the world famous South Street Competitions, first established in 1879.²⁵⁸ The inspiration for the competitions came from a group of young men, led by William Duguid Hill, who formed the South Street Literary and Debating Society which established its own library and which by 1891 conducted the first literary, elocutionary and musical competitions, offering prizes valued at 60 guineas. Choral contests began in 1897 when the career of Amy Castles was launched; Mary Grant Bruce won an essay competition two years later; James Scullin was crowned champion debater in 1901, the same year that Peter Dawson was named the outstanding singer of the year.

²⁵⁷ These bands became part of the 'cross-over' between musicians who were equally at ease in brass bands, in orchestra pits, as private teachers, choral performers, and, in some cases, composers and arrangers.

²⁵⁸ No official history of South Street has been written. However, see L.A.Blackman, 'A history of the Royal South Street Society of Ballarat', *The Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXV11, February 1966, No 1; Kay Dreyfus, 'The South Street Eisteddfod and local music making in Ballarat in the 1920s and 1930s', *The Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. 66, No 2, 1995.

By 1902, entries were being received from 184 different places in Australia, while the program continued to be extended to include brass bands, gymnastics and calisthenics, and Factory Choral Competitions.²⁵⁹ World renowned adjudicators were brought from overseas, special trains ran from Melbourne, prize lists were increased and construction began on a new hall in Grenville Street, capable of seating 3000 people and opened by the then Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, in 1908.²⁶⁰

With the establishment of the *Sun Aria* award in 1924, successive winners were assured a solid start to their opera careers, prize money for which by 1962 amounted to 2000 guineas. Such was the importance of the competitions that when a public appeal was launched in 1927, Dame Nellie Melba was a founding contributor, wrote at the time that

Its work is national in character and scope: its acknowledged achievements will stand for generations; the possibilities of its increasing usefulness and value are almost unlimited, therefore, SOUTH STREET MUST GO ON!²⁶¹ (Her emphasis)

Of equal importance to its growing national reputation was the role which South Street played in “normalizing” music in Ballarat, and enabling public performance experience for people designated as “amateurs”, including generations of Ballarat school children, always with a strong representation of girls from the convents. This point is stressed by Kaye Dreyfus, who argues that:

In terms of commitment, passion, enthusiasm and excellence, the distinction between amateur and professional has little meaning in local musical life; it merely

²⁵⁹ In addition to factory choirs, many of the larger enterprises in the city had their own brass bands.

²⁶⁰ The fame of South Street spread nationally and internationally and successive Prime Ministers and other notable dignitaries attended opening and closing ceremonies. The federal government provided £250 prize money for a military band contest and the local *Courier* an additional £100 for an orchestral contest, considerable sums of money in the early 20th century. The Coliseum as it was known burnt down in 1936, to be replaced by the refurbished Alfred Hall, which was used continuously for the competitions from 1936 until 1956 when the Civic Hall was built. By this time, total prize money had increased to £6,200 including £2,450 for the Australian Brass Band Competition. Blackman, ‘A history of the Royal South Street Society of Ballarat’, p20. Kay Dreyfus reported that 12,000 visitors came to the city in 1929, adding a significant boost to the local economy. “As the oldest, the richest, the most influential and prestigious eisteddfod in Australia, South Street brought fame, national attention and substantial economic benefit to the city.” Dreyfus, ‘The South Street Eisteddfod’, p102. Ms Dreyfus is the daughter of Frank and Bonnie Lucas, well known musical identities in Ballarat, and a music historian on the staff of Monash University.

²⁶¹ Quoted in L. A. Blackman, ‘A history of the Royal South Street Society in Ballarat’, p15.

distinguishes those who were able to make a living at music and those who were not.²⁶²

In this, she is supported by comments made to the researcher by Sister Barbara Lemke, RSM, who stressed that her father who was a leader in Ballarat's musical life, nonetheless ran a business as an economic necessity.²⁶³

It is within the context of Ballarat being a vibrant centre of music that the contribution of the women religious will be examined. As has been demonstrated by Anne Doggett, the encouragement of musical excellence and opportunities to hear, understand and perform church liturgy and works of the canon was not confined to Catholics in their schools, convents and churches. Nonetheless, the contribution of women religious and the many hundreds of students who passed through their schools was significant. Success for the convent schools at South Street was highly significant as the competition went well beyond the local area; they competed against peers from across Australia, gaining prestige nationally as individual performers or through choirs and orchestras.

Music in the Churches

An interesting history of music at St Patrick's Cathedral is provided by Sister Marie Davey rsm who also acknowledges the importance of the early Welsh settlers.²⁶⁴ In relation to music at St Patrick's Cathedral, she describes how church music changed during the first half of the twentieth century, in part because of concerns that the Masses of Mozart, Haydn and Weber, in particular, distracted from the liturgy of the Mass and were becoming public performances rather than a complementary part of the religious ritual. She quotes an article in the *Advocate* (9 September 1905) which reports that the Sisters of Mercy children's choir performed a Gregorian Mass at the cathedral, prompting Fr Kerin

²⁶² Kay Dreyfus further argues that "The energy of South Street derived from and was nurtured by the traditions and conventions of local musical life, in particular, the parish concert, the municipal brass band and the church choir. Local charities relied heavily on funds raised from concerts, most likely to be held in a church hall... music in Ballarat was not only universal, it was essentially communal and collective... The level of attendance and participation in South Street suggests that amateurism, not professionalism, is the true underpinning of Australian musical culture. Local music making is dominated and given direction by strong personalities, but, despite this, it is in essence communal and collective. South Street epitomized the democratic spirit of musical life in this country town in which music was seen as something potentially open to all, available to be actively practised by large numbers of people from every kind of background." Dreyfus, 'The South Street Eisteddfod,' p103.

²⁶³ Interview with Sister Barbara Lemke rsm Ballarat, 7 October 2008.

²⁶⁴ Marie Davey rsm, *Church Music at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, 1900-1957*, Church History 111, Catholic Theological College, Clayton, 1982

to remark that "...he believed the Sisters of Mercy Ballarat were the first in Australia to adopt this solemn and devotional church music".²⁶⁵

Solo performances, particularly those of women, were discouraged, while of equal concern was the use of non-Catholic choir masters who received a fee for their service and who would not necessarily understand the role of music within the context of the Mass, preferring instead to mount elaborate performances which could include up to 60 voices, orchestras and, on at least one occasion, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Band as a fundraiser for the Cathedral hall. Despite the exception of some outstanding women musicians to church music in Ballarat, particularly Kathleen McManamny, it was in the convents that girls were strongly encouraged to pursue music as a possible career, and as an essential component to a well rounded education.²⁶⁶

Music in convent and parish schools

Many congregational histories and indeed mainstream Catholic historians acknowledge the contribution which women religious have made to music education for generations of students within their own convents, as well as to external Catholic and non-Catholic music students, girls and boys, who attended music lessons out of school hours on a fee for service basis. The pioneer women religious who came from Ireland and Europe were often highly educated middle or upper class women, who received an education typical of their class, including a high degree of proficiency in music, languages, literature and art. In response to the requests of various bishops, they passed on these skills to the young women in their care in their convent high schools. In addition, for many of the congregations, their expansion into parish schools and day schools meant that the teaching of music became vital as a means of financial survival. Even Mary MacKillop who was initially reluctant to teach music because she felt it distracted from the education of the poor, eventually saw the necessity and the value of music education in her schools.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Quoted by Marie Davey, *Church Music*, p33.

²⁶⁶ Kathleen McManamny, affectionately known as "Ballarat's Melba", was the organist at St Alipius, a teacher at St. Patrick's College and Director of the Ballarat Choir Union. Her appointment as conductor and director of the cathedral choir prompted Sister Davey to comment that: "The male dominated world of music in a conservative provincial city was not where one would expect to find a woman appointed to such a position. Her talent and ability must have far outweighed what would have been considered the disadvantages of such an appointment." p 45. Kathleen, whose mother, Maggie, was a music teacher, was an old girl of Sacred Heart College (1916). Kathleen attended Miss Johnson's Private School before enrolling at the convent. Information supplied by Sister Lesley Dickinson rsm, archivist at Ballarat East, 3 November 2008.

²⁶⁷ On this point, see Anne O'Brien, 'Lifting the Lid', p31.

The importance of music teaching as a fee for service is stressed by Dr Sophie McGrath RSM. She reports that at the Catholic Education Conference in 1911, some disquiet was raised that too much time was given to music in the schools. In reply, Mother Stanislaus D'Arcy from Lismore pointed out that music was both elevating and ennobling, and concluded in her defense, "...pointedly saying that should music and the accompanying fees be discontinued, the sisters would be thrown upon the kindness of the bishops". This appears to have put an end to the debate at the conference.²⁶⁸

It is important to stress that the teaching of music was not confined to the convent high schools; parish primary school children also benefited from the professional competence of sisters in their schools as part of their daily curriculum. Individual children might benefit more from one-on-one tuition, but all children, including those in parish schools throughout the diocese, emerged with at least the rudiments of a music education, including a basic knowledge of liturgical music. As Anne O'Brien comments, "We cannot begin to estimate the boredom those nuns must have felt as one after another, little girls – many of whom must have been tone-deaf – filed into their rabbit warren cells"²⁶⁹.

The nature of music teaching changed from the 1950s for a number of reasons, some of which are identified by Sophie McGrath as the

...widening horizon of girls, especially in the fields of sport, and the dominance of TV in the home...attracting girls away from the discipline of mastering an instrument. A contributing element was also the fact that musically gifted sisters were being placed in the classroom rather than in the one-to-one music classes to help cope with the population explosion in the schools²⁷⁰.

Even taking into account these changes, the importance of women religious to music education can be seen from three different perspectives. As a fee for service to Catholic and non-Catholic children it provided a measure of financial security in supporting their convents. As an important part of the curriculum, it gave generations of girls in their schools the benefit of highly qualified teachers and opportunities to perform in public (some of which were denied them through traditional church choirs as shown above), and

²⁶⁸ Sophie McGrath, RSM, *These Women? Women Religious in the History of Australia: The Sisters of Parramatta, 1888-1988*, NSW University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1988, p66.

²⁶⁹ Anne O'Brien, 'Lifting the lid', p32.

²⁷⁰ Sophie McGrath, *These Women?*, p68.

as the continual backdrop to convent life, especially for boarders, liturgical music opened the window to classical music otherwise denied or at least, limited, to young women, particularly those living outside the major cities.

Popular novels and accounts of Catholic life frequently refer to the importance of the liturgical and cultural aspects of convent education before Vatican II, when daily liturgies and major feast days were always accompanied by music prepared and directed by the sisters. While annual concerts, speech days and school orchestras have been a feature of all boys and girls schools, Catholic and non-Catholic, the daily exposure to liturgical music and the quality of teaching in the convents marks a unique contribution by women religious. One un-named ex-student of Loreto Mary's Mount recalled:

I have wonderful memories of the singing in the chapel – “loveliest private chapel in the southern hemisphere!” No guitars then! The organ music suited that lovely Gothic church. Choral work was a feature of the school in general, as it is today. Mother Reparata and later Mr. Young created great enthusiasm and there was talent in plenty; does anyone remember Margaret Tobin's glorious voice?²⁷¹

Another ex-student, Lynne Browne wrote:

Our spirituality was heightened by weekly attendance at Benediction and other devotions. Loreto convent (Dawson Street) girls walked in order to the cathedral and participated in singing of hymns for Benediction in Latin...the combination of classical music, the incense, the Latin, instilled in us a sense of mystery and awe...the glorious singing in the Mary's Mount chapel all served to reinforce the sense of wonder which accompanied the daily practices and rituals to which we were accustomed.²⁷²

A former altar boy at Mary's Mount wrote of his memories of serving in the chapel:

Here was a profound feeling of peace, a serenity, a confident and comfortable expression of the message. The music was inspirational, the harmony, mixed with a kind of Gregorian chant, raised the hairs on the back of your neck. This was

²⁷¹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 168, *Loreto College Ballarat Past Students*, Author unknown, 'Impressions of Mary's Mount: The Fifties'.

²⁷² Loreto Province Archives, Series 271, *Material contributed for Proposed LSAC Publication*, 2003, Lynne Brown.

singing by women who were accomplished and who enjoyed the moments of praise.²⁷³

One student of Mary's Mount from the late 1950s and early sixties summarizes her thoughts on the benefits of the musical life at the school:

Woven into the tapestry of our musical life at Loreto with orchestral work, music clubs etc was my great love of singing. Many opportunities were put my way to sing at concerts, in chapel and at the many musicals the nuns worked so hard to produce. There was the *Pied Piper of Hamlen*, *Hansel and Gretel* and the cantata, *Ruth*.²⁷⁴

Most congregational histories name amongst their ex-students some who have become successful professional musicians and can name generations of nuns who are their acknowledged leaders as teachers of music²⁷⁵. In the case of the Ballarat institutes under study, several of these women were successful musicians before they entered the convents, and presumably might have continued careers as professional musicians had they chosen not to enter.²⁷⁶

Music in the Ballarat convents

The founding superiors of both Ballarat convents, Mother Xavier Flood rsm and Mother Gonzaga Barry ibvm, were both highly educated women and determined that music of the highest standard would be offered to their students. They were accompanied by women with musical talent and experience, and set the pattern for generations of sisters who would follow them. One significant difference between the two institutes was that the Loretos did not take in external music students to support Mary's Mount, in part, one assumes because of the strictly cloistered nature of the congregation. In fact, a letter from the Provincial in 1951, Mother Colombiere Lillis, made "...suggestions with a view to

²⁷³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 271, Notes contributed by Michael Rowan.

²⁷⁴ Margaret Cormack (nee Tobin), quoted in Mary Muirhead, '*Arts and Liturgy*'.

²⁷⁵ The Loretos for example can claim Eileen Joyce, whom they introduced to Percy Grainger, Amy Castles, Joan Hammond and Rosamund Illing as ex-students; the FCJ's taught Ada Freeman, international pianist; the Parramatta Mercies taught Vaughan Hanley (leader of the WA Symphony orchestra), Pamela Page and Eunice Gardiner, both international pianists, the latter of whom became the great friend of Carina Flaherty, IBVM and performed with her in recordings and concerts.

²⁷⁶ Again, I am grateful for the comments of Prue Neidorf; her opinion is that the demise of the multi-layered nature of music teaching in convents, especially in country areas, is one significant factor in the decline of overall music education for young people.

helping the nuns”, among which was that “no external pupils be taken for music”.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, there is evidence that Mother Magdalen ibvm taught music at South Melbourne and in Nedlands in Perth, and music lessons were similarly provided in Portland on a fee for service basis as a source of income.²⁷⁸

The Mercies on the other hand, have a long tradition of providing music lessons after school and on weekends for both boys and girls, as well as the strong emphasis on music education for their own students in all their schools throughout the diocese. An examination of the school magazines of both convents reveals an almost continual record of outstanding results in music exams achieved by girls; they also reveal the diversity and calibre of the music the girls studied and performed in public, including at South Street, where both schools produced winning choirs and solo performers with Mozart, Handel, Schumann, Bach, Bruch and Elgar featuring regularly. Both schools have provided a steady stream of young women to various State Symphony Orchestras, while the Sacred Heart Teacher Training College provided generations of highly trained teachers for schools throughout Victoria, all of whom would have received musical training.

In relation to the contribution of the Sisters of Mercy, a Masters student, Peter Julian Lynch noted:

[there has been] no significant research into the musical activities within the schools in which the Sisters of Mercy have taught. Neither has there been, therefore, any evaluation of their contribution, through music, to the cultural enrichment of the wider community.²⁷⁹

Lynch has made a significant contribution through his thesis exploring the life of M. Catherine of Sienna (Gertrude Healy) which is summarized below. But his point is a valid one; it would require a thesis in its own right to do justice to over 100 years of music teaching by the Mercies in the Ballarat diocese alone, particularly to balance the simplistic assertion that music (and other “ladylike” accomplishments) were provided to improve the status of an aspiring middle class, personified, according to educational historian, Marjorie

²⁷⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 61, *Correspondence from Provincialate to Communities*, Item 1, Directives from the Provincialate, 1951-1967, Letter dated 16 December 1951.

²⁷⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Notes prepared by Sister Mary Muirhead on the life of Mother Magdalen (Lily O'Hagan) for Sisters Biography Project.

²⁷⁹ Peter Julian Lynch, *Gertrude Healy: The Australian Violinist*, A thesis in the Department of Music, Monash University, in partial fulfillment of Masters of Arts, January 1996, pix.

Theobold, by “The lady at the piano”.²⁸⁰ Even allowing for the paucity of primary sources, it is apparent that the sisters demanded a high standard of performance from their students, and prepared them well for the competitive world of a potential music career through the various examination systems, for example, Trinity College in London. Students taught by women religious had expectations placed on them which were a far cry from the elitist and frivolous image which denied the seriousness of their endeavours.

There have been attempts by the sisters themselves to honour the women who came before them. For example, Sister Philip Welsh rsm traces the importance of the pioneer Ballarat East Mercy sisters, writing:

Music was always one of Mother Xavier’s special interests, and she had decided views on the training of music teachers, who, she thought, should be obliged to give criticism lessons as were the school teachers, and be subject to periodic inspection...Mother Bonaventure, her sister M. Frances Healy and later their even more celebrated sister, Gertrude Healy, who later became Sister M Catherine of Sienna, all continued the cultural development of the secondary students and of the trainee teachers in particular. Their choirs, their instrumental music, the orchestra flourishing in the 1920s, but brought to a pitch in the 1950s (the era of *Music for Strings*) all ensured that the trainees would be qualified to carry this love of music into the schools.²⁸¹

Despite the lack of a detailed history of the music education in the order, in conversation with sisters and ex-students their musical contribution is one of the most frequently noted features of their schools. An email to the researcher from local historian Anne Beggs-Sunter, recalls, “People like the tenor, David Hobson, speak of the legendry nuns at Sacred Heart, who were renowned music teachers, not just of Catholics. (I heard him say this at a concert he gave in Ballarat)”²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Marjorie Theobold, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women’s Education in Nineteenth Century Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, Chapter one.

²⁸¹ Sister M. Philip Welsh rsm, ‘Mercy Unto Many’, *Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education*, Vol 6, November 1985. ‘Music for Strings’ was a much anticipated and widely supported annual event in Ballarat when I was growing up in the 1950s; I well remember being taken to the concerts by my father who instilled in me a great love for classical music, and the need for impeccable manners when listening in respectful silence.

²⁸² Email from Anne-Beggs Sunter to Heather O’Connor, 29 September 2008.

There are notes in the archives written by Sister Mary Lynch, herself a music teacher, dated 1977.²⁸³ She records the life of one of the earlier sisters, Eileen Meagan (Sister Mary Angela), who, before entering the convent, studied in the United Kingdom after showing prodigious talent as a girl in both violin and piano, winning scholarships to the Melbourne Conservatorium. Sister Mary Angela was the official accompanist at Royal South Street for many years, and for more than forty years, "...she laboured unassumingly to give others the benefit of her extraordinary talent. There was no orchestral instrument she had not mastered and generations of SHC students owe their appreciation of music to her."

Sister Mary Xavier (1879-1978) was another outstanding singer, musician and drama teacher. She was in charge of St Alipius choir, prepared generations of students for South Street competitions and St Arnaud students for their concerts and was much loved for her solo renditions at Reception and Profession ceremonies. One of her Mercy sisters recalling her time as a student, wrote at the time of her death:

As time went on we were in her singing class. How we loved to hear her sing, not only "Danny Boy" and "Will ye no come back again" etc, but the beautiful Benediction hymns and those to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. We would meet her going over to teach music and she'd be humming some song. She helped out with all the concert work, especially in the country convents.²⁸⁴

Amongst the names of successful SHC students who made careers as musicians are Margaret Pell, sister of Cardinal George Pell, long time member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra; other Melbourne Symphony members were Wilma Olsen and Pauline Righetti. Kathleen Brady was an internationally renowned pianist and exponent of baroque music; Lynette Kierce and Carol McKenzie were both winners of the *Sun Aria*.²⁸⁵ David Hirchfelder, who became a renowned writer of film music, was a student at Ballarat Grammar School, but took lessons at the convent from Sister Therese Lynch rsm.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Both Sister Mary Lynch and her sister, Therese who are still living in Ballarat, were well known and accomplished music teachers. There is no archival category for the notes written by Sister Mary; the notes were found by Therese and headed *Music Academy, written by Sister Mary Lynch until the year 1977*; a copy was supplied to the researcher, Ballarat, October 2008.

²⁸⁴ Sr. M. Padua, *Ballarat Diocesan Sisters Council Newsletter*, No. 21, 1978.

²⁸⁵ Ms Kierce also won the Ormond Exhibition, Melbourne conservatorium, in 1948 and 1949.

²⁸⁶ Lynette Kierce established the Ballarat Symphony Orchestra in 1949; my father was a member of the orchestra and I regularly attended rehearsals with him. David Hirchfelder has won numerous awards for his work in films, including *Shine*, *Elizabeth: The Queen*, *The Interview* and *Dating the Enemy*.

Sister Anne Lynch reports on the importance of overseas visitors to the convent who gave recitals for the nuns and students, one of whom, Dr Edgar Ford, composed and performed a Mass for the liturgical celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of a group of Mercy sisters (date unspecified). Dame Kiri TeKanewa stayed with her New Zealand Mercy music teacher at the convent when she came to compete in the Sun Aria, while Doctor Percy Jones was also a visitor.

It should be stressed that music was also an integral part of the work of the sisters in their country schools in the Ballarat diocese. On the occasion of the centenary of the convent in St Arnaud for example, information was given about the early results of university and public music examinations, including those conducted by the Royal Academy and Royal College, London. Extensive reports of convent concerts from the turn of the century until the late 1950s demonstrate the importance of the annual events for the whole town, with capacity audiences in attendance at the town hall for each one listed.²⁸⁷ One ex-student reported: “The concerts were something of a highlight of the town, and later productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas were extremely successful”.²⁸⁸ Another who was a boarder at the convent wrote of her impressions of Gilbert and Sullivan performances, “Looking back, how ambitious were [the sisters’] efforts. After all there were only a few with real flair in this direction”.²⁸⁹ A day scholar acknowledges Sister Christopher as a “real person” who taught him piano and supervised his exams in the front room of the convent, taught him to appreciate musicals, such as *My Fair Lady*, and remembers taking part in *HMS Pinafore* as a ‘highlight of my acting career’.²⁹⁰

Loreto and Music in Ballarat

A thesis by Margaret Hariss records the contribution to music of three leading girls’ schools in Victoria, Methodist Ladies’ College (MLC), Presbyterian Ladies’ College (PLC) which are both in Melbourne, and Mary’s Mount in Ballarat.²⁹¹ She demonstrates the importance of the private schools in their founding years, in part because of the numbers of music teachers on staff in the non-government sector – 17.3 per cent compared

²⁸⁷ Author unknown, ‘St Arnaud Convent Centenary Reunion, 1901-2001’, Publisher and location unlisted.

²⁸⁸ ‘St Arnaud Convent Centenary Reunion’, p23.

²⁸⁹ ‘St Arnaud Convent Centenary Reunion’, p 30.

²⁹⁰ ‘St Arnaud Convent Centenary Reunion’, p37-38.

²⁹¹ Margaret Hariss, *The Role of Women in Music Education in Victoria from 1875-1910*, Master of Educational Studies, Monash University, July 1985.

to 1.1 per cent in the government schools.²⁹² Within a decade of the founding of Mary's Mount the sisters were able to offer instruction in five different musical instruments, plus lessons in singing, harmony and theory. From 1891, the school offered extension lessons from the University, and several international artists gave performances at the convent. Like their counterparts at SHC, girls from Mary's Mount were prepared for examinations at the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College in London and at the Melbourne Conservatorium. Early Loreto girls benefited from the visit to Australia by Mother Attracta Coffey from Rathfarnham, herself a Doctor of Music of the Royal Academy; according to Hariss, "...her influence remained long after she returned to Ireland".²⁹³

Mother Gonzaga introduced soirees which became a much admired feature of early Loreto education. Girls would be chosen to be hostess and responsible for entertaining their 'guests' (a group of fellow students) with musical and dramatic performances. These early pioneers laid the basis for music education in all Loreto schools. Mary Muirhead (Mother Reparata) was mistress of music at Mary's Mount from 1945-1973, and has compiled a manuscript covering decades of music education across the Province which lists the lives of many of the outstanding musicians who became Loreto sisters.²⁹⁴ Mother Madeleine Lalor, grand daughter of Peter Lalor of Eureka fame, was an accomplished pianist, violinist, organist and talented composer. Mother Damien McGowan had been a professional singer before entering. Another professional musician, Sister Carina Flaherty was a student of Mary's Mount, studied piano in Paris before entering the convent and taught for many years at Kirribilli in Sydney and Mary's Mount. Carina gave public performances and recorded a two-piano recital for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in February 1967 with the pianist Eunice Gardiner. The two women also performed in concert at Mary's Mount in 1969, by which time Carina was teaching at the school. She was also composing liturgical music which was recorded as "*Yahweh My God*", sung by the Mary's Mount choir and Redemptorist students from the nearby monastery.

²⁹² The vast majority of the 2060 registered teachers of music in Victoria during this period were in private practice.

²⁹³ Margaret Harris, *The Role of Women in Music Education*, p78.

²⁹⁴ Sister Mary Muirhead ibvm, *Arts and Liturgy in Loreto Schools, 1875-1996*, Loreto Province Archives. The Loreto Province Archives also house a comprehensive collection of Benedictine music, including plain chant and classical repertoire.

Carina has written her own recollections of another outstanding Loreto musician, Anne Byrne who was a student of Mother Lalor. Anne, along with Sisters Geradine Carroll and Mary Muirhead ibvm, became involved in the music as therapy movement, which has become a critical element in not only the rehabilitation of people with some sort of disability or special need; it is also testimony to the determination of professional carers of the aged and disabled to ensure that all people have access to the best in music.²⁹⁵ In this sense, it can be seen as an example of social justice for more vulnerable members of the community. Professionals in the field believe that human dignity is enhanced through the arts, which are not just the preserve of the rich or those with publicly acknowledged talent. Anne Byrne summarises by saying that:

In situations where communication and activity are restricted owing to the frailty of physical conditions, music therapy plays an important part in enhancing the quality of life...[in addition] I have found music is a great unifying force in a situation where different languages are spoken. It has a happy way of bringing people together, to acknowledge moods and to help the community to understand differences of experience.²⁹⁶

Anne's aunt, Mother Lua Byrne ibvm, was recognized as a leading teacher of music with her appointment as official examiner to the South Australian Music Examinations Board in 1978. Carolyn McSwiney, school captain of Mary's Mount in 1958, eventually entered the convent in 1967, completed her Bachelor of Music in 1959 with 21 honours in 30 subjects, winning the Ormond Exhibition. For two years she was leading cello with the Australian Youth Orchestra whose members were selected from the most gifted students from around Australia with the assistance of the ABC.

Two Institutes, Two Eras, Two Profiles.

The following are offered as profiles of outstanding musicians who were sisters from the two different institutes in two different eras.

²⁹⁵ Music therapy began in the USA after the Second World War to assist returning servicemen during rehabilitation.

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Mary Muirhead, *Arts and Liturgy*, p131.

Gertrude Healy rsm (Sister Catherine of Sienna, 1894-1984)

The thesis by Peter Julian Lynch provides a comprehensive account of the life of this extraordinary Ballarat East Sister of Mercy who did not join the congregation until she was in her fifties, but nonetheless, helped shape the contribution of the sisters to music education in the period under study.²⁹⁷ As a young girl, Gertrude competed successfully at South Street, winning three first prizes against Bernard Heinze and by the age of 15 became a registered teacher of violin. In 1908 she won scholarships to the conservatorium, but was beaten by Heinze for a scholarship to London. Nonetheless, with money raised through a concert in Melbourne, she traveled overseas with her sister, Kathleen, returning in 1920 to begin a teaching career at the Albert Street Conservatorium which continued until 1948, when she entered the convent, becoming professed in 1950. Gertrude was the sister of M.M. Bonaventure (Eileen Healy), then Superior at Ballarat East; their sister Kathleen (Sr. Francis Xavier) had also entered the convent of her return from the European trip and was professed in December 1926.²⁹⁸ Their younger sister, Josie, was to come to the convent with Gertrude, not as a sister, but as a much respected teacher of music in her own right. She had her own flat within the grounds of the convent, in which she was able to entertain friends in the company of her blood sisters. According to one of her male students who later became a Catholic and was ordained as a priest, “Josie’s parlour or flat was a sort of half way house that enabled the world to get a foot into the convent.....where those in the know could come along, almost at will. She [Sr. Catherine] would entertain there....that was her place of independence.”²⁹⁹

Before entering the convent, Gertrude returned to Sacred Heart College on a regular basis to coach the orchestra, and, as a professed sister, was responsible for inaugurating the annual *Concert for Strings* which was to become an important cultural event in Ballarat. She included in the programs her own compositions and those of Bach, Haydn and Tchaikovsky, “...then unusual fare for youthful string players”.³⁰⁰ Margaret Pell was interviewed by Lynch for the thesis and is recorded as saying,

²⁹⁷ Peter Julian Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*.

²⁹⁸ Kathleen Healy was responsible, with Sisters Angela, Bernadette and Damien in establishing a string orchestra which included Sisters Mary and Teresa Lynch. Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*, p68.

²⁹⁹ Interview between Peter Lynch and Barry Strickland, recorded 16 May, 1995, quoted in *Gertrude Healy*, p84.

³⁰⁰ Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*, p72.

The whole school would come to a standstill for at least a week for the orchestral concerts...but it was much to the annoyance of the rest of the school: everything revolved around that concert. She [Sister Catherine] got that [concert tradition] going. There was always a tradition of music at the school, but never to the extent that there was when she was there.³⁰¹

Lynch sums up by saying that “Mother Bonaventure saw to it that her sister had the unqualified support of the entire College community. The concerts, therefore, were not a matter to be taken lightly”.³⁰² Sister Barbara Lemke recalls that preparation involved three hours practice every night by orchestra members, some of whom were old girls of SHC.³⁰³ From the interviews conducted by Lynch, there appears to be a measure of ambivalence about Sister Catherine’s ability as a teacher of the girls at the school, particularly in her latter years. Despite the students being in awe of her and having such great respect for her talent, those students interviewed by Lynch were obviously confused about the expectations she had of them:

For my last year of school, I nearly went to the opposition...to Mary’s Mount. That’s how hard it got...[The] one thing she did instill in us was the love of music and, for me, of orchestral playing. That was my ambition – to get into an orchestra.³⁰⁴

In 1959 boys were admitted to the convent for music lessons with Sister Catherine; this must have been a big decision for Mother Bonaventure, but one which proved of benefit to all. For the remainder of her life, Sister Catherine of Sienna taught music to generations of students and is claimed with great pride by ex-students and by the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy.

Deirdre Brown ibvm

Although Sister Deirdre Brown did not teach at Ballarat, her contribution is included here because of her importance to the Institute as a whole, and because of her prominent contribution to liturgical music throughout Australia.

³⁰¹ Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*, p75. Interview with Margaret Pell and Julian Lynch, 17 February, 1995

³⁰² Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*, p75.

³⁰³ Interview with Sr. Barbara Lemke rsm, Ballarat 7 October 2008.

³⁰⁴ Lynch, *Gertrude Healy*, quoting an interview with Margaret Pell, p78.

Deirdre entered the novitiate in Ballarat in 1954 and was professed in Normanhurst after the novitiate shifted there in 1956. Like many of the women of her “set”, she was to benefit from the determination of M. Dympna to provide further education for her sisters. Deirdre studied violin at the Melbourne Conservatorium, after which she returned to Loreto Normanhurst as Director of Music. As with the case of the Ballarat sisters she ensured that her students would gain public performance experience, in her case, through the City of Sydney Eisteddfod, at which they won prizes for their outstanding choral work. Along with Mary Muirhead, she organized Loreto Music Camps in 1975 (Toorak), 1977 (Adelaide), 1979 (Brisbane) and 1981 (Sydney), which brought together Loreto girls from all around Australia.

After her return from studies in Chicago, Deirdre became a pioneer in composing liturgical works, contributing both music and words to the new English hymns, a collection of which has been recorded. The most popular of her hymns is “*Come as you are*”, which has been translated into French and Spanish and is used throughout the world. She has been a keynote speaker at National Liturgical Conventions, and was the co-musical director for the Papal Mass for the Pope’s visit for the beatification of Mary MacKillop in January 1995.³⁰⁵ She has been a member of the Melbourne Liturgical Committee in which capacity she has advised parishes on parish liturgy; she was the conductor of the Camara Choir at St Francis Church in Melbourne and has a special interest in Australian spirituality as expressed through music.

Deirdre Brown’s musical contribution and career represents a markedly different one from that of the traditional nun teaching music to school children, many of whom attended classes with great reluctance and little appreciation of the talents of the women who taught them. Beginning as an excellent and much loved teacher of music in schools, she expanded her apostolate to the benefit of a world far beyond the class room, extending her influence to the broader liturgical life of the church. Like many of her contemporaries, she took every advantage of the opportunities for further studies in Australia and abroad. She has moved easily on the national stage in terms of liturgical reforms where she has established a formidable reputation.

³⁰⁵ The paper Deirdre delivered was entitled *Australia Song – Taking the pulse; unpublished*, provided to the researcher in April 2010.

Sister Catherine and Sister Deirdre represent two eras of musical contribution by women religious. As pre-Vatican II novices they were subject to the rigorous training that prevailed for all women religious. Sister Catherine entered religious life as a successful professional musician of national and international standing. Deirdre developed her skills and professionalism as a result of the movement of women religious to study at home and overseas, allowing them to adapt their apostolates to the broader community outside the schools. In the case of both women, their ex-students and religious within their communities attest to their brilliance and their contribution to their students and to the broader community within which they worked. Their work as musicians demonstrates that music was not just an “accomplishment” provided for young ladies: along with many of their sisters in both institutes, they exemplified the highly talented and professional skills which women religious contributed to their students and to the broader community.

Conclusion

The “normalization” of music in the life of the Ballarat community was aided by the contribution of women religious: in their convents through professional teaching by qualified musicians, to both Catholic and non-Catholic private students out of school hours, in the parish and country schools under their control and to parish life through involvement in the weekly liturgy. Of equal importance was their encouragement of public and competitive performance, to a standard that enabled their students to compete successfully in the largest and most prestigious eisteddfod in Australia. Theirs was not a one dimensional “accomplishment-driven” contribution to an aspiring elite. They offered generations of young people, particularly girls, an opportunity to hear and perform the best of secular and church music; they provided live music experience for the broader community, and produced students whose abilities were also utilized in local orchestras, theatre companies and musical events. Music, more than anything else, was the interface between the convents and the city.

Chapter 5: The women under study

Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the daily lives and experiences of women religious in convents prior to Vatican II (1962-1965), dealing with their formation in the novitiates which will assist in capturing the journey they were to take between this period and 1980. Vatican II and its immediate effects on the women are documented, again to emphasize the magnitude of the changes asked of the women by the Church. A statistical profile of the women in both institutes provides a picture of the similarities and differences between the Loretos and Sisters of Mercy, and of the elected leaders who took them into the processes of change arising from Vatican II. Combined, the information I give an overview of women who were formed in the 1950s and who were to emerge as the leaders of their communities, either by virtue of their elected positions, or as women who blazed new trails in religious life.

Pre-Vatican II life of religious and their formation process

Rosa MacGinley has clearly documented that papal directives to women religious in relation to updating their life-styles and customs long pre-date Vatican II.³⁰⁶ As early as 1944 Pius XII expressed concern that women religious in the now established institutes should become more part of the contemporary world. In 1950 the Pope convened the first General Assembly of Religious comprising delegates from all over the world, with the aim of discussing the renewal and adaptation of religious life, warning that "...the holy laws of each Institute degenerate into an assemblage of exterior regulations uselessly imposed, whose letter, in the absence of the spirit, kills". The same year he issued *Sponsa Christi* in which he commented on the "...things in the institutes of nuns which are neither necessary nor contemporary; they are merely extrinsic and historical", recommending the need for "...adaptation to present-day conditions which will be able to bring not only greater dignity but also greater efficacy...". Religious habits were to be updated and the distinction between choir and lay members was to be removed. Pius XII again addressed the Superiors General in 1952 – "In this crisis of vocations take care that your customs, the kind of life or the asceticism of your religious families be not a barrier. We are

³⁰⁶ Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*, Crossing Press, Darlinghurst, 2002, pp333-348.

speaking of certain usages which, if they had a meaning in another cultural context, no longer have one today”.

Within Australia, the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Carboni (1953-59), energetically promoted the papal programme of adaptation, particularly in relation to promoting unions and federations amongst the various institutes, but despite these early calls for change and renewal amongst women religious, it was not until after Vatican II that systematic changes began to occur, although there had been some earlier adaptations.

Women who entered some religious congregations began with “juniorates” for children from the age of 14. This was not the case for the Loretos nor for the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, but it could be argued that their boarding schools provided similar types of training for young women who would eventually enter the institute once responsible for their secular education. The rigid adherence to many of the external religious practices of the women who taught them – long hours of silence, regulated community prayer, compulsory daily mass, observance of feast days of importance to the congregation, “immersion” in the cultural and religious context within which the boarding schools in particular operated – were solid training for those students who chose to enter novitiates, often straight from the school. At the very least, one suspects that time spent in a convent boarding school would have provided a much easier entry into the novitiate.

As Christine Trimmingham Jack’s observes in her experience of boarding at the convent of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Kerever Park, Burradoo (NSW), which would have been typical of many of the boarding schools open to the daughters of mainly middle class Catholic families:

There, we lived a life very similar to the one led by the religious who educated us: we learnt that being considered a good student meant following a strict regime of obedience, self-discipline and prayer, with a desire to love God the central goal...being good in this context meant saying yes to those in authority.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Christine Trimmingham Jack, *Growing Good Catholic Girls: Education and Convent Life in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003, px1. A similar account is provided by Kathleen Fitzpatrick describing her experiences at Loreto Portland in 1914, but with features readily recognizable to convent boarders up until the 1960s: “What I remember as chiefly being stressed in our Portland curriculum was the correct way of doing things – sitting for example, required the head to be up, shoulders back and down, feet side by side, heels and knees together, hands (unless usefully occupied) perfectly still and never engaged in hair smoothing, ear-exploring or any activity pertaining to the

Rosa MacGinley describes some of the generic characteristics of novitiate training in Australia. The first year of novitiate, known as the “canonical year”, aimed at promoting a deeper spiritual awareness in the novices. The focus was on religious life and on living according to the vows, under the direction of the Mistress of Novices. The training aimed at the acceptance of rules without question, to test the ability of young women to succumb to authority, engaging them in exercises suited to correcting defects, subduing passions and acquiring virtues, often given menial jobs and practices to detach them from worldly possessions. Contact with family and friends from their secular past virtually ceased: uncensored personal correspondence, attendance at family weddings and funerals were denied as were visits to their parental homes. In archived oral testimony, one Loreto Sister recalls how she watched her father’s funeral from the window of the class she was teaching, and how she was not allowed to come over from Western Australia when her mother died a few years later.³⁰⁸ Another describes how she could not go to her mother’s funeral: “I wanted to go home, but Mother Dorothea said she would have to get permission from Rathfarnham for that – I could not go!”³⁰⁹

During the second year in the novitiate, the women often undertook teacher training while continuing their religious studies and formation. The end result was intended to produce individuals who would not question rules, a life they sometimes replicated in their schools. However, as will become clear during the thesis, the pre-Vatican II formation process produced many women who were anything but submissive, whose leadership, vision and intellectual skills transformed their communities while, at the same time, managing to continue their apostolic work in education.

A directive from the Loreto Provincial, Mother Columbiere, in 1951 would have been typical of the times, and reads as follows:

person. I can recognize a convent girl of my generation still by her posture and deportment.” Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Solid Bluestone Foundations: Memories of an Australian Girlhood*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1983, p92.

³⁰⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 324, *Oral archive*. Interview with Sister Moya Mottram by Jane Kelly, ibvm, December 2004. Permission to visit sick family and attend family funerals was not granted until the 1960s, under the leadership of Mother Dymphna.

³⁰⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 82, *Personal papers of Sister Carmel Cody*. Sister Carmel’s experience is a stark example of the strength of the centralized system under which the Australian Province at this time was governed; any deviation from the rule of the congregation had to be referred to Ireland. The Sisters of Nazareth in Ballarat suffered the same constraints: a woman religious from another congregation told me the Nazareths had to ask permission from London to enable sisters to have a sleep-in in the mornings.

Observance of the following points will be pleasing to Our Lord, because being in accordance with the exact observance of our holy rules and made known by obedience, they are His will for each:

- 1 Great attention to the Rules of Modesty. When the Sisters walk out beyond the grounds, let them be no less than three, and let care be taken that each observes a truly religious exterior – No speaking in streets or trams, no staring about when meeting people, no pointing to houses etc, no carrying of parcels, no swinging of arms. Custody of eyes is looked for in Religious.
- 2 The Sisters are not to walk out with seculars, nor are they to speak to seculars if they meet them when walking out or in trams.
- 3 Our conversation at recreation should be marked by a deference for the taste and opinions of others, and by the “charity that makes itself all to all” (Const. 177); therefore all will carefully avoid discussions on politics. Ailments are not to be made subject of conversation – only the Superior and Prefectress of Health should be acquainted with details of them.
- 4 Arrangements as to where they are to go for vacations are not to be made by the sisters – Each should be satisfied with what Obedience settles.

(In her letter this final paragraph is in capital letters) – “Fervour in Religious life mainly depends on fidelity in little things and laxity easily creeps in if **all** are not watchful.”³¹⁰

Being mindful of the times and the context within which the Directive was issued, it is included here to stress the critical role which unquestioning obedience played in all congregations prior to Vatican II, and to underline the fact that the women trained under this system in the 1950s were the ones who were to bring about such massive changes within their communities and schools. In the case of both institutes, these were not the women who left religious life after Vatican II.³¹¹ They were the ones who stayed on and adapted and renewed their religious and professional lives and maintained their schools until they were handed over to the laity.

³¹⁰ Loreto Province Archives, *Series 61, Correspondence from Provincialate to Communities*. Item 1, Directives from the Provincialate, 1951-1967, Letter dated 16 December, 1951.

³¹¹ Of the 63 women who entered between 1948-1963, “the class of the 1950s”, only seven professed sisters left the Loretos.

The women religious confronting forces for change from all quarters – spiritually, professionally, in terms of their roles as women – emerged from a formation process more suited to the nineteenth century (or the middle ages). Before 1965 the vow of obedience demanded that they ask “permission” for things needed for their daily lives, poverty demanded that they had no personal budgets, chastity meant that their dealings with seculars were guarded and restricted even amongst personal friends. Christine Burke summarizes pre-Vatican II novitiate life by writing in the light of her Loreto experience: “Obedience was often seen to mean a total denial of one’s self and one’s insights. Entering religious life became effectively one’s last adult choice.”³¹²

The experience of the novitiates before Vatican II was in many cases a painful one. A Brigidine sister, Naomi Turner, has stated that her study of religious life, commissioned by the Australian Major Superiors in 1984, revealed that

Some sisters did not want to talk at length about their novitiate experience: it was too painful for them...a few were frankly angry about their experience with those who had been in authority over them...I marvelled that so many triumphed over their beginnings in religious life. What helped them to do so was their acceptance that their novitiate training was simply part of the religious culture of their time, a culture in which those in authority over them had also been caught.³¹³

The directive issued by Mother Columbiere quoted above “sensationalizes” the formation process pre-Vatican II, and the in-hindsight observations of the women themselves are understandable. But within the context of the times, the life of a nun was still one of choice for a significant number of women, many of whom proved to be more than capable of not only running successful enterprises themselves, but who were able to adapt and change to meet the huge paradigm shifts in both their spiritual and professional lives during the latter part of the 1960s and the 1970s. According to Diarmuid O’Murchu, “Stories abound about the harsh and infantile system through which Religious were formed in earlier times. These need to be reviewed in context, one that was often governed by the values of parental supervision with discipline as a primary virtue.” He argues that despite the

³¹² Christine Burke ibvm, ‘Religious life: Its implications for today’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 79, No 1, January 2002, p60. For a compelling collection of women’s stories across a broad range of American congregations, describing the rigid nature of pre-Vatican novitiate training, see Ann Patrick Ware (ed), *Midwives of the Future: American Sisters Tell Their Stories*, Leaven Press, Kansas City, 1985. See also, Joan Chittester, *The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal*, Orbis Books, New York, 2005.

³¹³ Naomi Turner, *Which Seeds Shall Grow? Men and Women in Religious Life*, Collins Dove, Blackburn, 1988.

frequent harshness of this approach, many matured into “people of grace and caliber” who rendered to the Church and society quality services.³¹⁴ It should also be noted that similar strict regimes prevailed in other professional callings, including the rigid discipline applied to young women undertaking nurse training, for example.

Vatican II

Zhou Enlai, second in command to Mao Zedong in the People’s Republic of China, was supposed to have answered the question, ‘What do you think of the French Revolution?’ by saying that “It is a little too soon to say”, a sentiment apparent in much of the literature which is still being produced about the Second Vatican Council.³¹⁵ Debate continues as to whether the Council was “an event”, an “experience” or a process which produced a series of documents which are still open to interpretation in terms of their relevance to the life of the Catholic Church. There is little debate, however, on the magnitude of the changes that occurred after Vatican II, none more so than those affecting women religious.³¹⁶ Amongst all women religious, painful debates were to begin within the religious institutes as they struggled to keep staffing their schools or maintaining other ministries, at times questioning the need and feasibility of retaining their traditional apostolic commitments in the light of falling numbers and the ageing of the sisters within their communities. According to Australian historian, Patrick O’Farrell, the Australian church at the time of Vatican II was “self absorbed” dealing with the aftermath of the Movement, the Split, immigration and an education crisis; and the effects of Vatican II were to become “not only enlivening and invigorating, but also disruptive and discomfoting.”³¹⁷ Equally disruptive and discomfoting was the Pope’s statement condemning artificial birth control, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), at the height of the international cultural revolution sweeping the world

³¹⁴ Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Consecrated Religious Life: The Changing Paradigms*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2006, p178.

³¹⁵ See for example, David Schultenover (ed), *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* The Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 2007.

³¹⁶ For a sociological analysis of the changes following Vatican II, see Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*, St Paul Publications, Homebush, 1993, particularly Chapter 2 and *Grieving for Change: A Spirituality for Refounding Gospel Communities*, St Paul’s Publications, Homebush, 1991. See also, Austin Cooper, ‘Vatican II -The context’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 80, No. 3, July 2003. For a review of Arbuckle’s work, see Reid Perkins, ‘Integrating postmodernity and tradition’, *Review for Religious*, Vol. 51, No 2, March/April, 1992.

³¹⁷ Patrick O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, NSW University Press, Kensington, Revised Edition, 1985, p411.

The Second Vatican Council was convoked by Pope John XXIII who issued the following notice on 25 January 1962, less than three months after his election: “I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in”. In calling for *aggiornamento*, that is, “renewal/reinvention according to own deliberations”, Pope John aimed to bring Catholicism into the modern world. Preparations for the Council took over two years, followed by general sessions over four successive years, 1962-65. Attendance at the Council was limited to all bishops as well as the superiors of male religious orders; despite being much more numerous, women religious had no representation at the Council, although representatives of Orthodox and Protestant communities were included as observers.

The Council produced a series of documents which marked a watershed in the history of the Church. Of these, the two Constitutions, *Lumen gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and *Gaudium et spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), presented a framework and a process through which the Church sought to update and reform its theology and its practices in order to meet the challenges of the twentieth century. *Lumen gentium* spelt out the nature and the mission of the Church. Within this pilgrim Church, the roles and responsibilities of bishops, priests and laity were clearly defined, with the emphasis firmly on the universal call to holiness for each individual through the common bond of baptism. Henceforth, the people of God would share in the priesthood of all believers, committed to the dignity of the individual, respect for cultural differences and justice for all. *Gaudium et spes* set out in even more detail a vision for the Church as one in dialogue with the world, providing witness to the gospel message reformulated in accordance to the signs of the times. This would be a servant Church turned towards the world, rather than away from it, working for economic and social justice, peace, and respect for the environment. At its core would be respect for the human person, the dignity of moral conscience, the ideal of a common good, and mission underpinned by responsibility and participation of all the people of God.

In contrast to previous Councils, Vatican II presented the Church as teacher rather than as a legislator issuing rulings and penalties for violators; it used conciliatory language – co-

operation, partnership, collaboration, dialogue, collegiality, inviting, persuading – ideas and language that were to shape the reforms envisaged by the Council fathers.³¹⁸

The revolutionary nature of the documents had a profound bearing on the nature of religious life, no longer defined as superior to the vocations of the laity, but as equal to all members of the people of God. The call to engage in dialogue with, rather than retreat from, the world, called forth deep questioning of religious life and mission. It was within the context of these earlier documents that women religious were to receive *Perfectae Caritas*, (Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life), which spoke of their need to reform and to up-grade their lives and practices, issued at the end of the Council (1965). As Sophie McGrath commented, “No detailed blueprint was provided: the Church was assuming that women religious had come of age and were capable of making mature decisions for their congregations”.³¹⁹

All religious institutes were directed to revise their constitutions and undertake self examination and experimentation “in the light of the gospel, the spirit of the founder, the needs of the members and the signs of the times”. Institutes were called on to hold a General Chapter within approximately three years of the close of the Council to consider renewal. Negotiating the transition from pre-Vatican II to the new world of adult responsibility, the choice of new apostolates, letting go of old established work and religious practice was to involve years of planning and often painful adaptation and renewal, initially based on the *Norms for Renewal* issued in 1965 through the Vatican document, *Perfectae Caritas*. Meanwhile, members of religious institutes were urged to live in the world, educate themselves, and take more responsibility for themselves individually and communally.

An indication of the seriousness with which women religious tackled the directives from Rome is revealed in the hundreds of documents in the Loreto Province Archives which clearly demonstrate how they prepared for the critical Chapters in 1968 through to 1980.

³¹⁸ On these points, see John O'Malley, 'Vatican II: Did anything happen?' in particular, pp67-85 in David G. Schultenover (ed), *Vatican II: Did anything Happen?*

³¹⁹ Sophie McGrath, *These Women: Women Religious in the History of Australia, The Sisters of Parramatta 1888-1988*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1988, p 150. For a clear exposition of how the Vatican II teachings impacted on and shaped all aspects of religious life, see Sophie McGrath, *These Women*, pp147-165.

The process started when in February 1967 Mother Pauline as the Superior General, wrote to all Loreto provinces from Dublin:

In accordance with the Norms for the Implementation of the Conciliar Decree, *Perfectae Caritas*, it has been decided to set up Commissions in each Province to prepare material for the General Chapter in 1968; by contact with the members of the Commissions, every Sister in the Institute is provided with facilities for expressing her views (anonymously if she so desires.)³²⁰

The Australian Provincial, Mother Dympna, began the local process by establishing a steering committee consisting of Mothers Rosalie, Dominic, Benignues, Repararata (Mary Muirhead), Paul, (Paula Ziesing), Aquinas (Margaret Manion), John Bosco (Noni Mitchell) , and Margaret Mary.³²¹ The function of this steering committee was to organize a plan of discussion and enquiry which would prepare material for discussion at the Provincial Chapter.³²² The Committee then set out the format for discussion and preparation of papers. They recommended that each community be divided into small groups, after which a general community report would be prepared and sent to the steering committee. A time table was set for mid-July 1967, at which stage commissions would be established to go into each topic at greater depth, ensuring that their findings would be available in early 1968.³²³ All the material arising from the discussion was collated at the end of July in order to be ready for a second meeting of the Steering Committee; the minutes of its meeting held on the 28 – 31 August reported on the work of the Commissions. Reports were then to be distributed back to each member of the Province, along with questionnaires and short enquiries to be completed as part of a full review of all

³²⁰ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Provincial Chapters and Congregations*, 1960-1971. Rosa MacGinley describes how prior to Vatican II, Chapters had become "...perfunctory, with their chief object the periodic election of major superiors; they had in the past, been largely ineffective in securing incremental change...Now Pope Paul VI summoned each congregation to hold a special general chapter which was to be prepared over several years by a full and free consultation with all the members...(he) appealed to a participative democratic process – the growing tone of the new post War world." 'Women religious in Australia', *Institute of Religious Studies*, Sydney, 1989, p32. The records relating to the 1960 Chapter of the Loretos cover only a few pages – topics discussed included material and quantity of clothing, whether or not rings and crucifixes should be removed from the dead, "may nuns sit anywhere and move about without asking permission?", how Silver Jubilees should be observed and whether Divine Office should be sung in Latin or English. By contrast, the files covering the 1968 through to 1980 Chapters constitute many hundreds of documents.

³²¹ Loreto Province Archives Series 182, *Provincial Chapters*, 'Minutes for enquiry into adaptation and renewal of religious life, 20 January, 1967, Normanhurst'.

³²² Two methods were initially considered: the first was to invite each community to send in topics for discussion, the second (chosen) strategy was for the committee to send out lists of topics for discussion.

³²³ The literature to be contained in the study included documents from the Vatican Council, scripture readings and those of Mary Ward, with the stress being on the need to revert to basic principles of religious life.

the work which would be undertaken by the Steering Committee at its final meeting in January 1968. The process concluded with a comprehensive report and full set of recommendations, in time for the General Chapter held in Rathfarnham on July 4 1968.

The rapidity and thoroughness with which the sisters responded is vividly documented through the archival material, and provides one explanation for the range of reactions to the recommendations which emerged at the 1968 Chapter, a phenomenon experienced by all women religious going through the same life changing experiences.³²⁴ There is one written recollection of the Chapter left in the archives by Sister Beatrice Hannan ibvm, who was one of the younger sisters first elected to Chapter; her account of the Chapter honestly records the divisions, hurts and anger felt amongst those present, as different factions emerged, not least around the vexed issue of the habit.³²⁵

As the Provincial of the time, Mother Dympna bore the brunt of the turmoil: “[She] was quietly insinuating some new points of view on dress and the reason for its need to change.... She circulated some photos of sisters in very discreet costumes, with an eye to widening our perspectives. These photos sank like a lead in a pool of resistance, if not hostility.” Dympna introduced information on changes occurring in America, sent to her by Sister Joan Nowotny who was studying there at the time, which

...provided the first indication of many that there was a large rift between her thinking and that of the other members; a wall of silence was covering a sense of disapproval, of apprehension about what was happening in the province. Mother Dympna found herself more and more isolated... Women could not/would not engage in free and open discussion of the issues of those days which were so vital to our future... what was startling was the inability or refusal to discuss openly the

³²⁴ For example, see Rosa MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*, pp333-348; Sophie McGrath, *These Women*, Chapter 7; Morna Sturrock, *Women of Strength, Women of Gentleness: Brigidine Sisters- Victorian Province*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1995, Chapter 11; Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loretos in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, Chapter 11.

³²⁵ Sister Beatrice Hannan ibvm, ‘Some Impressions, 1968’ in Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 3a. Sister writes, “With the hindsight of 1993 it is somewhat difficult to recall the vehemence and time expended on this question, but custom, constitutional history (and a few old photos) would soon put the question in perspective”. Other younger sisters elected to the Chapter included Margaret Manion, Noni Mitchell, Mary Muirhead, Toni Matha, Angela Quill, Meg Hannon, Therese Daly, Julianna Coghlan – all were to build on this initial experience within the congregation to emerge as agents of change over the next thirty years.

questions clamouring to be answered on obedience, poverty, dress, prayer, mission, community life – to name a few.³²⁶

An article written for the Ballarat Diocesan Sisters Council in 1975 by a Ballarat East Mercy sister provides an excellent summary of the experience of the change process post Vatican II in their community:

For those of us who can be called “pre-conciliar” as well as “post-conciliar” religious, so many reactions to the changes that have happened in the last 10 years since Vatican II could be described as baffling, exasperating, exciting, upsetting; some began by being quite enthusiastic for renewal, but because the pace of change was so slow, became despondent...in the lives of many there was fear of change. It has been an era of questionnaires, of surveys, of reports, community meetings, discussions, committees and seminars. There was the introduction of a new vocabulary – some words worked so hard they frequently seemed very tired – consultation, community, collegiality, subsidiarity, involvement, relevance. One wide spread phenomenon attributed to Vatican II was that of the “generation gap” entering religious life. This problem intruded because younger religious tended to take to Vatican II like ducks to water, while for many older religious, this was not possible.³²⁷

A second Ballarat East Mercy sister was to record:

As religious women, we always felt the impact of major changes in the Church at large, but it could be argued that no one understood and appreciated the ramifications of Vatican II more than religious Sisters worldwide. Jokes were made about the way that nuns were racing off to lectures, conferences and seminars almost everyday of the week. Studies in scripture, theology, liturgy and psychology were tucked into our weekly program of work and prayer. We were fortunate in Ballarat to have the expertise of lecturers from the Redemptorist House

³²⁶ Beatrice Hannan, ‘Some Impressions’. So distressing was the Chapter for M. Dympna that she tendered her resignation as Provincial soon after; it was not accepted by the leadership in Ireland, and she continued on as Provincial until 1970.

³²⁷ Article written by Sister Margaret McKenna rsm, in Diocesan Sisters Council Newsletter, 1975, Loreto Province Archives, Series 161, *Diocesan Sisters Council*.

of Studies in Wendouree available to us at this time... Encouragement was given by our far-seeing Superiors to each sister to have the opportunity to undertake formation and study either in Australia at local universities and theological colleges or to study overseas. In 1969 our first two sisters went overseas to the Philippines to study at the National Pastoral Institute... sisters traveled overseas sometimes for years at a time to study in Jerusalem, America, Canada, England or Ireland in scripture, theology, liturgy, psychology, education, formation, social welfare.³²⁸

A measure of balance was achieved for both institutes by the mid-1970s, in common with congregations across Australia, according to a national report entitled “Response of religious sisters of Australia to the subject matter proposed for discussion” in October 1972.³²⁹ The report states that by 1972 institutes “in general appear to be regaining balance and stability”, although there was still a level of disquiet about the meaning of the vows of obedience and poverty which now placed more stress on individual responsibility. The majority of respondents from across all Australian religious institutes admitted that divisions and tensions which flowed from the changes existed in their communities, with some division between age groups, and between those who feared change and those who wanted more radical change. The report stated that the principle of subsidiarity had been readily accepted, more homely and comfortable surroundings instituted, and “many congregations see among the positive results of renewal a better understanding of the life and aims of founders and foundresses, and how these aims can be adapted to present day conditions”.³³⁰

Beatrice Hannan finishes her memories of the turbulent times by writing,

³²⁸ Anne Forbes rsm, *Power Point Presentation, '125 Years of Mercies in Ballarat'*, provided to the researcher in April, 2007.

³²⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 162, *Records relating to Religious Sisters Australia*.

³³⁰ Loreto Province Archives, Series 162. The National Statistical Survey of Religious Personnel, Australia, 1976 reported, “It is interesting to note that most of those departing from religious life in the peak period would belong to the age group born in the post-War period, presumably subject to some of the post-War influences. The demise of the utopian vision, the absence of the kind of euphoria that followed the First World War, disillusionment, changing values, the questioning of much that had previously been taken for granted, increasing urbanization, institutional changes in authority concepts, in structures and in patterns of industrial relationships etc may well have contributed to much of the parallel change occurring in religious life. Many who had found it imperative to remain in religious life, now felt free to depart...whereas earlier a number of constraints may have been operative”, p76, cited in Loreto Province Archives, Series 163, *Records relating to major superiors*.

It has been heart warming to watch the growth of outspoken views increasing with each succeeding province meeting as people are called more and more to break away from the institutionalization and to take part actively in the life of the Province;...with the enlightenment of the Spirit and the extra appreciation our studies of Mary Ward have provided us with, I feel we may say with assurance that there will be no repetition of the Mt Eliza Chapter of 1968.³³¹

As Superior General of the Ballarat East Mercies, Valda Ward wrote in reflection on their 1976 General Chapter when "... we took into account not only Mercy, but also Justice, the Gospel value which challenges us in the materialistic society to which we inevitably belong. I wonder did we realize what would happen to us as women and as religious when we took this really seriously". By 1980, she was able to report, "We have grown very close to each other over the past four years as we have tried to find new ways in which to reconcile for the congregation the pain of the "now" with the glory of the "not yet".³³²

Nonetheless, all tension was not resolved: this letter written by an older member of the Loretos to a friend within the community barely contains her anger at the changes:

What is a superior's priority? Isn't it community? Not all the entanglements of preoccupations with buildings, renovations...parents' associations, policy frameworks – are all ready to take over!...All of which comes back to what we have lost by dispensing with the rules of modesty – dress and deportment aspects...I do feel deeply that the permit is being pushed too far...for example, at a Requiem on Monday, one IBVM seemed to be wearing the equivalent of 'shocking pink' (and at a Requiem!); Dear, I wish this dress topic would be weighed anew...these days some go out to films, theatres, movies. The blackboard tells the names of those out, but not why – [there] is very little community left.³³³

As with secular women at that time, social change was difficult, painful and only accomplished through hard work, difficult decisions and a long process of re-education; the difficulties and confusion experienced by women religious resonate with many secular

³³¹ Beatrice Hannan, 'Some Impressions'.

³³² Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy Archives, File 1100-0109, *Valda Ward File*, Report of Superior General, Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East, General Chapter 1980.

³³³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 280, *Local Superiors/Community Leaders Meetings*, Item 2.

women of that generation when confronted with the pain frequently caused by their “revolution” to their parents, family members, friends and neighbours. But alongside the pain of the changes arising from Vatican II, many women spoke of the new freedom and the new opportunities for different apostolates outside teaching. The written memories of one Loreto sister in Ballarat provide an interesting insight:

I came in full of new ideas, but found myself in a ‘one man band’ when I voiced some of them. One member who had entered with me and was professed with me said: “I just can’t understand how you can think like this! We came from the same novitiate, had the same training and you want to change all that!” Needless to say this attitude spread in the community and made life more difficult for me, but I was not deterred.³³⁴

Sister Moya Mottram ibvm, recalling the changes, said:

It’s been absolutely wonderful for me; there’s freedom but it’s more a responsibility in a way than it was before when you were told that you had to do this and that. The changes have made me more mature and responsible for my actions; I think I’m a better person for the changes; it has given me a better education than I had and has deepened my spiritual life.³³⁵

One of the most common themes which emerged from interviews and informal conversations during the course of this research was the almost unanimous relief at abandoning the traditional habit. Aside from the practical benefit of no longer working in cumbersome and uncomfortable dress, often unsuited for the weather conditions, the main point made was that women religious no longer wished to be perceived as separated or privileged in status from the laity. This is not to say that it was not a painful decision for some, nor that the practice was abandoned easily, but after initial reluctance, it was perhaps better received by the women themselves than by many seculars, for whom the habit remained as a sign of respect, even awe, with its disappearance marking the end of an era.

³³⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records of Loreto education*, Item 15, Memories of Sister Angela Serong.

³³⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 324, *Oral Archives*, Interview by Sister Jane Kelly with Sister Moya Mottram, 14 December, 2004.

Despite the divisions and apprehension, the strength of the women in managing the transition lay in their education and their membership of religious congregations which were known for their independence, respect for strong leadership and for successful management of large and diverse enterprises. Both the Mercies and the Loretos were sustained in their struggle to find a new way of religious life by the charism of their founders, despite the reservations of at least two commentators who questioned the utility of returning to the inspiration of some founders, whose motives were pragmatic, attuned to the times and not necessarily relevant for the needs of the church in the 20th century.³³⁶ In the case of the two institutes under study, it appears that a return to the charism of their respective foundresses provided more than adequate sustenance for their renewal journeys, and within those charisms they identified the concept of justice as the key to their quest. In the midst of the confusion of the 1968 reforming Chapter of the Loretos, it was stated:

The widening of our field to meet the needs of the modern society may mean sacrifice, but if we have the spirit of Mary Ward, we will be prepared for this. It was pointed out by some of the nuns that as Mary Ward had to struggle to change the accepted monastic way of life in her day, so perhaps we too have to struggle to change our present way of life, in order to meet the needs of the church today. It seems certain that Mary Ward's aim was, and would be, in this present age, to place her Institute at the service of God and of the Church.³³⁷

In her presidential address to the Sisters of Mercy in 1977, Valda Ward relates a conversation with an elderly sister who advised her in preparation for the National Assembly that:

‘Whatever choices the sisters think they are going to make at the National Assembly, just remind them how Catherine McAuley went about things.

³³⁶ Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., ‘Beyond the liberal model: Quo Vadis?’ *Review for Religious*, Vol. 50, No 2, March/April 1991, p185. Sister McDonough, wrote: “Unfortunately, when active institutes of women religious went in search of their roots in the mandated renewal subsequent to Vatican II, most were confronted with the absence of a genuine, unique charism. And most women’s institutes apparently either could not or would not recognize that absence for what it really meant, namely: They actually had no sound structures, no formative customs, no deep-rooted spirituality, no long-term ecclesial service, no meaningful and compelling way of life that they could call their own. In short, they had no genuine spiritual patrimony or religious heritage to which they could return and from which they could move into the future.” p185. Dr Paul Collins expresses similar views; see *No Set Agenda: Australia’s Catholic Church Faces and Uncertain Future*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1992, p63. For an analysis of the concept of charism in relation to education, see John Braniff, ‘Charism and the concept of education’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 84, No 1, January 2007.

³³⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to provincial chapters/congregations*, Part 1, Chapter, 1968.

Remember that she was tough minded and tender hearted – both at the same time. And if the sisters today think they can make choices any other way, then they are very much mistaken’. I believe that by using those two adjectives, ‘tender-hearted’ and ‘tough minded’, that elderly sister proved she knew what mercy and justice are all about.³³⁸

In the same address, she also stressed that

Women of today are assured that within limits they can determine their own destiny. And this accords well with Mercy tradition. A healthy independence always characterized the way Catherine McAuley worked. In every situation she showed herself to be a woman of decision.

She also observed, “Maybe justice is the key word, the touchstone, the criterion for ministry that will determine to whom, to what needs, and how we minister, and will never permit us to be comfortable again... The congregation must always question itself as to whether what it is doing and what it thinks it is doing are really the same thing.”³³⁹

Profile of women religious in the two institutes

Between 1950 and 1963, the numbers of Loreto sisters within the Australian Province remained steady between 262 and 273; it then peaked at 289 in 1968, declining to 257 in 1971, 237 in 1976 and 218 by 1981.³⁴⁰ Their membership was spread across all the mainland states, but they always retained a significant proportion of their number to Ballarat. For example, the number of professed Loreto sisters living and working in Ballarat were those in the Mary’s Mount community, ranging from 22 in 1951, building to the peak number of 36 in 1977, falling to 28 in 1980, supported during these three decades by seven second degree sisters, while in the Dawson street community, there were 13 teaching sisters, supported by two or three second degree sisters³⁴¹. In summary,

³³⁸ Valda Ward, Presidential Address, ‘Some choices which the congregation faces’, *Mercy and Justice, First National Assembly of the Sisters of Mercy*, Australia, Melbourne, 1977, p10.

³³⁹ Valda Ward, Presidential Address, p9.

³⁴⁰ The significance of these figures is that at the peak of their membership, Loretos in Australia numbered only 289 women (in 1966), that of these, many were second degree sisters involved in domestic work. Taking into account the number of women who would have been past working life, this would have left little more than 200 Loreto women across Australia who were responsible for boarding schools, day schools, kindergartens, parish schools, commercial colleges and a university college

³⁴¹ Two or three professed sisters from each community taught at each of their two parish schools during this period.

approximately 50 professed sisters and 10 second degree sisters constituted the numerical commitment of Loretos to the city of Ballarat between 1950 – 1980, in addition to which there were on average, 17 Loreto sisters in Portland.

The figures for the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy during the same period are as follows: 85 sisters, expanding to 162 in 1965, declining to 130 in 1980, spread across the Ballarat diocese. There was a consistent staff of 20 women religious at Sacred Heart during the 1950s and 60s. By 1974, there were 37 sisters living at Ballarat East, 11 of whom were studying, nine were at St Martin's, six were attached to Patrician House, and 15 were spread throughout their four parish schools in the city.

Post-Vatican II changes began to impact on the apostolic work of the two institutes by the mid-seventies, but the number of students under their care continued to grow: Mercy sisters teaching at SHC and St Martin's were responsible for 648 girls; the Loretos between Mary's Mount and Dawson Street had 631. Both still offered boarding facilities and both still had a significant, visible presence of women religious in positions of authority as principals and deputy principals. As will be shown in Chapter 8, this was to radically change by the end of the decade.

An examination of the Registry of Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat East reveals the quite extraordinary family links between many of their members during the period under study. From 1948 until 1981, (with the exception of six of the years), membership of each set of new novices contained at least some who were sisters, cousins, nieces or grand-nieces of women who were already in the convent, or who had been members. In the case of some of the women, they fitted all categories – sister, cousin, niece/grand-niece. In addition to wishing to retain the teachers' college and the novitiate, the struggle of the Ballarat East Mercies to hold out against amalgamation was fueled by the need to retain power to recruit locally and keep their community together. The fact that they drew most of their postulants from ex-students of the convent confirms this strong theme of local "ownership" and sense of belonging to the Ballarat community, demonstrated by the fact that of the 20 sisters teaching at SHC in 1950, 17 had themselves been students of the college, as had 19 of the 20 in 1960³⁴². The local nature of Mercy membership can be seen as a strength, as

³⁴² Information supplied by Sister Lesley Dickinson, archivist at Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy.

generations of girls from the same families along with many young women who went to school together have entered and have maintained strong family and community ties, adding to the belief of many in the Ballarat diocese that the “Mercies are one of us”.³⁴³ They maintained good working and personal relationships with the local clergy, many of whom were themselves local men and ex-students of St Patrick’s College.³⁴⁴

As a national organization, a strength of the Loretos was the fact that individual women were shifted inter-state between their schools and presumably gained a wider view of both the church and the varying education systems at that time, although comments have been made by some sisters that this resulted in a much lower identification with the local church and community. As a centralized institute, the Loretos drew their novices from across Australia, but it is interesting to note that a high proportion of novices did come from the Ballarat diocese; in the overall total number of Loreto sisters, the Ballarat diocese provided as many members as did the Melbourne diocese, while the other two Victorian regional dioceses sent no recruits to the order.³⁴⁵ Of similar interest is that the numbers of women entering Loreto and Ballarat East Mercies between 1891 and 1972 were actually the same (42 each), a pattern that at first seems surprising. But the perception is somewhat distorted by the fact that the Mercies actually stayed within the diocese and retained high visibility in their schools and through their regular home visits, whereas a woman entering the Loretos from Ballarat could finish up interstate for much of her life, and therefore be “lost” to the diocese. Even those who stayed within Ballarat for many years remained virtually unseen by any except students and their parents, as outside visitation was strictly prohibited by their rule.

³⁴³ This phrase was used by a long serving priest of the Ballarat diocese in private conversation.

³⁴⁴ Monsignor Fiscaini had a niece in the Mercies and was perceived to be closer to them than the Loretos with whom he would have much more limited contact.

³⁴⁵ For example, of the 289 Loreto sisters in 1966, 63 women came from Ballarat diocese and 63 from the Melbourne diocese. Twelve girls from the Ballarat diocese also entered the Melbourne congregation of the Sisters of Mercy; nine joined the Sisters of St John of God, six joined the Sisters of Nazareth. Others chose the Sisters of Charity (14), Brigidines (13), Sisters of St Joseph (8), Our Lady of Sion (7), Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (5), Good Shepherds (3), Presentation Sisters (3), Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion (2) and one each to the Nursing Sisters Little Company of Mary, FCJs, Missionary Sisters Society of Mary, Little Sisters of the Poor, Benedictine Missionary Sisters, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. *Ballarat Parish Magazine*, March 1972. According to this report, 170 young women joined religious congregations from the Ballarat parish; the report did not specify which period of time these figures covered.

³⁴⁵The ethnic origins of Loreto nuns remained consistent during this period; by 1976 membership of the institute was overwhelmingly Australian born (203) with Australian born parents (195); 30 women were from Ireland with Irish parents, three were from the UK and a further nine from continental Europe. It is also of interest to note that none of the Irish born departed the congregation during the decade 1966-1976.

The voice of the Australian Loretos was a strong one within the Irish Province, constituting as they did the second largest grouping among the international Provinces with 271 members in 1968, second after the Irish themselves who numbered 575.³⁴⁶ Two Australian born members went on to become superior generals of the international Loreto congregation, Sister Noni Mitchell (1986-1999) and Sister Mary Wright (1999-2006). Equally, the voice of the Ballarat East Mercies was strong amongst the Mercy sisters across Australia, as will be demonstrated in the course of this thesis, particularly in relation to issues of the governance and structure of Australian Mercy communities.

Educational qualifications of the women religious

The most significant feature of the both institutes was the long history of providing their own training for both religious and secular women who taught in their schools at primary level. Of equal significance, is the importance which was given to educating sisters at the tertiary level from the turn of the 20th century, continuing throughout their history, and, as with other congregations, accelerating after Vatican II. In the case of the Mercies, in large part this is because they were needed to staff the teachers' college, the important point being that the same graduates simultaneously taught at the convent; thus the girls in their secondary years benefited from well qualified teachers at a time when tertiary qualifications for secular women were not the norm.

The range of professional qualifications held by women religious in both institutes between 1950 and 1964 reflects their almost exclusive involvement in teaching until after Vatican II, although both communities did have a small number of members who had been professionally trained as, for example, nurses or office administrators, before entering religious life. It also reflects the requirements and expectations of all women who worked as teachers during this period. Whether they were religious or secular, women's post-secondary education continued to fall within a narrow band of qualifications necessary for their current employment.³⁴⁷ However, in both institutes there had always been highly qualified individuals from the time of their establishment in Ballarat, particularly in areas

³⁴⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 155, *Australian Province Community Lists*. Other member nations of the Irish branch of IBVM and their membership numbers in 1968 were: England (162), India (142), Africa (141), Spain (134) and Mauritius (80).

³⁴⁷ For example, it was not until the late 1970s and 1980s that growing numbers of women moved into educational administration, for the simple reason that there was no career path open to them in this field; it was not until 1968 that married women gained the right to remain permanent employees in the Victorian education system, therefore the numbers of women eligible for promotion was confined to those who remained single.

such as music, languages, literature and the arts.³⁴⁸ The educational qualifications of women in both institutes reveal a pattern of gradual increase in qualifications, but all within a fairly narrow range of disciplines relating directly to teaching, with the addition of management and administration by the early 1960s, reflecting the changing demands of all those in charge of educational institutions growing from this period. Both the Loretos and the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat were well qualified in fields similar to those held by women in the secular society, that is, in primary education up to grade eight and to a lesser extent, with university qualifications that enabled them to teach up to year 12. Their qualifications in music reflected the heavy emphasis placed on the subject within most convents across Australia.

As a critical component of the management of their schools, Sister Valda Ward reports that as early as 1969 many of the principals of schools managed by the Sisters of Mercy had already taken part in workshop sessions in educational administration in Ballarat.³⁴⁹ The Mercies were able to provide educational administration courses for their own sisters and for other congregations by the early 1970s; for example, in 1973, 12 of their own sisters, two (Ballarat) Loreto sisters and two lay people were enrolled in educational administration at Aquinas Teachers' College.³⁵⁰ In 1974 of the 37 sisters at Sacred Heart, 11 were studying, and, again reflecting the pattern of other women's religious institutes, many were doing so while holding down full or part-time teaching positions.

In interviews and informal conversations conducted in the course of writing this thesis, Mercy sisters have stressed the importance of being part of a community with a long history of providing educational opportunities for their members. Sister Therese Power acknowledged the early leadership of M. Xavier and M. Bonaventure as educationalists, and, in that tradition, the encouragement for further study provided by both Clare Forbes

³⁴⁸ In 1952, only two Loreto sisters held diplomas of theology, but 26 had university degrees, increasing to ten and 37 respectively by 1964; twelve had higher Diplomas of Education, increasing to 17 by 1964. The most common qualification was a Teaching Certificate held by 108 women in 1952 and 133 in 1964. The increase was accounted for by the fact that registration required three year training for primary teachers. It should be noted that the convent archival records also have numerous reports and discussions about the need for women to maintain their reputation as leading educationalists. This is a reflection of the Loreto tradition of attracting and keeping women who for their times were well qualified professionally; it was not just outside pressures that account for the emphasis on retraining and/or upgrading qualifications; it was part of the congregation's ethos.

³⁴⁹ Valda Ward, 'An investigation of the organizational climate of certain elementary parochial schools in the diocese of Ballarat'. *Diploma in Educational Administration*, University of New England, 15 October 1971, p41.

³⁵⁰ The Loreto sisters were Sisters Margaret Noone and Anna Gaha; the two lay people were employed as lay staff at St Michael's school in Horsham.

and Valda Ward after Vatican II.³⁵¹ Sister Rita Hayes said that further training in areas other than education was strongly encouraged, in her case by Sister Clare Forbes, allowing her to move out of teaching into social welfare.³⁵² Rita's experience mirrors that of Sister Toni Matha ibvm, who was equally encouraged by her Provincial, Mother Dympna, to change her professional career from teaching to social welfare, seen at the time as a significant shift for the Loretos who had no history of corporate work in social welfare or health provision in Australia.

Leadership amongst women religious prior to and during Vatican II

The hierarchical system prevalent in the 1950s and 60s in all convents produced elected leaders in the form of the group's major superior and her council of consultors. As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, there were also individual women who took on leadership roles during the post-Vatican II era, either by force of their personalities and/or by virtue of their willingness to pioneer new apostolic work. A fruitful area for further research would be a thorough documentation of the lives of the elected leaders of women's institutes in Ballarat, how they personally shaped their own communities and contributed to the social capital of the city and diocese. For the purpose of this thesis, an overview of the contribution of some of these women will be included, to draw out the different styles of leadership required of leaders before and after Vatican II, the challenges they faced and the forces which impacted on their decision making.

Leaders of the Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East

Following on the leadership of M Xavier Flood, the Ballarat East Mercies entered into a long period dominated by two equally formidable superiors: Mother Alacoque and Mother Bonaventure who led the congregation in three year rotating periods for over fifty years between them, in what has been described by some as "benevolent dictatorship". Mother Bonaventure was born in 1888 at Ballarat East, the second of five children of Michael John Healy, railwayman, and Mary Helen Costello, a teacher. Her schooling was with the Ballarat East Mercies at St Alipius and later Sacred Heart College, after which she completed her Diploma of Music at Melbourne University in 1909 and Diploma of Education in 1916. She entered the convent at the age of 20 in 1908, and by 1928 she was elected assistant-superior. Between 1951 and 1956 she took on the role as mistress of

³⁵¹ Interview with Sister Therese Power, Melbourne, 3 July, 2008.

³⁵² Interview with Sister Rita Hayes, Ballarat, 1 July, 2008.

method, preparing both sisters and lay women to become teachers. In 1956 she was elected Mother General and became principal of SHC until her death on the 26 May, 1966 at the age of 78.³⁵³

Mother Bonaventure was an institution in Ballarat, and stories of her leadership abound in local circles and amongst her hundreds of ex-students. Although she did not live to see her dream of the completion of the separate campus for senior students at St Martin's in the Pines, she left behind an impressive legacy of buildings, new foundations and generations of students who went through the schools she managed and staffed with her sisters. She established Patrician House as a hostel for the undergraduates of the teachers' college and was also responsible for four primary schools in Ballarat, as well as convents and schools in 13 Victorian towns. In the 1950s, new buildings were added to the convent and novitiate, and the sisters expanded their teaching into domestic science and sewing, using rooms at St Paul's Technical College.

Led by strong leaders from the days of their arrival in Ballarat, the Mercies were no strangers to change when confronted with the paradigm shift of Vatican II in the 1960s, as the issue of their governance and relationship with other Mercy foundations stretched back to the turn of the century. Their history is peppered with instances of change and with resistance to what they perceived as threats to their independence. For example, the amalgamation of various Mercy congregations in Victoria and Tasmania in 1907, following the need for teacher registration, was strongly resisted by Mother Xavier who refused to join, fearing the loss of their teachers' college, their own novitiate and their ability to fulfill Catherine McAuley's vision of strong, independent foundations³⁵⁴. In 1953 two models for further amalgamation were proposed by Rome; the first was a Union whereby the different member congregations would become provinces under the superior general; the second was a Federation comprising a more loose structure of collaboration among the superior generals of the independent congregations. Under the direction of Mother Bonaventure, Ballarat East opted for Federation as a way of preserving autonomy,

³⁵³ Anne Forbes rsm, 'Healy, Eileen Mary (1888-1966)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p421.

³⁵⁴ Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia*, p290. The Australian bishops were advised by Rome not to impose amalgamation "as an obligation, but to advise and the induce the Sisters to accept it", MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*, p234. Ballarat held out strongly on this first attempt to amalgamate them with Melbourne.

and added further to the perception that Ballarat East Mercies were strongly independent and indeed thought of by some as “rebels”.³⁵⁵

M. Bonaventure was a woman of her time, but as one of her sisters in religion commented: “Her death (in 1966) was timely as it would have been very difficult for her to come to terms with the cataclysm that Vatican II brought in its wake”.³⁵⁶ Nor did she prepare for her immediate succession, and reminiscent of the Indian proverb that “under the Banyan tree, nothing grows”, Mother Carmel Keane who followed her experienced difficulty providing the strong leadership that was required to steer the community through Vatican II. This task would be left to Sisters Valda Ward and Clare Forbes as the next Superiors, just as it would fall to Sister Noni Mitchell who followed Mother Antoinette at Loreto.

Leadership of the Loretos

In personality and style, M. Dympna McNamara ibvm who was provincial from 1958-1970, emerges from what little has been written about her as distinctly different from M. Bonaventure, but she was equally determined and visionary in her approach to the women and the institute under her care. Like M. Bonaventure, she oversaw expansion of her schools and, of greater importance, reintroduced a strong commitment to the education (and re-education) of her sisters, following what had been a drought in sending women to university under previous provincials.

A large number of the interviews conducted by Mary Clark for her commissioned history of the Loretos reveal M. Dympna as the greatest influence on the Loretos who joined the institute during her time, many of whom were to become the new generation of leaders, elected and otherwise. She was widely respected and sincerely acknowledged for her leadership in the Vatican II days as the Loretos own “John 23rd”, steering the very difficult path of change at great personal cost. Her obituary, written by Sisters Noni Mitchell and Jennifer Cameron states:

McNamara believed in the potential of women, liberated through education and learning, and she faced change with courage, vision and good humour...In 1968

³⁵⁵ The vote in 1954 was eight in favour of the Union with the remaining nine for Federation, consisting of Ballarat East, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Grafton, Townsville, Herberton, Parramatta, North Sydney and West Perth. The Federation was formally approved by Rome in 1956. The first Council of the Federation with M. Bonaventure as vice-President, was held in Ballarat, 19 January 1957, representing 2000 Sisters of Mercy.

³⁵⁶ Sr. Anne Forbes, *Power Point Presentation*, p10.

she centralized finances, “an extraordinarily enlightened initiative”, backing her own wisdom and judgment with expert business and financial research and advice from the managing director of Lend Lease, Dick Dusseldorf. In 1965 she sent the first two Sisters, Veronica Brady and Joan Nowotney, to Toronto for post-graduate studies to doctorate level, relocated the provincial headquarters to Loreto House in Albert Park (a practical, commonsense move), attended General Chapters in Rathfarnham (Ireland) in 1960, 1968 and 1971, and was passionate about the need for Union between the different branches of IBVM, demonstrated by her visits to the Generalates of Rome and America.³⁵⁷

Mary Wright ibvm wrote at the time of Mother Dympna’s death:

In an institutional life with strong focus on detail and conformity, she saw the big picture. She had a vision for religious life for adult women, unfettered by antique customs and where we were encouraged to develop and use those gifts in the service of God. She suffered in persevering with her efforts to implement reforms. She made mistakes but wasn’t paralysed by the fear of making them.³⁵⁸

Her obituary concluded that amongst the “giants in the era of change and in the advancement of women, McNamara stood with them”.

Mother Antoinette Hayden followed as Provincial in 1970, having previously been Mistress of School and then Superior at Mary’s Mount (1961-1969). Educated at Loreto Dawson Street day school and later head girl at Loreto Mandeville Hall in Melbourne, Mother Antoinette was a member of one of Ballarat’s leading Catholic families.³⁵⁹ Mother Antoinette was viewed by old girls of Mary’s Mount as a truly gifted and inspiring teacher, a formidable but very fair authority figure, a great sportswoman and a deeply spiritual woman. Although some found her rather stern and forbidding, there was obviously a great deal of respect for her from both students and women with whom she worked and lived, demonstrated in part by naming the new library wing at Mary’s Mount in her honour. There are indications in archival material that Mother Antoinette was struggling with some

³⁵⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July, 2000.

³⁵⁸ Fax dated 15 June 2000 from Sister Mary Wright to Sister Deirdre Brown, located in Loreto Province Archives, Series 213, *Biographical file*, Item: Dympna McNamara.

³⁵⁹ Mother Antoinette’s brother, Basil, was a successful real estate agent, a prominent member of a number of elite clubs and institutions and an acknowledged member of Ballarat’s “local aristocracy”.

of the outward signs of change after Vatican II, although it was she who allowed Sister Veronica Brady to dispense with her veil when Veronica began teaching at the University in Western Australia, and it was her vision that enabled the Loretos to branch out into mission work in Broome. Her leadership period might best be described as a “holding period”. Her sudden death in Rome in 1974 marked the transition to a younger, post-Vatican II breed of leaders in the person of Sister Noni Mitchell.

Conclusion

Women who were formed in religious life in the 1950s emerged from a conventual system more attuned to the nineteenth century than of the twentieth. In the midst of the decade when the highest demands were being made on their professional work as teachers in an education system stressed to breaking point, they were asked to undertake the most thorough review of their lives as women religious. That they were able to do this, albeit at great cost and with considerable pain and anguish, is a tribute to their faith, dedication to the communities within which they lived, their education and their leadership. The transition demanded of them was not at all times achieved with universal success; for some, the changes were either too slow or too rapid. While a number withdrew from the institutes, some stayed in religious life who might otherwise have been better to have left; some in leadership positions obviously struggled to rise to the demands asked of them. The processes of renewal and adaptation of religious life were inevitable and irreversible as demanded by the Church. At the same time, they were to face equally confronting changes arising from external forces, which are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: External paradigm shifts impacting on the contribution of women religious

*Catholic history [also] needs to be open to history that is not Catholic. By this I mean simply that it needs to be telling a story that is in dialogue with other parts of the culture.*³⁶⁰

Introduction

The paradigm shifts which occurred to drive the changes to both the religious and professional lives of women religious were both external (political and cultural) and internal to the processes of the Church; these were obviously not confined to Ballarat, nor to the institutes under study. An understanding of the context which they provide is essential to an understanding of both the nature and the magnitude of the changes which occurred to the daily lives of the women following Vatican II. The period from 1950 to 1980 has been chosen for this study to illustrate the changing historical context within which women religious operated and adapted. The forces which impacted were both cultural and political, arising in part out of the wider social movements for individual and political freedoms, including the emergence of the women's movement internationally and within Australia; all came to a head in what has become collectively known as "the 1960s". Concurrently, significant changes were occurring in both secular and Catholic education policies, most notably the introduction of state aid to Catholic schools and the subsequent development of a more structured Catholic education system.³⁶¹

The Shifts in secular culture - The 1950s

Cultural historian John Murphy argues that "we respectively think of decades as having an expressive unity – as the prosperous and complacent fifties, or the turbulent and rebellious sixties" but warns that thinking of decades as archetypes can be deceptive, as they are "not

³⁶⁰ Katherine Massam, 'Australian Catholic history – Developing or declining?' Thoughts on telling the stories of Catholic Australia', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 27, 2006.

³⁶¹In choosing the period 1950-1980 as "manageable decades" for this research, I am aware of the risk that segmentation can fail to acknowledge the connections and relationships with what has gone before, in addition to what may come after the end of the artificially chosen historical period. For example, as cultural historian, David Hilliard comments, "In the religious history of Australia, the 1950s are remembered and portrayed as a time of confidence and expansion. For historical analysis, these are not merely the years from 1950 to 1959 but the 'long 1950s' which began in the late 1940s and ended about 1963-64". David Hilliard, 'Church, family and sexuality in Australia in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 109, October 1997. British historian, Eric Hobsbawm treats the 1960s as the period from the First World War to the global crisis of the 1970s; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*, The Penguin Group, London, 1994.

one uniform experience, but a variety of contending experiences and responses to circumstances”.³⁶² He argues that the 1950s have come to be viewed not just as a decade, but as an adjective, “...conjuring up visions of prosperity, complacency, suburban blandness, lack of imagination, repression and intolerance; in the much quoted view of Paul Keating, ‘as one long silent Sunday afternoon’”.³⁶³ Whatever judgment is made about the views of the popular commentators on the 1950s, either as a decade or an adjective, it is widely acknowledged that profound social changes had their seeds in the post-war reconstruction extending into the 1950s, particularly full employment, the growth in prosperity and the beginnings, albeit at glacial pace, of changing work and family conditions for women.³⁶⁴

The unprecedented economic boom lasted from the end of the Second World War until the 1970s, bringing with it the growth of a middle class (estimated from 12% in 1950 to 19% in 1970) and as Murphy argues, more importantly, the spread of middle class values: home ownership, stability, values of respectability, self-reliance and responsibility.³⁶⁵ Murphy points out that the prosperity of the 1950s was not realised until the middle of the decade and that many of the discontents of the 1960s began to emerge in the 1950s with the effects of the isolation inherent in the growth of suburbs, particularly felt by the young women and mothers cut off from extended families, the “problem with no name”, referring to the discontent of house-bound women identified by Betty Friedan in 1963 in *The Feminine Mystique*, and by the image of *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* portraying the “rat race” of consumerism and soul destroying employment conditions for the 1950s man.³⁶⁶

Post-war Australia was fuelled by the largest migration program of any country in the world relative to existing population, outside the peculiar circumstances surrounding

³⁶² John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p218. Other popular commentators on Australia in the 1950s include Ronald Conway, *Land of the Long Weekend*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, 1978 and *The Great Australian Stupor: An Interpretation of the Australian Way of Life*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, 1985; Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1964.

³⁶³ John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p2.

³⁶⁴ For one overview of the Catholic Church in the 1950s and 60s, see Austin Cooper, 'Vatican II- The context', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 80, No 3, July 2003. See also, Paul Collins, *Mixed Blessings, John Paul II and the Church of the Eighties: The Crisis in World Catholicism and the Australian Church*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987, Chapter 2.

³⁶⁵ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p6.

³⁶⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, New York, 1963; “The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit”, a film starring Gregory Peck.

migration to Israel.³⁶⁷ For the Catholic Church, this huge influx of migrants was to have a profound effect on their education system. Although Ballarat itself did not experience anything like the increase in migrant population affecting Melbourne or Sydney, nonetheless the flow-on effects were felt as Catholic education authorities, particularly in Melbourne, began to re-shape the way in which the system was administered in order to respond to what became an “education crisis” by the mid-1960s.

Adding to these social and family stresses inherent in post-war 1950s Australia was the fear of nuclear war and the fear of the spread of communism, the latter causing heated and divisive debate within the Catholic community, particularly after the success of the Chinese Communists in 1949. Australia’s response resulted in a commitment of troops to Korea in 1950, to Malaysia in 1955 and, most contentious of all, to Vietnam in 1965. Domestically the fear was fuelled by the Petrov defection in 1954, the struggles within the union movement and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) over how to handle communism within Australia, and the Soviet invasions into Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) which impacted most directly on migrant communities and many members of the Left in Australia.³⁶⁸

It was not only the Catholic Church that responded to these internal and external threats (perceived and real). As David Hilliard has demonstrated, all the major Christian Churches at this time issued calls to the people of Australia to strengthen family life, tackle the new phenomenon of ‘juvenile delinquency’ and general moral decline.³⁶⁹ They did this through crusades and missions, including those of Billy Graham who led huge rallies in Australia, through family services, wide expansion of Sunday schools, marriage counselling and support for Youth Fellowship organisations, particularly strong amongst Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Assisted migration rose from 275,241 between 1951 and 1955, to 537,478 between 1966-70. *Official Year Book of Australia*, 1973, p26.

³⁶⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of the causes and consequences of the cultural revolutions, particularly those of the 1960s, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, notably, Chapter 13, ‘The Age of authenticity’.

³⁶⁹ David Hilliard, ‘Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s’.

³⁷⁰ Billy Graham’s address in 1959, paraphrased in Hilliard could well have been delivered by any Catholic priest or bishop: “Happy marriages were based on a benevolent, industrious, trustworthy wife, and a loyal, honest husband in perfect command of his tongue; a wife who made an effort to look attractive and keep the house clean; a husband who gave his wife a small amount of money each week for her own use; a home that was a centre of wholesome activity for the children.” David Hilliard, ‘Church, family and sexuality’, p138. See also, Anne O’Brien, ‘A Church full of men’: Masculinism and the Church in Australian History’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No 100, April 1993.

The crusading efforts of Protestant churches were mirrored by those of the Catholic church in the 1950s, most vividly represented in the work of Katherine Massam.³⁷¹ Rosary Crusades, parish missions, Cana marriage counselling, novenas and prayers for the conversion of Russia, underpinned church life which proved to be an excellent training ground for youth, particularly through the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and the sodalities within the schools which led Val Noone to argue that “The conclusion drawn is that the 1950s, often portrayed as a cemetery, were, rather, a seedbed for many of the social changes of the 1960s”.³⁷²

The effects on the Catholic community of the anti-communist movement, supported by Archbishop Mannix and Bob Santamaria, first through the Catholic Social Studies Movement in the 1940s, later through National Civic Council (NCC) and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), have been extensively documented, and, as indicated in Chapter 2, had a profound effect in Ballarat.

The 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s has become even more of an adjective than the 1950s. It was a time of turbulent change in the Catholic Church and within the broader Australian society. Archbishop Mannix died in 1963 after dominating not only Catholic life in Victoria, but also exerting huge influence on the Australian Church and Australia’s political history. The Menzies years came to an end in 1966; his successor, Harold Holt, was to issue the famous “all the way with LBJ” statement when the US President, Lyndon B Johnson, visited Australia in 1967, adding fuel to the anti-war movement and the growing restlessness of a society which had been dominated by conservative politics since 1949.³⁷³ That same year, Australians began to see the war in Vietnam played out and analysed on the news each

³⁷¹ Katherine Massam, *Sacred Thread: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1996; see also by the same author, ‘The Blue Army and the Cold War: Anti-communist devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No 97, October 1991, and David Hilliard, ‘God in the suburbs: The religious culture of Australian cities in the 1950s’, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 97, October 1991. Both the Rosary Crusade and Billy Graham’s crusades attracted crowds of over 150,000, with an estimated 57,000 people “coming forward” to declare their conversion at the Sydney show grounds during Billy Graham rallies.

³⁷² Val Noone, ‘A new youth for Australia’: Young Christian Workers around 1960’, *Footprints: The Journal of the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission*, December 1995. See also, John Molony, *Towards an Apostolic Laity*, Y.C.W., Melbourne, 1960.

³⁷³ Tom Frame, *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005.

night with the introduction of *This Day Tonight*, Australia's first daily current affairs program.³⁷⁴

The world wide cultural revolution of the 1960s arrived later in Australia than other parts of the Western world, arguably starting in 1969 with the rise of the anti-conscription and anti-war movements.³⁷⁵ Out of these arose (in part) movements for women's liberation, the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa and for Aboriginal rights.³⁷⁶ Even if we did place the song *Sadie the Cleaning Lady* as number one hit ahead of Bob Dylan, Australians were not immune to the events which marked 1968 internationally: the Tet offensive in Vietnam, riots in Paris, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the jailing of Nelson Mandela, and the opening of *Hair* on Broadway.

The Women's Movement in Australia

*Armed with a University education and the pill, many young women determined to escape from the orbit of their mothers and follow their brothers... Women's Liberation at one level was a generational rebellion, a rejection of mothers and maternity. At another level it was an effect of women's new economic positions and aspirations.*³⁷⁷

Of the broader cultural changes affecting all sectors of society, none was more dramatic than the women's movement. The international movement for women's liberation was to have profound effects on all Australian women, including presumably women religious. Beginning with the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan in 1963, the movement gathered strength slowly during the 1960s, and by 1970 had become an international and national force for change for women. *I am Woman* sung by Helen Reddy topped the charts in 1973 and became the anthem for the international women's

³⁷⁴ Of equal importance in the same year was the introduction of talk-back radio, giving voice to an increasingly aware and vocal listening audience; also the election campaigns were covered by TV for the first time.

³⁷⁵ The anti-conscription movement grew as a result of the decision to send conscripts to Vietnam in 1966, leading to the burning of draft cards and growing organized dissent on University campuses. The broader anti-war movement came later with the huge moratorium marches around the country in 1970, 1971 and 1972. For a comprehensive account of the anti-war movement amongst Catholics, see Val Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam*, Spectrum Publications, Richmond, 1993.

³⁷⁶ See Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*. Allen and Unwin, Crow's Nest, 2002.

³⁷⁷ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Anne McGrath and Marion Quarterly, *Creating a Nation, 1788-1990*, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1994, p301.

movement. Standard overseas texts were quickly followed by Australia's own contributions, most notably Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*.³⁷⁸ The more radical strands of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) with emphasis on abortion rights and what were perceived by many to be "attacks on the family" were not readily embraced by many in the women's movement, but these were strongly attacked by Church authorities and Catholic lay organisations. However, the more moderate strand of the movement that concentrated on raising the status of women through improved educational opportunities found allies amongst religious educationalists and amongst those women religious involved in theological and Biblical studies. Indeed, a number of the women under study (and from other religious institutes) represented the views of Catholic educationalists on committees of enquiry and government bodies in the struggle to raise the standards, retention rates and diversity of educational opportunities for girls and women.

"Second wave feminism" which spread to Australia in the late 1960s was to impact on the young women in the care of women religious and on the secular women who supported their enterprises as professionals, parents and volunteers. Expectations of the type of education needed for the new generation of young women in the care of women religious were largely shaped by lay women educationalists, who researched, organised, protested, lobbied government and teacher unions, to tackle discrimination against girls and their female teachers. Anti-sexism became the issue around which women across the nation rallied as they forced changes in both government and industrial policies to meet the needs of the new generation of female students and their teachers, particularly those active in their unions. But as will be shown in Chapter 9, women religious from Ballarat were also involved and provided leadership in secular (and church) organisations that shaped and implemented these changes.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸ Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, Granada Publishing, London, 1971; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1975. Other significant and widely read Australian books published at this time included Edna Ryan and Ann Conlan, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1975; Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1976; and Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane (eds), *Uphill all the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1980.

³⁷⁹ Equal pay (or the lack of it) became the rallying point for both first and second wave feminists, building on the activism of secular feminists such as Jessie Street, Bessie Rischbieth, Ada Bromham, Mary Bennett and Muriel Hegney whose battles centred on women's right to participate as full citizens and workers with equal rights in the decades before the Second World War. Their efforts were strongly resisted, not only by conservative forces, but by men in the Labor and union movements who saw women's push for equal pay, for instance, as an attack on working men whose 'family wage' was guaranteed under the law. Labelled as either middle class traitors, or as communists, these early pioneers

The issue of wage justice also affected women religious, whether articulated by them or not; it is doubtful if the issue would have been identified as important in the light of their vows of poverty and obedience. Nonetheless, the reality was that their work in schools prior to Vatican II did not attract the same stipends as those of the Christian Brothers or priests, nor did it when they entered full time work outside their convents. Melbourne historian Helen Praetz reports that in 1952, Fr Conquest (as Director of Catholic Education) reported that:

...nuns still depend on the generosity of the parish priest, [and] that stipends varied between £50 and £125 per annum...Brothers at that time were receiving between £150 and £170 per annum, which was finally raised, after repeated requests, to £250 per annum. By 1955 a stipend of £3 per week if convent-supported and £4 per week if parish-supported was suggested for nuns, but it seems likely that many continued to work for less than that amount and to assist in fund-raising activities to pay themselves.³⁸⁰

In the case of Catholic lay women, the stress on the importance of their roles as wives and mothers was in part a response by the Church to modernism and individualism, a response which was to use religious arguments to justify the domestication of females, and one which was reinforced in the schools. *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids* brought together a collection of stories of Catholic women whose lives were shaped by the pre-Vatican era, for whom

The fifties was a time lacking in causes that engaged women. The Korean War, the movement, the split in the Labor Party did not provoke women to public debate or protest. In the sixties and seventies, issues in the church and the wider community changed all that. Women found a voice and were stirred into action.³⁸¹

continued their struggle and laid the basis for the new wave of feminists who took up the same issues in the 1960s. As Marilyn Lake comments, "Labor women were expected to put their class loyalty before sex solidarity: feminism was accused of being a middle class indulgence". Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1999, p102.

³⁸⁰ Helen Praetz, *Building a School System: A Sociological Study of Catholic Education*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, pp40-41. One reason given for the higher sums for Brothers was their need to employ domestic labour, while sisters either supported themselves or else still had lay sisters who undertook domestic tasks.

³⁸¹ Kate Nelson and Dominica Nelson, (eds) *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids: Journeys from Catholic Childhoods*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986, px. Edmund Campion, twenty years later, was to note that the women who contributed to the collection

Many of this generation of women educated through the Catholic education system were lost to the Church; unlike the women religious, few found the opportunity to take advantage of the new theological and biblical studies, nor were they encouraged to discuss (much less challenge) the debates arising from the Vatican Council. Nonetheless, some of the same generation of women who became leaders of the second wave women's movement in Australia were raised in this Catholic milieu, and, it will be argued, gained strength as well as a deep hurt and anger that was often translated into a struggle for social justice, primarily but not exclusively, for women and girls. Like their sisters in the convents, they were to struggle with reconciling the contradictions within the patriarchal church with their personal and professional aspirations for themselves and the women who came after them.

The 1960s and 70s were ripe for less "polite" behaviour.³⁸² Individual women chained themselves to the entrance to the Arbitration Commission and to the bars of hotels demanding equal rights to pay and to service; another group refused to pay more than 75 per cent of tram fares (as they only earned 75% of a male wage); the term "sisterhood" was coined to describe mutual support for each other, personally and professionally.³⁸³ Other terms such as sexism, sex roles, sex objects, male chauvinism and socialisation came into common usage amongst the thousands of women who joined consciousness-raising groups and who organised around a diversity of issues from child care to women's refuges, in neighbourhoods, universities, unions, political parties and work places.³⁸⁴ None were more active than women teachers, many of whom moved on to become politicians, community activists, union organisers, academics and prominent public servants.³⁸⁵

were "...the *Humanae Vitae* mothers, whose disappointments with the Church over contraception were an index of the wider malaise. Frustrated by the defeats of their Vatican II hopes, there now seemed to be no place for them except on the margins. *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids* took the temperature of the Church 20 years after Vatican II and its prognosis was not good." 'Australian Catholic women: A spiritual trajectory', *Woman-Church*, 40, Final Issue, 2007.

³⁸² One of the "anthems" of the women's movement became the song written by Glen Tomasetti, *Don't be too polite girls*.

³⁸³ For an overview of the campaign for equal pay, see Zeldia D'Aprano, *Kath Williams: The Unions and the Fight for Equal Pay*, Spinifex, North Melbourne, 2001. See also, Megan McMurchy, Margot Oliver and Jenni Thornley, *For Love or Money: A Pictorial History of Women and Work in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1983; Ann Curthoys, Susan Eade and Peter Spearritt, *Women at Work*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Canberra, 1975 and Clare Burton, *Women's Worth: Pay Equity and Evaluation in Australia*, AGPS, Canberra, 1987.

³⁸⁴ Almost 500 women's organisations were established and recorded between 1970-1985; this number does not take into account myriad local groups which sprang up during the same period. See Emma Grahame and Janette Joy Pritchard, *Australian Feminist Organisations 1970-1985: A Research Guide from Feminist Publications*, Women's Studies Centre, The University of Sydney, 1996.

³⁸⁵ Women teachers who fell into this category included, amongst others, Joan Kirner, first woman Premier of Victoria, Carmen Lawrence, first woman Premier of WA, Susan Ryan, first woman Federal Minister for Education, Senator

Prior to 1950, married women had to relinquish their permanency within the service, thereby rendering them ineligible for promotion, a discriminatory practice that would reverberate through the teaching service for another generation, not least in terms of promotion to positions of higher authority in schools and superannuation entitlements.³⁸⁶ In contrast, women religious were fully in charge of their own private schools, and held on to the principal positions in parish schools; even though the parish priest was the legal and canonical authority, few children or parents were in any doubt as to who was in charge. It was not unusual for women religious to be appointed to positions of authority in schools at an early age: three Loreto sisters filled the positions of principal of large schools while in their late twenties/early thirties.³⁸⁷

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) launched early equal pay campaigns in the 1950s, resulting in the *Equal Pay Act of 1958* which guaranteed full equal pay for men and women in 1963, but only for that small proportion of workers who were doing exactly the same work.³⁸⁸ Nationally, the Equal Pay Case was argued by Mary Gaudron with the support of the new Whitlam government in 1973,³⁸⁹ which also appointed Elizabeth Reid as Whitlam's "super-girl" advisor on women, laying the basis for the uniquely Australian phenomenon of the influence of women known as the "femocrats". These women entered the public service and established women's units within and across federal and state bureaucracies.³⁹⁰ The tactic of working to reform government policies and supporting the

Margaret Reynolds, Minister in the Hawke/Keating federal governments, plus numerous state and federal politicians. A detailed account of the prevalence of teachers amongst Australian women politicians is given in Anne Henderson, *Getting Even: Women MPs on Life, Power and Politics*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 1999.

³⁸⁶ It was not until 1968 that married women could become members of the State Superannuation Scheme. Even then, dependents of married women teachers had to prove their dependency in order to access their mother's superannuation, unlike dependents of male teachers.

³⁸⁷ Margaret Manion was principal (mistress of schools) at Mary's Mount at the age of 29; Jane Kelly, principal of Mandeville Toorak, aged 28, Deirdre Rofe, principal, Normanhurst, aged 28.

³⁸⁸ It was not until 1967 that the conservative Victorian government under Sir Henry Bolte announced that it would gradually introduce changes to the teaching service beginning in 1968, until the new conditions covered all classes and divisions of teachers by January 1971.

³⁸⁹ Mary Gaudron went on to become the first woman member of the High Court of Australia. Justice Gaudron was educated at St Ursula's in Armidale, NSW.

³⁹⁰ See Marian Sawyer, *Sisters in Suits: Women in Public Policy in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990; Marian Sawyer and Marian Simms, *A Woman's Place: Women and Politics in Australia*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984; Anna Yeatman, *Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats: Essays in the Contemporary Australian State*, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1990; Sara Dowse, 'The women's movement's fandango with the state: The movement's role in public policy since 1972', in Cora Baldock and Bettina Cass, (eds) *Women, Social Welfare and the State*, George Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1983; Anne Summers, 'Mandarins or missionaries? Women in the federal bureaucracy' in Norma Grieve and Aisla Burns (eds), *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986. For international comparisons, see for example, Hester Eisenstein, *Gender Shock: Practising Feminism on Two*

women who worked within the system to bring about improvement in the status of women was strongly supported by the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), in contrast with the more radical groups associated with the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).³⁹¹

At the national level, the beginning of the breakthrough for women teachers and female students in government schools came nationally with the establishment of the Schools Commission committee of enquiry whose report, *Girls, Schools and Society* issued in 1975, became the benchmark for further research and, more importantly, provided the information and research for lobbyists in the field. Included on this committee was Toni Matha, IBVM, whose life will be examined in more detail in Chapter 9. At the state level, growing pressure in Victoria forced the then Premier, Dick Hamer, to establish a Committee to investigate Equal Opportunity in schools which reported in July 1977 and which in part resulted in the first Victorian Sex Discrimination legislation; another Loreto sister, Elizabeth Nowotny, was a member of that Committee.

As with their sisters before them, the second wave feminists earned the ire of conservatives, Labor men and in many cases, spokespeople for the Catholic Church and organisations associated with it. Bob Santamaria was particularly outspoken on the dangers of WLM, seeing its diverse activities as a direct attack on the family, particularly regarding the issue of abortion, but also on the fear that it would encourage women to participate more fully in life outside the home.³⁹² In these views he was publicly supported by conservative women's groups such as Women Who Want to be Women (WWWW) and Women's Action Alliance (WAA) who mounted well organised campaigns, frequently published articles in Catholic newspapers and worked closely with the National Civic

Continents, Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1991; Ellen Boneparth, *Women, Power and Policy*, Pergamon Press, New York, 1982; Kathy Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984 and Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, *Women and Public Policies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987.

³⁹¹ Amongst the women who led this movement in reforming public policy were many who had been educated by women religious, including Elizabeth Reid, Anne Summers, Lyndal Ryan, and Mary Draper. Leading Catholic-educated female politicians who helped implement many of the reforms included Susan Ryan and Rosemary Crowley, (Senators in the federal government), Carmen Lawrence, (Premier, WA) Clare Martin, (Chief Minister, NT), and Pauline Toner, Kay Setches and Maureen Lister (Ministers in the Victorian parliament) and more recently, Maxine McKew. Other significant women leaders educated by the women religious include Clover Moore, Mayor of Sydney, Sharon Burrows, President of the ACTU, and environmental leader and Senator, Christine Milne.

³⁹² On 5 May 1961, he was quoted in the *Age* newspaper as attacking women's return to the workforce as "...a major blow at the reproductive base of the Australian community", indicating his pre-women's movement concern about any change in the status of working women. Quoted in Deborah Towns, 'Equal opportunity for women teachers: Women in the Victorian teaching service, 1950-1981', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney, 1982, p333.

Council (NCC).³⁹³ As Marilyn Lake comments: "... feminism was increasingly identified with subversive forces, threatening the stability of family and community. It was blamed for the rising tide of divorce and family breakdown and men's loss of power."³⁹⁴ The conservative campaigns attacked both the moderate and more extreme forms and organisations of the women's movement; both WEL and Women's Liberation more broadly defined received equal treatment from WAA and WWW, setting the scene for extremely bitter and public debates, particularly during International Women's Year and the UN conferences which accompanied it in the mid-1970s.³⁹⁵

Although not often reported publicly, women religious who emerged from Vatican II experienced some of the hostility that was heaped upon secular feminists. According to O'Farrell, tensions arose in some parishes with priests who wanted "house nuns", the traditional exploited workforce of the church, and were more than uneasy with the highly educated women who emerged in the 1970s. Public condemnation did come in relation to some individual women religious; Ronald Conway attacked Sister Veronica Brady ibvm on her appointment to the Board of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) as not "...being in line with the Pope's exhortation to religious to stand by traditional roles".³⁹⁶ The controversy surrounded Veronica's support, as a Board member, for the rights of homosexual employees to equality of treatment in their industrial conditions. Conway argued that religious should be content to follow the simple precepts of their rule and congregation, and that Veronica Brady's post was one further step away from "...the immemorial central role of male and female religious which, in the humble view of many of us, is to pray, to follow a rule of life, to teach or heal or give pastoral aid in various ways".³⁹⁷ Even more colourful was the condemnation by Michael Gilchrist of Sister

³⁹³ Women's Action Alliance was formed in 1974 by Marion Crowe who later became an endorsed DLP candidate; Women Who Want to be Women was formed in 1976 by Babette Francis. For Babette Francis' account of WWW, see 'Equal but different: A memoir' in M. Lake and F. Kelly (eds), *Double Time: Women in Victoria – 150 Years*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985. See also her contribution to *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids*, for an account of her Catholic childhood and education in India. Mrs Francis also issued the only dissenting report from findings of the Committee to Investigate Equal Opportunity in Victoria.

³⁹⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p204. For the conservative view of second-wave feminism, see for example, Midge Dexter, 'The intelligent woman's guide to feminism', *Quadrant*, July, 1981. *Quadrant* continues to be the voice of conservative views on the role of women, as do journalists such as Michael Barnard, Michael Gilchrist and Miranda Devine.

³⁹⁵ For a further account of the tensions between "reformist" feminists and WWW, see Wendy McCarthy, *Don't Fence Me In*, Random House Australia, Milson's Point, 2000, Chapter 7. As a member of the National Women's Advisory Council, representing Family Planning Australia, Ms McCarthy experienced first hand the battles surrounding the International Women's Year.

³⁹⁶ Rosemary Williams, 'Religious women in the *Advocate* in 1893 and 1983', *Journal of Catholic Education*, Vol. 6, November 1985, quoting from the *Advocate*, 11 August, 1983, p8.

³⁹⁷ Rosemary Williams 'Religious women', p11.

Margaret Manion ibvm, for being photographed pulling a beer at the Victorian Arts Centre.³⁹⁸ Whilst the majority of Australian women may not have empathised with the radical extreme of the women's movement, nonetheless, many in the growing affluent middle class felt the restrictions on their individual autonomy and were to benefit from the improvement in many of their industrial, professional and social conditions. As one author argues,

Feminism has affected all women, whether or not they claim its label... Feminist or not they owe [that] freedom of choice to the women's movement, to the women who drove it through history and to the last great push of the 1970s.³⁹⁹

Educational changes

The struggle for state aid

The women's movement was only one strand in the post-war educational revolution; arguably of greater importance for women religious was the introduction of state aid and the subsequent rationalization of a system of Catholic education. The withdrawal of government assistance from church schools in the 1870s and 1880s marked the beginning of a ninety year struggle to provide universal Catholic education which absorbed the energies of generations of archbishops, bishops, parish priests, teaching religious and lay people.⁴⁰⁰

Constitutionally, responsibility for education rests with the States, although indirectly the Federal government has influenced school funding through the Grants Commission, the Loans Councils and the Premiers' Conference.⁴⁰¹ Some gains had been made during the

³⁹⁸ Michael Gilchrist, *Rome or the Bush: The Choice for Australian Catholics*, JohnX111 Fellowship Co-op. Ltd, Melbourne 1986. He also condemned Sister Helen of the Presentation order for wearing "knee high boots, sweaters and jeans", and Sisters Mary Leonora Woodhead fcj and Pauline Smith rsm for raising issues of women priests.

³⁹⁹ Liz Byrski, *Speaking Out: Australian Women Talk About Success*, New Holland Publishers, Sydney, 1999, p1.

⁴⁰⁰ The strength of the rationale, commitment and the passion of the early bishops can be best expressed by the 1880 joint pastoral letter, quoted in Freudenberg: "This expenditure on godless education, this studding of the colony with schools which the Church knows from experience will, in the course of time fill the country with indifferentists, not to speak of absolute infidels, this use of Catholic funds – of taxes out of Catholic pockets... to sap the foundations of Christianity is an act so galling to every feeling of fair play, that we do not see how any free man, with any spirit in him, can allow it to pass unchallenged... it is a system of practical paganism." Graham Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, 1977, p24.

⁴⁰¹ Since 1933 the Grants Commission has been able to make special grants to financially weaker states to provide more uniform economic development across Australia under Section 96 of the Constitution, while the Loans Council is empowered to rationalise the public borrowing of all Australian governments by deciding, for example, the level of loan allocation to public works, including schools. In addition, since 1941, as a war time measure, the Uniform Taxation Agreement gave the Commonwealth the power to tax incomes, a power it has maintained since the Second World War.

Second World War; school fees had been abolished in government secondary schools, there had been a marked increase in government scholarships and studentships in years 11 and 12 at high schools, even though these were still based on academic achievement and not on financial need, and there had been improvement in school transportation for children outside the major centres.⁴⁰² The social conditions underlying the pressure for mass secondary schooling lay in the strong belief that schooling was needed for economic development, including the post war construction and the industrial “take off” in the fifties, but also for social cohesion, particularly in relation to the surge in migration after the war. For the Depression and the war generations, schooling was seen as the means to ensure secure employment. This applied equally to the Catholic and non-Catholic communities, but the added disadvantages experienced by some Catholics of previous generations in relation to their work and career prospects made them especially conscious of the necessity for education in their quest for social mobility.

Despite the mechanisms which allowed for federal assistance and the growing expectations of the post-War generation, both major political parties up until the 1960s sidestepped the issue of federal funding for schools by citing constitutional problems; for their part, state governments did not push for federal involvement because of fear of a Commonwealth takeover. When Robert Menzies came to power in 1949 he promised to consider assistance for universities, technical and adult education, but still continued to cite constitutional constraints when pressed for more federal funding for schools.⁴⁰³ It is widely argued that Menzies’ “turnabout” on the issue of federal funding had more to do with political expediency than the educational arguments put forward by the various pressure groups, in particular by the DLP, on whose preferences he relied.⁴⁰⁴ The DLP was

⁴⁰² Although many country people resisted raising the compulsory leaving age to 15 (which happened at different times across the various states) because of the need for labour on farms, they argued that their children should not have to shift to cities to continue their education after primary school, adding to the political pressure on politicians to find solutions for the appalling lack of educational facilities outside the major population centres.

⁴⁰³ Menzies nonetheless argued that because of the high cost of universities, some accommodation should be made to meet their needs, thereby forcing him into the constant dilemma of advocating federal assistance for universities, but denouncing it for schools. An excellent case study by P. N. Gill provides in great detail the Prime Minister’s thoughts and strategies in dealing with the state aid question. ‘The federal science grant: An episode in Church and state relations’, 1963-1964, *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1964. In 1958, Menzies established the Universities Commission, thereby setting the precedent for federal funding, which was to lead to further concessions in May 1964 when Commonwealth funding under Section 96 of the Constitution was made available for science and library facilities for non-government schools.

⁴⁰⁴ Menzies also brilliantly exploited the disarray of the federal Labor Party, for whom state aid was arguably the most divisive issue of the fifties and sixties, and one indeed of the most enduring and bitter episodes in Australian history, as the Church battled to force both federal and state governments to re-enter the field of state aid for Catholic schools which they abandoned in the 1870s and 1880s.

the only party during the 1950s and 1960s to include State aid to Catholic schools in its education platform. A by-election in Bendigo in 1960 saw the then Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Mannix, entering the debate, followed in 1962 by the “strike” in Catholic schools in Goulburn when Catholic children were withdrawn from schools and presented to the local state schools as a dramatic statement about the inability of the local Catholic community to meet mandatory building standards imposed by governments that refused any financial assistance to meet them.⁴⁰⁵

So critical for the ALP was the issue of state aid that it became the issue over which Gough Whitlam, elected Labor leader in 1967, was prepared to “crash through or crash” in taking on his opponents within the Party, and so heated was the conflict between Whitlam and the executive of the ALP that there were moves made to expel him from the party, a move only narrowly averted.⁴⁰⁶

When Gough Whitlam was elected leader of the Labor Party in 1967, the scene was set for the battle to lay to rest the state aid debate which had bedevilled the Party for decades.⁴⁰⁷ Whitlam’s analysis of his challenges and achievements is famously summed up by his own assessment: “If we achieved nothing else, we would be remembered for this: that we buried once and for all the futile and divisive debate over so-called ‘State rights’ and state aid for schools.”⁴⁰⁸ As he also said:

The most intense debate during the 1960s was not about Vietnam, it was about education. It was a debate which embodied, expressed and exemplified much of the best and the worst of more than a century of Australia’s political, constitutional, social, economic and religious history.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁵ The subsequent national publicity fed into the 1963 election campaign, and was at least one of the factors taken into account by the conservative parties who changed their long held views about providing funds for Catholic schools. See B. Bessant and A. Spaul, *Politics of Schooling*, Pitman Publishing, Carlton, 1976, p121. For a full account of the Goulburn strike, see J. Puls, ‘The Goulburn lockout’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, April, 2004.

⁴⁰⁶ Freudenberg, *A Certain Grandeur*, p35. The key to the debate was conflict over a resolution passed in 1961 by the Federal Executive of the Party which stated that “Citizens who do not choose to use the school facilities provided by the State, whether for conscientious or other reasons, shall have the absolute right to develop an independent system of schools of a recognised standard, *provided they do so at their own cost*”. (my italics) In Whitlam’s words: “These eight words were designed to restrict all Labor governments to making grants exclusively to the government system.” Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government, 1972-1975*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985, p297.

⁴⁰⁷ The 7% swing Whitlam gained in the 1969 election against the newly elected Liberal leader, John Gorton, became the springboard from which Labor would be elected in 1972 after 23 years in opposition.

⁴⁰⁸ E. G. Whitlam, *On Australia’s Constitution*, Widescope International Publishers, Camberwell, 1977, p 323.

⁴⁰⁹ E. G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government*, p291.

The main pressure for change came from teacher unions and parent bodies, both of which lobbied strongly for federal funds for State schools but remained vigorously opposed to state aid to non-government schools, including Catholic schools.⁴¹⁰ After years of bitter debate, the ALP eventually approved a “needs policy” as the basis for federal funding, to be decided by an independent Schools Commission, the establishment of which became a major promise leading up to the 1972 election. Needs-based funding was designed to effectively cut off additional funds to wealthy private schools, but to support parish and “non-elite” Catholic secondary schools, and was to have unprecedented effects within the Catholic education system and on the religious congregations under study.⁴¹¹

Within eleven days of his election in December 1972, Whitlam appointed Professor Peter Karmel as chair of the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission, one of whose members was Fr Frank Martin from the Melbourne Catholic Education Office. Fr Martin’s role was critical in the attempt to develop both a state wide and national system for the delivery and administration of Catholic education, one that could, amongst other things, present a unified voice when lobbying government. He also won the crucial support of fellow members of the Commission, most notably Jean Blackburn and Joan Kirner in arguing the case for the desperate need of parish schools for assured funding. Joan Kirner credits Fr Martin for his great integrity and skill in persuading her of the justice of ensuring that all children should have the best quality of schooling:

Frank and I shared a belief in education as the pathway for all children to shape their lives; he was not just interested in dollars; his emphasis was always about the quality of schools and equity issues.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ For the definitive study of the state aid issue, see Michael Hogan, *The Catholic Campaign for State Aid: A Study of a Pressure Group Campaign in NSW and the ACT, 1950-1972*, Studies in the Christian Movement, Manly, 1978. Also by the same author, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987 and *Public vs Private Schools: Funding and Directions in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1984.

⁴¹¹ For a comprehensive account of the Schools Commission, see Leon Allwood, (ed), *Australian Schools: The Impact of the Australian Schools Commission*, Australia International Press and Publications, Drouin, Victoria, 1975; in particular, see Chapter 6 by Father W. McCarthy, ‘Implications of the Australian Schools Commission for Catholic Education’. The Interim Report of the Schools Commission was an additional spur to rationalize the resources of the Catholic community which was struggling to even maintain the commitments they already had to schools, much less tackle the unmet demands of those who sought enrolment, as well as the children attending government schools who were not accessing catechetical classes.

⁴¹² Interview with Joan Kirner, Melbourne, 23 March 2009. As a member of the Defence of Government Schools (DOGS), Mrs Kirner was to suffer harsh criticism for her support of the parish schools, particularly as she had been a

Although the intricacies of the state aid debate being played out at a national level would have little impact on the day-to-day lives of the women religious struggling with huge class sizes and heavy workloads, nonetheless the decisions being taken at the national level politically, and the subsequent adjustments to the administration of Catholic education, were to impact strongly on their apostolic work. Moreover, as will be shown in Chapter 9, several of the women religious in Ballarat became important participants in decision making at the local, state and national levels.

The growth of a Catholic education system

Without funding from the government after 1872 in Victoria, the Catholic education “system” could better be characterised as a conglomeration of schools, with the Catholic Education Office fulfilling the role of an inspectorate, with no fiscal control over the schools. As Fogarty comments:

Having grown too fast, it lacked proportion; in very few Dioceses had the school work itself been organized on a Diocesan plan ...whatever organization existed was due not to Diocesan direction but to the religious orders operating in their own group of schools... the whole system remained inchoate and amorphous. The earliest efforts of the bishops had been directed towards the all important matter of getting schools established; compared to that, details of organisation had been relatively unimportant.⁴¹³

According to Anne O’Brien who worked for many years as Fr Martin’s assistant in the Melbourne Catholic Education Office,

Relieved that the religious congregations assumed responsibility for secondary education, bishops made little attempt to interfere with them, even though this meant haphazard growth and the loss of a certain amount of diocesan control...Catholic education in Victoria in the 1950s [thus] consisted of a network of primary and secondary schools controlled essentially by sub-systems of religious

plaintiff in the case brought before the High Court by the Defence of Government Schools (DOGS). See Kevin Lawlor, ‘Catholic schools in the High Court: DOGS and funding’, *Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 2002.

⁴¹³ Brother Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia, 1806 -1950, Vol. 11, Catholic Education under the Religious Orders*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1959, p423.

congregations, and variously financed by the priests, by the laity and by voluntary contributions made by the religious who provided their services at very low cost to the Catholic community.⁴¹⁴

A central theme running through Anne O'Brien's account of the development of the Catholic education "system" is that there was no central structure through which increased government involvement could be addressed; for example, there was no reliable data to mount arguments for state aid, nor to account for government money when funds did come through from the Schools Commission.⁴¹⁵ As the one body which had a coordinating function for Catholic education, the Melbourne Catholic Education Office faced a number of seemingly insurmountable problems according to O'Brien:

[They were] limited by four factors: Mannix had ruled the diocese for a very long period: the cathedral authorities perceived themselves to be the appropriate persons to make most decisions about education: the parish priests and the religious congregations were virtually unassailable within their own territories; and the role of the CEO as laid down in the 1930s did not equip it to meet the needs of the 1960s and beyond.⁴¹⁶

Adding to the difficulties of coordination was the fact that parish priests were technically and legally the principals and delegated proprietors of their parish schools; lay teachers

⁴¹⁴ Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1999, pp11-12.

⁴¹⁵ The first Victorian attempt to develop the required "system" began in Melbourne when Bishop Simonds (coadjutor to Dr. Mannix) established the Catholic Education Advisory Council which met for the first time in 1963, comprising representatives of the religious orders, diocesan authorities and parish priests, assisted by a number of lay academics. Its function was purely advisory and was disbanded in 1968 following repeated clashes between the academics and the archbishop and cathedral bureaucracy. However, they did in that short time organize important conferences in 1965, '66 and '67, and produced an educational journal, *Dialogue* edited by Peter Gill from Melbourne University which concentrated heavily on research and planning. See Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail*, p51. For the most comprehensive account of this period, see Fr Frank Martin, 'Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980', in *Catholic Education in Victoria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. A similar process of administrative change was underway in Sydney; see Dr Jim D'Orsa, *Monsignor John Slowey: Servant of Education, Facilitator of Change*, CEO Sydney, Leichhardt, 1999.

⁴¹⁶ Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail*, p17. A leading educationalist and member of the Catholic Education Advisory Council, Professor Dick Selleck wrote: "...from the 1950s Catholic authorities faced the daunting task of converting a loose collection of independently-controlled schools into a coherent secondary school system...secondary schools, while they had a unity created within each religious order, were from a planning point of view a collection of separate fiefdoms with differing expectations and policies; because there was little communication between dioceses, the possibility of state-wide planning was remote." Dick Selleck, *Catholic Education in Victoria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Seminar Proceedings, Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 1984, p 104. See also by the same author, 'The Catholic primary school' in John Cleverly (ed), *Half a Million Children: Studies in Non-government Education in Australia*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1978.

were employed under various awards and had no single union or association that could negotiate for better pay, conditions, portability of service or promotion.⁴¹⁷ There was the constant suspicion that any attempt to coordinate planning across the parishes, much less amongst the secondary schools, was a threat to the independence of the parish priests and the teaching orders.⁴¹⁸

In April 1969 Archbishop Knox announced the establishment of the Melbourne Catholic Education Board (MCEB), consisting of 50 priests, representatives of religious orders and laity.⁴¹⁹ Fr Pat Crudden succeeded Fr John F Kelly in the downgraded position from Director of Catholic Education to Director of the Catholic Education Office, because of the concern expressed about some of Fr Crudden's writings and speeches on catechetics.⁴²⁰ His dismissal in 1970 was largely as a result of an article he wrote about the future of, and indeed the need for, Catholic education as it had developed over one hundred years.⁴²¹ Selections are recorded here because of their central importance to the debates that were to occur within the teaching orders in the following decade.

Schools gave Australian Catholics a tangible objective for which to work. Each school created loyalties about itself and made for social cohesion. Probably they were helped in this by being seen as the achievement of an oppressed minority, or at least a minority subjected to an injustice. They taught the catechism and nobody questioned the eternal truths that it enshrined. This was not a time for questioning. Practice was based on obligation and nobody doubted the certainty of the moral basis of this obligation. A cohesive body of people united against a godless world needs strong faith and strict discipline. Both were there. This was the myth that enabled the Catholic school system to grow without any real planning...Inevitably

⁴¹⁷ Parish and girls' secondary schools were tied to the Determination of Teachers (Girls Schools) Wages Board, while the Christian Brothers had their own award.

⁴¹⁸ For detailed discussions of each of these issues, see Brassil and Daffey (eds), *The Catholic School in a Pluralist Society*, Melbourne Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 1971; Dick Selleck, *Crudden: The Reluctant Rebel*, Heinemann Educational, South Yarra, 1970.

⁴¹⁹ Parish Boards were also introduced at this time; both they and the MCEB remained advisory to the archbishop and parish priests respectively.

⁴²⁰ It was at this time that Professor Selleck suggested the professionalizing of the CEO through employment of educational experts, resulting in the employment of one woman religious and four laypeople, and ensuring that future appointments would be made through a process of open advertisement.

⁴²¹ Patrick Crudden, 'The myth of the Catholic school', in Peter Gill (ed), *Catholic Education: Where is it Going?* Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, 1972.

this led to disaster. What once served the educational mission of the Church effectively is now impeding that mission just as effectively.

The future of the Church in Australia depends very much on its ability to recognise and accept the fact that the future of education rests with the state schools...this major decision should be accompanied here ... by an unequivocal statement of support for what state schools are attempting...namely equality of educational opportunity for all children in the community, quite independently of their economic status and academic ability..... [a decision which should be seen as] a positive decision to relinquish the Church's commitment to secular education in order to free it for preaching the gospel.⁴²²

The article led to heated debate amongst Catholics and commentators on Catholic education. But Fr Crudden was not the only Catholic educational leader under attack for raising the difficult questions relating to the future of Catholic schools. Fr Burke took up the newly created position of Director of the Federal Catholic Education Office where his initial work for the federal body was to gather statistics on the current state of Catholic education, for the purpose of lobbying government, but also to start the process of national planning for Catholic education and to make available trends in enrolment and staffing. Amongst the statistics gathered was the finding that by 1968, 37 per cent of Catholic children were in government schools, raising serious questions about the almost total commitment of religious to their own Catholic schools, with very few resources devoted to this significant proportion of the Catholic school students attending government schools.⁴²³

Furthermore, in the view of the editor of *Dialogue*,

Catholics have sometimes failed to recognize that there are other areas of educational concern, other areas of crisis, and that other groups in the community have valid grounds for lobbying governments with just as much vigour themselves. The 'education issue' for many Catholics in the past, meant the 'state aid' issue and nothing else.... It is not completely banal, I hope, to remind ourselves that there are

⁴²² Patrick Crudden, 'The myth of the Catholic school', p55.

⁴²³ R. T. Fitzgerald, 'After Bourke, What follows?' *Dialogue*, Vol. 4, No 3, November 1970. Like Fr Crudden, Fr Burke raised this critical issue, but in the view of Fitzgerald, "...there appears to be a reluctance to face up to the issues Bourke has raised. The forces of reaction seem stronger than those of reform and die-hard conservatives have regarded Bourke rather as a saboteur. For them the test of loyalty is to maintain that Catholic education for all still constitutes a viable policy." P9.

other matters at stake beside ‘state aid’ in particular and ‘education’ in general. It would be idiotic if we, as electors, cast our votes on this issue alone, no matter which party offered what.⁴²⁴

The split in the Catholic community developed into those who supported “holding on” at all costs, as opposed to those who began to focus on the nature rather than the extent of education provided for all Catholics following Vatican II, including that of adults, but most particularly for the children attending government schools, either because of the difficulty of paying fees, because of their unwillingness to see their children in under-resourced, under-staffed Catholic schools and/or the growing reluctance of a more educated community to obey the directives of priests and bishops to send their children to Catholic schools under pain of sin.

Helen Praetz illustrates how the Melbourne CEO achieved growing control and power “..through [its] conversion into a powerful and authoritative bureaucratic structure under the dynamic leadership of its Director (Fr Frank Martin).⁴²⁵ In 1971 the CEO presented to the MCEB a report entitled, *The Future of a School System: A Plan for the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (The Martin Report) This plan became firmly identified with those who took a “reformist” position (as opposed to those who became identified as “abolitionists”) in relation to Catholic schools, encompassing a determination to continue a commitment to Catholic education as “desirable and possible”, but one that would “...take into account ‘the need for a comparable attempt at Christian formation for those Catholic children not in Catholic schools’”.⁴²⁶ The report and the plan it contained, according to Helen Praetz,

⁴²⁴ Peter Gill: Editorial: ‘Education and the elections’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No 1, May-June 1972. At the height of the debate, Archbishop Knox was calling for a “holding period”, particularly in the light of plans being developed by the Josephites to re-think their commitment to schools, and encouraged by the infusion of both state and federal per capita grants by conservative governments, with the promise of funding based on need in the event of the election of a federal Labor government.

⁴²⁵ Helen Praetz, *Building a School System*, p2. Fr Martin succeeded Fr Crudden, who became parish priest at Blackburn; Pat Crudden was later to leave the priesthood and spend a successful career as highly respected adult educator in his role as Director of the Council of Adult Education in Victoria.

⁴²⁶ Peter Tannock, ‘Future directions for Catholic education in Australia’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No. 2, September 1972. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the differing views about the future of Catholic education, represented by the “abolitionists” (Fr Crudden) and the “reformists” (Fr Martin and the Melbourne CEO). For a critical view of the “reformist” position, see Michael Gallagher, ‘A case for reform’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No. 2, September 1972 who argues that the Martin Plan perpetuated the emphasis on *survival* of the system, without addressing adequately the decision to concentrate on primary parish schools at the expense of secondary education; he also highlights the fact that there was a lack of questioning the underlying objectives of Catholic schools and their lack of rigorous evaluation and accountability procedures. See also, Gregory Meere, ‘The arguments against a Catholic education system re-assessed’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 2, No 1, Spring 1967. The view of Professor Selleck was that the report “...totally changed the tenor of the debate in Catholic education” in his editorial: ‘The future for a school system’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 5, No. 3, November 1971.

became the means by which Fr Martin established the legitimacy, authority and supremacy of the CEO as the dominant agency for administration and planning for the Catholic education system. It was also to become the model for much of the rest of the Catholic education system across Australia. The plan contained two main recommendations:

- Resumption of the expansion of primary schools and the holding of the expansion of secondary schools
- The gradual supervised withdrawal of sisters, brothers and priests from administrative responsibility in schools and the employment of lay principals, along with appropriate conditions of service for lay teachers.⁴²⁷

The extension of the Martin Report and recommendations to the other dioceses in Victoria was to come through the establishment of the Victorian Catholic Education Commission; in 1971 Bishop Mulkearns of Ballarat, wrote to all Victorian bishops about the desirability of some regular consultation between education offices on a state level. Of particular importance for this thesis is that the repercussions for the other dioceses of Melbourne-based decisions to which they had no opportunity of input weighed equally heavily on them. In particular, decisions relating to the future of teacher training directly affected the Mercy Teachers' College in Ballarat.⁴²⁸ As Sister Valda Ward rsm was to argue, although Ballarat was an autonomous diocese, it "...does little to ease the stranglehold of the Melbourne CEO, because, in effect, decisions made in the Archdiocese of Melbourne have unavoidable implications for the provincial dioceses, including Ballarat".⁴²⁹

Meanwhile, at the national level, the First National Conference on the Administration of Catholic Education was held in Armidale, NSW in 1972 resulting in recommendations being made to the Australian Episcopal Conference on the need for state wide and national

For a further assessment of the Plan, see T.A. O'Donnell, 'The Melbourne Catholic Education Office Report – Whither now?' *Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No 1, May-June 1972.

⁴²⁷ Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail*, p72. Other features of the Report included the need for parity of salaries for all lay staff in parish schools, and the recognition that "religious women are experiencing great difficulty in formulating coherent congregational policies, especially in regard to the administration of schools because of the differing responses from the suffragan bishops with whom they deal directly."

⁴²⁸ This issue will be examined in detail in Chapter 8.

⁴²⁹ Valda Ward, *An investigation of the organizational climate of certain elementary parochial schools in the Diocese of Ballarat*, Diploma in Educational Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 15 October, 1971, p44.

structures.⁴³⁰ The conference proved to be a critical turning point in the history of Catholic education, consensus being reached that efforts to retain both primary and secondary schools would continue, but that significant changes would have to be made in administration, in balancing the need for decentralization of responsibility with more centralized administration, and in devising more sophisticated strategies of lobbying government, based on rigorous research. One concrete result of the conference recommendations was that the model of the Victorian Commission was to extend across Australia, resulting in the establishment of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) in 1973, with Fr J.E. Burke first Director, and Sister Noni Mitchell ibvm as a founding member.⁴³¹

This problem was to extend to the religious congregations as they grappled with their future work in schools: how to maximise the benefits of increased government funding while at the same time retaining their independence and responding to the needs of their local communities. In this they were assisted by the directions set by the Armidale conference, and by growing cooperation of Major Superiors, particularly the decision in October 1974 by the women's institutes to set up an advisory committee on education under the auspices of the Major Superiors Conference. Women religious were entering a new era of networking, sharing information and research across congregational lines, at the same time as women seeking reform in the secular society were finding common ground in their endeavors to have their voices heard. Evidence of the importance of the Armidale conference is found in a report from Sister Noni Mitchell in her provincial letter: "Now that the Catholic education conference in Armidale is over and we have been confirmed in our conviction that the education apostolate is absolutely necessary and wanted, it seems

⁴³⁰ For the most comprehensive paper presented at the conference detailing the challenges facing Catholic education, see Peter Tannock, 'Quo Vadimus? Future directions for Catholic education in Australia', *Paper presented to the First National Conference on the Administration of Catholic Education*, The University of New England, Armidale, August 25, 1972. See also, Peter Tannock, (ed) *The Organisation and Administration of Catholic Education in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1975; see also, 'Report and Recommendations of the Conference Committee', Loreto Province Archives, Series 123, *Records relating to Education, General*. Sister Joan Nowotny ibvm was a member of the conference committee which drew up the recommendations; the other woman religious on the committee was M. de Lourdes Ronayne, a Good Samaritan sister.

⁴³¹ In his submission to the Schools Commission at this time Fr Martin outlined the structures in Catholic education and their implications for the Commission in determining appropriate methods of funding, and commented that, "The state problem is how effectively to decentralise and localise. The Catholic problem is quite the opposite as we try to retain the traditional benefits of decentralisation and strength at the local level while developing stronger regional and central levels in order to maximise resource usage and distribution, coordinate planning and educational policies and develop support services for individuals and groups of schools." Fr Frank Martin, 'Towards an understanding of the structure of Catholic education', Loreto Province Archives, Series 123, *Education General*, Item 17, Catholic Education Office.

time to set up an Advisory Board of Education...you will remember we discussed this at our Provincial meetings.”⁴³²

Conclusion

The forces for change within the broader Australian community, including those in relation to the position and status of women, accompanied by changing policies and programs of government and within the Catholic education bureaucracies, all impacted on the decisions which women religious were to make in the 1960s and 70s. The broad parameters of the debate concerning Catholic schools were resolved in favor of the “reformists” – the Church in Australia would not abandon its 100 year long commitment to education. Compromises would have to be made in terms of trying to provide secondary education for all, and even the most optimistic advocates of universal provision at the primary level conceded that thousands of Catholic children would be educated in the government schools. But the vision and the expectation was that the schools would continue, even if it meant that the laity would take over from the religious, the complete reverse of what had happened a century before.

Although much of the debate, and certainly the decisions, were held at many removes from individual religious communities, it is important to note that women contributed to decision making in relation to the future of education, most notably in their own schools, but also at the diocesan and national level as the various planning bureaucracies emerged. Individual women also contributed to the debate about the status of women in the Church and in the broader society, as will be shown in Chapter 9. Even though it is difficult to overestimate the gravity of these external forces for change on the apostolic work of women religious and how they impacted on their internal decision making processes, they were not merely passive victims of outside forces: just as secular women entered into the bureaucratic system in order to shape policies and practices, so too did individual women religious actively engage in the policy debates. Of even greater importance, their internal decision making was based equally on examination of their own priorities. Post Vatican II and post Whitlam their contribution continued to be based on the integrity of the charisms of their institutes and of their understandings of what religious life would mean for them going into the 1980s.

⁴³² Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, 25 September, 1972 .

Chapter 7: Post-Vatican II contribution: Continuity and change

*Are our congregations functioning primarily to fulfill a specific need in the Church, eg, teaching, nursing etc, or are they now or in the future, to function first as a group of women living in a religious community, fulfilling their mission to serve the church in a variety of ways, exercising more fully the individual talents of women?*⁴³³

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the on-going corporate contribution of women religious in Ballarat following the upheavals of Vatican II in order to emphasise the fact that, amidst all the turmoil of renewal and adaptation, women continued their unbroken tradition of providing schooling and tertiary education to the Ballarat community. Continuity was maintained in their management and staffing of schools, in large part because they could rely on the domestic support of their lay sisters, and because the majority of the women were prepared to continue as teachers, even though new opportunities were offered to them to change apostolic work and/or undertake professional retraining. Chapter 9 will consider the importance of these new apostolic priorities, but the fact that a proportion of sisters left the classrooms should in no way diminish the reality that both the parish and the private schools and the teachers' college continued to be staffed and managed by women religious, many of whom engaged in part-time study, either to upgrade their teaching qualifications, or in preparation for new careers. At the same time, they embarked on the difficult work of handing over to the laity the major day-to-day responsibilities in their schools, a change made necessary for a range of practical reasons, but one which also lay at the heart of a new understanding of the role of the laity based on post-Vatican II discernment.

For religious, the increased emphasis on standards, accountability to government and involvement with Catholic education bureaucracy, while accepted as a reality, had to be balanced with a respect for traditional approaches to service which were based on the spiritual dimensions of their institutes, and the long history of sacrifice which had sustained their schools and other ministries. Change also required much soul searching

⁴³³ Report of the National Conference of Religious Superiors of Australia, November 1972, Loreto Province Archives, Series 163, *Records relating to major superiors*.

about how to maintain a corporate approach which would underpin their apostolate as they began the process of handing over to the laity, while accommodating those individuals who moved on from schools, and often, moved away from living in self-contained communities within convents. Throughout the process of change, the majority of women continued in the schools, enabling their corporate work to continue. This difficult transition period was to benefit from the leadership of two outstanding women religious, Noni Mitchell ibvm and Valda Ward rsm, supported by a growing band of women trained in educational administration and drawing on the collective wisdom of women who had successfully run educational enterprises for many years. The role of these leaders involved difficult and pragmatic decision making, but also meant guiding their sisters to new understandings of possible apostolic priorities and the emerging role of the laity as genuine partners in maintaining the ethos of their institutes.

Continuity in corporate apostolic work: Women religious who stayed on in the schools.

The majority of the women in both institutes continued to teach in their schools after Vatican II. As Noni Mitchell was to report in 1980: “The facts do not support the anxieties of some that there has been an exodus from the schools into diversified apostolates (15 sisters have been released in six years.)”⁴³⁴ Amongst numerous examples that could be cited, the work of two such women illustrates the point. Sister Anne Forbes rsm, who was to play a prominent role in the resettlement of refugees from East Timor in Ballarat, continued an unbroken career in schools until 1998, a career that included intensive work with Vietnamese students in North Melbourne, and a final two years at St Patrick’s College in Ballarat. Bernadette Ziesing (Mother Gerard ibvm) spent her entire career in schools in Ballarat and interstate; now over 80 she continues to tutor and support young people in juvenile detention. These women were typical of the majority who “held the fort” in their schools; both stressed their love of teaching and of their students and despite broadening their interest to include vulnerable people outside schools, their core work has remained teaching.⁴³⁵

The working conditions of those left in the schools in terms of class sizes, care of boarders, lack of administrative support and heavy teaching loads did not markedly improve until

⁴³⁴ 1980 Provincial’s report, Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 19, Provincial’s report for Provincial Chapter, 1980, p 16.

⁴³⁵ Interview with Bernadette Ziesing ibvm, Ballarat, 5 December 2009, and Anne Forbes rsm, Ballarat, 29 June 2009.

well into the 1970s when relief came in the form of funding for the employment of lay teachers and support staff. In many significant areas, their work loads actually increased as more women took on further education and professional development, and the numbers in their schools increased. While a minority of women were freed to take up full-time study, the majority did so as part-time students, at the same time as they were expected to become much more active in internal decision making, and also begin the process of meaningful interaction with the laity.⁴³⁶ The situation of the part-time students was well understood by the leaders:

I must pay special tribute to all our nuns who are undertaking part-time study. It lays special stress on them, and makes the choosing of priorities between apostolic work, study requirements and community obligations a continual pressure and strain. I am sure that we are all aware of this, but I ask that we all support and relieve them in practical ways as well as by our prayers.⁴³⁷

Despite these pressures and increased work load, both institutes maintained their commitment to the parish and private schools under their control. The process of relinquishment did not gather momentum until the 1980s, and, in fact, it was not until 2005 that the Sisters of Mercy withdrew from Ballarat North, Warracknabeal, Birchip and Robinvale. However small their numbers, women religious held on in the schools, even though many were past normal retirement age.

The gradual shift to lay control

As with all major shifts in society, there is a temptation to see the emergence of lay control of Catholic schools as a one-dimensional historic movement, brought on by the single factor of the declining numbers and ageing of women religious. However, a more accurate picture emerges when a number of other factors are taken into consideration, and it should be acknowledged that lay staff had always played an important role in most of the parish

⁴³⁶ The 1980 Provincial's report of the Loretos stated: "The gratifying response by our primary teachers to the pressing need to upgrade qualifications to three years has been shown by their willingness to undertake part-time study, after school or by correspondence. It has been an outstanding effort. Since 1977, three year registration has been obtained by all our primary school nuns in the states demanding that qualification." Series 182, *Provincial's report for Provincial Chapter*.

⁴³⁷ Mother Antoinette, Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, 31 May 1974. In similar vein, Noni Mitchell as Provincial was to write about part-time study three years later, "It can be a rather hidden, hard-pressed task which seems at times to have little bearing on our work for the Kingdom. In fact it represents the thirty years or so of the Gospel when our public ministry was in its preparation. A seeding time – the harvest to come!" *Pro-Loreto*, 24 January, 1977.

schools, and even in the primary private schools attached to the convents. The situation was quite different at the secondary level at both Mary's Mount and Sacred Heart until the late 1960s: specialist teachers were employed to fill the gaps in the teaching staff, but only in small numbers, and only under the leadership of women religious who maintained all positions of authority.

A complex matrix of forces emerged after Vatican II which were to radically change the pattern of staffing which had prevailed since the 1880s when the decision was made to provide universal primary education for Catholic children, and extensive opportunities for those at the secondary level. Sociological changes, including growing expectations and indeed vocal demands for better education came from an increasingly educated community; new curriculum and new methodologies emerged which acknowledged that large numbers of children with one religious in front of them were no longer acceptable – either to parents, governments or employers, all of whom demanded radical change in education in both government and non-government schools. The end of the post-War boom in the mid-1970s saw rising youth unemployment and the growing realization that new skills, including those required for new technologies, had to be incorporated into the curriculum in the schools. All teachers grappled with balancing professionalism and a new industrial militancy which re-defined their role in society, including their own demands for changes in the ways in which they were initially trained and offered on-going professional development. Married women became increasingly restive about barriers to their careers and to the inequities in pay rates which were based on gender alone. Governments of all persuasions and at both state and federal level demanded more accountability for the increasing funding which began to flow in the late 1960s to the non-government sector; education bureaucracies and education pressure groups burgeoned. All these sociological factors shaped the teaching force upon which Catholic authorities could draw for their new staff. Furthermore, in the case of those who chose to work in the Catholic system, their commitment to the schools or the particular congregation which employed them, was of a different order from those who staffed schools when the Catholic community saw a separate Catholic education system as the bulwark against a godless society, and often the only means available to assist their upward social mobility. The days of the ghetto had passed.

Parallel to these sociological and cultural changes were the theological insights arising from Vatican II concerning the role of the laity, both as teachers and as parents. Conciliar documents including *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), clearly spelt out that the call to apostolic action comes to every Christian through baptism. It followed that the laity would now be seen as equal partners with religious in the education of their children and as teachers in Catholic schools.⁴³⁸ This theological dimension to the debate should not be underestimated in terms of how women religious framed their decision making. Archival records clearly show that the status of lay teachers coming into their schools was analysed in equal measure between the practicalities of the new arrangements and the duty of religious to accept lay contribution as an opportunity to diversify and expand the charisms of their institutes. A thorough analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis and is one which would benefit from rigorous research; the following analysis, while concentrating on the sociological and practical aspects, is undertaken in the clear understanding that it is only one dimension of the change process.

By the mid 1970s, the hand-over to lay teachers and administrators was acknowledged as inevitable, requiring strong leadership and generosity on the part of both women religious and the lay teachers who supported them. Amongst the most difficult decisions was relinquishing control to lay principals; another involved developing policies relating to the industrial conditions and career paths of lay staff. These decisions on staffing were accompanied during the same period by the development of boards of management or parent councils that moved well beyond the traditional volunteer “helpers” of the past. This shift in control could not be achieved before extremely difficult issues were resolved within the institutes: what was the role of the superior once lay principals were employed? Who had the final authority? Were the women religious in the schools accountable primarily to the lay principal or to their religious superior? How would the finances of the convents and the schools within them be disentangled? Under what conditions would the lay staff be employed and how would the religious react to the growing industrial demands

⁴³⁸ See George F. Donovan (ed), *Vatican Council II: Its Challenge to Education*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1967 and Kathleen Walsh, ‘The apostolate of the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*)’ in Adrian Hastings (ed), *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, SPCK, London, 1991.

of lay staff? Should lay staff be included in the internal planning processes of the institutes?⁴³⁹

Few of these questions had ever been raised before Vatican II, nor were the women religious trained in this level of educational administration, a factor highlighted in the Armidale conference referred to in Chapter 6.⁴⁴⁰ Prior to Vatican II, secular and religious staff had separate staff rooms, they did not eat or socialise together, nor were secular staff included at any level of meaningful decision making within the schools. Many congregations in their rules made explicit the need for their members to distance themselves from the lay teachers. Loreto rules stated that no Sister was to speak with the seculars, “or call others to speak with them without a particular or general leave of the Superior”. The Guide for the Sisters of Mercy declared: “All who have experience in the direction of religious, as well as those who have written their instruction, concur in declaring unnecessary secular intercourse most prejudicial to their perfection.”⁴⁴¹ The approach of the religious was that of benevolent employers towards their employees rather than one informed by a view that they were partners with the lay teachers in the provision of Catholic education, an approach which persisted until it became apparent that lay teachers would need to be employed in greater numbers: “It was well into the 1960s before the religious orders ceased to view lay teachers as fulfilling an essentially inferior and supplementary role.”⁴⁴² These structural differences were undoubtedly mitigated by friendly professional relationships between the two, but the progression from there to the

⁴³⁹Evidence of these difficult discussions can be found in documents dating from 1968 through to 1980; for example, in 1971 it was reported: “All are agreed on the desirability of giving dedicated and experienced lay staff members administrative posts, but all were in agreement on keeping the post of Principal in the hands of an Institute member.” Further, “Groups agreed that roles were ill-defined, though some noted an improvement in regard to Principal-Superior roles. All agreed that roles must be defined in such a way that principles are clear while flexibility in practice should be necessary as local circumstances dictate....clarification of policy-making is an urgent question for the whole province.” Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 8, Provincial Chapter 1971: Apostolic Commission.

⁴⁴⁰ On this issue, see Joseph Pulis, ‘The role of the administrative leader in the Catholic education system’, *Dialogue*, Vol. 8, No. 3, November 1974.

⁴⁴¹ Thomas O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Catholic Education in Schools, 1922-1965*, Peter Lang, New York, 2001, p43; he also cites examples of the similar directives in the rules of the Presentation Sisters and Christian Brothers, and concludes that “What was being made clear through this terminology was that a lay teacher was to be employed in a school only when no nun, religious brother or priest could be found to fill an essential teaching position”.

⁴⁴² O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith*, p45.

total relinquishing of control of the day-to-day running of the schools was yet another layer of change with which both sides had to deal.⁴⁴³

The gradual withdrawal of religious from day-to-day teaching and therefore direct contact with parents was not without pain within their own communities, nor of criticism from the broader Catholic community. Religious life was so strongly associated with teaching in the schools which the Catholic community had struggled to fund, and to which they were bound to send their children, that change was inevitably accompanied by hurt, misunderstanding and to some extent, anger as Catholics grappled with what they saw as the loss of “their nuns” from the classroom.⁴⁴⁴ The pre-Vatican II culture within the Church meant that the laity had little idea of how the convents and schools were actually run, outside the weekly update from the pulpits on the need for funds, and for some, the involvement in the state aid debate and/or for the few who were virtually full-time volunteers supporting the schools. The rapidity of the changes after Vatican II, the decline in the number of new entries to the congregation and the ageing of the remaining sisters were issues not well understood by either parishioners or by many lay teachers, understandably, as the era of involving parents in educational decision-making was new even in government schools, much less so in the Catholic and non-government systems.⁴⁴⁵

The role of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office (CEO) in relation to the status of lay teachers

As mentioned elsewhere, decisions made by the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne directly affected the Ballarat diocese, none more so than those relating to the status of lay teachers. In a thesis covering this period, Sister Marie Kehoe rsm traces the history of the lay teacher in parish schools in Melbourne for the century spanning 1872-1972, demonstrating that the shift in the status of lay teachers began with Archbishop Mannix’s decision in January 1955 to recruit lay teachers, preferably to be paid the same as state school teachers, but realistically acknowledging that the Teachers (Girls School) Board

⁴⁴³Within the Loreto Province Archives there are boxes of documents relating to these issues: background papers, questionnaires, reports and research, showing that from the 1968 to the 1980 Chapters there was continual questioning and refinement of the ways in which to proceed with the process of relinquishment of control to the laity.

⁴⁴⁴The visible sign of the change was the abandonment of the habit, which caused distress amongst many traditional Catholics and was the cause of some of the greatest divisions within the communities themselves.

⁴⁴⁵ On the issue of parental involvement in education, see for example, Joan Kirner, ‘Organisational change in education: The parent line’, in M. Frazer, J. Dunstan and P. Creed (eds) *Perspectives on Organisational Change: Lessons from Education*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985.

rates “would suffice, at least for a beginning.”⁴⁴⁶ The rate was to be used as the basis of the salary scale for lay teachers in parish primary schools and it would not be until the late 1970s that their salaries would be brought in line with their government school colleagues, made possible by increased Federal funding.⁴⁴⁷ In response to the 1955 directive, educational historian Dr. Helen Praetz maintains:

...there was no certainty that parish priests would pay them...an interesting example of an unsuccessful attempt to institute the bureaucratic procedures demanded from below. Lay teachers seeking equitable and regular salary payments turned increasingly to the CEO to intervene on their behalf.⁴⁴⁸

At this time there was little faith placed in the Association of Teachers in Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools (ATVCCS) and the Victorian Catholic Primary Teachers' Association (VCPTA) as bodies capable of pursuing industrial conditions. They were associations designed for mutual and spiritual support, and certainly not 'unions' in the sense that the three Victorian Teachers' Unions were at that time.⁴⁴⁹ It should be noted that it was during this period (1963-1973) that the three Victorian teacher unions entered into a phase of teacher militancy which would become a dominant feature of the politics of Australian education. In part this arose because of a new breed of young teacher militants. Many of these were women trained within the unions, and who forcefully argued, not just for better industrial conditions, but also for policies which would address the disadvantage of women and girls in education.⁴⁵⁰ The contrast with organizations designed to improve

⁴⁴⁶ Marie Kehoe, *Lay Teachers in Melbourne Catholic Primary Parish Schools, 1872-1972: An Examination of changes in the role and status of lay teachers in Melbourne Catholic Primary Parish Schools*, Master of Education Thesis, Melbourne University, March 1982, and by the same author, 'Winds of change: Vatican II and teachers in primary schools', *Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education*, Vol. 7, November 1986. Sister Marie Kehoe was a member of the Melbourne Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

⁴⁴⁷ As Helen Praetz has commented: "Steps had been taken in Melbourne by 1951, where the Archbishop had ruled that lay teachers in parish schools were to receive a minimum of £8 per week (The average female wage was £8.12.10 per week). Providing the money was the responsibility for the parish, but frequently parishes failed to honour their obligations". Helen Praetz, *Building a School System: A Sociological Study of Catholic Education*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, p39.

⁴⁴⁸ Helen Praetz, *Building a School System*, p39.

⁴⁴⁹ For example, the decision as to whether to amalgamate the two teachers associations was put in abeyance until a decision was to be made by Bishop Simonds when he returned from Rome; in other words, their decisions were reliant on gaining approval by their employer. It should also be noted that teachers in Catholic schools were precluded from membership of any of the three Victorian Teachers' Unions by virtue of their constitutions which allowed exclusive coverage to teachers in the government system. On the development of Catholic Teacher Unions, see Gerald Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership*, Sydney, St Paul's, 1993. See also, I. F. Eggleston, 'Lay teachers associations in Victorian Catholic schools.' M.Ed Monash University, Clayton, 1980.

⁴⁵⁰ On the rise of teacher militancy, see B. Besant and A. D. Spaul, *The Politics of Schooling*, Pitman Pacific Books, Carlton, 1976. They define the politicisation of schooling as "[This is] the process whereby pressure group activity in government and non-government schooling emerges as a regular determinant in political and bureaucratic decision

conditions for Catholic teachers was stark: Catholic lay teachers were thrown back on the good will of parish priests, heads of the religious orders and in the last instance, the CEO itself to push for improvements in wages and conditions.

Between 1960 and 1965 lay teachers were receiving 80-85 per cent of salaries paid in government schools, and although this was increased to 90 per cent in 1966, in the years following it failed to keep up with government increases in teachers' salaries. As well as salary schedules, the debates during 1969 -1970 were around the need to release principals from class-room duties and recruit male lay teachers at salaries comparable to those of teachers in government schools. It is somewhat ironic to note that the growing presence of male teachers was one factor that led to overall improvement in wages for women – a similar phenomenon that occurred when men joined the ranks of nurses. By 1971 the majority of lay staff had only one or two years of teacher training with little opportunity to upgrade their qualifications and nearly half of the teachers were married women, with a “wastage rate” of 46.7 per cent over 3 years after graduation. Very few Catholic trained lay teachers applied for and won positions of authority within the schools, despite encouragement from Fr Martin and the CEO which began offering wide ranging professional development courses made available after 1971 for lay staff, as well as those provided by the religious institutes for their own staff.⁴⁵¹

With the objective of establishing a professional lay teaching service, in 1973, Mr Frank Rogan was commissioned by the Melbourne CEO to undertake a comprehensive survey of the role and status of lay teachers in Catholic schools, in view of the increased reliance on secular staff, who enjoyed limited career opportunities in the Catholic “system”.⁴⁵² In a Report to the Bishops in 1978, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) outlined the steps which had been taken and those in progress to address the needs of lay teachers, both in terms of their professional conditions and their religious formation as

making for school systems.” P183. See also, A. D. Spaul, (ed) *Australian Teachers: From Colonial Schoolmasters to Militant Professionals*, The Macmillan Company of Australia, South Melbourne, 1977.

⁴⁵¹ Marie Kehoe, ‘Winds of Change’, p107.

⁴⁵² Frank Rogan, ‘The Role and Status of the Lay Teacher’, Melbourne CEO, January 1974, cited in Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 12, Appointment of Lay Principals. He found that “Until WW2, there was no significant change in this pattern [of dominance of religious, with few lay teachers], although there had always been dedicated individual lay teachers in various schools who had joined religious in their apostolic work, often at considerable material cost to themselves and their families.” However, the decade 1963-72 saw such a rapid expansion in numbers within Catholic schools, that “neither in the provision of new schools nor extension to existing schools nor in the supply of enough personnel were the religious teaching congregations able to expand rapidly enough to cope with this crisis. To meet this latter need, large numbers of lay teachers were brought into the system.”

potential teachers of religious education in schools, or at least, their responsibilities for supporting the aims and objectives of the Catholic school system.⁴⁵³

At this time, the CECV promulgated new long service entitlements, and portability of service between Catholic schools in Victoria, with the intention of introducing common sick leave entitlements and a Catholic Superannuation Fund with portability of credits throughout Australia.⁴⁵⁴ Thus the bureaucratic policies and structures began to emerge against which women religious could formulate their own plans in relation to the needs of lay staff.

Handing over to the laity: internal decision making

Marie Kehoe rsm argues:

Evidence of professional maturity in the Catholic teaching force began to emerge in the later 1970s only when these two complementary lines of thought came together, that is, when both religious and lay teachers became conscious of the need to professionalise their roles in Catholic education and each became aware of the particular contribution which their lives as Christian teachers, either religious or lay, could make to the totality of the Catholic school community.⁴⁵⁵

While the CEO was grappling with these complicated issues, according to records in the Loreto Province Archives relating to the 1970s, internally much time and thought was also

⁴⁵³ CECV, *Report to the Bishops of Victoria on the Staffing of Catholic Secondary Schools*, April 1978. Included in this report was the intention to introduce accreditation policies for all teachers entering service to Catholic schools for the first time: "Whilst acknowledging that some teachers will not be competent or may wish to refrain from actual teaching in religious education, we stress that all can and should positively contribute to religious formation." Also attached to this report were Appendices which set out the procedure for the appointment of lay principals for Diocesan-owned schools in the archdiocese and for congregation-owned schools, making it clear that the CEO was to assume administrative responsibility for both.

⁴⁵⁴ As Sister Denise Desmarchellier reported: "The reports on Conditions of Service and Long Service Leave are attempts to ensure appropriate provision for lay teachers and to help religious congregations to budget for and to meet the rapidly increasing financial demands of such legislation as ten year long service leave." Loreto Province Archives, Series 163, *Records Relating to Major Superiors in Australia*. These initiatives reflected directives from the Vatican, dating from 1965, when the Pope issued the *Declaration on Christian Education*, the importance of which lay in the fact that it attempted to clarify the respective roles of parents, teachers, the Church and State regarding education, emphasised the need for professional preparation and development for teachers, and strongly acknowledged the role of parents and the need for their partnership with the schools. In other words, the emphasis was away from responsibility to the Church or to individual Orders, to one of responsibility to the parents/family. For an analysis of the document, see Donald Cave, 'Christian education and the Second Vatican Council', in Peter Gill (ed), *Catholic Education: Where is it Going?*, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, 1972.

⁴⁵⁵ Kehoe, 'Winds of change', p125. On the barriers facing women teachers in Catholic schools in terms of establishing careers and filling positions of authority, see Sister Therese Powell rsm, 'Dancing on a Moving Floor: Lay Women and Principals in Catholic Education', PhD thesis, Deakin University, Geelong, 2001.

devoted to the issues of pay, superannuation and other conditions for their lay staff, as well as their relationship with parent bodies, as it would have been with all the teaching institutes.⁴⁵⁶ As Provincial, Noni Mitchell was to write of the need to integrate all staffs – lay and religious – into the search for social justice in educational and apostolic work, and issued strong encouragement for teachers to upgrade to three year certificates. Principals were advised to make suitable arrangements for their lay staff and further advised that funds were available through the CEO in-service programmes. “I believe such action is a matter of justice to our lay teachers who are serving loyally and deserve our help in meeting this general requirement of all actively engaged teachers.”⁴⁵⁷

As one measure of how difficult the shift was, it is of interest to note that Sister Denise Desmarchellier ibvm, as representative of the Major Superiors on the staff of the CEO, was to write in August 1977 concerning the area of teacher development and the accelerating need for lay principals:

It is disappointing in this regard that principals and lay teachers themselves have not seized the opportunities for the development of lay teachers such as sponsored release for theology and scripture courses offered for 1977 but mainly cancelled due to lack of support, for two week Leadership Course in the second term when there were only fifteen participants.⁴⁵⁸

In the Loreto archives there is an undated paper entitled, “Issues from the Open Forum”, from a seminar conducted by Kevin Treston, followed by notes on a discussion where the following concern was expressed: “We may operate out of a notion of mission, yet it seems to be moving towards an industry model – when difficulties eventuate.” There was obviously real concern about appointing staff from state schools, some of whom would have been non-Catholics, as well as concern about the directions being taken by VCPTA. The issues raised included how much understanding there was of the history and contribution of religious orders amongst lay teachers (and their associations), tension in dealing with industrial issues which “often contradict our values”, although the tone of the document was somewhat softened by asking “how can we make the best of this?”

⁴⁵⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *CEAB documents relating to IBVM schools/convent finances*.

⁴⁵⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, 26 November, 1976.

⁴⁵⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 163, *Records relating to Major Superiors in Australia*.

From selected interviews with lay staff involved with both institutes at this time, it appears that the “best of this” was largely achieved during the transition period in both institutes. Mr Steve Bracks who later became Premier of Victoria, was on the staff at Sacred Heart College in the 1970s, having himself been educated by the Sisters of Mercy in primary school. His role in promoting a union for Catholic teachers in the Ballarat diocese was strongly supported by the Mercies, whose college he regarded as the most progressive of the Ballarat Catholic schools, led by women whose sense of social justice extended to both staff and students, in the true tradition of Catherine McAuley. They provided true models of women in leadership; his admiration for Sister Therese Powell from his experience with her on the staff led him to appoint her to head health services in Ballarat when he became Premier. One of only a few male members of staff, he admired the sisters’ ability to recruit staff from a wide range of backgrounds, to accept students regardless of their ability to pay full fees, and to support the industrial rights of their staff. As a committed unionist, he found the Mercies to be excellent employers.⁴⁵⁹ His sentiments were echoed by a female lay teacher at Villa Maria; Ms Jody Georgakakos, a non-Catholic, held the sisters in the highest regard, particularly in the way they supported her to improve her qualifications, to participate in a number of in-service activities and the flexible approach they took to the needs of their staff.⁴⁶⁰

Flexibility and acknowledgement of family commitments also emerge from testaments of selected lay staff employed by the Loretos in Ballarat. Ms Dawn Jose taught for many years at Dawson Street, and wrote about the time-tabling there that provided women with family responsibilities, a flexibility, it should be noted, quite unknown to their counterparts in government schools, a sentiment echoed by another teacher, Ms Lyn Browne who wrote,

The nuns were able to allow their staff room to grow because they were independent women with innovative ideas themselves. Sr Jennifer Collins was a woman way ahead of her time when she initiated flexible work hours for staff. As a young mother at the time she was Principal, I will always remember the pastoral

⁴⁵⁹ Telephone interview with Mr Bracks, 1 December 2009.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Ms Georgakakos, Bermagui, 28 July 2008.

care she demonstrated by giving me the opportunity to compress my work hours so that I could do “milk and fruit” at kinder...

Just as it was when I was a student, the nuns were pleased to give their staff every opportunity to succeed. If you had an innovative idea you were encouraged to follow it through. Lay teachers were involved in planning and implementing changes in the management of schools...If the nuns could see that you had a gift in a particular area, they had no hesitation in nurturing that gift and it seemed to be done effortlessly.

A third teacher, Helen Weir, wrote, “We were all encouraged to take on roles of responsibility such as subject coordinators, year level leaders, house leaders; school based professional development has always been a priority and formal study encouraged”.⁴⁶¹

The growing reliance on lay staff and the consequent requirement to establish industrial policies to deal with service conditions in retrospect were perhaps the easier of the many decisions the women had to make as they gradually handed over more control to the laity. Records of Provincial Chapters and others in the archives indicate that sorting out the roles of the two teaching forces within the one school were far more difficult. Numerous attempts appear to have been made to sort out the respective roles of the principal and the superior of the Sisters’ community for instance. While in the past this had presumably not been a major issue, with the introduction of lay principals it was obvious that confusion (and some resentment) arose.⁴⁶²

In addition, religious institutes working in schools (and hospitals) were faced with extremely complicated legal questions relating to their status as employers, which included not only their obligations in terms of industrial conditions, but also in relation to occupational health and safety, insurance, duty of care, legal liability and the legal status of boards of management, both advisory and executive, summed up as follows:

⁴⁶¹ Each of these comments was written for a proposed Loreto publication that did not eventuate, but whose transcripts appear in Loreto Province Archives, Series 271, *Loreto Schools Advisory Council Publications*.

⁴⁶² Some of the questions posed included: What qualifications would be required by a person assuming the role of Principal? To whom would such a Principal be responsible – to the school board, Provincial? Delegate of Provincial? Local Superior?

In spite of the many changes that have occurred in the last thirty years and the pressures they generated, Catholic institutions are essentially the same in law as they were then. In particular, they are for the most part unincorporated associations and operate through legal entities that are not used today by modern business organizations to undertake major financial commitments.⁴⁶³

It was predicted that by 1978, three quarters of teaching staff in Catholic schools would be lay teachers, leading to the comment that:

Where our nuns will hold one quarter of all the positions on the staff, not necessarily the administrative ones, a change in the concept of “our” schools must occur. Therefore integration of lay and religious staff members into an effective apostolic team is of vital importance.... Lay teachers must be given larger areas of responsibility if they are to participate in the running of the schools. Development of lay responsibility is a point of major significance and one which requires action in the immediate future. There must be development of administrative structures which will increase the professional efficiency of the schools.⁴⁶⁴

If the 1974 Chapter was regarded as “the cross-roads”, the intervening years until 1980 continued to hold huge challenges for the sisters as they sought to untangle individual issues relating to their schools: questions of retrenchment, how best to deploy the numbers they had, what qualifications were required – and just as importantly – desired, by individual sisters entering new apostolates, and the difficult issues relating to seeing their lay staff, not just as supplementary to their mission, but absolutely central to it.

⁴⁶³ The Australian Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, *Religious Orders and Advisory Bodies : Governing Bodies for Undertakings of Religious Orders*, Order of Malta in Australia, Maryborough, 1984, p6. On the legal issues facing the orders at the time, see also, Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria 1963-1980*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1999, pp183-187.

⁴⁶⁴ Loreto Province Archives, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Provincial Chapter 1974, Education Survey. After listing a number of options for either retrenchment, amalgamation and/or limiting enrolments in various schools, they conclude by writing: “The difficulty of producing sufficient numbers of religious administrators for these secondary schools points to the need to prepare for lay administration...the implications of which include]...financial burden, changing concept of “our” schools, relationship between principal and ultimate authority – Order? Superior? Board? Consideration must be also given to the apostolic nature of a move which involves the laity in the Church’s work of education...the preparation for such a move requires:

- Development of administrative structures
- Complete integration of lay and religious in terms of responsibility
- Development of advisory boards.

During the Loretos 1980 Chapter, there were still painful discussions on their role in schools, but "... all agreed that we have a fundamental task of enabling the laity and that help is needed in training for this, especially for those in the primary area".⁴⁶⁵ The 1980 Chapter appears to be the first time when the sisters considered including lay staff on their Education Advisory Boards, as the most local decision making body in relation to education. During one of the working sessions of the Chapter, the notes record that "it is important to include lay staff in order to share our philosophy", but an alternative view was put that "exploring our new role cannot be done in a public forum. We are entitled to work on this as a group within the Institute without lay staff present." The voting on the issue did not indicate whether or not lay staff were to be invited, although it was clearly voted that "...membership be extended to those actively engaged in education at all levels".⁴⁶⁶ But what was stressed again because of the increased number of lay staff was the need for staff theological training if Catholic schools were to maintain their identity and value system, reflecting the emphasis that the CEO was placing on the same issue at the state and national level.

In a further reference to how their decision making tied in with state and national planning across Catholic education, Noni Mitchell wrote: "Broader approaches to the education of faith for children and families in rural areas has been suggested. These have been pressed by Major Superiors with individual Bishops and in some dioceses and the NCEC. In these issues, the Church moves slowly, unless a practical creative plan is proposed."⁴⁶⁷ From this it can be deduced that in the case of decisions about individual schools they consulted with CEOs, and, in the case of Portland, they entered the new arrangements with the permission of the bishop – presumably because it involved a co-educational ecumenical initiative, but in the case of attempting a broader national approach, they, along with other religious institutes, were unsuccessful.

At a Loreto principals' meeting in December 1980, following the Chapter, it was reported that the role of the religious in the school proved to be the most important session:

⁴⁶⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 17, Provincial Chapter Report, Australian Province, 1980. During this same Chapter they began raising questions of enrolment policies – should their students be practising Catholics? Non-Catholics – what proportion, what criteria? Open entry? Eucumenical? And of on-going importance – how do they evaluate the effectiveness of the schools?

⁴⁶⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 3, *Provincial Assembly*, 1980.

⁴⁶⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 19, *Provincial's Report for Provincial Chapter*, 1980.

Many noted the low morale among the religious who do not see themselves as effective in a school where younger, lay members of staff predominate and hold positions of responsibility. The lay staff are now more stable than the religious and may be better qualified (this latter does not apply as much now). Without positions of responsibility, religious can feel they no longer count in decision making in what they see as an IBVM school.⁴⁶⁸

At the same meeting they discussed staff contracts which "...give clarity and security, [but] their legal validity was questioned. The issue of staff tenure was discussed briefly – general agreement that it was a difficult one, made all the more acute by the ready availability of good quality teachers in the community." These brief reports are an indication that issues relating to staff conditions, role and status were not well formed in 1980, in part because of the lack of any industrial "clout" of the teachers, and in stark contrast with the industrial strength of the teachers' unions in the government schools, where their industrial and political power was at its peak.⁴⁶⁹ The minutes of this meeting give a very clear picture of the vexed issue of the confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the principals and the religious superiors, and their relationship to each other:

This topic proved to be the Archilles' heel or Gordian Knot or the Mystery of Thebes – in other words, it absorbed our energies for three sessions..... but there are still some areas which are unresolved, viz, finance, relationship to parents and friends, past pupils etc, role in the school.

Post Vatican II leaders and agents of change: Noni Mitchell ibvm and Valda Ward rsm

Sisters Noni Mitchell and Valda Ward who were to steer these complex issues in their two institutes, undertook their novitiate training in the pre-Vatican II mould, but were to prove more than capable of striking the balance between responding to outside pressures, while all the time retaining the strength of their institutes and respecting the integrity of their

⁴⁶⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 10, Secondary Principals 1980-1988.

⁴⁶⁹ As one commentator was to observe, "As lay teachers gradually replaced religious teachers in the schools, the Church's relationship with them became that of employer to employee: the relationship became industrial rather than religious and paternal, as it had been with the congregations of sisters and brothers; the Church had to deal with the kinds of industrial problems which beset any employer". Naomi Turner, *Catholics in Australia, Vol. 1*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1992, p95.

members. There are remarkable similarities between the two key leaders of the Ballarat women, both of whom represent a new leadership style, one which would take their communities forward into a new way of religious life in the post-Vatican II era.

Both women entered their respective institutes after some years in secular life. Noni Mitchell (M. John Bosco) entered the Loretos in 1954 at the age of 25, by which time she had already qualified as a medical doctor, the top female student and the youngest in her year, with years of work experience with the South Australian medical service. Valda Ward (Sister Gabriel) qualified as a teacher through the state system and had several years experience teaching in country Victoria before entering at Ballarat East in 1958. Both were ex-students of their institute's schools, and both belonged to the group of women who entered in the 1950s whose skills and leadership were to extend well beyond their roles as teachers. The diversity of their contribution extended far beyond the local or diocesan level. These were women who became decision makers and shaped policy in both the secular and Catholic systems of education. In the course of their work, they became firm friends and professional colleagues, something that would not have been highly unlikely for the generation of women religious who preceded them in Ballarat.

At the urging of M. Dympna who was preparing for the changes to schools in NSW following the Wyndam Report, Noni went back to university to complete a science degree and Dip. Ed., and spent several years teaching and later as principal at Loreto Kirribilli (Sydney), during which time she became an advisor to the Archbishop of Sydney on catechetics. Her career began to parallel that of Valda Ward as she took up her appointment as principal of Christ College, the Catholic teachers' college in Melbourne (1971-74). She became a founding member of the newly created National Catholic Education Commission representing the Major Superiors, a position she retained until 1978, four years after being appointed Provincial of IBVM on the sudden death of M. Antoinette.⁴⁷⁰ During her time at the teachers' college, she came to know Valda as a fellow member of the board of the Institute of Catholic Education (ICE).⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Noni was only 44 at the time of her appointment, a relatively young age, especially when compared with her two predecessors; M. Dympna was 63 and M. Antoinette was 59 at the time of their appointments.

⁴⁷¹ Both women also held executive positions on the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Women in Victoria – Valda as President in 1978, Noni as vice-President in 1977, and Noni was President of the Australian Leaders of Women's Congregations from 1979-1981.

The Loreto Province archives contain handwritten notes of speeches and workshops given by Noni during the 1970s to a range of religious congregations and school communities. The subjects covered the role and future of Catholic schools, and the importance of planning in education that would extend from individual congregations into diocesan and national frameworks. She continually stressed the need for seeing Catholic education within the context of the broader ministry of the Church, and avoiding what she described as “drift” in decision making. She warned of the danger of Catholic schools becoming the exclusive province of the elite who could afford it, of the injustice of lay teachers not being employed under adequate industrial conditions. Acknowledging that some Catholic schools had fee structures outside the reach of many in the community, she challenged those select schools to strengthen their role in encouraging leadership, not for status and income, but for justice and gospel values that would articulate a critique of injustice in the structures of society. Her words were straightforward, challenging, often critical and questioning of received wisdom, but they always encouraged intelligent vision of the best that Catholic education could offer.

Drawing on her medical background, Noni also delivered lectures on the subject of “The nun and mental health” and “The nun as woman” to her own Loreto sisters and those in other religious communities. In 1971, she challenged women religious to question their femininity and their sexuality by asking:

In what ways can we be feminine? By doing the sort of things that give women their natural fulfillment – creating beauty in their surroundings. I wonder how much psychological damage has been done to us as young women by the deliberate removal of colour from our convent surroundings?...I think we should think very much indeed about the life, colour, femininity, the sheer grace, delicacy and loveliness of our convent school environments if we are to discover in ourselves the joy of making beauty part of our lives, but more especially, in providing it for others.⁴⁷²

It is difficult to imagine how women trained in the austerity of the pre-Vatican II era would have responded to the challenge and bravery of Noni’s words.

⁴⁷² Loreto Province Archives, Series 79, *Personal papers of Sister Noni Mitchell*, Item 17, Papers given by Sister Noni Mitchell.

Of even more formidable status as a leading educational administrator, Valda Ward spent over 40 years in religious life undertaking study and professional development to build on her initial training as a primary school teacher. She obtained a B.A., Dip Ed and B. Ed at the University of Melbourne, a Dip. Ed. Administration, Master of Ed. Administration and PhD through the University of New England, followed by Diplomas in Social Justice Studies and Theological Studies at the Yarra Theological Union, the last of her qualifications being attained in 1993 when she was 63 years of age.⁴⁷³

A list of the speeches and conference contributions contained in Valda's Curriculum Vitae, held in the Ballarat East congregational archives, covers the period 1974 – 1995. These were delivered nationally and in America, Hong Kong, Rome, Europe, the UK, China, Fiji, Tonga and New Zealand. Topics concentrated on educational administration and planning, and included an emphasis on the role of women in leadership. Of equal importance, was the range of her research interests, focused on the practical application of her academic knowledge: structures of governance in schools and the Yarra Theological Union, patterns of leadership in schools and evaluation of co-education. Her teaching and research within Aquinas Teachers' College and later the Australian Catholic University (ACU) gave her skills and expertise which she brought to bear in her critical role as a national leader amongst Sisters of Mercy in the development of their new structures, culminating in the establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy in 1981 which would henceforth act as a national voice for the Mercies across Australia. Just as Mothers Xavier Flood and Bonaventure had played dominant roles as leaders of their time, so too did Sister Valda Ward as the major superior of Ballarat East in the national negotiations decades later, working for the goal of a national structure within which individual congregations retained authority and flexibility, and which took over 100 years to achieve. Leaders of the Ballarat East Mercies played critical roles in each of these major changes to the structure of Mercy

⁴⁷³ In a tribute to Valda after her death, the current congregational leader, Veronica Lawson, wrote: "Valda was a lifelong learner and researcher. She said not so long ago that her 1991 Diploma in Social Justice from YTU was her most significant qualification: 'that's what all the rest was about' she said." Veronica Lawson, *Our Diocesan Community*, December 2008, p14. accessed at www.ballarat.catholic.org.au on 16/2/2009.

sisters in Australia, none more important than Valda Ward in the 1970s and 80s, whose experiences of the process are documented in her PhD thesis.⁴⁷⁴

The publication of the speeches and research of these two women would constitute a unique contribution to women's educational history, and add immeasurably to the understanding of women religious as leaders in all fields of education. When combined with the deep spirituality exhibited by both in their role as superiors in their own communities, the picture of their lives becomes even more compelling, as demonstrated in the following two instances of written records.

Noni Mitchell's report to the Loreto Province Chapter in 1980 could be published as a stand-alone tribute, not only to her own work as Provincial, but to the women whom she led during the difficult 1970s.⁴⁷⁵ The 30-page document covers every aspect of the life of the province between 1974-1980, from the statistical analysis of the institute to its deepest questioning of the religious vows and the spirituality which underpinned their apostolic life. It does not avoid the difficult questions, nor her perceived personal failings as leader. It provides an historic record of the move towards constitutional reform, particularly the discernment process involved in adapting the Jesuit constitutions, and the importance of the recapturing of the spirit of Mary Ward and the inspiration of M. Gonzaga Barry.

Similarly, Valda Ward's address to the 1977 National Assembly of the Australian Sisters of Mercy deserves re-publication as a critical historical record of the period.⁴⁷⁶ Put alongside Noni's 1980 report, the two documents provide the most compelling evidence of the journey undertaken by women religious during this period, and in the case of Valda's speech, a clear outline of the challenges facing women religious moving into the 1980s and beyond. Both are underpinned by a deep spirituality, combined with clear-headed practicality, making it easy to see why the two women would have become both spiritual and personal friends.

⁴⁷⁴ Valda Ward, *'Organisation and Change and the Process of Change in the Sisters of Mercy'*, PhD, University of New England, Armidale, 1986.

⁴⁷⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Records relating to Provincial Chapters/congregations, Item 19, Provincial's report to the Provincial Chapter 1980.

⁴⁷⁶ Valda Ward, Presidential Address, *Mercy and Justice: First National Assembly of the Sisters of Mercy, Australia, 1977*, Northern Press, Melbourne, 1977.

There are a series of striking parallels between these two women. Both entered religious life after some years in the secular world as qualified professional women, and both took advantage for further study, culminating in CVs that would have qualified either for the highest positions in secular life. Both were young women in their early forties when they assumed leadership of their institutes; Noni was Provincial of the Loretos in Australia from 1974-1983, Valda Superior General, Ballarat Congregation, 1973-1980, followed for each by the call to fill the highest office of their respective institutes – Noni as Provincial of the Irish Branch of the IBVM (1986-1999), Valda, as National President of the Sisters of Mercy, 1975-1980.

Each was nominated throughout her career for membership of both Catholic and secular decision-making bodies, details of which are provided in Chapter 9. Both women were recognized nationally for their contribution to education. Valda Ward appeared twice amongst the *World's Who Who of Australian Women* and honoured amongst *Ballarat's Finest: A Showcase of Achievement and Contribution by Ballarat Women*. Noni received an Order of Australia in 1997 and an Honorary Doctorate from the Australian Catholic University (ACU) for her outstanding contribution to education and community life. Of greater importance, as women religious they are each deeply respected and admired by people with whom they lived and worked; tributes to each from oral testimony given in the course of my research go far beyond the acknowledgment one would expect for elected leaders. Bishop Mulkearns judged that Valda “was the right woman for the job at the right time” in his dealings with her as leader of the congregation and during the establishment of the Ballarat Diocesan Education Board.⁴⁷⁷ As a professional colleague at Christ College, Cyril Drew pays Noni this tribute: “[She] had a warm approach to her relationships with all at the College. Graduates remember Sister Noni’s dignity and her sense of humour, her profound spirituality and her down to earth approach to administration.”⁴⁷⁸ One of her ex-students wrote: “Mother John Bosco [Noni Mitchell] shaped my life. As a girl growing up in post-war Australia when women were expected to be wives and mothers, M. John Bosco represented an alternative role model. I certainly decided to emulate her in becoming a doctor.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Bishop Mulkearns, Ballarat, 24 March 2009.

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Joan Kenny, *Prologue to the Future, Christ College: The foundation and early development of the Australian Catholic University's Christ Campus, 1967-1990*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1996, p58.

⁴⁷⁹ Dr Sue Ogle, quoted in *Loreto Normanhurst 1897-1997: A Century of Memories*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 1997, p95.

The most striking feature of both women was their ability to rise to the challenges facing them after Vatican II, to steer the very difficult path as leaders with vision who, at the same time, had to make extremely hard managerial and administrative decisions that would directly affect not only their members, but the lay staff, students and parents of their schools. This potential clash between vision and managerialism was handled by both with extreme skill, born from their deep spirituality as well as their professional expertise. Perhaps their professional and life experiences before each entered in her mid-twenties was a factor; another would appear to be the ability of both to encourage and support other women of talent, including those with administrative skills, to assist with difficult decisions.⁴⁸⁰ But without the confidence which each displayed in their understanding of their foundresses and their spiritual inheritance, they may be remembered chiefly as skilled administrators, and not as the deeply spiritual women of vision who inspired the next generation of leaders to carry through with the decisions made in the 1970s.

Conclusion

The corporate work of both institutes after Vatican II continued to be education, made possible by the commitment of teachers to stay within the schools, a leadership which managed the hand over new responsibilities to committed and dedicated lay teachers, and the willingness of individual sisters to work past retirement age in domestic support. The gradual handover to the laity and the consequent role of religious as employers was not achieved without great soul-searching and the benefits of administrative skill and leadership. In this sense, the period between 1965 and 1980 bears out Marie Kehoe's argument that "renewal" did not necessarily mean withdrawing from schools: it was not necessary to change apostolate in order to "renew" the religious institute itself.⁴⁸¹ Women religious in Ballarat demonstrated that despite individual sisters seeking new forms of religious life and work, they could still continue to provide education for a growing number of children and tertiary students. But although the majority remained teachers all their lives, teaching after Vatican II no longer equated with religious life; lay people were equally equipped for the task, and women religious were now encouraged to make the best use of their skills and talents, even if for a minority it meant leaving the classroom. It is

⁴⁸⁰As will be shown in Chapter 9, women religious in Ballarat, as elsewhere, were amongst the most highly qualified and experienced educational administrators in the community, their qualifications and experience far outstripping their secular sisters.

⁴⁸¹ Marie Kehoe, 'Winds of change', p117.

against this background that the lives and works of individual women discussed in the following chapters should be considered.

Chapter 8: Case studies of continuity, change and adaptation

Introduction

Two case studies have been chosen to illustrate the changing nature of the contribution of the Loreto sisters and the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy to education in Ballarat. The first is the relinquishing of control over the Aquinas Teachers' College by the Mercy sisters, and the second a study of closure of the boarding school at Mary's Mount, which was accompanied by the amalgamation of the two Loreto private schools – Mary's Mount and Dawson Street. Both were central to the corporate work of the two institutes, and the changes instituted by 1980. Adaptation in the delivery of their services was the direct result of the changes within the congregations themselves, spurred by Vatican II and by their declining and ageing numbers of sisters. In addition, the decisions made were inextricably bound to changing policies within government, and among those responsible for the planning of Catholic education transmitted through the local educational authorities under the direction of Bishop Mulkearns, often driven through the Melbourne Catholic Education Office (CEO). Interwoven in the case studies is the inevitable handing over to the laity, not only in terms of professional personnel, but also in terms of the governance of the enterprises.

The nature and the rapidity of the changes obviously caused much soul searching and pain, as the women presided over the loss of control of educational projects for which they had fought long and hard for nearly 100 years. There is compensation in the fact that the direct descendent of the teachers' college, the Australian Catholic University (ACU), continues to serve the city and the community, marking an unbroken contribution to teacher training, particularly for girls and young women. Similarly, Loreto College is now a leading all girls' secondary school, catering for 800 students, with an enviable academic record. In a city known for the preservation and celebration of its history, women religious have maintained historic buildings which contribute to the city's reputation as being one of the finest examples of nineteenth century planning and architecture.

A case study of continuity and change: Mercy Teachers' College⁴⁸²

Background

As shown in Chapter 1, Mother Gonzaga Barry saw the need to train her sisters for their role as teachers before the end of the nineteenth century. During the same period, the Superior of the Ballarat East Mercies, Mother Mary Xavier Flood, was responding to the need for registered teachers for Mercy-run schools through the establishment of Aquin Teachers' College, which obtained registration in 1909, and was officially opened in 1910 within the Sacred Heart convent and college complex, where it assumed the name of the Sacred Heart Training College. Its founding (and the transfer of the Loreto Teachers' College from Ballarat to Albert Park) was a direct response to the 1905 *Registration of Teachers and Schools Act*, promoted by the then Victorian Director of Education, Frank Tate. This Act marked the first time in the British Empire that a government required the registration of independent schools and the teachers within them. The Act was the catalyst at that time for negotiations between the Melbourne Archbishop and the religious institutes to try to impose minimal planning and coordination around the training of teachers for Catholic schools, preferably through the establishment of a central teacher training facility and through amalgamations amongst some of the religious institutes. But this attempt, like many in the future, was to flounder on the insistence by individual institutes to retain their own control and to resist "outside" attempts to coordinate their efforts. Sister Clare Forbes rsm, is reported as commenting:

For most of the church at this time, the tide was running in the direction of large scale organization, and to swim against the tide was to earn the displeasure of the hierarchy. The Ballarat East Mercy stance was in marked contrast to the general movement of the church ...despite the apparent authoritarian, centralized nature of the late nineteenth century and early 20th century Roman Catholicism, some local independence was possible provided that the ingredients of faith, vision and courage were present in abundance.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸² The teachers' college run by the Sisters of Mercy underwent three name changes; originally known as Aquin College, the more commonly known name became the Sacred Heart Teachers' College; reversion to Aquinas College came in 1974 when the site of the college shifted from Victoria Street to Mair Street. For ease of understanding, the term Aquinas will be used throughout this text.

⁴⁸³ Ballarat ACU library, *Aquinas History*, Meeting concerning the College's 75th anniversary, May 1985.

Archbishop Carr expressed the view that it would be "...absurd for each Mercy Convent, or even for a few together, to try to open a training college for teachers. In the first place, they have not the finance to do it. Plain common sense told them all that the only path to be followed was that which led to amalgamation."⁴⁸⁴ The archbishop was also concerned that novices were being sent into schools before they were properly trained, the inevitable consequence of the so-called "apprentice" system that saw hundreds of primary teachers, both religious and secular, trained on the job, a system that lasted well in to the 1950s.⁴⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Mother Xavier persisted in her determination to keep within the institute both her novitiate and her training college, but did make strenuous efforts to comply with the Act, first ensuring that those women who had some teaching experience applied for registration, secondly, by enabling three of her Sisters to enrol at Melbourne University, and third, by gaining permission for them to undertake their practical training in her own schools, "... at that time an unheard of privilege for students and a grave responsibility for the young College", and by taking in at least ten lay students each year.⁴⁸⁶ The original three sisters travelled to Melbourne once a week and went on to become the first staff at the teachers' college. They included Mother Alacoque who would succeed Mother Xavier as Superior and would also assume the position of principal of the college, and Mother Bonaventure who herself succeeded Mother Alacoque. It is important to stress that the sisters who staffed the teachers' college still carried out teaching duties at Sacred Heart Convent, another indication of their commitment and of the heavy work load they carried in these early days, and a practice that continued well into the twentieth century.

According to Sister Therese Morganti rsm, herself a long serving staff member at Aquinas, the reason for not going along with the amalgamation in 1905 (and by definition, for not relinquishing the teachers' college) was that Dr Carr's urgings were based on the need to comply with government legislation (ie expediency) whereas Mother Xavier Flood felt that such a move "...departed from the

⁴⁸⁴ Quoted in Sr M. Philip Welsh, 'Mercy unto many', *Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education*, Vol. 6, November 1985 (no page numbers included). For a full account of the importance of the 1905 Teacher Registration Act, see A.M. Babcock, 'The extension of state control over independent schools in Victoria 1900-1925', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1964.

⁴⁸⁵ It should be noted that the Victorian government trained teachers using the same teacher-pupil system. For a detailed history of teacher training in Australia, see John Cleverley, 'The state primary school teacher between the wars', J. Cleverley and J. Lawry (eds), *Australian Education in the Twentieth Century: Studies in the Development of State Education*, Longman, Camberwell, 1972.

⁴⁸⁶ Welsh, 'Mercy unto many', Sisters of Mercy were also enrolled at the School of Mines and the School of Forestry in the nearby town of Creswick.

federation's plan for the Order...if changes occur, they are justified only if based on spiritual reasons."⁴⁸⁷

The early struggle to establish the college provides the historical background for the battles which were to resume in the 1960's and 1970's when the college was under threat of closure.

The battle to save Aquinas

The history of Aquinas is a significant illustration of the determination of women religious to meet what they saw as the needs of their own institutes, and in this case, the needs of the diocese, even if this meant confronting church authorities whose advice was based on pragmatic considerations, and/or assumptions about the capabilities of the women. To put their early contribution to teacher training in context, the State College for the training of teachers in Sydney only opened three years before Aquinas (1906), illustrating the foresight of M. Xavier Flood (and M. Gonzaga Barry).⁴⁸⁸ In hindsight, the decision in 1909 to establish, maintain and control teacher training in Ballarat defied financial and logistical logic; obviously, 'logic' was not the main motivation of the Mercy sisters. It also illustrated the inability of church authorities to force amalgamations or "rationalization" of the efforts of the different teaching institutes, a theme that was to recur in the 1960s and 70s. In addition, it highlights the determination to retain the ethos of separate Catholic institutions as a right rather than just a need – again, a theme that resonates throughout the long history of the fight for state aid and the fight to retain control of Catholic schools, hospitals, orphanages and tertiary institutions. The argument about right to a "fair share" of public funds remained a constant tool of advocacy when confronting governments at all levels and of all political persuasions.

Aquinas is unique in Victoria as the one continuously operating, independent teachers' college outside Melbourne. Its immediate aim was to prepare teachers for the Ballarat East

⁴⁸⁷ Letter dated 2 March, 1987, addressed to Dr. Fitzgerald, *Aquinas History*, Ballarat ACU library. Dr Fitzgerald wrote a short history of the college, *From Acquin to Acquinas, 1910-1985*, Aquinas Campus, ICE, Ballarat, 1985. He was Director of Aquinas Campus in 1985, succeeding Fr George Pell.

⁴⁸⁸ Adelaide Teachers' College was opened as early as 1876, Melbourne's was established in 1889. Other significant independent teachers' colleges included Mercer House in Melbourne and the Teachers' Guild in NSW, both of which trained teachers for non-Catholic independent schools. See Ivan Turner, 'The professional preparation of teachers in Australia (1958)' in A. D. Spaul, (ed), *Australian Teachers: From Colonial Schoolmasters to Militant Professionals*, The Macmillan Company, South Melbourne, 1977. The expansion of state teachers' colleges did not commence until after the Second World War, when the number in Victoria increased from seven in 1940 to 23 by 1958.

Mercies, but it also trained lay teachers for the Ballarat diocese, later expanding to provide teachers across the Catholic education system in Victoria and into the Wagga Wagga region. The college survived the great depression when others closed, including the state-run Ballarat Teachers' College, which was established in 1926, but forced to close between 1932 and 1946, leaving Aquinas as the only Victorian teacher training college open to both religious and lay students outside the metropolitan area for over a decade.⁴⁸⁹

Despite the early difficulties and the on-going financial burden to the institute, between 1961 and 1972, the college trained 80 religious and 224 lay students and was staffed exclusively by Mercy sisters until 1963, with additional input from the local Redemptorist and diocesan priests.⁴⁹⁰ The sisters also provided residential accommodation for the teacher trainees who lived alongside the secondary school boarders at Sacred Heart, until they shifted the training facility to Patrician House in 1963. Patrician House continued as a combined training facility and hostel for ten years when it outgrew the ability to cater for the 180 students, including a small number of young men. It was at this time that they shifted to the present site in Mair Street in the heart of the city, and reverted to the title of Aquinas College.⁴⁹¹

Under Premier Bolte, whose attitude to state aid for Catholic schools and institutions was the epitome of pragmatism, the Victorian state government began providing limited assistance to independent teachers' colleges in 1967, which eased some of the financial strain.⁴⁹² Of longer term importance, Sir Robert Menzies established the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education (CACAE) in October 1965 under Senator John Gorton as the first Federal Minister for Education. Similar to the Australian Universities Commission (AUC), the CACAE was to advise the Minister on tertiary education outside universities; in the words of its first Chair, Sir Ian Wark, it developed an

⁴⁸⁹ Bendigo state teachers' college also closed during this period, re-opening in 1945.

⁴⁹⁰ The first full-time lay lecturers were not employed until 1971.

⁴⁹¹ The building in Mair Street, *Carn Brae*, was originally owned by Cyrus Bath Retallack, a Cornishman who arrived in Ballarat in 1857; it passed into the hands of the wealthy (Protestant) Manifold family and was later occupied by Ballarat Girls' Grammar School. The building was purchased by the Sisters of St John of God in 1973 and sold to the diocese in 1980 as the site for Aquinas College, and is now the Ballarat Campus of the Australian Catholic University. The sisters used their own parish staffed schools for practical lessons, as well as St Paul's Technical College and St Joseph's parish school which was staffed by the Loretos, and the schools operated by the Sisters of Nazareth within their orphanages.

⁴⁹² This aid amounted to \$1.00 for \$1.85 in recurrent funding, and \$1.00 for \$1.00 in capital funds. Premier Bolte's attitude to aid for Catholic education can be summed up by his famous statement, "Have them at government schools and the government and the taxpayer had to pay the bloody lot. State aid made sense economically and was handy politically too." Quoted in Joan M. Kenny, *Prologue to the Future: The foundation and early development of Australian Catholic University's Christ Campus, 1967-1990*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1996, p22.

“air of Santa Claus about it”.⁴⁹³ For the first time, federal money started to flow freely to the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), but not to the state teachers’ colleges which were still seen as the responsibility of state governments. Nor did the money come to the independent teachers’ colleges such as Aquinas. Nonetheless, the CACAE did offer advice on amalgamations of some teachers’ colleges with established CAEs, and laid the ground for further advice to the government on the future of the independent teachers’ colleges.

In 1967 the Mercies wrote to Minister Gorton, pointing out that:

Our training college ...prepares students for registration by the Council of Education of Victoria as primary, sub-primary and junior secondary teachers and as teachers of special subjects (commercial work). We have been in existence since 1909 and are approved by the Universities Commission to receive Commonwealth Scholarship holders. All the buildings and staff [are provided] without government or diocesan monies, all at the expense of the Mercies of Ballarat East...we would be grateful to hear just how we should make application for a Commonwealth grant.⁴⁹⁴

The tone of the letter and the tactic of writing directly to the person with most influence echoes the advocacy of Mother Xavier Flood when she appealed directly to Frank Tate as Director of Education. But the 1960s and 70s were to require much more intense and sophisticated lobbying for government approval if grants were to be forthcoming.

Planning within the Ballarat Diocese

By the 1970s Church authorities themselves were undertaking more strategic planning for tertiary institutions, in the same way that they were moving towards coordination of schooling provision. In April 1971, Bishop Mulkearns wrote to the superior of the Mercies, M. Carmel Keane, regarding the possibility of future development of Aquinas as a diocesan training college to be conducted by the diocese in partnership with the Sisters of Mercy; she wrote back on 28 April accepting the proposition in principle as the basis for further discussions.⁴⁹⁵ A Report of the Ballarat Diocesan Education Board of 19 December

⁴⁹³ Ian Wark, ‘Colleges of Advanced Education and the Commission on Advanced Education’, in IFK Birch and D Smart (eds), *The Commonwealth Government and Education, 1964-1976: Political Initiatives and Developments*, Primary Education (Publishing) Pty. Ltd, Richmond, 1977, p155. Sir Ian Wark remained Chairman of the CACAE from its establishment in 1965 until 1971.

⁴⁹⁴ ACU library, Ballarat, *History-Aquinas-ICE*, letter dated 10 February, 1967.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter dated 28 April 1971, *History-Aquinas-ICE*.

1971, again reiterated that it seemed impossible to continue training the number of lay teachers required for the diocese through the Sacred Heart Training College; therefore a formal recommendation was passed that a diocesan Catholic Teacher Education Training Institute be established to be in use by January 1973, under the direction of a committee appointed to initiate the project. This committee consisted of Fathers George Pell and Frank Madden, Sisters Valda Ward and M. Ignatius (Clare Forbes), Peter Teggelove (Ballarat CEO), Miss Imelda Palmer from Melbourne University, Mr J Flynn and Geoff Torney.⁴⁹⁶

While not unusual for many Catholic organizations at the time, it is nonetheless important to note the narrow composition of the steering committee. The failure six years after Vatican II to give the laity meaningful representation on a body planning yet another huge commitment of Church resources, including on-going levies from parishes, was not only out of step with governance structures of secular public authorities, but contrary to the spirit of Vatican II directives on the role of the laity.⁴⁹⁷ Just as important was the criticism by the government funding bodies which expressed strong disquiet about the lack of broad community involvement in the management of organisations which sought to become recipients of tax payers' money.⁴⁹⁸

At the January 1973 Chapter of the Mercies, it was reported that the Bishop was willing to enter into a contract to pay all salaries of institute members, in return for the institute undertaking to maintain a proportion of religious on the staff. In the same year, Fr George Pell was appointed Director of Aquinas. According to his biographer, Tess Livingstone:

⁴⁹⁶ Mr Torney was a partner in the leading Catholic law firm Byrnes, Jones and Torney. His wife, Janet, also a lawyer, was at the same time a member of the Council of the Ballarat College of Advanced Education.

⁴⁹⁷ This criticism was to become even more potent in the arguments surrounding the birth of a Catholic University, whose beginnings can be traced to these battles in the 1970s to save the Catholic teachers' colleges across the nation. See for example, John Hill, 'University? Catholic?' *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXV111, January 1991; Paul Collins, *No Set Agenda: Australia's Catholic Church Faces and Uncertain Future*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1992, pp143-151; Robert Gascoigne, 'Are Catholic universities in Australia a good idea?' *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXV111, Number 4, October 1991. For the case for the Catholic University, see Fr George Pell, 'Australian Catholic University inaugural address', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXV111, January 1991, No. 1; Brother Dan Stewart, 'A case for the Australian Catholic University', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXV111, January, 1991; Peter Sheehan, 'On being a public and Catholic University at one and the same time', *Interface*, Vol. 6, No.1, May 2003.

⁴⁹⁸ For example, as Victorian Director of Education, Laurie Shears was in the forefront of those within state government who identified lack of professional lay input into parish schools and those under control of the Orders as being a barrier to legitimating calls for public funding. See L. W. Shears, 'Some forces for continuity in Australian education', W.S. Simpkins and A.H. Miller (eds), *Changing Education: Australian Viewpoints*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Sydney, 1972.

Putting the interests of Aquinas ahead of her own, Sister Clare Forbes, who had been acting principal, was happy to stand aside to allow Pell to take the position, as she knew he had better academic qualifications for the job. Pell appointed her as his deputy, and they forged a powerful partnership, earning the nicknames of George and the Dragon. ‘Clare was one of my closest friends, and I think even our strongest enemies would concede we made a formidable pair,’ he says.⁴⁹⁹

Meanwhile at the state level it was evident that teacher training for Catholic schools was moving into a different era – not only was the training moving away from the control of the religious institutes because of their diminishing numbers, but their survival would depend on rationalization through amalgamations and forced entry into the government controlled State Colleges of Education if they were to receive government funding necessary for this survival.⁵⁰⁰ Cardinal Knox was well aware of this, but refused to consider the proposal put forward by the CEO through Fr Frank Martin that the existing Catholic teachers’ colleges be converted into religious education institutes, leaving the initial teacher training to the secular colleges. According to Anne O’Brien:

Martin had gained the support of Dr Laurie Shears (Director of General Education) who was an outspoken critic of independent teachers’ colleges, and Mr Lindsay Thompson (Victorian Minister for Education) for his proposals. Staff at Catholic teachers’ colleges felt threatened by the proposals, and ensured that there was never any discussion of [his] paper by the parties concerned.⁵⁰¹

Obviously, despite all the signs of a new and changing era, Catholic authorities were determined to hang on to both the secular and religious teacher training of their teachers, none more so than the people in Ballarat, led by Fr George Pell who according to his

⁴⁹⁹ Tess Livingstone, *George Pell*, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 2002, p95. Whilst Fr Pell’s academic qualifications were not in question, he did not possess the educational background or educational qualifications of the women he replaced, an issue that has drawn some comment during informal conversations with a number of people during the course of this research.

⁵⁰⁰ In the 1970s Aquinas was being funded primarily through a levy of \$19 on each Catholic primary pupil in the Ballarat diocese; by 1974 Commonwealth funding constituted approximately one-third of the recurrent costs of the college, leaving a significant shortfall.

⁵⁰¹ Anne O’Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1999, p 177. According to O’Brien, the main opposition came from the Melbourne Mercy College and Christ College; Fr Martin was apparently instructed personally by the archbishop to drop the proposal, and “...conceded that the treatment meted out to him over this report the most painful of all his experiences in the Catholic Education Office” .

biographer, rates "...saving Aquinas as one of the best things I have done".⁵⁰² The first step towards achieving government recognition and the funding that accompanied it was the formation of the Institute of Catholic Education (ICE).⁵⁰³ This consisted of an amalgamation of Aquinas along with the Melbourne based colleges: the Melbourne Mercy college at Ascot Vale, Christ College, which was established in 1967 and the Christian Brothers college at Box Hill.⁵⁰⁴ As a constituent member of the ICE and with the support of the Chair of the ICE, Sir Bernard Callinan, and Archbishop Knox, Fr Pell played a critical part in two battles, first to have the ICE admitted to the State College of Victoria, and secondly, to receive full Commonwealth funds. Catholic authorities were thus engaged with both levels of government in the fight for their survival as autonomous, independent organizations, knowing that without government recognition and funding, almost 100 years of involvement in teacher training would inevitably come to an end.

Government Planning

The broader context within which the battles raged in the 1970s was one of virtual chaos in terms of planning for tertiary education, with little or no agreement between the two levels of government, "daggers drawn" between the universities and newly created Colleges of Advanced Education, and almost total neglect of teachers' colleges.⁵⁰⁵ While Aquinas was successfully admitted to the ICE, which itself was accepted as part of the State College of Victoria (SCV) in 1974, it still faced the task of achieving recurrent grants from the federal government which had taken over full funding responsibility from the states the same year. While the archbishop was able to assert his authority over the CEO, the Church could not stop the tide of reform at government level. In August 1973 the Whitlam government mandated the Commission on Advanced Education to advise on the provision of funding for private teachers' colleges, paying particular attention to their viability in terms of numbers of students enrolled. A Teacher Education Liaison Committee was subsequently established, one of whose members was Sister Noni Mitchell ibvm.⁵⁰⁶ This committee circulated a questionnaire to the seventeen relevant Colleges, and conducted on-site visits

⁵⁰² Livingstone, *George Pell*, p93.

⁵⁰³ ICE became a fully accredited CAE, approved and accredited under the Victorian Post-Secondary Education Act.

⁵⁰⁴ For the history of the Ascot Vale Mercy Teachers' College, see, Author Unknown, *Mercy Teachers' College: 75 Years of Catholic Teacher Education, 1909-1984*, ICE, Melbourne, 1984. For a history of Christ College, see J.M. Kenny, *Prologue to the Future, Christ College*. Loreto sisters who taught at Christ College included Sisters Margaret Manion and Veronica Brady, and Sister Noni Mitchell who was Principal from 1971 to 1974.

⁵⁰⁵ For a comprehensive account, see I.K.F. Birch and D. Smart, (eds), *The Commonwealth Government and Education, 1964-1976: Political Developments and Initiatives*, Primary Education (Publishing) Pty. Ltd, Richmond, 1977, and Alan Barcan, 'Teachers' Colleges', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 2, 1982/3.

⁵⁰⁶ Noni at this time was Principal of Christ College, accounting for her position on the sub-committee.

to those which had requested Commonwealth funding. Obviously, a letter direct to the Minister asking how one applied for a grant was no longer a viable tactic; receipt of government funds would now be based more firmly on statistical evidence of viability and, increasingly, on an assessment of the *need* for the provision of services.

Student numbers in the independent colleges ranged from 30 to 683, with the majority enrolment being between 200- 400; Ballarat was on the lower end of the scale with just 186 students. One of the criteria required to obtain Commonwealth funding was that the colleges should have a good chance of increasing to 400 by 1975 and to continue expansion, thus allowing for broader subject choices. Another criterion was the need for more widely-representative councils, as opposed to what the government (and presumably wider community at that time) saw in the current boards, which were narrow in composition, and in many cases, unduly oriented to the needs of a single employer. The Commission noted the need for elected representatives of the interests of the general community and inclusion of senior members from other educational institutions and authorities, positions that were to be filled by election, with open recruitment of staff, the majority of whom were not to be linked with a particular religious institute.⁵⁰⁷

Continuing to demand compulsory religious studies raised the spectre of denial of government funds, but the Commission also acknowledged that funds would be necessary to replace religious staff whose numbers were declining. In other words, they were taking the pragmatic view of teachers' colleges; the colleges were necessary and were fulfilling an important function in keeping the Catholic system viable. But the price to be paid for funds would be accountability to government and to the community through elected boards and more open access and recruitment policies in line with comparable secular and/or government bodies. Sister Noni Mitchell reported to a meeting of the Victorian Catholic Teacher Education Board, 7 November 1973, that in relation to the governance issues, the government would likely support rationalization and amalgamation, but "... would not be

⁵⁰⁷ While under the control of the institute, the college had been governed by a Council nominated by the Mother General who was also responsible for appointing the religious staff. The governing body which took control when responsibility shifted to the diocese as outlined above was an autonomous committee and thus not legally subject to Church control; however, one presumes that its composition would be sufficient to ensure that it did not stray far from Church priorities and objectives. It is doubtful that it would be seen to comply with government (and community) requirements for broad representation on governing bodies receiving government funds.

likely to support a loose federation of colleges, as this did not appear to offer the desired variety and quality of tertiary education”.⁵⁰⁸

Funding from the system required becoming part of the system; in this case, the recommendation was that the Victorian Catholic teachers’ colleges should come under the umbrella of the State College of Victoria (SCV). But although a part of the ICE, Aquinas was not recommended for funding, because of its low numbers and because the Commission believed that for a city with a population of 86,000 which already had three tertiary institutions, funding would be contingent on a viable working relationship with both the Ballarat Teachers’ College and the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education.

From the view of those outside, it must have seemed incomprehensible that a city the size of Ballarat could expect to maintain a separate, independent teachers’ college when, in the 1960s and 1970s, the city and the educational authorities within it were waging the latest in an almost 100 year battle to gain a university for the town. But this did not deter the Catholic authorities from continuing to mount the special case for Ballarat, a political tactic widely used by non-government agencies of all religious and secular persuasions, across all levels of government and across many decades of the city’s development: Ballarat was renowned in government circles for presenting itself as “a special case”.⁵⁰⁹ It argued the long held “Ballarat” case that it was part of the Victorian regional community and understood better the needs of non-metropolitan rural areas, and finally, asserted that Catholic schools required Catholic trained teachers as a self-evident truth.⁵¹⁰ On the 75th Anniversary of Aquinas, the homily at St Patrick’s Cathedral called up the spirit of Mother Xavier (and Eureka) stating that:

⁵⁰⁸ Victorian Catholic Teacher Education Board, *Minutes of Meeting*, 7 November, 1973. There are indications that the diocesan authorities themselves were anxious to have more say over staffing, distribution of diocesan scholarships and broadening membership of any governing body to include representatives of the parish priests who were legally responsible for the parish schools to which the new teachers were appointed and in which they had gained their training.

⁵⁰⁹ In arguing for funding as an autonomous college, Aquinas emphasized its long and successful history as a training institute that had proved its legitimacy with government by obtaining the right to take students holding Commonwealth scholarships, that it served at least 62 Catholic schools in the western half of the State, provided teachers for the Sandhurst and Wagga dioceses and supported government decentralization policies.

⁵¹⁰ The irony of a city little more than a one hour drive from Melbourne defining itself as “rural”, much less “isolated” was not lost on government authorities. Of more importance to those in power in Melbourne and Canberra was the fact that Ballarat had become a marginal seat at both state and federal levels, giving great potential influence to lobbyists for improved or expanded services.

Ballarat people have always been convinced that outsiders do not have a monopoly of wisdom and that Ballarat people usually do things as well as outsiders...In 1973 and 1974 there were many, locals and outsiders, who felt that Ballarat should not, indeed could not, be part of the Institute and the federation of the State College of Victoria. These did not include the Bishop of Ballarat or the Archbishop of Melbourne, later to become Cardinal Knox.⁵¹¹

The history of the battles for a secular university for Ballarat has been traced in meticulous detail by local historian, Anne Beggs Sunter.⁵¹² She records the Byzantine process that stretched over 100 years, when Ballarat and its citizens variously struggled for recognition from Melbourne University, responded to innumerable state and federal government reports and enquiries, resisted attempts to be “swallowed up” by Geelong and Deakin University. Civic leaders presented divided opinions between those supporting the School of Mines and those supporting the Ballarat Teachers’ College as the most appropriate institution from which to form a university. It was not until 1976 that agreement was reached to amalgamate the two to form the Ballarat College of Advanced Education (BCAE), which itself developed into the University of Ballarat in 1994 with Professor Geoffrey Blainey, an old boy of Ballarat High School, as its first Vice-Chancellor.

There are a few indications that the Catholic authorities were paying attention to these battles, and were feeling the pressure to cooperate with the existing local secular institutions. The untitled and undated document in the Mercy archives submitted to the Commission on Advanced Education stated:

Present accommodation (on the Mair Street site) is inadequate, but land has been purchased near the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education and plans drawn up for a new College catering for 200 students. A state grant has been promised for this, and the remaining cash is in hand from diocesan sources. Tenders will be carried out within a fortnight.

⁵¹¹ Aquinas – Seventy-fifth Anniversary, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Ballarat, 13 October, 1985.

⁵¹² Anne Beggs Sunter, *Rich Vein of Learning: The Origins of the University of Ballarat 1869-1993*, University of Ballarat, 1994, p7.

Beggs Sunter also states that in 1974 the BCEA Council minutes mentioned the possibility that Aquinas College could move to a site adjacent to the BCEA campus at Mt Helen "... and take some of their courses at the merged institution. Subsequently this plan did not eventuate"⁵¹³. Sister Therese Morganti records that a meeting was called by Clare Forbes as the Acting Principal of Aquinas in July 1973 to form the advisory Council at which it was agreed to purchase ten acres of land at Mt Helen adjacent to the BCAE, and that a meeting on the 30 July the same year was told that the land had been purchased. However, at the Council meeting on 15 November 1973, "...it was agreed not to go ahead with the building at Mt Helen until the relationship with the State College of Victoria was resolved. In the event, this proposal was never proceeded with"⁵¹⁴.

Full funding for Aquinas was finally achieved in 1978 under the federal Liberal government, when the then Minister for Education, Senator Carrick, acknowledged the "distinctive character of non-government schools and their dependence on the availability of teachers committed to the ethics of those schools"⁵¹⁵. But it was not until 1982 that Aquinas received its first significant capital grant of \$165,000 for the library which was named after Sir Bernard Callinan. On 1 January 1991, Aquinas, along with campuses in Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, formed the new Australian Catholic University following the reforms instituted by John Dawkins, federal Minister for Education in the Hawke/Keating Labor governments.

Whatever the debates about the need for or relevance of a Catholic university at this time, the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy were a vital component of the project. For almost a century they have been involved in tertiary education within the city and were to retain membership of the company, Australian Catholic University Ltd, which has responsibility for the university, and to which they continue to contribute their members as professional teaching staff. Despite all the changes and the declining numbers within the institute, the Mercies retained a strong commitment to teacher training, with five of their members

⁵¹³ Anne Beggs-Sunter, *Rich Vein of Learning*, p55.

⁵¹⁴ Sister Marie Therese Morganti, 'Synopsis of Aquinas Campus College' Callinan Library, Aquinas Campus, ACU, 1991. See also Jill Blee, *From the Murray to the Sea: The History of Catholic Education in the Ballarat Diocese*, Ballarat CEO, 2004, p162. She refers to an article in *Light*, September 1975, when the diocese had approached Kim Beazley Snr as the Federal Minister for Education for funding support, stressing that savings would be made once Aquinas shifted to Mt Helen and could share facilities with the BCAE.

⁵¹⁵ J.N. Kellett, *History of the Institute of Catholic Education*, ICE, East Melbourne, 1987, p30.

remaining permanent staff members in 1977.⁵¹⁶ In addition, one Loreto sister, Carolyn Deutscher ibvm joined the staff at the invitation of Fr Pell in 1977; Sister Noela Fox, a Presentation sister from Wagga, was also on staff.⁵¹⁷

While the congregation no longer had full control of the College, it was noted in 1976 that:

The work in the teachers' college is an especially productive apostolate for Sisters since they are no longer able to staff schools as in the past. It seems imperative that their influence be through the more indirect benefit of their experience of educating Catholic teachers. In this way, the benefit of their experience and dedication is not lost. The greatest need in Catholic education today is not money, though it is a necessity, but the real need is to serve the teaching role of the Church through dedication and consecration...Our role is not the same as when the College was ours. It is nevertheless a missionary role; it is a role of Mercy; it is a pastoral role. The practical spirit of Mercy is our chief contribution to Aquinas.⁵¹⁸

As well as their commitment of academic and administrative personnel, the sisters continued to support their students through the provision of accommodation, particularly for first year students.

The hostels contribute to College life in a variety of ways. It is suggested that the Chapter give some consideration to this apostolate, and that Sisters interested in maintaining it be given every encouragement. It is further proposed that the Sisters chosen for the hostel work be those with the gifts necessary for this delicate and important work.⁵¹⁹

In terms of their contribution to Ballarat and beyond, the record of the training college is marked by its unbroken history from 1909 of providing trained teachers, religious and secular, males and females, for the Sisters of Mercy and other congregations and for parish schools right across the diocese. From the 1960s, Diploma of Education students from

⁵¹⁶ These were Sisters Therese Morganti, Theophane Dargan, Phillip Welsh, Leonie Tuddenham and Clare Forbes. In 2010, there are still two Sisters of Mercy on the staff, Elizabeth Dowling and Mary Nuttall. Non-teaching work was undertaken by Sister Lesley Dickinson as administrative assistant to Fr Pell and Sister Marie Louise Foley as librarian.

⁵¹⁷ Aquinas also took over responsibility from the Sisters of St John of God for nurse education in 1987, thus consolidating the training commitments of the two institutes within the one institution.

⁵¹⁸ ACU Aquinas Campus Library, *Archives-History-Aquinas and ICE*.

⁵¹⁹ ACU Aquinas Campus Library, *History – Aquinas – ICE*.

Melbourne were able to do teaching practice in Ballarat Catholic schools, and in addition, the Mercies trained young women from South East Asia to go back to their own countries as teachers. The local “Asian invasion”, according to Anne Forbes, began for the Mercies in 1955 when the first Thai student arrived and “... opened the way for entrance here year after year of students from Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines and other Asian countries... Approximately 50 overseas students ... awakened us as has nothing else to a world outside,” according to Sister Forbes.⁵²⁰

To those who now place such a high value on retaining Ballarat’s unique built heritage, the continuing use and maintenance of Carn Brae/Manifold House is a major contribution to the city, made more so because of the controversy that raged over the decision to move the old School of Mines out of the heart of the city to the outlying Mt Helen, separating “town and gown” in terms of secular tertiary facilities. Aquinas Campus remains one of Ballarat’s most beautiful sites, positioned in the centre of the town. The economic contribution of Aquinas and later the ACU to the city and its inhabitants is extremely difficult to evaluate, but would be an invaluable contribution to future research.⁵²¹

Conclusion

The sisters provided generations of country and overseas students with accommodation and produced hundreds of teachers for their own and other diocesan schools. For most of the life of Aquinas, women who taught at the college simultaneously taught at SHC, providing the school with well qualified teachers. Aquinas was also able to offer accredited courses in educational administration for both religious and lay staff who faced the challenges of a changing educational system from the 1970s; they also delivered these courses overseas and through other tertiary institutions. Valda Ward rsm was a member of the Victorian Catholic Teachers’ Education Board; in which capacity she was part of the decision making for state-wide teacher training provision, including the implications for the Catholic colleges of the SCV Bill in 1972. Valda and Sister Clare Forbes were

⁵²⁰ Anne Forbes rsm, *Power Point Presentation*, p35.

⁵²¹ A ‘benchmark’ evaluation is provided by Ann Beggs-Sunter who estimates that by the end of the 1980s the BUC, which had 4000 students and 1000 staff formed the largest coordinated centre of human activity in greater Ballarat. Counting the value of buildings and plant, plus the spending power of staff and students, it was estimated that a direct injection of funds into the local economy was in the order of \$70 million by 1992. She also examines the value of the tertiary institution in terms of its use as a community resource, the importance of the staff as resource people for local businesses and not-for-profit organisations as researchers and technical advisors, and of the students and staff as local volunteers and fund-raisers, thus broadening the traditional notions of a contribution to education and the community well beyond the number of graduating students. While outside the scope of this thesis, a similar exercise in relation to Aquinas and the ACU would be of great value.

formidable educationalists and administrators, equal to the pioneers in the early life of Aquinas. That their roles were somewhat overshadowed by male clerics in the battle to save Aquinas says more about the political climate at the time than about their abilities.

Sister Veronica Lawson, the current congregational leader of the Mercies, sums up:

We take enormous pride in the fact that there have always been Sisters of Mercy on the staff at ACU National's Ballarat Campus and its predecessor institutions... We also take pride in the developments at the university that have permitted the initiatives of our Mercy pioneers to flourish in new contexts for new times and in partnerships with others who share a similar Gospel-focused vision.⁵²²

The closure of boarding facilities at Mary's Mount

*boarding schools came into existence many years ago to meet the needs of another ageas society has changed, so also have the needs of society changed and the institutions which serve the needs of society must change to meet the new needs...the church is for people, not for institutions.*⁵²³

Introduction

The rationale for choosing the closure of the boarding school at Mary's Mount as a case study of change management is that the factors leading to the decision take in all the major stakeholders involved in education during this period.⁵²⁴ The change also involved years of debate and discernment about the nature of religious poverty and the perceived image of the Loretos as the "ladies of the Lake", catering for the boarding needs of the elite of society. As with the Mercy sisters in their decision to relinquish the teachers' college, the Loreto sisters themselves were forced to consider radical change because of their falling numbers and the consequent dependence on paid lay staff. The Commonwealth government became involved through the Schools Commission's concern for geographically isolated children and how their needs related to the provision of boarding

⁵²² ACU National, *AcunIQUE*, Vol. 10, 9 January 2009, acu.edu.au/acunIQUE/Vol-10, accessed 16/2/2009.

⁵²³ Cletus Read, 'Boarding schools and the education of isolated children', cited in Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 2.

⁵²⁴ A paper from the National Catholic Education Commission identified the following as the major interest groups directly involved in boarding schools: federal and state governments, religious orders, headmasters/mistresses of boarding schools, diocesan authorities and community interest groups. Working paper presented to NCEC meeting, Adelaide, September 1977, in Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 2, Boarding schools, 1976-1984.

schools. The Catholic education authorities at national and state levels were in the process of rationalizing and planning for educational opportunities, particularly at secondary level; locally the Ballarat diocese was faced with the prospect of supporting two boarding schools for girls, neither of which could survive given their current operations. The similarity with the Mercy sisters is obvious – both secular and Church processes impinged on their decision making, but the women made valiant efforts to continue their educational commitment and to control the timing of their withdrawal which was made in the light of apostolic priorities of their own making.

Background

As mentioned, from the time of its establishment in 1875, Mary's Mount was exclusively run as a boarding school until the 1940s. In contrast, Sacred Heart College opened as a day school with 80 day scholars and only four boarders; they also took few boarders from Melbourne over the years of operation, concentrating much more on the needs of Victorian regional students, and, later on, providing accommodation for their trainee students.⁵²⁵ Mary's Mount finally closed its boarding school in 1982, operating only as a day school, following the gradual phasing out of boarding facilities for younger children.⁵²⁶

Composition of the boarders, and boarding fees

Records of individual boarders at Mary's Mount appear to be incomplete, and in some cases difficult to decipher; however, from those available a pattern emerges that shows that between 1950 and 1965, the majority of girls taken in as boarders came from a broad coverage of country Victoria (115), closely followed by girls from Melbourne (82), generally from the wealthier suburbs such as Kew and Toorak, with easy access to Loreto Mandeville Hall in Toorak. The remaining boarders during that period came from Ballarat (25), ten from interstate, and five from overseas, all of whom were Australian born but whose families were working overseas.

⁵²⁵ In Ballarat boarding facilities were also available for girls at the Anglican Girls' Grammar School and at Clarendon College (Presbyterian). Within the diocese, Loreto Portland had boarders, while St Brigid's in Horsham and Marion College in Ararat catered for weekly boarders. Boys in the Ballarat diocese boarded at either St Patrick's College in Ballarat or at Monivae in Hamilton; non-Catholic boys could board in Ballarat at either the Ballarat (Anglican) Grammar School or at Ballarat (Presbyterian) College.

⁵²⁶ Across Australia, Loreto sisters ran boarding schools in Victoria (Mary's Mount, Portland and Mandeville Hall in Toorak), Normanhurst and Kirribilli in NSW, Nedlands and Claremont in WA, and Cooperoo in Brisbane. During the 1970s, comparable boarding schools were run in Victoria by the FCJs at Genazzano where there were 20 boarders in years 10-12, and in Benalla with 30 weekly boarders. The Presentation sisters had 50 boarders, years 10-12 in Windsor in Melbourne; the Brigidines in Beechworth had 28 boarders in years 7-12. Each of these schools, plus those provided by the Mercies in Ballarat, could be seen as covering the "catchment" relevant to Mary's Mount.

The level of fees (or “pensions”) paid between 1950-1980 again are difficult to document with any accuracy, in part because of variations that appear in the records: discounts were provided for families with more than one girl attending, other discounts appear to have been given with no note of explanation in the documentation available. In the 1950s there were a few families who appeared to be paying more than the standard fee, while in a small number of cases, either no fee or a nominal fee was paid. As one sister commented, fees were often tailored to meet the needs of individual families, as they were at Sacred Heart (and presumably, convents throughout Australia).⁵²⁷ The fees per term ranged from £40.1.0 in 1953 to £63.0.0 by 1962; day fees per term during this period ranged from £3.3.0 in 1950 to £12.12.0 in 1965.

The reasons for providing boarding facilities in the early days at Mary’s Mount, including a genuine need for secondary schooling for girls outside the cities, no longer held in the 1960s/1970s. By this time, a large number of boarders were coming from the city, another sizable proportion came from nearby towns which were serviced by school buses by then available to Catholic students, weekly boarding was available in Horsham and Ararat, and Ballarat could hardly justify having two Catholic boarding schools for girls (not to mention the two non-Catholic ones).⁵²⁸ The fact that such a large proportion of girls came from the city weakened any rationale that they were providing facilities for “isolated children” when they came to lobby for federal assistance through the Schools Commission.⁵²⁹

National planning and policy development

Both the government and the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) were experiencing difficulties in formulating policy relating to boarding schools, because of the

⁵²⁷ Mary Ward Scholarships, sponsored by Loreto Past Pupils Association, were available between 1961 and 1969, covering fees (£45), uniform (£50) and books (£7). Mary Ward scholarships were available for Mandeville Hall, Mary’s Mount, Portland and Dawson Street; money was raised from the annual Loreto Ball held in Melbourne. Loreto Province Archives, Series 39, *Records relating to Toorak, Mandeville Hall*, Item 9, Mary Ward Scholarships.

⁵²⁸ The fact that such a large proportion of the students came from Melbourne weakened the argument that they were providing for “isolated children” under the guidelines established by the Schools Commission after 1973. In direct contrast to Mary’s Mount, Sacred Heart took few boarders from Melbourne, which according to an informal conversation with two of the sisters there, was seen as a “blessing”, as girls from Melbourne (and their families) were regarded as being more difficult to assimilate into the Mercy boarding school ethos.

⁵²⁹ For the history and an analysis of federal government involvement in boarding schools, see D.G. Tomlinson and P.D. Tannock, *Review of the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme*, University of Western Australia, 1981. The critical policy underpinning the scheme which was of most relevance to Catholic schools was that assistance would not be provided “...to enable students to by-pass government schools reasonably accessible from their homes”, p20. During this same period (mid-seventies), there were 220 boys enrolled as boarders of a total enrolment of 800 at St Patrick’s College in Ballarat.

reluctance on the part of the schools to provide information, presumably because of the competitive and commercial nature of many of the enterprises. The Schools Commission funded a study of boarding schools in Australia, which they followed up with a seminar in Canberra in 1977, with a key note address from Jean Blackburn in her role as a member of the Commission. In it she reported that 40 per cent of all boarders in Australia were in Catholic schools, fees averaged \$800 per year in 1974 (though those for Catholic schools tended to be lower on average).⁵³⁰ Beyond these basic figures she commented: “There is precious little else we know across the whole spectrum of schools” in part because only 57 per cent of schools responded to study: “As there are so many perplexing questions to be answered before well based public policies can eventuate, this response is very disappointing”.⁵³¹ She also clearly outlined the government’s priorities in relation to the educational needs of country children, outside the immediate issue of subsidizing boarding schools. These included responding to the demands of country people for better schools in their local communities, changed views on child-rearing which questioned the suitability of sending children away from families, rapidly increasing costs of boarding schools (particularly in the light of the declining cheap female labor), and the fact that local state schools and communities were adversely affected by the decline in numbers caused by the exodus of some students, and the involvement of their parents at a local level.

The issues raised by the Schools Commission were reflected in discussions within the NCEC, which commissioned its own report on boarding schools, and argued that the three issues of boarding schools, rural education and ‘isolated children’ should be treated separately, a distinction made very forcefully by Cletus Read fms. His argument was that boarding schools which ran as alternatives to home/school education “really have very flimsy ground for claiming government assistance, and even if it was granted, it would only be on a proportional basis depending on the percentage of isolated children in the schools population”.⁵³²

Contributing to the national debate, Sister Denise Desmarchelier ibvm presented a paper to the National Council of Independent Schools Seminar in 1977. In it she demonstrates a

⁵³⁰ The average cost for Catholic schools at this time was \$720 for accommodation and \$400 for tuition.

⁵³¹ ‘NCIS Conference: New Perspectives on Boarding Schools’, Canberra, 7/5/1977, p2, Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 2, Boarding Schools, 1976-1984.

⁵³² ‘NCIS conference’ p3.

clear understanding of the context within which the Schools Commission was formulating its policies:

The Commission, in allocating funds for improvement in country schools is indicating its belief that long term improvements in educational opportunity will only result from initiatives directed towards upgrading services in local schools. The Commission does not accept that there is a public obligation to subsidise accommodation except for children who are unable to attend a local government school offering appropriate courses.⁵³³

She then proceeds to outline the position of the NCEC, particularly its affirmation of the importance of providing educational opportunities which allowed children to stay at home with parents in their own local communities, of considering the effects of removal of children on provision for other children in regional communities, and in ensuring that priority be given to children genuinely isolated:

Our task is to demonstrate a need against the two stated criteria of the Schools Commission for funding: a) the necessity of the boarding school for those who do not have education at hand, and b) the priority of support to be given for schools close at hand. To argue the dependence of the school for its viability on the continuance of the boarding section leaves us open to the criticism that we are using isolated children to meet the needs of institutions rather than institutions to meet the needs of isolated children.⁵³⁴

The role of the Major Superiors

In addition to the planning processes being conducted by individual institutes, the Major Superiors instituted a process to investigate the problems currently associated with the provision of education for Catholic rural children and with the maintenance of the Catholic boarding schools. The recommendations of the National Council of the Major Superiors of Religious of Australia at this time included their acknowledgement that all institutes needed to work with the various state Catholic Education Commissions in order to avoid duplication of work, indicating that the time and the mood had changed to the point where

⁵³³ Denise Desmarchelier, 'Rationalisation', Paper presented at NCIS conference: "New Perspectives in Boarding Schools", in Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CAEB*, Item 2, Boarding Schools, 1976-1984.

⁵³⁴ Denise Desmarchelier, 'Rationalisation', p3.

a more collaborative and coordinated approach to the planning issues facing all institutes was called for.⁵³⁵

For example, in her report on a joint meeting of Major Superiors in April 1977, Noni Mitchell wrote,

The boarding school issue has, perhaps, been one example of decisions having been made by individual congregations in a “vacuum”, as a result of their own personal needs. In fact, the accumulated effect has been probably beyond what any one of the congregations would have desired or done anything about. But that will continue until there is some attempt to look at the total contribution of Religious to the educational process – just where we want to retain and perhaps what active inter-congregational meeting of certain situations might make possible the coverage, where individual congregations cannot continue to supply the people required.⁵³⁶

Planning at state level

The collaboration so sought after nationally was reflected at the state level, where the Major Superiors established a Victorian committee to examine boarding school issues.⁵³⁷ The first meeting of the Victorian Committee took place at Vaucluse College, Richmond on 16 July 1977, convened by Sr Margaret Mary Kennedy. In attendance were Sr Denise Desmarchelier representing the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, (CECV), Sr Mary Darcy (St Martins – Ballarat East Mercies), Sr Ellen Moran and Sr Mary Wright from Mary’s Mount. The purpose of the meeting was to share what each congregation was doing in respect to personnel, resources and policy. The statistical information from boarding schools in the Ballarat Diocese they gathered was as follows:

⁵³⁵ Letter from the President of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Women, dated 15 July 1977. Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 2, Boarding Schools 1976-1984.

⁵³⁶ On an optimistic note she added, “...how gratifying it has been to see among the women at the meeting such preparedness to make congregational sacrifices if there is a strong enough and unified enough reason for doing so, but that qualification was what made the idea difficult to ‘sell’”.

⁵³⁷ Ballarat women on the committee were Sisters Denise Desmarchelier and Mary Wright ibvm, and Sisters Valda Ward, Veronica Lawson and Mary D’Arcy, rsm.

| | | |
|----------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ararat: | Marion College | 18 weekly boarders |
| Ballarat | Mary's Mount | 105 boarders, forms 3-6 |
| | Sacred Heart | phasing out, 88 boarders forms 1-6 |
| | St Martin's | 130 boarders, forms 5 and 6 |
| | St Francis Xavier's | phasing out primary boarders |
| Horsham: | St Brigid's | 22 weekly boarders ⁵³⁸ . |

The report then listed the major problems facing the schools run by women (and male) religious. In relation to funding, it was reported that

a combined approach is important but it is necessary to have defined criteria; the first task is to get the data; the need for funding is national; the task of this committee is rationalization... [the Schools Commission realizes] there will have to be funding for boarding schools but for boarding schools for isolated children, not across the board.⁵³⁹

Denise Desmarchelier was part of this process as representative of the Major Superiors at the CEO, in which capacity she reported back to the Superiors:

The present boarding school study is raising wider issues: the most appropriate and effective apostolic deployment of religious personnel; the actual and percentage cover of Catholic children of secondary age and responsibility for the nurture of the faith of those unable to find a place in Catholic schools; the need for Catholic schools to provide broader options, especially in a time of great unemployment, with the consequent extension of their custodial role.⁵⁴⁰

Planning at the diocesan level

In Ballarat a meeting was called of all local providers of boarding facilities, including non-Catholic heads of country boarding schools; it was held at Mary's Mount on 25 November 1976, with representatives from the Ballarat East Mercies (Sisters Genevieve McDonald,

⁵³⁸ Their research also showed that across Victoria there were approximately 450 boarding places available for girls, of which 80 were for weekly boarders only; there were no full boarding places for girls below year 9.

⁵³⁹ One of the possible solutions canvassed was... "may be to rationalize the provision of places, with each congregation supplying one religious". This did not prove to be viable, in part because external events effectively over-ran the process.

⁵⁴⁰ *Report to the Major Superiors* by Sister Denise Desmarchelier, 16 August 1977.

Veronica Lawson, Therese Power and Anne McMillan) and from Ballarat and Clarendon College, Ballarat Grammar, St Patrick's College, Assumption College and Hamilton College, with an apology from Girton College, Bendigo.⁵⁴¹ The consensus of those present was that the demand for boarding places was no less than in the past and that the ability of the parents to meet costs is the "operative factor", that the Isolated Children's Allowance needed to be widened and that the greatest need was to increase the recurrent funding; the availability of capital funds was welcomed, but would prove secondary if people could not afford the fees. All schools represented saw the need to bring their buildings and facilities up to acceptable standards, including those required by safety and health standards.⁵⁴² The "tone" of the documentation of the meeting was that there was a great reluctance to contemplate phasing out boarding, even in the face of formidable challenges.

At a further local meeting held on 9 December 1977 of the Catholic boarding schools in the Ballarat diocese, Fr George Pell was reported as saying that "Diocesan interest is in the total provision of Catholic schooling; diocesan policy is for expansion, although in practice schools are closing through massive financial difficulties".⁵⁴³ The same meeting reported that Mary's Mount was running at a loss, but "able to manage because of religious in kitchen-dining room". They also discussed the possibility of Catholic families taking in weekly boarders; "This and lay staffing could be a new apostolate for the laity." In addition, Fr Pell suggested that: "Part of the solution may be to rationalize the provision of places, with each congregation supplying one or two religious." He also suggested that as students were increasingly isolated and disadvantaged through the low socio-economic status of their families, the Church could argue for increased federal funding, a somewhat naïve suggestion in light of the clear Schools Commission funding principles.

In the face of this optimistic desire for "diocesan expansion" expressed by Fr Pell, there was mounting evidence of issues common to all Catholic boarding schools expressed at the meeting: insufficient religious and difficulty of obtaining suitable lay staff, lack of appropriate accommodation for lay staff, lack of privacy for boarders and of recreational facilities, need for greater recurrent funds (more so than capital funding). In addition, personnel and facilities were lacking to provide for the social welfare of children from

⁵⁴¹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, Item 2, Boarding schools, 1976-1984.

⁵⁴² Inadequate safety standards were amongst the reasons for the closure of facilities at SHC (lack of fire exits), while the fact that St Martin's in the Pines was a newer building, was one reason it was able to continue operating until 1994.

⁵⁴³ *Records of CAEB*, Item 2.

broken homes, institutionalized living was by then becoming an “outmoded concept”, and with the improvement in country high schools, the need for boarding was much reduced for country families.

Nonetheless, the Ballarat Committee wrote to the CECV requesting that “in any approach to the Schools Commission or government on recurrent funding, there be inclusion of the needs of boarding schools,” an indication perhaps that parochial issues were again to the fore in Ballarat despite the reality of national forces that were moving against retention of what had been practice for nearly 100 years.

Internal decision making

Decision making within the institute during the 1970s in relation to the education apostolate continued to lie primarily with the provincial and her consultors, but structures were put in place to allow broader input from all sisters. Educational Advisory Boards (EAB) were established in each state, and at the national level, there was a Central Educational Advisory Board (CEAB), all of which were designed to provide advice, conduct research, organize appropriate meetings and make recommendations to the Provincial in Council:

This is seen to be valuable from a number of viewpoints: the increased professionalism of using resources both within and without the Institute; the increased involvement of local communities and the Institute as a whole in a process where openness ensures that differing viewpoints can be represented; the increased morale resultant upon such involvement and an awareness of and commitment to planning and programmes of the local Church is ensured.⁵⁴⁴

Membership of these boards provided significant experience for a number of the sisters who would later assume elected leadership roles, as well as providing the institute with sound research upon which they could base decisions about their future apostolic priorities. The boards were the vehicles through which internal decision making could take into account both their own internal needs and priorities and those of outside forces which

⁵⁴⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CEAB*, 1967-82, Item 30, Minutes and related papers. The boards were established in 1976; original members were Jean Cover (chair), Denise Desmarchelier, Margaret O'Sullivan, Margaret Finlay and Joan Nowotny; new members two years later were Louise Richard, Maureen Burke, Mary Wright and Beatrice Hannan.

impinged upon them. The CEAB was responsible for the surveys, questionnaires and background papers relating to boarding schools discussed below.

The decision to phase out boarding facilities was inexplicably bound up with the amalgamation of Dawson Street day school and Mary's Mount which led to the consolidation of the two schools on the Mary's Mount site resulting in the current Loreto College. The local processes of the amalgamation have been documented by Sister Denise Desmarchelier.⁵⁴⁵ She nominates the following factors of importance to the decision: the need to rationalize the work of declining religious personnel; the need to comply with the Schools Commission optimum school size of 600 and the socio-economic discrepancy between the two schools; plus the decision of the province to close its private day schools and concentrate their sisters in parish schools. Her case study concentrates on the local level events and provides an excellent overview of the processes involved with parents, staff and students of both schools during the planning and implementation phases (1972-1978).

Underpinning the amalgamation were the decisions taken within the institute, dating back to the 1968 Provincial Chapter, when a recommendation was passed:

That an enquiry be made into the position of our boarding schools and the boarding school itself as an institution in Australian education today, bearing in mind our attitude to the apostolate of our boarders and our approach to other apostolates being carried on in conjunction with the existing works of the house... Many think that schools for the privileged are necessary but that we should not expand any further in this direction... there is a feeling that our boarding schools are a great strain on our nuns, and it was questioned whether our work with boarders is sufficiently effective to warrant their continuance in the present way.⁵⁴⁶

Subsequently, their apostolic commission recommended that a committee be set up to review their schools as a whole, to abolish boarding schools where necessary, to put an end to the distinctions between convent and parish schools, to work more closely with the

⁵⁴⁵ Denise Desmarchelier, *The Management of Change: Case Studies in Six Non-Government Schools*. M. Ed. Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 1981.

⁵⁴⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*.

local church in each area, "...to put ourselves at the service of the poor, and to seek ways of breaking down class consciousness in our schools."⁵⁴⁷

A follow up survey in 1973 was conducted in order to gain the data needed to respond to the question confronting the institute: What are the total resources of the IBVM in Australia and how can these best be deployed in the service of the Church at this point in time? Questionnaires were sent to every school principal in the order asking for information on enrolment, sites and facilities, administration and staff, plus two further sections on boarding and religious education.⁵⁴⁸ Amongst the responses to the survey it was shown that the availability of alternative schooling in 1973 for boarders at Mary's Mount included nine Catholic metropolitan schools; "...for many of our boarders it is geographically possible to attend school as day scholars. There are of course, many other factors to consider such as the quality of the education, traveling time and transport difficulty, social and emotional needs."⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, it was pointed out that within five years of the survey it was predicted that there would be few, if any, domestic religious staff for the school, consequently, increased staffing by seculars in such areas would dramatically affect the financial situation of the school, and require professional supervision and coordination by a matron equivalent (religious or secular) as a full-time duty.⁵⁵⁰

Sisters were asked, "If boarding staff were to be separate from teaching staff, would you choose to teach or to work with the boarders?"

⁵⁴⁷The commission also recommended that all sisters be given the opportunity to say if they wanted to continue working with boarders, and that the implications of the employment of lay staff to replace the second degree sisters be considered.

⁵⁴⁸The questions were based on comparative data in *The Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission*, in order to draw comparisons with government schools which were being surveyed at the same time. Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto Education*, Report on Data Survey (IBVM schools) 1973-74.

⁵⁴⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto Education*, Item 9, Type of apostolic work of sisters. It is of interest to note that the number of girls boarding in Catholic schools across Victoria fell from 508 in 1967 to 234 by 1972, indicating that boarding as an option was declining across all the teaching institutes.

⁵⁵⁰ At this time the domestic staff in the boarding schools were close to or past retirement age, all but four being over 56 in 1973. Further, the report of the survey concluded that "It is clear that some nuns are overburdened in view of the limitations their work load places on their religious and professional development; these tend to be in the 30-40 age group, well qualified upper secondary teachers, holding considerable responsibility in schools."

| Responses: | Under 46 | 46-65 | 65plus |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Teach: | 22 | 16 | 1 |
| Boarders | 11 | 1 | 2 |
| Part time both | 24 | 14 | 2 |

A number of questions arose from this information and from the attitude of the sisters themselves: If boarding schools were to be retained – what style of boarding school should be developed? If there were to be retrenchment, should it be partially in each school or wholly in one or several schools? Was it to be the junior school level in every school, or the phasing out of boarders in one or several schools? Which school or schools? How could spaces be used for alternative needs of expanding schools? What should be the criteria for enrollment? Interestingly, they also raised a series of questions about what potential changes could mean to their own professional and spiritual lives: “What would be the alternatives for ourselves without a boarding school commitment – such as courses, professional reading and development, maximum usage of skills, pastoral care, community living, recreation and revitalization, prayer and spiritual reading?”

By 1976, there was a recommendation that the Australian Loretos should continue three boarding schools – Mary’s Mount, Normanhurst (Sydney) and Marryatville (Adelaide) for the following five years, to be reassessed in 1979, plus that there should be a seminar of those involved in boarding schools in 1977. There does not appear to be consensus about the details, but it was obvious and accepted that some retrenchment would be necessary, as would an upgrade in facilities of the schools.⁵⁵¹

Two years later, Sister Noni Mitchell wrote to members of her congregation that parents were informed of the closing of boarding at Mary’s Mount:

The Provincial Council made this decision after much discussion with the Bishop, Peter Teggelove (CEO) and Sister Valda Ward [then Superior of the Mercies]. A

⁵⁵¹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Boarding School Survey*.

hard decision to make in the light of a century of history. Your prayers please for all concerned in such a step.⁵⁵²

This is the only written reference I can find of any discussions with the Mercies about rationalizing boarding in Ballarat, but Noni Mitchell said in an interview that very friendly and professional relations between her and Valda Ward at the time allowed them to negotiate around the issue, in particular, to ensure that families approaching Loreto were directed to St Martin's in the Pines as an alternative to boarding at Mary's Mount.⁵⁵³ A similar close personal relationship existed between the relevant principals, Bernadette Ziesing ibvm and Therese Power rsm, which immeasurably aided the process.

The decision was made to restrict the intake of boarders to Year 9 from 1976, with the final phase out to commence over the proceeding four years.

At present there are just over 60 boarders in years 10-12. The decision about years 11 and 12 is to be reviewed this year, but there has been no new intake of boarders since 1979. I recognize that these decisions have distressed many of our nuns, especially regarding Mary's Mount, with its over 100 year tradition as a Loreto boarding school. However, unless we can envisage a practical possibility of obtaining and retaining suitable lay personnel for care and supervision, I find it difficult to imagine how we would be able to continue... finance is to be considered, but as a lesser problem: unless high fees are charged boarding schools tend to run at a loss, for example there is about a \$30-40,000 deficit at Mary's Mount in 1979.⁵⁵⁴

In her Provincial's report for 1980, Noni writes:

The six years have involved some difficult decisions with regard to our boarding schools. The closing and phasing out of these has been decided on primarily because of shortage of religious personnel to staff them satisfactorily ... In the discussion of the Boarding School Apostolate, the needs of families (not just

⁵⁵² Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, 17th September, 1978.

⁵⁵³ Interview with Sr Noni Mitchell, Sydney, 3 May 2009. Noni and Valda had formed this friendship when they both involved with teachers' colleges; Noni's regard for Valda remains one of great respect and warmth at both a personal and professional level which came through in the interview.

⁵⁵⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *1980 Provincial Report*; Brisbane phased out boarding in 1979 and Claremont was closed the following year.

children) in rural areas – especially for education in faith – were emphasized. Our boarding schools are providing an important and necessary service to these families but we must examine whether there are other more general ways of meeting their educational needs...Shortage of personnel is our main difficulty, despite the rather optimistic boarding school survey.⁵⁵⁵

The pragmatic decisions about rationalizing personnel and physical resources must be seen against the background of debates relating to renewal and adaptation following Vatican II, as argued in Chapter 7. What was meant by religious poverty, and how the Institute could re-orient its apostolate to take into account the needs of the poor was most starkly demonstrated in the debates about providing boarding facilities.

Conclusion

The closure of the boarding facilities at Mary's Mount resulted from a complex planning process which involved the Loretos in long and painful discussions dating from the 1968 Chapter. The important point here is that perhaps for the first time, they were decisions taken in the light of external forces outside their control, particularly the changing priorities and funding policies of the federal government, and for the first time, they were decisions made with the active input of all members of the institute. This latter point reinforces the changes to religious life following Vatican II, including the importance of the principle of subsidiarity and the need to consult members as to their wishes in relation to their professional lives. It also highlights the vital role that had been played by the 2nd Degree sisters in providing domestic labor, and the double work loads borne by the women who taught all day and then supervised boarders at night and on the weekends.

It is also the case that the policies and the assistance offered through the combined views of Major Superiors appears to have, at the least, set a framework for planning, one which itself took into account the importance of the role of the state and national CEOs. What was obviously well beyond the power (or the interest?) of the institutes was how the planning should be extended beyond the diocesan and state levels, which could have led to a national philosophy and approach by Church authorities to the whole question of boarding schools.

⁵⁵⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, 1980 Provincial Report.

The women with the authority to spearhead these changes were well suited to the task. Noni Mitchell was a member of the National Catholic Education Commission and therefore involved in national decision making for Catholic education across Australia. She was a member of the Major Superiors and well acquainted with the broader picture of the role of women religious in education.

Denise Desmarchelier was a member of the Victorian Catholic Education Commission representing the Major Superiors, with similar knowledge of state planning; both women were on the internal Loreto Education Advisory Board, responsible for advising on internal decision making. These were women who not only responded to paradigm shifts in religious and secular life; they were shaping them to ensure that their contribution was not only to their own institute, but to the broader Catholic community, and as will be argued elsewhere, to the future of religious life.

Chapter 9: Into the Eighties

*The apostolic force of our lives depends on what we are, the sort of religious we are, rather than on what we do; our work, in itself, is not what makes us apostolic, is not related to visible achievement or success; however, we must make and evaluate our apostolic choices.*⁵⁵⁶

Introduction

Women religious in Ballarat were typical of sisters throughout Australia who, over the course of the 1970s and 80s, moved into local, state, national and international work, whilst at the same time, their institutes continued their corporate mission of schooling at a local level. Post Vatican II also required a radical re-thinking of the formation process and of the constitutions within which the institutes planned new understandings of religious life. Individual ministry to some extent eclipsed the symbolism of the statement previously made by corporate commitments, while the continuing public presence of sisters in both secondary and parish schools masked somewhat their broader commitment to emerging apostolic work outside their schools which will be described below.⁵⁵⁷ Their concern for social justice had been basic to both institutes since their foundations, but became more focused in the light of Vatican II changes, particularly through the adoption of ‘the option for the poor’ as outlined in Chapter 10. An appreciation of the diversity of the work undertaken by individuals with the support of their institutes is essential to a fuller understanding of the on-going contribution of women religious to civil and church society. A significant part of this new work constituted what had previously been the responsibility of the clergy, although, as will be shown in the final chapter, this did not translate to structural change in the broader church during this period.

Visible changes in Catholic Ballarat

By 1980 staffing of the schools, hospitals and aged care facilities was shifting to the laity. The Catholic orphanages were about to close; the future of Catholic schools in the diocese, including their boarding facilities, had been reviewed and changes were being implemented, including amalgamations, closure of old schools and opening of new ones in

⁵⁵⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 262, *Apostolic priorities of Loreto*, Item 8, Apostolic priorities correspondence, 1983.

⁵⁵⁷ For a discussion of these issues as they arose in the United States of America, see David J. Nygen and Miriam Ukeritis, ‘The Religious Life Futures Project: Executive summary’, *Review for Religious*, Vol. 52, No 1, January/February 1993.

the burgeoning suburbs. The original Mercy Teachers' College would become one of the institutions to form the Australian Catholic University (ACU), and home care services provided by the Sisters of Mercy became part of the Diocesan Family Services (later to become Centacare). 1978 was the last year of operation of the Loreto kindergarten, the same year that Loreto College was registered operating on two sites (Mary's Mount and Dawson Street), with the commercial college as an annex of the college. In Portland, the Loreto convent became part of the newly established Christian Community College. Each of these changes occurred in less than twenty years within a Catholic community that had traditionally accepted decisions made by the hierarchy as to what services they would provide and how the money would be raised within that community. By 1980, moves were being made, albeit slowly, to involve the laity, not just as paid staff, but as board members and through community consultations.

At the diocesan level, Bishop Mulkearns brought a new leadership style, one which placed much greater emphasis on the professional planning of education and welfare services, implementing administrative reforms which in some instances were the first of their kind in the Australian Church.

The bishop is credited with being close to the priests under his jurisdiction, many of whom formed tightly knit friendships amongst themselves and with him. One Loreto sister commented that the priests seemed to know each other very well, and were much friendlier than in some other dioceses within which she had worked. As the principal of Loreto Dawson Street and a member of the Diocesan Education Board, she regarded the bishop as a "great facilitator".⁵⁵⁸ A Ballarat East Mercy sister who worked closely with the bishop in the establishment of the Religious Education Centre in 1972, commented that in her view, Ballarat had the best educated laity because of the support given by the bishop for adult catechetics, and because Fr Ryan, as the Director of the Centre, was "serious about adult education".⁵⁵⁹

By 1980 the majority of women religious remaining in the two institutes no longer wore the full habit, although veils were often worn on public occasions and, by some, retained when teaching. The final resolution of the issue of religious dress remained a source of some tension, hurt and confusion for those women religious who maintained that a

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with Sister Yvonne Lamerand ibvm, Ballarat, 18 March 2009.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with Sister Anne McMillan rsm, Ballarat, 24 March 2009.

distinctive form of dress was critical as a sign of their total commitment to God. Nor had there been resolution to the issues surrounding the use of personal budgets which for some women was against the spirit, if not the letter, of the vow of poverty. Rethinking the meaning of the three vows underlined the difficulty and extent of renewal during this period, in stark contrast to the pre-Vatican II days when unquestioning acceptance of their relevance and their practice dominated religious life. While the external signs of “adaptation” – change in dress, freedom to be in public without a companion, flexibility relating to professional career choices - were the most visible signs of change to the Catholic community, renewal of religious life often posed far greater challenges to the women involved.

The most striking visible change evident to the outside world was the declining number of women religious in the schools, hospitals and care facilities. What this indicated was not only a decline in the entries but also low retention rate during initial formation, a pattern which was in line with a world-wide phenomenon.⁵⁶⁰

A new process for formation post Vatican II

Changes to the formation programmes and novitiate life began in the 1970s and were to result in a system of formation unrecognizable in relation to that which women undertook before Vatican II.⁵⁶¹

As the number of women entering religious life declined, convents no longer needed large novitiates, nor would novice mistresses remain almost exclusively the dominant figures in the formation of young religious. There would be a total re-thinking of what formation into religious life meant, from the time of entry into the institutes, but continuing throughout the entire life of women religious.

The “Norms for the Implementation of the Vatican Council Decree: *Perfectae Caritatis*” allowed that a “sufficient measure of prudent experimentation should take place” in terms of new methods of formation, and that joint collaboration of several institutes would be

⁵⁶⁰This dramatic decrease reflects the pattern which emerged in Sister Carmel Leavey’s survey in 1976, which showed that the numbers of women religious in Australia declined 10% between 1966-1976, while at the same time the Catholic population increased 17 per cent. The decline was due to a drop off in vocations (declining 61% in the decade), a drop in the retention rate to only 40 per cent of women entering religious life, and a 76 per cent increase in the number by then at retirement age. The largest number of religious remained in some form of education (46.3 per cent, but this represented a decline of nearly 30 per cent overall, plus the fact that those in full time study increased by 48 per cent.

⁵⁶¹The pattern of change in the formation process between 1968 and 1980 is revealed in an examination of the records of Provincial Chapters of the Loretos and national surveys undertaken by the Major Superiors.

permissible. By 1972, some of the changes in novitiate life were evident in a letter from a group of novices, by then living at Loreto House in Albert Park, in which novices explain the process of formation and their daily/weekly routine.⁵⁶² All were doing some teaching, both in Loreto schools and in state school catechetical classes; they were undertaking parish visitation and gaining experience in buying and cooking food. With novices of other institutes they were attending special courses at Assumption Institute, commenting that “This general programme of study and relaxation with other novices has helped to broaden our personal formation and deepen our understanding and appreciation of religious life”. They were also encouraged and able to keep in touch with novices who had left, which was a significant change from the practices adopted prior to Vatican II when women simply “disappeared” from convents and severed all contact with the institutes.⁵⁶³

A common issue for all was the need for both suitable personnel and a suitable process to guide the formation of the dwindling number of young women entering their institutes, women, who unlike their counterparts in 1950, would enter in ones and twos, with few women ahead or behind them in the novitiates. While in 1950 some may have had a problem with the regimented regime, lack of privacy and flexibility in daily life, women entering in the 1970s could experience isolation and miss the benefits that came from living in established communities. “Formation communities” caused some difficulties as a concept, particularly in relation to loneliness and isolation from peers which, in some instances, proved to be a source of discouragement for younger members. Formation teams emerged, led by novice mistresses equipped with new or upgraded training in formation programmes designed to draw upon the experiences of other institutes, both in Australia and overseas.⁵⁶⁴ For example, in 1971 Jan Barlow *ibvm* was sent to South Africa to complete a five month program focusing on the formation process before assuming her new role as novice mistress.⁵⁶⁵ Ellison Taffe *ibvm* studied at Gonzaga University,

⁵⁶² At that time in the Loretos there were four novices, two each in their first and second years. A study program for their sisters in 1972 was outlined which included study of the constitutions (history, spirit, mission etc), consecrated life and chastity, purity, obedience, prayer and penance, community, apostolate, formation, government, plus the documents of Vatican II and the works of Mary Ward.

⁵⁶³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 67, *Formation Records*, Item 16, Novitiate news. On the issue of the experiences of women who left religious life, see Victorian Women’s Trust, *The Paradox of Service: The Welfare of Former Nuns: A Research and Discussion Paper prepared by the Victorian Women’s Trust*, Melbourne, September, 2008.

⁵⁶⁴ One of the main points of contention centred on the use of psychological tests for screening entrants: considerable misgivings were expressed by the Loretos, including the need for follow up after testing. They decided that formal written reports were to be sought by the Provincial administration “from our own sisters who know the candidates well, as well as informal information from other contacts before a final decision is made”.

⁵⁶⁵ Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, UNSW Press, 2009, pp219-220.

Spokane, Washington, prior to her appointment 1979. Similarly, Liz Teggelove rsm was also sent overseas before assuming the role of novice mistress for the Ballarat East Mercies.

Amongst the Loretos, there was strong support to begin the programme for tertainship, which was made mandatory for the institute by 1981. Based on the on-going formation process used by the Jesuits, tertainship was for sisters finally professed not less than eight years and normally not more that twelve years, for a period of not less than three months, preferably with international experience, either by the inclusion of participants from other provinces or by Australian women participating in overseas study. Already by 1980, forty-eight sisters had completed renewal or pastoral ministry courses, three of whom completed renewal courses overseas.

Profiles of two women who entered in the late 1970s.

In stark contrast to the 1950s when novices were judged suitable by very simple criteria, women entering religious life in the 1980s were described as needing five qualities:

- Self-direction/motivation
- Willingness to search, risk and be capable of living with uncertainty
- Deep spiritual life
- Rootedness in the charism of the Institute
- Global vision and mission.

The profiles of two sisters who entered during this period are offered to illustrate the contrast in the experience of those who entered in the 1950s.

Sister Liz Moloney rsm⁵⁶⁶

Liz was the third in her family of eleven children, receiving her early education with the Mercy sisters in Terang in the Wimmera district of Victoria. She boarded at Sacred Heart College (SHC) in Ballarat for years 10 and 11, and on leaving school, did office work in Terang, later shifting to Melbourne where she worked at a children's home in Kew for two years. During this time she completed a Diploma of Residential Care, when serious debate was beginning about the appropriateness of large institutions for the residential care for

⁵⁶⁶ Interview in Melbourne, 10 December 2009.

people in need of care; it was through this experience that she developed an interest in alternative models of community care.

Liz entered the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy in 1977 at the age of 22 and was professed in 1980. There were two other novices with her, under the direction of Sister Liz Teggelove as novice director. She did not live in the convent while a postulant, retaining her accommodation in Melbourne. The regular Saturday morning classes she attended consisted of studying the life and work of Catherine McAuley, the meaning of religious vows and prayer life. During the afternoons, she undertook some form of apostolic service, including visitation and work with the homeless. She then moved into the community at Sacred Heart in Victoria Street, Ballarat.

Her decision to enter religious life with the Ballarat East Mercies did not include an assumption that her work would involve teaching, for which she was not qualified nor which was of any interest to her. She said that she had very little idea what she would do, but her work history shows that she was able to build on her interest in welfare services, first by supporting families through the Diocesan Family Services and the Ballarat Children's Home and by 1985, working, again supporting families in the Delecombe Neighbourhood House. In 1990, she was granted 12 months off work and undertook to build on her early study by completing an Associate Diploma of Welfare Studies through Bendigo TAFE. She was then asked to become the coordinator of the boarding school at St Martins, at the time when Valda Ward was the principal, and to oversee its closure in 1994, after which she shifted to Melton outside Melbourne and completed a Degree in Social Work at Deakin University. This led to her work with the MacKillop Family Services in Sunshine, focused on the needs of asylum seekers. For her services, Liz was awarded the Edmund Rice Award for Excellence in Practice by a Permanent Staff Member of MacKillop Family Services, 2009.

Liz Hepburn ibvm

Liz Hepburn entered the Loretos as one of three novices. She was at the time in her early thirties, a lecturer at Christ College and living in her own home. Her formation was guided by Sister Ellison Taffe and the formation team which consisted of two or three professed members of the institute. Each week, she would attend a communal meal and Mass with other sisters, formation by then seen as a gradual process in which each person came to see

what was right for her. Her career spans all aspects of education, from teaching in primary schools to adult education, university administration and lecturing in ethics. She completed a PhD overseas and pursued a career in bioethics, becoming Director of the Queensland Bioethics Centre and Director of Ministry and Ethics for Catholic Healthcare Australia. In these roles she acted as an advisor to the clergy and to the broader Catholic community, publishing widely on issues relating to ethics, health and end-of-life care. She later became head of St Mary's College at Melbourne University, a post she still fills.

Both women entered religious life as experienced workers, while neither expected to spend their working lives as classroom teachers; both were offered further educational opportunities and achieved success as professional women in their chosen careers, while emerging as leaders of their communities and exemplifying a new generation of women religious.

New forms of governance

Changes in governance for both institutes were carried out in part to ensure that the new understandings of the meaning of religious life and the adoption of new forms of apostolic work could be achieved under their constitutions and rule books. The endless hours of preparation, consultation, revision and meetings were not undertaken as an academic exercise. Landmark constitutional reforms were reached by both institutes in the early 1980s, but were to continue for the next three decades, as revisions, modifications and updated constitutions continued.⁵⁶⁷

In a pattern that was to reflect earlier attempts to amalgamate and/or rationalise the resources of the Sisters of Mercy across Australia, the late 1970s and 1980s again saw Ballarat East leaders emerge as crucial individuals in difficult decision making. The process leading to the establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia (ISMA) has been documented in the PhD thesis of Valda Ward, a detailed account of the work which describes her own role in the process, culminating in her election as the first President in 1981. The process for finding a suitable structure to accommodate both the Federation and the Union of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia began in the late 1960s, with an initial draft constitution being produced in 1972, followed by a period of consultation

⁵⁶⁷ The Sisters of Mercy are currently (2010) working towards a further reconfiguration of their structures, while the Loretos have recently received approval from Rome for their new constitution, following the amalgamation of the Irish and American branches of the IBVM in 2003.

with each of the separate communities. The most significant event in the process, in the view of Valda Ward, was the convening in Melbourne of the National Mercy Assembly, 28 August until 3 September 1977. The conference was attended by hundreds of Mercy sisters from across Australia, together with representatives of the laity, clergy and other religious congregations. Out of the conference a working party was established, presenting its report in April 1978 which included a model for a new structure. This was circulated for further consultation after which the final document was presented at special national meetings in 1979. Valda, as president of the Federation and of the Conference of Sisters of Mercy, accompanied by the Superior General of the Union and two church lawyers, took the document to Rome for final approval. The subsequent inaugural National Chapter was held in August 1981, marking the formal establishment of the Institute, of which all 17 Australian Mercy congregations were the constituent members.

Mary Ward's vision that her sisters should adopt the Jesuit constitutions as the basis of their spiritual life and apostolic work was finally achieved in the Irish branch of the IBVM in 1985, after many years of discussion and discernment.⁵⁶⁸ In her provincial's report to the community, Noni Mitchell was to write in 1980:

The events of last September in Rome suggest that the Holy Spirit may be pointing us to Mary Ward's sure guide: "Take the same of the Society" as an indication that the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus are the most authentic and lasting statement of our corporate spirituality, as the Spiritual Exercises are the basis of our personal spiritual renewal.⁵⁶⁹

In her report of the 1980 Provincial Chapter, she writes in a most moving tone, about a process of discernment led by Fr Des Dwyer, SJ:

The proposal was put: "It is advantageous for our purpose that the Institute take the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, adapted according to the mind of Mary Ward, as our fundamental law, together with our modern document"; the calm and quiet result was: "Yes" to the proposal for 38 of the delegates, with one delegate

⁵⁶⁸ For a detailed account of the process of constitutional reform within IBVM, see Mary Wright ibvm, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity*, Crossing Press, Darlington, 1997. Re-union between the Irish and North American branches was finally achieved in 2003 when Mary Wright was the General Superior of the Irish branch.

⁵⁶⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 53 *Pro-Loreto*, 17 January, 1980.

genuinely undecided. The feeling of peace and serenity was unmistakable, and there was a deep sense of being present at a point of history of our Institute.⁵⁷⁰

She also explained that the task before her community now was to complete a ‘Modern (C.C.C.) Document’ to translate their rule into concrete statutes or directives so that the General Chapter in 1980 would have before it a framework, discussed and examined in communities, in order to give the guidelines necessary for final submission in 1983.

How the women saw themselves by 1980

A summary from the Loreto sisters who examined the changes between 1968 and 1980, noted the sense that sisters are “real women”, courageous and individual, women of enterprise and initiative who “filled the gaps without the benefit and support of professional training...with a sense of humour, readiness to tread new paths and break patterns...[a group] of fascinating eccentrics who radiated independence and creativity”. However, there was a

dark side, hurt and anger that some still struggle to integrate – [particularly] the horror of the two class system [which was] totally opposed to the gospel, the futility which some feel of the formation we received, the restriction of laws and the control of life by bells and all that that symbolizes, the sense of wasted years and having to heal the hurt of that, the futile dependence on small things, the rigid understanding of our mission and the hurt perpetuated by lack of proper training.⁵⁷¹

Noni Mitchell wrote her assessment of where the community stood in relation to the vows, their prayer life and spirituality in 1980:

The six years have brought us to the beginning of understanding the key elements of apostolic spirituality in the Ignation tradition, summed up in the elusive phrase, “contemplative in action” or “finding God in all things”. The active orders in the Church are searching for a genuine apostolic spirituality for today: one immediate

⁵⁷⁰ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 17, Provincial Chapter Report, Australian Province 1980, p9.

⁵⁷¹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 262, *Records of the Apostolic Priorities of Loreto Working Party*, Item 9, Apostolic Priorities Working Party.

answer is to return gratefully to our own spiritual heritage. There are signs of great vitality, and some areas of weakness, in our apostolic prayer.⁵⁷²

Valda Ward in her 1980 report as the Superior General of the Ballarat East Mercies recalled that at the 1976 Chapter

...we took into account not only mercy, but also justice, the gospel value which challenges us in the materialistic society to which we inevitably belong. I wonder did we realise what would happen to us as women and as religious when we took this really seriously.

She concluded that, “We have grown very close to each other over the past four years as we have tried to find new ways in which to reconcile for the congregation the pain of the ‘now’ with the glory of the ‘not yet’”.⁵⁷³

The significance and diversity of individual apostolic work

The Sisters of Mercy clearly spelt out the difference between the new categories of apostolic work: individual apostolates were those where a woman chose her own type and location of ministry matching her individual talents and qualifications, outside the traditional work of the institute, in some cases, outside Catholic organisations. Second, there was a category they described as ‘Corporate apostolate – Co-operation’ whereby Mercy sisters contributed their talents to shared service providers, not restricted to Mercy institutions, but in co-operation with other church organisations such as the parishes and welfare services. Third, there was their traditional apostolic work in Mercy institutions – schools, teaching training and higher education and home care.⁵⁷⁴ The implications of individual apostolates were described by the Sisters of Mercy thus:

The type of service implies that a sister is held responsible by the Community for making informed specific choices as to the type and location of her ministry, for seeking to match her own giftedness with the signs of the times; for exercising with the Community a mutual accountability in service, and for embodying in her life of

⁵⁷² Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 19, Provincial’s report for Provincial chapter 1980, p10.

⁵⁷³ Ballarat East Mercy Archives, 1100-01-09, *Valda Ward files*.

⁵⁷⁴ ‘Paper submitted for consideration at the Mercy Congregational Assembly, 1981’, located in Loreto Province Archives, Series 262, *Records of the Apostolic Priorities of Loreto Working Party*, Item 9, Planning 1982. The fact that this, amongst several other Mercy planning documents, is located in the Loreto archives indicates that the Loretos were seeking information from outside their own institute, and drew upon work undertaken and shared by the Mercies.

service a common Mercy spirituality. [It] assumes that there can be great diversity of service appropriate to Mercy charism. It assumes that the Community accepts and endorses the diverse choices made as being a valid means of spreading the Mercy impact, even though the choices may weaken the concentrated efforts of Mercy institutions. Finally, it assumes that each Sister of Mercy is a responsible, mature adult.⁵⁷⁵

The diversity of work undertaken by women in both institutes was made possible by the generosity of their communities; in supporting release for full-time study in many cases, in accepting that many would leave their schools, leaving others to “hold the fort” in what were still difficult conditions. It also meant accepting that many of the new ventures would align their communities with issues that were politically controversial. Whilst the following information divides the extent of the new work into secular and church related activities, the divide is acknowledged as an artificial one. No attempt is being made to distinguish the relative value of either, or to locate them as contradictory: both are presented as a contribution to civil society, of which the life of the church is an important element.

Between 1950 and 1980, Ballarat, as with all regional centres, experienced significant growth in the provision of non-government services, in part to fill the gaps left by the declining voluntary commitment typical of all the major churches in the nineteenth century and first part of the twentieth century. Individual women religious were to play an important role in the establishment of a number of secular not-for-profit organisations in Ballarat, as well as those under the auspices of the church. Their presence represented a major shift in the apostolic commitments of both institutes and became the most visible sign of outward change for women religious, raising issues of identification with their institutes, particularly when the move involved adopting various forms of independent living away from their communities in the convents.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Planning papers for the 1981 Congregational Assembly, 13 June 1981, located in Loreto Province Archives.

⁵⁷⁶ For discussion of these issues, see, for example, Joan Chittister, *Women, Ministry and the Church*, Paulist Press, Ramsay, N.J., 1983; Sandra M. Schneiders, *Religious Life in a New Millennium: Vol. 1: Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, Paulist Press, New York, 2000; Carmel Leavey and Rosalie O'Neill, *Gathered in God's Name: New Horizons in Australian Religious Life*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 1996.

One important initiative was for a number of women from both institutes to volunteer as councillors with the telephone crisis service, *Lifeline*, dealing with pressing social problems with which they would have little contact as class-room teachers, particularly in the pre-Vatican II era, including drugs, marriage breakdown, mental illness, homelessness and domestic violence. Amongst the founding members of *Lifeline* in Ballarat were Rita Hayes rsm, and Margaret Noone ibvm, both of whom built on this experience of broader social issues to establish non-government agencies which continue to serve the needs of vulnerable people in Ballarat.

Through her involvement in Saturday morning sport in Ballarat in the 1970s, Sister Rita Hayes came into contact with girls deemed vulnerable and at risk because of family circumstance and/or peer pressure. Her commitment to ensuring that these young women would not become caught up in the juvenile detention system led her to train as an honorary probation officer. Working closely with the Good Shepherd Sisters in Melbourne, her work was designed to divert girls from Winlaton which was the juvenile detention centre in Melbourne, notorious for the number of its inmates who “graduated” to Fairlea women’s prison. Her vision and drive saw the establishment of *Lisa Lodge* in Ballarat as an alternative organisation which could provide housing and local support outside the formalised juvenile detention system. Along with Sister Genevieve rsm, Rita was a member of the original committee which established *Lisa Lodge* and became the first supervisor of the service, living at the hostel as an unpaid worker, while maintaining her teaching position at Sacred Heart College.⁵⁷⁷

Rita was one of the women religious who commented in interview that she was “quite pleased personally” to move on from teaching into the broader social welfare area, encouraged in her new professional career and further education by Sister Clare Forbes. She went on to become the acting director of Ballarat Diocesan Family Services, before relocating to Cairns in Queensland to help establish a Centracare agency there.⁵⁷⁸ She was also a board member of Ballarat Children’s Homes and Family Services, and helped

⁵⁷⁷ Information from Lisa Lodge web-site, www.lisalodge.org.au accessed 25/6/2008. In 1973 Lisa Lodge purchased a property in Armstrong Street in the heart of Ballarat and received a grant of \$5000 during International Women’s Year (1975) with further state government funding following in 1976. The first referrals to the centre came following the closure of Nazareth Girls Home, providing alternative care for the girls who had been, in some cases, utilised as support workers for older residents at Nazareth House, a situation deemed totally inappropriate by government and community authorities.

⁵⁷⁸ A Loreto sister, Margaret Mary Flynn, was the founding director of Centracare in the Wilcannia-Forbes diocese.

establish *Grow*, a support group for people recovering from psychiatric illness.⁵⁷⁹ When the *Lisa Lodge* committee opened a new children's home in Ballarat in 1976, it was named "Hayeslee" to honour her work; she was also the recipient of a Council on the Aging Achievement Award (2006), nominated as amongst the 100 people who helped shape Ballarat by *The Courier* in 2000, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Ballarat (2008).

Rita's career has strong parallels with that of Toni Matha ibvm, with whom she remains a close friend. Toni undertook similar work at Winlaton in Melbourne, supporting young women at risk. Even before Vatican II, Toni was encouraged by Mother Dympna to undertake a course in social welfare when she met officers from both Pentridge men's prison and Fairlea where she began visitation. As a teacher at Loreto Mandeville, she encouraged girls to visit and mix socially with young men in Torana (the boys equivalent to Winlaton).⁵⁸⁰ She formed a strong friendship and working relationship with Fr Kevin Mogg when he was the Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare, Victoria. She began working as its Executive Officer, in which capacity she held membership of both the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and later, as treasurer, of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS).⁵⁸¹ In June 1980, Toni was appointed representative at the first National Catholic Welfare Commission, and as both an educationalist and a social worker; she was also nominated by Fr Tom Doyle (Director, Melbourne Catholic Education Office) as a member of the committee which produced the *Girls, School and Society Report*, 1984 for the Australian Schools Commission. For her community contribution, Toni was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1997.

For feminists at this time there was perhaps no harder struggle for justice than that relating to young women in care and women in prisons. Their rights and access to education and rehabilitation have been amongst the most unpopular causes taken up by civil rights and

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Sister Rita Hayes, Ballarat, 1 July 2008.

⁵⁸⁰ Sister Elizabeth Nowotny was also a volunteer child carer at *Allambie*, a home for girls up to the age of 11, a task she undertook for five weeks during the school break from Mandeville Hall.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Sister Toni Matha, 2 July, 2008, Melbourne. ACOSS is the national umbrella organization representing over 2500 organisations involved in welfare and advocacy; it is represented on a variety of government advisory bodies, regularly makes submissions to government and produces research relevant to the sector. Through this work, she began long associations with leaders in the welfare movement such as Brian Howe (Minister for Social Welfare in the Hawke Labor Government), Julian Disney and Merle Mitchell, both leaders of the Australian Council of Social Services), Professor Denise Bradley and Dr Shirley Sampson (both advocates for equality of girl's educational opportunities), Ray Cleary (prominent Uniting Church activist) and Eva Cox, leading feminist activist and researcher.

feminist activists.⁵⁸² That women religious would not only volunteer their assistance, but that Rita would also work to establish an on-going organization to help divert young women from a life in and out of prison, and Toni would organize students at Mandeville to fraternize with young offenders, no doubt scandalized the more conservative people in Ballarat and Toorak, many of whom presumably would have preferred them to remain in the classroom. The emergence of women religious into Catholic social welfare was complicated by the fact that the sector was dominated at the higher level by men, mainly male clerics. As one author demonstrates, the vision of a handful of male clerics, supported by professional Catholic lay women of great fortitude, was critical to moving the sector away from what Rita Hayes described as “an old boys club”.⁵⁸³

In 1978 Margaret Noone ibvm was appointed as a representative of *LifeLine* to the organization, *Very Special Kids*, whose objective was to support children with life threatening illness and to provide assistance for their families. By 1985 Margaret was employed with a grant of \$10,000 from the Sidney Myer Trust as the first employee, and was granted a Churchill Fellowship to the UK, USA and Canada to research models of care for dying children, eventually establishing the *Very Special Kids House*, the first hospice for children in Australia, with an active branch of the organization operating in Ballarat. Margaret Noone’s dream for a specialised children’s hospice was far in advance of government policy at that time, but her personal commitment and skills as a lobbyist in the cause of distressed families was widely acknowledged as a key factor in persuading government officials of the justice of the cause. Caroline Hogg, MLC, was at the time Minister for Community Services and later Minister for Health in the Cain/Kirner governments, and had direct contact with Margaret in both portfolios. Ms Hogg remembers her as “a remarkable advocate, powerful, compassionate, persuasive and well-mannered: an acknowledged skillful and persistent advocate”.⁵⁸⁴ For her services to the

⁵⁸² For the most comprehensive account of these issues, see Helen Barnacle, *Don't Let Her See Me Cry: A Mother's Story*, Bantam Books, Sydney, 2000. It is of interest to note that amongst the strongest advocates for women in prison is Elizabeth Cham, an ex-Loreto Dawson Street pupil, whose role as advocate for women leaving prison facilitated considerable philanthropic funds being donated to “Somebody's Daughter Theatre”, a theatre company run by ex-women prisoners.

⁵⁸³ D. J. Gleeson, ‘Some themes in Australian Catholic social welfare history’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 28, 2007; see also by the same author, ‘The Foundation of the National Catholic Welfare Commission’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 85, No.1, January 2008.

⁵⁸⁴ Phone conversation with Caroline Hogg, 18 August 2009.

community, Margaret received an OAM and was named Patron of *Very Special Kids*, a position she still fills.⁵⁸⁵

Sister Anne Forbes rsm emerges as another Ballarat woman religious at the forefront of what have been at times, controversial issues, all of which have demanded a strong commitment to social justice. Re-settling refugees in Ballarat was such an issue, particularly as it brought the women religious into the public eye in terms of their support for the rights of people in East Timor and West Papua. Anne Forbes was no stranger to working for the rights of dispossessed peoples: as early as the 1950s she was a member of the Ballarat branch of the Aboriginal Advancement League, seen at the time as a “radical” movement. Her involvement in these difficult issues over the next 50 years culminated in 1999, when she escaped the ravages of war in East Timor, rescued by a young German Jesuit, Fr Albrecht, who ferried her to the UN compound, from which she fled to Darwin. Returning to Ballarat, she began her work to re-house and educate four young East Timorese men who had been in detention between 1995 and 1998.⁵⁸⁶

Anne is one of many Ballarat East Mercies who played a crucial role in the resettlement of asylum seekers, through the provision of educational opportunities, personal support and accommodation. Several of the Sisters of Mercy are founding members of the Ballarat branch of the Australia-East Timor Association, and the West Papua Association. Both the Mercies and the Loretos have provided personnel for teacher training and other support work in these neighbouring countries.⁵⁸⁷

Two Sisters of Mercy who entered religious life in the 1970s provide further examples of work in diverse fields. Margaret Kelly rsm was responsible for the “Star of the Sea” family holiday and respite house run by the Sisters of Mercy in Apollo Bay, open to parish groups and individual families, for which work she was honoured in “Ballarat’s Finest”, as was Sister Beverley Malcolm. Beverley was a lecturer at the ACU, and as a member of the Aquinas Centre for Social Justice, worked tirelessly for refugees and asylum seekers and

⁵⁸⁵ *Very Special Kids* now also operates in Geelong, Traralgon, Coburg and Footscray in Victoria.

⁵⁸⁶ The four men completed their secondary education at Damascus College and later enrolled at the Catholic University in Ballarat. Fr Albrecht was shot and died soon after rescuing Anne. See report in the *Ballarat Courier*, 28 June 2002.

⁵⁸⁷ By the late 1970s, two sisters of Mercy from Ballarat were also working in Chile, one of whom, Anna Gleeson, was arrested in 1980 under the Pinochet regime. For an account of their work, see Clare Forbes rsm, *A Widow’s Mite to Chile*, Publisher Unknown, Ballarat, 1990.

to establish links between the city of Ballarat and Ainaro in East Timor.⁵⁸⁸ Another Mercy sister, Helen Nolen, was recognized for her work in East Timor by winning the Paul Harris Fellowship Award for her outstanding contribution to the people of Fohorem in East Timor. A Ballarat-born Loreto sister, Patricia Franklin, was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for service in the field of international humanitarian relief and to children in south East Asia, particularly in Vietnam, through the establishment and administration of education and social welfare programs.

Chris Coughlan, who entered the Mercies in 1970, became director of *San Michel*, run by The Australian AIDS Foundation to support men dying from AIDS. For this work she was nominated for *The Australian Women's Weekly* Woman of the Year for which she was runner up. She went on to become director of "Rosehaven", a similar facility catering for women. Just as Margaret Noone traveled overseas to expand her understanding of children's hospices, so too did Chris travel to Canada and the USA to visit houses and institutions assisting dying persons.⁵⁸⁹

The brief biographies of these women are included to illustrate that their individual contributions were made possible by the elected leaders who facilitated their re-education, and by community members who supported them practically and personally. Some of their sisters may have felt "left behind" or deprived of similar opportunities, and some priests and lay people may have felt the sisters first obligation should be to the schools, seeing these new, sometimes, radical ventures as a "distraction" from their corporate work in education or in local parish work. But the women could point to the vision of their foundresses, Mary Ward and Catherine McAuley, who encouraged work amongst the poor, and were inspired by the risks each took in pushing the boundaries of what was then accepted as appropriate behavior for women religious. They could also call upon their pioneer leaders in Ballarat as women of conviction and leadership, and upon an understanding of the teachings of Vatican II, particularly in relation to adopting a preference for the poor. Finally, despite the concerns of some male members of the Church, priests of vision (and men from other religious denominations) were obviously

⁵⁸⁸ Author Unknown, *Amongst Ballarat's Finest: A Showcase of Achievement and Contribution by Ballarat's Women*, Women's Health, Grampians, Edition One, 2008. Other women religious who have appeared in this publication are Mother Gonzaga Barry and Mother M. Mulhall ibvm, Sisters Valda Ward, Rita Hayes, Beverley Malcolm and Margaret Kelly; a forthcoming edition will include Gertrude Healy rsm, and the Sisters of St. John of God.

⁵⁸⁹ For detailed information on other individual Loreto sisters whose apostolic work expanded during this period, see Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, Chapters 12 and 14.

important in easing the way for women to enter into a field in which they had little previous experience, in direct contrast to their educational apostolates over which they had exerted almost unique control.

Contribution to policy making in secular education

The contribution of individual women such as those outlined above should be set in the context of other members of their communities who, as leading and long serving educationalists in Ballarat, continued to contribute not only to Catholic education, but to the broader education sector of the city. Valda Ward rsm, for example, was a member of both the Course Advisory Committee at the University of Ballarat and a member of the Ballarat Regional Council for Educational Administration. She was also a member of the Professional Development of School Principals working party of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, (1982-83) as the national representative for Catholic schools.

At the state level, Elizabeth Nowotny ibvm was nominated by the Victorian Premier, Sir Rupert Hamer, as a member of the Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Schools, established to enquire into both the education of girls and discrimination against women in the teaching service. The enquiry proved to be extremely divisive in the community, with conservative organizations objecting vigorously to the concept of sexism in education, voiced strongly by Mrs Babette Francis, representing “Women Who Want to be Women” (WWW), backed by conservative forces within the Catholic church at the time. Elizabeth Nowotny supported the more progressive members of the committee and the public servants whose job was to steer the changes which became significant first steps in the struggle to achieve equality for women and girls in education.

The skill and professional expertise of these individual women, and of their commitment to the broader educational community was recognized at state and national levels through these appointments. Margaret Manion ibvm was a board member on the Council of Adult Education, the Council of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and of Swinburne University in Melbourne and became one of only two women ever appointed to the Board of the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne. She was also appointed as trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria in 1975, (Deputy chair, 1984-1990), was a member of the Australian Research Grants Committee, the Australia Council and the Victorian Arts

Centre Trust.⁵⁹⁰ Dr Veronica Brady ibvm has established herself as a public intellectual through her prolific writing and contribution to human rights debates.⁵⁹¹ In 1975 she was nominated on to the National Committee for the Teaching of English, and became the first religious appointed to the board of the ABC.⁵⁹² She was also appointed a member of the Council on the Aged in the 1990s.

Contribution to Catholic education – administration and planning

Women religious quickly learnt how to operate at a high level of policy development, administration and public advocacy, a significant shift in their role as educators, requiring professional and political skills that presumably they had never had to exercise before (or at least not outside their own congregations). As early as 1971, there was universal agreement within the Loretos of the urgent need for administrative training.⁵⁹³ It was a sentiment obviously shared by the Ballarat East Mercies, as evidenced by the number of women who undertook formal courses in administration, up to and including PhD level.⁵⁹⁴ Through Aquinas College (and later the Australian Catholic University) it was the Sisters of Mercy who provided educational administration courses for their own sisters and those of other institutes, as well as for lay teachers. The following information illustrates the extensive contribution made from Ballarat women in the different levels of educational administration.

Noni Mitchell was a founding member of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) as representative of the Major Superiors of Women in 1974, the same year she became Provincial of ibvm when she wrote: “I have decided to stay on the Commission because it keeps me in touch with political developments in funding to schools and with national policies in Catholic education”.⁵⁹⁵ Both Noni Mitchell and Valda Ward were members of the Victorian Catholic Teacher Education Board in 1973, at which time Noni was chosen to become a member of the Teacher Education Liaison Committee enquiry

⁵⁹⁰ Margaret is also a Fulbright Scholar, the recipient of an Order of Australia (AO) and of the 2001 Centenary Medal for service to Australian society through art history and the promotion of arts in the community.

⁵⁹¹ See for example, Veronica Brady, *Caught in the Draught: On Contemporary Australian Culture and Society*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1994.

⁵⁹² For an account of Veronica's contribution to academia and human rights campaigns, see Kath Jordan, *Larrikin Angel: A Biography of Veronica Brady*, Round House Press, South Fremantle, 2009.

⁵⁹³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 8 Provincial Chapter 1971.

⁵⁹⁴ Included amongst those who gained Masters or PhDs in administration from the Mercies were Therese Power and Valda Ward, and amongst the Loretos, Denise Desmarchelier and Jacqui McGilp, who in later years, joined the staff at the ACU as a highly qualified lecturer in educational administration, change management and community development.

⁵⁹⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, 16 October, 1974.

into independent teachers' colleges, conducted by the Commission on Advanced Education. She is the recipient of an OAM for her contribution to education. Denise Desmarchelier was a staff member of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) during 1977-78, representing Women Religious Teaching Congregations; she was also a part-time member of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. As an educator, her role was acknowledged in 1983 when appointed to the Australian Schools Commission, the first woman religious so honored by the Minister for Education, Senator Susan Ryan, who, in the following year, appointed Sr. Judith Redden rsm from South Australia as part-time Commissioner.⁵⁹⁶ In 1983 Denise was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education in recognition of her contributions and leadership in non-government education and her membership of many national and state level education committees.

Denise was followed by Meg Hannon ibvm, who had been a lecturer at the Catholic College of Education in Castle Hill, Sydney, after which she became a part-time staff member at the Melbourne Catholic Education Office (MCEO). Anne Anderson, ibvm was also a member of the Religious Education Department at the MCEO, and Elizabeth Nowotny became the vice-president of the Association of Catholic Educators whose aim was to help those in the city and country involved in religious education.⁵⁹⁷

Valda Ward rsm was appointed to a Working Party of the Commonwealth Schools Commission in relation to professional development for teachers; Noni Mitchell ibvm advised the then Minister for Education in Victoria, Lindsay Thompson, on the needs of non-government teachers' colleges as part of the move to establish the State College of Victoria; both were members of the Melbourne Archdiocesan Teacher Education Board. Valda was active at the local level as a foundation member of the Ballarat Diocesan

⁵⁹⁶ A letter from Denise Desmarchelier outlines in detail her work at the Catholic Education Office, representing women religious on the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. She describes her work as liaison person between the Commission and Catholic schools, in the preparation of submissions to the Schools Commission and reports to bishops on staffing, long service and other working conditions and teacher development. She was chair of the Committee of Principals which distributed funds to systemic schools through the commonwealth recurrent funding arrangements, and also on the State Planning and Finance Committee which determined capital grants, library and disadvantaged grants and emergency assistance. In summary she reported: "There is no doubt that my work this year has been intellectually and physically more demanding than as a Principal, even of a boarding school. The emotional involvement is less, although the need for political sensitivity can be very draining." Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto Education*, Letter dated 18 December, 1977.

⁵⁹⁷ Publications by Elizabeth Nowotny include *Young People's Ideas about God, Religion and the Meaning of Life*, Dove Publications, Blackburn, 1978 and 'Religious Education', *Dialogue*, December 1976.

Education Board (1969-1981) and of the Aquinas College Advisory Board, plus as a member of Course Advisory Committees at the University of Ballarat. Both Valda and Noni retained membership of professional bodies such as the Australian College of Education and subject associations.

At the local level under the direction of Bishop Mulkearns, the Ballarat diocese established its own Catholic Education Office in 1971. From its inception, women religious played important roles in shaping policy through their involvement on the Ballarat Diocesan Education Board. Denise Desmarchelier and Valda Ward were both foundation members of the Board, Denise being the vice-chair during 1973-4.⁵⁹⁸ Building on the traditions and work of these women religious, Therese Power rsm became the first woman Director of Catholic Education in Ballarat in 1985; Therese was honoured for her contribution to education when named Senior Educator of the Year by the Ballarat Region of the Australian College of Education in 1998, and along with Rita Hayes, was listed amongst Ballarat's 100 who shaped the city. She was also the first woman and the first Catholic to be invited to join the Board of Management of Ballarat Health Services.

Adult education, catechetics and pastoral work

The need for professional development in the teaching of catechetics and related further study in theology and scripture were to be on-going themes amongst the Loretos throughout the post-Vatican II renewal process. Some questioned the value of catechetics – perhaps in part because of the fear of “abandoning” their own schools and/or stretching their limited resources to children in government schools. There is also an indication of Loreto sisters feeling very insecure about their ability to take on responsibility for teaching religion after the Vatican II changes. However, the need was seen to be so urgent that they urged the release of women for overseas study to face the new challenges:

So many modern techniques are being applied to education that training of teachers and administrators will have to be faced in a very big way, if our schools are to survive competition and remain effective... We will have to be experts in our fields with increased specialization. Theology degrees, as well as academic, will be

⁵⁹⁸ Denise was also President of Ballarat In-service Education, (1973-4); foundation member of Ballarat Pastoral Care (1974-5), foundation member of Ballarat Careers, (1973-4) and foundation member of Ballarat Health Education, (1974). Valda Ward was a foundation member of the Aquinas College Advisory Board (1974-81) and President of Ballarat Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools (1984).

necessary. Youth want strong theology and dogma. If we are to move into adult education, we would have to be expert in theology.⁵⁹⁹

This debate amongst the Loretos was recorded as early as 1971 in a *Summary of reports of discussions on philosophy of education*. In relation to “education for the whole life span”, the discussion centred on the need to expand into adult education which would require the training of religious education teachers covering

some aspects of psychology and sociology, with an up to date interest in modern teaching techniques such as mass media, audio-visual aids etc. ...[the] implications for the teacher are apparent: a more real involvement in the world combined with an interior listening to the Spirit in reflection and prayer....and revealed in the ordinary circumstances of daily life...the continuing formation of the religious education teacher must provide this rich background of lived experience as part of their own lifelong education.⁶⁰⁰

Not everyone agreed with catechetics (if by that it meant “formal” religion lessons) as a full-time apostolate for the sisters, either in their own schools or state schools, some arguing that religion lessons should be completely integrated with the general curriculum. However there was wide-spread approval for further part time involvement, where it was needed, particularly if the newly trained women could assist those sisters still teaching in their own schools. All appeared to agree “That the members of the Province avail themselves of the newly developing catechetical centres and courses (in-service or correspondence) for further education in this important field... [and] that we support the efforts being made at present to establish an Australian Pastoral Institute”.⁶⁰¹

The examples provided from both Birchip and Portland in Chapter three illustrate how the sisters teaching in Catholic schools, expanded their contribution to Catholic children in government schools, and to teaching catechetics in small communities. For the Mercies, the introduction of their Motor Missions formalised this apostolic work. The Mercy

⁵⁹⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Records relating to Provincial chapters/congregations, Item 2.

⁶⁰⁰ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 2.

⁶⁰¹ In *Pro-Loreto* 20 October 1972 it was announced that the Pastoral Institute would open in January 1973. “This is in response to numerous requests for the urgent need for an Institute which would reflect our circumstances of the Australian Church. It will stress catechetical needs of the Church and will equip personnel for pastoral tasks beyond the classroom, especially in the field of adult education.”

tradition of home visitation, whilst focused on family support, also represented an opportunity for the sisters to support the faith life of parishioners, while they also made available the physical and personal resources of the convent for adult lay apostolic work, notably by providing meeting space for the Young Catholic Workers (YCW) and other organisations.

Retired and semi-retired sisters were also involved with pastoral activities, remedial assistance for children in schools, work with the St Vincent de Paul Society, with refugees and teaching English to migrants: “In theory these are part-time activities, but they consume the time, energies and generosity of so many that I cannot number”.⁶⁰² The presence and the practical assistance offered by older sisters in both institutes to the diocese is again a reflection of the invaluable but often unacknowledged work of women in their capacity as volunteers, carers and respected elders – in all, a critical component of the health of civil society. My own experience in visiting both communities from 2008 confirms that women well into their 80s are still engaged regularly in voluntary work with a range of local organisations, both Church and secular, and with individuals in need of support. It is only the very sick whose contribution is now limited by their physical condition – even so, their witness to a life of prayer, and, in some cases, suffering, remains an inspiration to their sisters, families and friends.

Contribution to the parish and the diocese

Both institutes responded to needs in the parishes of the diocese as the declining number of priests began to impact on the life of the Catholic community. This included the establishment of a new Loreto community in 1978 in Lyons Street near St Patrick’s Cathedral. The mission was to become involved in prayer groups for the parish, with particular attention to the needs of women in the parish. This move into the heart of the city was announced by Noni Mitchell:

I would envisage an apostolic involvement with parish pastoral ministry, a sharing of liturgy and prayer, and an open hospitality to those seeking companionship and support. The suggestion of the Provincial Council in our planning is to ask for

⁶⁰² Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 19, Development in New Ministries. The same report added that more training was necessary in pastoral care, more involvement of staff in the social and faith activities of the local Church, and more support for the laity to assume greater roles in the local Church; they also reported more frequent requests for sisters to be resident in the parishes.

volunteers to initiate a new community in 1978. Please give some indication of your reasons, pro and con, for offering for this mission, and of the process by which you made this discernment.⁶⁰³

For the Mercies, the most visible sign of their presence was the commitment they undertook to staff the newly created Diocesan Education Centre, based at the Cathedral headquarters. The Diocesan Education Board minutes of February 1974 show that Bishop Mulkearns envisioned that the education centre would train lay catechists, support those already engaged in religious education and provide teaching materials and other professional development resources. In appointing a committee to investigate the current situation in the diocese and report to him with recommendations, he also sought advice on how to establish a suitable program of religious education for children in non-Catholic schools.⁶⁰⁴ In 1978, Fr Barry Ryan made a request to Valda Ward to allow one of her sisters, Anne McMillan, to work as a part-time librarian, gathering resources for the new centre, which was to officially open in a new diocesan centre in 1983. In the recurring pattern noted for both institutes, Valda encouraged Anne to upgrade her qualifications to support her new work, by undertaking liturgical studies overseas.⁶⁰⁵

Women religious were involved from the outset in the establishment of parish councils in Ballarat. In May 1971, Bishop Mulkearns distributed a booklet, entitled “Our Parish Council” to explain the roles and function of the new councils as commended by Vatican II. In it he issued the challenge to “...renew the clergy and laymen of our parishes, and set up viable structures which will teach, nourish, and sustain the apostolate, structures which will provide for a sharing of the work it will take to meet this challenge”. Four women religious were founding members of the new Council: M. Theodore and M.M. Morrissey, ibvm and Sisters Kieran and Giovanni from the Sisters of St John of God and Nazareth

⁶⁰³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 29, *Lyons Street*, Item 14. Amongst the Loreto sisters who have lived in this community are Margaret O’Sullivan, Bernadette and Paula Ziesing, Maureen Burke, Mary Hendrick and Cynthia Wright.

⁶⁰⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 123 *Education – General*, Item 6, History of Catholic education in Ballarat. The minutes at this time indicate the new planning processes set in place by the bishop, including the need to rationalise resources in the parish schools and plan for a new school in Alfredton.

⁶⁰⁵ Anne had established the library at Sacred Heart College in the wake of new Schools Commission money; Anne is now a full-time member of the Centre. Other Mercy sisters who worked at the Centre include Helen Forbes, Mary Darcy, Shirley and Margaret Marney, Joan Dagleish, Geraldine Mugavan and Mary Mead. Information supplied by Sister Anne McMillan, Ballarat, 24 March, 2009.

respectively.⁶⁰⁶ In a further initiative of the bishop, the Ballarat Historical Commission was established in 1985 with three Sisters of Mercy as inaugural members.⁶⁰⁷

Women religious from both institutes became regular visitors to patients in institutions of care throughout the diocese, including the hospitals, prison, psychiatric and aged care facilities, often as special ministers who distributed communion to those unable to attend Mass. They facilitated or were directly involved in parish prayer groups, preparation of children for the sacraments, youth groups, liturgy and ecumenical groups, often filling roles that would previously been that of the priests of the parish, including education of the laity for leadership positions.

Professional development and further education

The Loretos decided by 1971 “that no nun be asked or allowed to teach without adequate training in the given field [and] that each be consulted as to what form this retraining will take”.⁶⁰⁸ Only nine years later they were able to report: “In all 43 sisters have completed professional and upgrading courses qualifying with degrees or diplomas”.⁶⁰⁹ At Ballarat East, by 1969 their first two sisters went overseas to the Philippines to study at the National Pastoral Institute in Manila, followed by others who took the opportunities offered by their leadership to study in Israel, America, Canada and the UK.

It was of great importance to both institutes that they had leaders who gave strong encouragement to individual women to choose for themselves what new careers could support the charism and mission of their communities, at the same time as making the best use of the talents and career aspirations of individuals who chose to move on from teaching in schools. Valda Ward and Clare Forbes are widely acknowledged for their vision, bravery and generosity in encouraging women to broaden their education, as were both Mother Dymrna and Noni Mitchell. Numerous interviews and informal conversations attest to their importance in this regard.

Just as “the Whitlam women” flocked back to universities when fees were abolished in 1973, many women religious took every advantage of educational opportunities open to

⁶⁰⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 159, *St Patrick's and the Ballarat Diocese*.

⁶⁰⁷ They were Sisters Katherine Doyle, Anne McMillan and Mother Phillip.

⁶⁰⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 19.

them. Statistics reveal that by 1973, a total of 82 Loreto sisters from an institute wide membership of 258 were engaged in some form of structured, accredited secular or religious studies. Given that at this time 47 per cent of the sisters were in the “post retirement” age bracket, this is a remarkable demonstration of the commitment to build on their reputation as a highly educated group of women. It was repeated across most women’s religious institutes, including the Ballarat East Mercies.

International presence

As work extended into overseas missions, both institutes broadened their apostolic vision to include an international presence in decision-making, which has involved gaining status at the United Nations (UN) as registered non-government agencies. The Sisters of Mercy established *Mercy Global Concern* in 1998 in order to gain status at the UN; as part of this international network, Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy join with their sisters world-wide in focusing on addressing global poverty.⁶¹⁰ Mercy sisters are now working in community development in East Timor, Africa Papua New Guinea and Panama. Similarly, *Mary Ward International* was established in 2002 to support world-wide IBVM ministries and has UN status since 2003. The Australian branch (*Mary Ward International, Australia*) raises and distributes funds to projects in remote Australian locations, in India and Africa, as well as training volunteers for mission work.⁶¹¹ Volunteers are also trained to work with Mercy Refugee Services which has a particular focus on supporting refugee families in Australia.⁶¹²

In addition to these corporate national and international works, a Loreto sister, Mary Wright, who followed Noni Mitchell as Mother General of the Irish branch of the Loretos (1999-2006), is now a canon lawyer working at the Vatican, a rare position for a woman, and an acknowledgement of her skill and wide experience as a woman religious.⁶¹³

Growing co-operation between the institutes

As early as 1970 more inter-congregational contact was being made through the novitiates; Mother Antoinette ibvm reported that novices from Loreto, Ballarat East Mercies and Melbourne institutes attended a five day seminar at Rosanna, indicating that “There are

⁶¹⁰ www.mercyworld.org for further information.

⁶¹¹ www.loreto.org.au for further information.

⁶¹² www.mercyworks.org.au accessed 03/10/2006.

⁶¹³ Mary Wright was mistress of schools at Mary’s Mount, 1977-1980.

good friendships now among all these young nuns”.⁶¹⁴ This was reinforced in 1973, when sisters attended a combined retreat at St Martin’s in the Pines. According to the recollection of one Loreto sister, the “watershed” in relations between the two institutes happened when the Ballarat Loretos were attending Mother Antoinette’s funeral in Melbourne and the Sisters of Mercy came up to Mary’s Mount to look after the convent and school and prepare a meal on their return; such an event would have been unthinkable in earlier times.⁶¹⁵

In 1978 the Loretos responded to a request from Valda Ward to supply one of their own sisters, Zita O’Donoghue, as a nurse to fill a need for the Sisters of Mercy, noting that: “Our own hospital needs are light at the present.”⁶¹⁶ Therese Power rsm took over responsibility for teaching chemistry at Mary’s Mount for a term when their teacher was unavailable, and in 1980 Sister Veronica Lawson offered places for Loreto sisters on a trip she was organizing to the Holy Land. By 1982, representatives of both institutes formed the membership of the Ballarat Secondary Schools Committee, formalising planning procedures for the overall benefit of the diocese. The expertise of staff at the Ballarat Education Centre was used for those planning the amalgamation of St Patricks and St Josephs parish schools in 1981-82.

Personal friendships between women religious reinforced the growing co-operation amongst women religious. Sister Bernadette Ziesing ibvm remarked in interview that the forerunner of what was to become the Diocesan Sisters’ Council was the strong friendships between herself, Therese Power rsm and Patricia Cramer, then a Sister of St John of God, forged long before Bishop Mulkearns formalised the Council in 1973 to represent the 400 women religious in the diocese. Another sister said in an informal conversation that prior to Vatican II they hardly talked to others within their own institute: it was little surprise that they didn’t talk to women religious in their separate convents. But the friendship of the three women cited above indicates that once the post-Vatican II reforms were underway, and once women religious were able to attend outside meetings and educational institutions unaccompanied, barriers between members of different institutes began to dissipate. Common membership of committees and planning bodies for

⁶¹⁴ Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, March, 1970.

⁶¹⁵ Interview with Sister Maureen Burke, Sydney, 11 April 2010.

⁶¹⁶ Loreto Province Archives, Series 53, *Pro-Loreto*, March 1978.

the first time enabled professional and personal friendships to develop between women religious, outside those which may have formed amongst the elected leaders in the past. The simple fact of being able to share social occasions possibly did more to overcome the previously imposed distance between the various institutes within the diocese.

The personal friendship between Sister Maureen Burke *ibvm* and Sister Karen Donnellon *rsm* led to their decision to build upon their experience with young people in extra-school activities by working together throughout the diocese to support parish councils who wished to include youth activities in their areas. Their youth ministry grew in the 1980s from part-time to full-time work, with a particular focus on the Mallee area, where they often stayed with local parishioners. The work continued until 1989, during which time they gave lectures at Aquinas on youth ministry. Karan became the Director of Youth Ministry for the diocese, and later, chaplain at Torana boys home.⁶¹⁷

The Ballarat Sisters' Council was the first of its kind in Australia, and an example of Bishop Mulkearn's vision as an administrator, as he attempted to open channels of communication amongst the women and with the hierarchy "to promote more intelligent and effective collaboration, to make available to the diocese the services of religious women on a professional and creative basis and to ensure adequate involvement of sisters in decision making which will affect their lives".⁶¹⁸ Nine sisters from the nine different institutes within the diocese were elected to organize support for each other, in particular, to support those sisters who were often working alone or in pairs in the more remote parts of the diocese. Weekends of prayer, social events and personal contact marked a new beginning of personal and professional friendships amongst the religious. As their first chaplain, Fr John Martin, was to remark:

There are so many indications of cooperation, trust and support amongst the religious of the diocese that we may be tempted to regard this as the natural, obvious, intelligent and Christian thing to do. But the present attitude is the result of much prayer and effort by many people.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁷ Interview with Maureen Burke, Sydney, 11 April 2010.

⁶¹⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 161, *Diocesan Sister's Council*.

⁶¹⁹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 161, *Diocesan Sisters' Council*.

The Sisters' Council continues to operate in the Ballarat diocese. A proper evaluation of its role would make a valuable contribution to the understanding of the contribution of women religious across the diocese.

Conclusion

As with the move into academic life, sisters undertaking individual apostolic work or working in partnership with outside organisations did so within the framework of priorities set by their own communities in the light of a 'preference for the poor'. While retaining their corporate commitment to education, women in both institutes broadened their apostolic work to include a diverse range of collaborative and individual apostolates, underpinned by professional development and tertiary training at the highest levels. Individual women won public recognition for their work, and the structures of the institutes were transformed to accommodate the needs of a changing society. This revolution in religious life was informed by two complementary ideologies which were transforming public policy and the delivery of services – social justice and feminist critique, which are the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter 10: Social Justice and Feminism

*It is one thing to point out that the Australian Catholic community has a strong tradition of preaching social justice. It is entirely another to ask whether anyone takes any notice.*⁶²⁰

Introduction

Two social movements which gained momentum in the 1960s and '70s, impacted on society, the Catholic church, on women religious and upon the children in their schools. Widespread anti-colonial movements and those for democratic participation following the Second World War, included movements for social justice for the vulnerable in society and, by extension, for the needs of women who constituted the majority of the world's poor. As a secular movement, social justice found its expression in political campaigns mounted by advocacy groups intent on changing legislation to enshrine legal rights and to ensure client participation in the delivery of services. Again, by extension, women's groups identified the need to improve the status of women; a new wave of feminism swept the Western world, a movement which included women, both religious and secular, in the churches. The following analysis will consider the extent to which both these movements impacted on the religious institutes under study.

Social justice

An examination of the documents produced by women religious in both the institutes demonstrates the seriousness with which they addressed the issue of adapting their apostolic focus towards social justice, questioning the use of their resources for the benefit of the upper middle class of society, as opposed to the poor and marginalized.

For the Mercies, their fourth vow "to serve the poor, the sick and the ignorant" provided one framework within which they could examine their future apostolic work.⁶²¹ The history of the Sisters of Mercy in the Ballarat diocese reveals how much of their work centred on the needs of the poorer members of the Catholic community who struggled to

⁶²⁰ Michael Hogan, *Australian Catholics: The Social Justice Tradition*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1993, p143.

⁶²¹ Beverley Zimmermann argues that "The Sisters of Mercy were especially aware of Catherine McAuley's legacies, including her concern for the poor. They took her emphasis on the mercy of Christ as a motivating force in their lives very seriously, to the extent that they practised a fourth vow which formalized their commitment to the poor and to the care of the less fortunate." 'She came from a fine Catholic family': Religious sisterhoods of the Maitland Diocese, 1867-1909', *Australian Historical Studies*, No 115, October 2000.

send their children to parish schools in both the city and the country regions which covered nearly half of Victoria. Until the arrival of the Sisters of Nazareth and the Sisters of St John of God, Mercy sisters expected to meet the challenge of providing both protective care of young children as well as health services, as other Sisters of Mercy were doing throughout Australia. Relieved of these responsibilities, they answered the call of the bishops to staff schools, kindergartens and the teachers' college, confining the majority of their resources to education, including within the poorer parish schools. Despite this long history of providing education for working class families and their commitment to home visitation, as part of the process of adapting to the "needs of the time" there were many within the institute who questioned whether they should continue to provide schooling for the middle class in their convent and boarding schools, rather than committing more fully to "the option for the poor."

The same debates were taking place within the Loretos throughout Australia, perhaps with more urgency given the nature of their elite schools. In Ballarat their commitment to staffing two parish schools, the day school at Dawson Street and the Commercial College, were testimony to their determination to reflect the demands of their founder, Mary Ward, that education was important to all sectors of the community, not just for those able to afford it. Like all women religious, they were able to point to numerous families for whom fees were waived or adjusted in their schools. Given their small numbers in the Ballarat diocese it cannot have been easy to staff these schools in Ballarat, plus their convent and parish school in Portland. While the perception may have been that the Loretos were a wealthy institute, they faced the same financial problems and pressures on their personnel common to all religious as the demand for enrolments continued to rise. They too began a soul-searching process to discern how they could best respond to the "option for the poor."

The social justice tradition of the Church in Australia

Based on the encyclical letter, *Rerum Novarum* issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, the Australian bishops, led by Cardinal Moran of Sydney, gave strong support to those seeking fairer conditions for exploited workers, and provided the impetus for the bishops to issue a series of annual statements which marked Social Justice Sunday until 1962.⁶²² The

⁶²²According to Hogan, "...it was with some relief that the beginning of the Second Vatican Council gave them the excuse to discontinue the series at that time." Michael Hogan has contributed the most comprehensive accounts of the social justice tradition in Australia, while Michael Costigan, as the first Executive Secretary to the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace (re-named the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace)

encyclicals issued by Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1967), by the Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), and by Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), saw a new agenda in the church's promotion of social justice, which in Australia was to be implemented by the National Commission for Peace and Justice from 1972.⁶²³

It was not only Vatican directives which led to the formalising of structures to promote peace and justice issues. Social movements which began in the late 1960s and the issues they highlighted in relation to Indigenous communities, immigration, poverty, equal opportunity and the rights of people with disabilities meant that, "The social climate was right for the Catholic bishops to revive their interest in social justice".⁶²⁴ In addition, changing economic conditions marked an end to full employment and the market predictability that had characterised the prosperous post-war era. Rising and seemingly intractable unemployment, particularly amongst youth, and persistent inter-generational poverty, highlighted by Professor Ronald Henderson, added to the pressures on both government and non-government agencies to address difficult, structural problems that were well beyond the means of traditional 'charitable' organisations to alleviate.⁶²⁵ Pragmatism, as well as social justice ideals, demanded new solutions.⁶²⁶

Feminists took up the issues of poverty and social justice and made major contributions to the debates and to influencing policy responses, not least because women and their

outlines the bureaucratic structure of the relevant church authorities and a brief outline of the consultations and reports produced by them up until 2004.

⁶²³ The Australian Commission was renamed the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in 1976, and fulfilled the requirement of the Vatican that each country should establish a Commission which would mirror the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. For analysis of the Papal encyclicals, see John Molony, *The Worker Question: A New Historical Perspective on Rerum Novarum*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1991; Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: An Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, 2002; E. E. Y. Hales, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World: A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present*, Image Books, New York, 1960. See also Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, St Paul's Publications, Strathfield, 2004. In Ballarat, a Christian Social Week was organized in December 1962 in order to discuss the implications of the social encyclicals and the proceedings were published: John Molony (ed) *A New Age of the Human Person*, The Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1963.

⁶²⁴ Hogan, *Australian Catholics*, p1. See also, Karl Rahner, S.J, 'Towards a fundamental theological interpretation of Vatican II', in Lucian Richard, Daniel Harrington and John O'Malley (eds), *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, Paulist Press, New York, 1987.

⁶²⁵ R. F. Henderson, *Poverty in Australia*, AGPS, Canberra, 1975. For an analysis of the Henderson inquiry and subsequent legislative changes it influenced, see Ronald Sackville, 'The Law and Poverty Report – Four years on' in Gareth Evans (ed), *Law, Politics and the Labor Movement*, Legal Services Bulletin, Monash University, Clayton, 1980.

⁶²⁶ See, for example, Neal Blewett, 'Economic management and social justice: A role for Labor governments?' Evatt Foundation, *Evatt Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1993 and Graham Dunkley, 'The economic crisis: Towards a social democratic solution', in Gareth Evans and John Reeves (eds) *Labor Essays, 1980* Drummond Publishing, Richmond, 1980.

children constituted the majority of people living in poverty. Research undertaken by women such as Bettina Cass, Cora Baldock and Meredith Edwards tackled all aspects of poverty, including taxation reform, social services, advocacy rights, affordable housing, health services, education and legal discrimination.⁶²⁷ There is little or no evidence in any of their writings that they were able to draw upon the social teachings of any of the churches to support either their findings or their demands for justice, outside the possible exceptions of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Uniting Church.

In detailed analyses of the social justice tradition, Hogan explains the contrasting ideologies of the pre-and post-Vatican II approach to social justice.⁶²⁸ The earlier emphasis on the twin problems of unfettered capitalism and the strong anti-communist thrust was to give way by the 1970s and 80s to an ideology based more on Liberation Theology and in line with secular liberation movements throughout the world.⁶²⁹ This included the need for political struggle to achieve human rights and dignity for the poor of the world, working where possible across denominational boundaries and with a much stronger emphasis on lay participation.⁶³⁰ For many Australian Catholics, this meant a break from the earlier anti-communist emphasis articulated by Bob Santamaria through the National Civic Council and the people who had supported it, including several of the Australian bishops, most notably, Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne and Bishop O'Collins in Ballarat.⁶³¹

It should also be noted that it was not only the Catholic church which defined social justice more in terms of charity than of human rights until late into the 1960s. Organisations and individuals in secular society frequently regarded the “relief of poverty” as requiring at

⁶²⁷ See, for example, Bettina Cass, 'The changing face of poverty in Australia: 1972-1982', *Australian Feminist Studies*, No.1, Summer 1985; Cora Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds), *Women, Social Welfare and the State*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983; Meredith Edwards, 'Economics of home activities', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 15, No. 1, February 1980, and 'A guaranteed income scheme: Implications for women', in A. Graycar (ed), *Perspectives in Australian Social Policy*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1978.

⁶²⁸ Michael Hogan, *Australian Catholics*.

⁶²⁹ See for example, Helder Camara, *Structures of Injustice*, Justice and Peace Commission, London, 1972.

⁶³⁰ See for example, Stuart Reid and David Shinnick (eds) *Development is for People: A Report of AWD – Action for World Development*, AWD National Team, Fitzroy, 1981.

⁶³¹ Bob Santamaria was the author of the majority of social justice statements up until the 1950s. For an overview of Santamaria's role in shaping the debate on Catholic social teaching in Australia, see Bruce Duncan, 'The puzzle of Santamaria's politicisation of Catholic movements' in Costar, Love and Strangio (eds) *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2005, and Paul Strangio and Brian Costar, 'B.A. Santamaria: Religion as politics' in the same publication.

worst, little more than material help in the form of charitable handouts, or at best, admonitions to employers to treat their employees more fairly.⁶³²

The problem was not a lack of interest in justice amongst the laity. As Hogan argues, lay interest and lay leadership in promoting social justice have been a continuing thread in Catholic history – in the trade union movement, the Labor party and in a range of social movements, including the women’s movement.

The problem has been that when bishops and laypeople have disagreed about appropriate policies or tactics, very often the clergy have used the argument of authority in attempting to bring their lay colleagues into line. This recourse to authority is misguided even according to classic Catholic social teaching, according to which the laity should have autonomy in the world of politics and public affairs.⁶³³

Beyond the question of undoubted instances of clericalism, comes the even more vexed one of how much knowledge of Catholic social teaching informed church leadership and the women religious at a local and national level. Social justice in its broadest terms was not the number one priority, although the Church encouraged extensive voluntary efforts to ensure delivery of material relief for the poor. The overwhelming priority was the effort needed to implement church policies of ensuring that every parish established and maintained Catholic schools, a task that consumed generations of Catholics. One dramatic instance is recorded by historian John Molony, a priest of the Ballarat diocese in the 1950s, relating a story told to him by Bishop Roper. While it cannot be taken to be a typical occurrence in the life of a country priest, nonetheless it illustrates at least the missed opportunities for church leaders to influence public policy outside the narrow confines of state aid (and later, anti-communism):

⁶³² See for example, R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History: Documents, Narrative and Argument*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1980. Their analysis concludes: “In a series of political debates and official inquiries, it was accepted on all sides that there was a category of ‘the poor’ that was somehow *outside* the social structure, and that the appropriate response was adjustments to pensions and social services rather than over the structure that generated such a situation. By defining a ‘poverty line’ – essentially basic wage plus child endowment – the existing equilibrium in class relations was reproduced by the state welfare apparatus.” P303. See also, R.W. Connell, *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture: Studies in Conflict, Power and Hegemony in Australian Life*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

⁶³³ Hogan, *Australian Catholics*, p138. See also, Race Mathews, ‘Collateral damage: B.A. Santamaria and the marginalising of social Catholicism’, *Labour History*, Number 92, May 2007. Mathews summarises thus: “Santamaria’s undoubted contribution to the removal of communists from trade union office in the 1940s and 1950s may be judged ultimately to have been less significant than his marginalizing of Social Catholicism” p1. See also, Michael Hogan, ‘Australian Catholic corporatism: Proposals for industrial councils in the 1940s’, *Labour History*, No. 62, May 1992.

It was of his meeting with James Scullin who later became the first Catholic Prime Minister of Australia (1929-1932). Scullin, born and raised a Catholic, was editor of the daily Labor newspaper, the Ballarat *Evening Echo*, from 1913 until 1922. One day he came to the cathedral presbytery to speak to Basil who was a curate there. He drew from his pocket a copy of Leo X111's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and asked Basil to explain it to him. Shamefaced at his ignorance, Basil admitted that he had not read it. Scullin went away disappointed and Basil expressed sorrow because, as he said, from that day Scullin showed no direct interest in Catholic social teaching although he retained his strong faith in the Church until the end.⁶³⁴

As Hogan argues, the Australian hierarchy was ambivalent about promoting social justice because of the peculiar circumstances arising from the Split and tensions between the bishops themselves;

One consequence of the Labor split and the formation of the DLP was to divert the concern of Catholic community leaders from the long agenda of social justice to the single issue of anti-communism...For their part, after the public divisions of 1954-57, the Australian bishops withdrew from the promotion of social justice...the bishops as a body [however] were unable to agree on anything significant in the social justice area other than the dangers of communism, and they reverted to platitudes and theological jargon.⁶³⁵

Women religious and the option for the poor

We live in a stratified society where certain economic, political, cultural and religious structures maintain and promote the dominance of the rich and the powerful over the mass of ordinary people and peoples. These structures operate

⁶³⁴ John Molony, *By Wendouree*, Connorcourt, Ballan 2010, p 260. For a contemporary analysis of the debates relating to social justice and the church, see Bruce Duncan, 'A schizophrenic process in the church? The conservative retreat from the social dimension of the gospel.' *Compass*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Summer 2003. For the conservative side of the argument, see Michael Gilchrist, *Australia's Catholics Today: Lost!*, Freedom Publishing, North Melbourne, 2006 and 'New class, new church', *Quadrant*, September 1986.

⁶³⁵ Hogan, *Australian Catholics*, pp77-8. See also, Val Noone, *Disturbing the War: Melbourne Catholics and Vietnam*, Spectrum Publications, Richmond, 1993. Noone argues, "There is some evidence that concern to preserve the newly granted state aid to Catholic schools was a factor in official Catholic support, overt or tacit, for the Vietnam War while Bishop Fox and Archbishop Knox were in charge. Denis Kenny, a Marist who in 1967 became the first Melbourne Catholic priest to achieve any prominence as an opponent of the Vietnam War, has written: 'When my superiors began to lean on me about my involvement they were quite explicit that the Australian bishops, who had leant on them, did not want to upset government for fear of losing state aid to Catholic schools.' Quoted from a letter sent to Val Noone by Denis Kenny, 7 September, 1987, p129, *Disturbing the War*.

through agencies and institutions that are staffed mainly by middle class people – those who provide the professional and commercial services of society...Some of the services provided by the churches are an integral part of the institutions of society – for instance of the educational or medical system of this country. Those who are working in, or responsible for, church services of this kind are asking themselves whether their work, however good it may be in itself, is an adequate embodiment of the church's commitment to justice in society.⁶³⁶

The Vatican Council demanded of all religious a rethinking of their priorities in the light of the demands for social justice as spelt out most forcefully in *Gaudium et spes*, and for greater inclusion of the laity in all aspects of apostolic work, while the “signs of the times” clearly spelt out the need to take seriously the call for political and economic self-determination on behalf of the marginalised in society. This new social justice agenda was a far cry from the 1950s and 60s when state aid for denominational schools, anti-communism and anti-permissiveness constituted the public face of Catholic advocacy most obvious to those seeking leadership from the Church, including many of those active in lay organizations.

The late 1960s also marked the beginning of a shift from laying the blame for discontent amongst marginalised groups at the feet of the communists, “outside agitators” and/or feminists; the 1970s and 80s saw a burgeoning of movements whose policies centred on the rights of disadvantaged people, policies which were taken up by governments formed from both sides of politics.⁶³⁷ These movements could not help but affect the Church and the women religious. The care of children at risk is perhaps the most dramatic example. Large institutions housing children who, in many instances, were forcibly removed from families were universally seen as totally inappropriate, and were progressively closed down to be replaced by more appropriate family support services. Debates began to centre on the rights and the human dignity of people suffering disadvantage, including their right to be involved in decisions which affected their care. Advocacy groups began to include clients themselves – aged persons, people with disabilities, children at risk, prisoners,

⁶³⁶ Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching*, Gill and McMillan, Dublin, 1985, p3.

⁶³⁷ See for example, Cora Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds), *Women, Social Welfare and the State*; Dorothy Broom (ed), *Unfinished Business: Social Justice for Women in Australia*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984; Judy Mackinolty and Heather Radi (eds), *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian Women and the Law, 1788-1979*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney 1979.

consumer advocates, veterans and single mothers – all insisted upon their right to define their own needs and to advocate on their own behalf for adequate resources necessary to live dignified and independent lives.

Second-hand clothes, food vouchers, housing of people in large institutions were no longer seen as solutions to poverty and disadvantage. Similarly, Western style “development” and missionary activity in third world or Indigenous communities came under intense scrutiny, again based on the premise that piece-meal alleviation of distress was not the long term solution to structural inequality. ‘Poverty’ and ‘the poor’ were being redefined in the broader community at the same time that women religious were themselves grappling with the meaning of what their own vow of poverty meant, and how they could respond to the needs of the poor in ways radically different from those which had shaped their work since their arrival in Australia in the nineteenth century.

The Vow of Poverty

In relation to the vow of poverty, American theologian, Sandra Schneiders writes:

Contemporary reflection on and practice of poverty is being deeply affected primarily by two factors. First, there is the psychological fact that total dependence upon superiors for one’s material well-being is experienced by many religious as trivial in itself, unrelated to evangelical poverty and conducive to immaturity and irresponsibility. The second factor is the increasing awareness on the part of many religious of the extent and severity of real destitution in the world and a consequent sense of inauthenticity in claiming to practice poverty while enjoying a disproportionate share of the world’s goods and virtual freedom from material insecurity... the implications of such an understanding of poverty reach from voluntary simplification of personal and communal lifestyles to individual and corporate participation in the politics of social justice.⁶³⁸

Schneiders provides an historical and theological overview of the monumental challenge facing all women religious after Vatican II. One of her central arguments is that it was not so much the explicit teachings of the Council in relation to renewal of religious life (in particular, *Perfectae Caritas*) that guided the women religious in the quest for renewal and adaptation. Her argument is that the ‘foundation-shaking impact’ was felt more because of

⁶³⁸ Sandra Schneiders, *New Wine-skins: Re-imagining Religious Life Today*, Paulist Press, New York, 1986, p91.

the study and understanding of *Lumen Gentium*, particularly Chapter 5, “The call of the whole Church to holiness”, through which the Church affirmed that “one and the same holiness is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God”, and *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World), which reversed the adversarial stance of the Church in relation to the world. In summary, she defines religious poverty thus:

Religious poverty is an evangelically inspired and structured relationship to material creation which involves owning well, using well, and suffering well for the purpose of transforming human existence, our own included. Its goal is a community in which all have the material supports necessary for truly human living whose fullest realization is that total openness to God which makes salvation possible and real.⁶³⁹

Many women who entered religious institutes in Ballarat in the 1940s and 1950s were no strangers to economic hardships suffered in the Great Depression and the Second World War. War-time rationing and shortage of goods continued until 1949 in Australia and applied to all families, regardless of social status. Frugality was not uncommon, even amongst the better off in the community; women religious were not the only people who lived simple lifestyles. Poverty, relative or real, was not uncommon amongst the working class, nor amongst many of the farming families in the Ballarat diocese whose daughters joined convents and/or attended their schools. This is not to underplay class differences endemic to the times, not least in Ballarat. There are many examples of young women entering religious life whose families weathered economic hardship better than others. Nonetheless, a vow of poverty which removed all private possessions and relied on “permissions” for essential items presumably allowed most sisters to accept poverty as a relatively simple and easily understood concept underpinning religious life prior to Vatican II.⁶⁴⁰

Few would doubt that women religious have led lives of personal poverty, despite outward appearances of some institutes whose convents, schools and clientele spoke of material

⁶³⁹ Sandra Schneiders, *New Wine-skins*, p190.

⁶⁴⁰ Although the nature of financial dependence obviously differed between sisters and secular women, it is worth noting that few secular women had their own earnings, and many were totally dependent on their husbands (or fathers) for any money beyond housekeeping “allowances”. Asking “permission” for spending money was certainly not confined to women religious and was not an uncommon experience for secular women well into the 1970s. See for example, Meredith Edwards, ‘The distribution of income within households’, in Dorothy Broom (ed), *Unfinished Business*.

wealth, or at least, middle class affluence. Mr Charles Barnes as the independent financial advisor to the Loretos in 1974, stated,

I am as sure as I can be that no economies can be effected in the nuns' manner of living. It would appear that in the limited field of which I have knowledge the Sisters carry an over heavy load, and relief could be given when Sisters are involved in accounting work as well as their important duties. I have been impressed by the fact that the living quarters for the Sisters have been the last part of our houses to be updated. It seems that it is the general rule to practise even minor economies and some major maintenance has been postponed, in the interests of economy.⁶⁴¹

Evidence from the Loreto archives has been uncovered by Mary Ryllis Clark in her book on the Australian Province of the Loretos about the appalling living conditions of many of their sisters, in the magnificent grounds of Mandeville Hall in Toorak.⁶⁴² An informal conversation with a Loreto sister elicited the information that had it not been for one of Ballarat's wealthier Catholic families during the 1930s Great Depression, sisters at Dawson Street would often have gone hungry. The same level of personal poverty affected the Sisters of Mercy who also relied on the generosity of parishioners for basic necessities such as food. All convents maintained kitchen gardens and poultry to supplement their daily meals, as did many families in Ballarat. Personal and communal poverty would have been part of the experience of many of the sisters even had they not entered convents, as it was for many secular women at the time.

A reinterpretation of the vow of poverty after Vatican II therefore constituted a re-evaluation, not only of personal lifestyles, but more importantly, an examination of the whole concept of poverty as it applied to religious life. Mother Antoinette ibvm, herself no stranger to wealth through her family connections, raised the question of whether women religious could ever call themselves truly poor given their access to education and status within the church and community.

⁶⁴¹ Loreto Province Archives, Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto education*, Report on data survey (IBVM schools), 1973-1974.

⁶⁴² Mary Ryllis Clark, *Loreto in Australia*, UNSW Press, 2009.

When we turn to the study of our vows, we note that poverty seems the most controversial today. Some question whether we should call ourselves poor or own up to a vow of poverty at all, on the grounds that in comparison with those people who are generally designated by these expressions we are, we will be and even have been, ‘well off’. The heart of poverty, they point out, is social impotency, whereas our education, our marketable skills, our range of friends, contacts etc, immediately preclude the possibility of genuine poverty, no matter what our life style.⁶⁴³

Religious across the ages may have chosen “poverty” as an aid to their spiritual quest, but as Schneider asserts,

No one with an education, no one who has ever heard a concert, seen a ballet, visited a museum, or enjoyed any of the social, cultural, aesthetic, recreational, travel, or familial opportunities that virtually every religious has enjoyed can ever be poor in the literal sense of the word. Our inner resources, which cannot be renounced, are a wealth of remarkable proportions that marks us off from the truly poor.⁶⁴⁴

At the heart of the debate about the vow of poverty after Vatican II was the need to find new ways of relating to, and if possible, working *with* (rather than *for*) the poor, and making the shift from the traditional notion of ‘charity’ to one of seeking genuine justice, often through confronting structural economic and political inequality.

An examination of the documents produced by the women religious after Vatican II in relation to this vexed issue reveals a number of features. First, there is obvious soul searching which underpinned all the discussions. For example, documentation of this First National Assembly of the Sisters of Mercy, Australia, held in Melbourne in 1977 reports back on a workshop entitled “Mercy and Justice in Action”:

We came to our group with different levels of understanding and awareness. For some of us the issues of injustice and oppression in society and our contribution to these were far removed from our everyday experience and awareness. For some,

⁶⁴³ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, Item 12.

⁶⁴⁴ Sandra Schneiders, *New Wine-skins*, p179.

they were very real experiences in a particular area of apostolic work. A few were aware of them on a broader scale and aware also of their responsibility, and ours, for action... There was a confusion about what working for justice really meant... we could acknowledge our non-involvement in urgent issues of social justice, that we contribute to injustice within Australia and the Third World through a lack of awareness, or indifference... it was clear that we should be able to take a stand in the public arena [of our own locality] either ourselves or supporting others... [some of the Sisters]... see our present comfort, prestige, status as preventing us from really throwing our care on God, and preventing us suffering the indignity, discrimination, victimization that cries to heaven for justice. They see that because as a congregation we are no longer poor, we do not hear the cry for justice, nor do we even know what injustices to right.⁶⁴⁵

The proposal that arose from this workshop reads:

“We the Sisters of Mercy of Australia

- Acknowledge our non-involvement in urgent issues of Social Justice
- Acknowledge that we contribute to injustice within Australia and the Third World through lack of awareness or through indifference
- Acknowledge that within our own institutions of Mercy we have failed to come to grips with questions of justice.

Aware of the power of the Gospel we follow and the creative energies of our Sisters, we pledge ourselves to remedy this situation by first of all awakening our own consciences and changing our attitudes.”⁶⁴⁶

One cannot but be struck by the honesty and by what appears to be their inordinately harsh judgment of themselves as a community and as individuals.

In relation to the Loretos, an extensive survey conducted in 1971 included, amongst other items, a request for all sisters to comment on the level of involvement of the institute on a range of social issues. Numbers of respondents varied slightly in relation to each question, but the average response was from 150 women. The results indicated their belief that the

⁶⁴⁵ *Mercy and Justice: First National Assembly of the Sisters of Mercy, Australia. Proceedings of Conference, Melbourne, 1977.*

⁶⁴⁶ *Mercy and Justice*, p41.

institute had a low level of involvement in matters outside the affairs of their schools. For example, civic matters (91 women answered ‘low level of involvement), diocesan problems (84), problems of the universal church (69), national problems (72) and world problems (69). Those who gave no answer ranged from 39 to 41 individuals, an indication that the institute as a whole was not confident in its understanding of these broader issues, six years after Vatican II.⁶⁴⁷

Eight years after this survey, a critical judgment of the institute appears in a paper presented by Sister Elizabeth (Libby) Rogerson ibvm, for the Provincial Chapter in 1980. Prepared with the assistance of other sisters and two lay women, the paper raises the question: “Given the mandate of the 1974 Chapter to work towards, ‘building a more just and humane society with special focus on the family’”, how effective have we been in meeting the challenge?’⁶⁴⁸ She gives an impressive list of individual sisters whose apostolates extended beyond the schools, but after this the ‘self-congratulation’ ends. One of the contributors to the paper is quoted as saying:

How alert are we as a Province? Not much at all. We come from behind scratch (because of wealthy schools and our own upper middle class backgrounds). In so far as grappling with the real issues means being critical of our present social scene -- not at all for most people. On the issue of women and justice – minimal awareness. Justice in the Church – non-existent awareness.

Libby then argues that:

Very little distinction is made between justice and charity...How many communities, for example, have ever discussed the accepted appearance of *Newsweekly* on their community room tables? Why is there no evidence of concern for the unemployed...One could safely make the assumption that many in the Province are still dominated by the twin bogies: fear of communism – hence *Newsweekly* and the enthusiastic support for Vietnamese refugees – and the fear of appearing “political”. The institute has a long road to travel before it can echo the Jesuit General Congregation: “In a world where the power of economic, social and

⁶⁴⁷ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Provincial Chapters*, Item 8, Provincial Chapter 1971, Apostolic Commissions.

⁶⁴⁸ Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*. Item 20, Proposals and Submissions, Provincial Chapter, 1980.

political structures is appreciated and the mechanisms that govern them understood, to serve according to the Gospel, is to change the structures.”⁶⁴⁹

The authors of the paper then listed for general discussion, the following points (amongst others)

- We have to grapple with the fact that the personal backgrounds of most of us, the studies we make and the circles in which we move, often insulate us from poverty and even the simple life and its day to day concerns.
- As religious committed to a vow of poverty we have little experience of poverty.
- Injustice is integral to many of the structures we take for granted – our economic system, judiciary, social welfare – as Christians, our response needs to be in terms of political action.
- There is a dearth of informed, aware and articulate Christians ready to speak out on issues of injustice and oppression. As the Church’s professional educators we need to give greater importance to the formation of our staff and students.⁶⁵⁰

Of central importance to both Loretos and the Sisters of Mercy whose corporate apostolate still remained education at the time of writing this report (1980) was this confronting statement:

Our identification, particularly in regard to secondary education with the rich, the educated and the middle class should be openly and honestly discussed. There is a genuine need to ask as widely as possible: Should our involvement in education be so heavily weighted in favour of the wealthy middle class?⁶⁵¹

Even though the Ballarat East Mercies were not as strongly identified with the wealthy, nonetheless, they were also grappling with how to make the most effective use of their resources, not just in the light of diminishing numbers, but also in the light of adopting ‘the option for the poor’. For both institutes, these questions led directly to major restructuring of their educational apostolates in Ballarat and throughout the diocese.

⁶⁴⁹ Series 182, Item 20 p3. *Newsweekly* was the paper produced by the National Civic Council, expressing the views of its editor, Bob Santamaria.

⁶⁵⁰ Series 182, Item 20, p5.

⁶⁵¹ Series 182, Item 20, p5. Libby Rogersen’s paper at the 1980 Provincial Council was written in collaboration with Sisters Therese Lechte, Roberta Hakendorf and Christine Burke, plus Ms Wendy Poussard (past pupil, employed by the Asian Bureau) and Therese Woolfe, from the National Missions Office.

The second feature of the documentation of the debates is the rapidity with which many of the challenges were confronted by the women. Up until the mid-sixties, these women were asking permission for basic daily needs, were forced by their rules to minimise all contact with seculars, living lives underpinned by unquestioning obedience and cut off from the daily news of the world. Yet barely ten years later they were engaged in often painful debates within their own communities about the very foundations of religious life. All would have well understood notions of charity, some would have had the opportunity or time to follow the secular debates surrounding social justice. Nonetheless, through their renewal Chapters and other processes to determine the future of their apostolates, they were thrown ‘in the deep end’ of debates about social justice that marked paradigm shifts in the policies and operations of both government and non-government agencies throughout the community. Had they had a better of understanding of how difficult the issues were for those in social movements in secular society, they may not have been so harsh in their judgments of themselves.

In the process of change, women religious did receive support and advice from priests and other trusted advisors, and did take advantage of any opportunities to educate themselves about the issues. The Sisters of Mercy acknowledge the importance of the local Redemptorist priests as instructors and advisors, and also included Jesuit priests as respondents to their first national assembly in 1977.⁶⁵² At the Loreto’s Provincial Council in 1980, Fr Denis Dwyer delivered a lecture on *The Religious Order in the Local Church*, in which he raised the idea, articulated by Johannes B. Metz, that women religious must have “... both an innovatory function and function as ‘shock therapy’, offering new models for following Christ in a given social, economic and cultural context.”⁶⁵³ He quotes Metz further:

Furthermore, religious orders at the very least have a corrective role: the function of restoring the balance. They are a kind of shock therapy instituted by the Holy Spirit for the Church as a whole. Against the dangerous accommodations, and questionable compromises that the Church as a large-scale institution can always

⁶⁵² Priests who attended and commented on the conference included Frs Mark Raper and P. O’Sullivan, SJ.

⁶⁵³ Denis Dwyer, ‘The religious order in the local church’, Loreto Province Archives, *Provincial Chapter 1980*, Item 15, Appendices.

incline to, they press for the uncompromising nature of the Gospel and of the imitation of Christ. In this sense they are the institutionalized form of dangerous memory within the Church. [His emphasis].⁶⁵⁴

How well did they respond to the option for the poor? In what ways did they respond to the call to support social justice within the local church and in the broader community? Records show that both institutes were placing a strong emphasis on social justice issues within the curriculum in their schools by the 1980s. For example, the minutes of the Loreto Principals meeting held in December 1980 recorded that their schools acknowledged

..the importance of awakening students to the issue of social justice in their own local communities, encouraging students in the notion of practical service which involved some giving up of their own time, the need to encourage staff to integrate this aspect into the formal curriculum and thus provide an informed base for discussion and awareness among students.⁶⁵⁵

However painful the debates, examples given in Chapter 9 testify that social justice was central to both individual and corporate apostolic works by 1980.

Feminism and women religious

*To listen to a woman who can bring the gospel to life in a small group, but who is not allowed to preach in the church, and then to sit beside her through an irrelevant homily, is frustrating to say the least.*⁶⁵⁶

Two key questions arise in relation to feminism and women religious: to what extent can they be described as feminists; to what degree did the changes in their professional work, further education and apostolic priorities after Vatican II reflect the experience of women in the broader women's movement during the late 1960s and 1970s? The answer to the

⁶⁵⁴ Denis Dwyer, 'The religious order in the local church', quoting Metz, 'The Future Ex Memoria Passionis,' in Ewart H. Cousins (ed) *Hope and the Future of Man*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972.

⁶⁵⁵ Loreto Province Archives, Series 156, *Records of CAEB*, Item 10, Secondary Principals 1980-1988. The point should be made that similar debates were occurring in government and other non-Catholic schools during this period; the inclusion of social justice rhetoric was not the sole province of Catholic schools.

⁶⁵⁶ Christine Burke, *Freedom, Justice and Sincerity: Reflections on the Life and Spirituality of Mary Ward*, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2009, p114.

first question presents significant problems in terms of definition and in attempting to apply later categories to earlier periods. Some clarity is found through the work of Sandra M. Schneiders who provides a useful analysis of the different strands of feminism. She outlines the major stages of women's struggles for recognition, dating back to the women's emancipation movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when suffragette advocates fought for women's right to vote, through to the women's liberation movement which spread across the western world from the late 1960s.⁶⁵⁷ She then distinguishes between the various strands of the second wave of the women's movement, ranging from liberal feminists who sought women's equality within the prevailing socio-political system, to radical feminists whose critique of patriarchy as the source of women's oppression led them to argue that only a complete restructuring of the political and economic system would ensure women's complete liberation.

Applying her analysis to the Catholic Church, she concludes that:

As Catholic women's consciousness was raised about their experience in the church, they began to realize that their exclusion, marginalization, and oppression were not incidental or accidental but structural and systemic. They identified the church as a deeply patriarchal structure, owned and operated by men for their own benefit, and firmly committed to the continued domination of women Catholics by men in general and male clerics in particular.⁶⁵⁸

No doubt this radical critique resonated with many Catholic women who left the Church during the turbulent 1970s, but for the many who stayed, including women religious, it made "...sense for those who can endure the pain to remain and to struggle until the church becomes the 'discipleship of equals' which Jesus initiated".⁶⁵⁹ It was within the liberal strand of feminism that women religious can more comfortably be described as "feminists". This is not to negate the analysis of patriarchy within the institutional church which many came to identify, but the fact that so many have willingly chosen to stay and work within the church for reform, places them within the liberal tradition shared with secular feminists who themselves chose to stay within equally patriarchal organizations

⁶⁵⁷ Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond Patching: Faith and Feminism in the Catholic Church*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, N.J., 1991, chapter 1, 'Feminism: Women's fad or humanity's future?' For one analysis of Schneider's theories relating to feminism, see Martin Kelly, M.S.C., 'Feminism as a liberating theology', *Compass*, Vol. 32, Autumn, 1998.

⁶⁵⁸ Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*, pp.33-34.

⁶⁵⁹ Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*, p.34.

such as the Labor movement in the hope of bringing about gradual change in the status of women.⁶⁶⁰

Parallels with the secular women's movement

Denying women's ordination and their gifts as theologians, liturgists and Biblical scholars, and the failure to use inclusive language, represent an exclusion from full participation in the Church which stands in direct contrast to improvements in other areas of women's lives, gained as a result of protracted struggles of second-wave feminists. Young women emerging from Catholic schools, trained by independent women, were encouraged to aspire to meaningful careers in all aspects of society; inclusive language within the public service and all government documents was enshrined in legislation, and yet the Church held on to sexist language despite the deep hurt and anger it caused many of its adherents.⁶⁶¹

The gains made by women in secular society both influenced and shaped a new generation of Catholic women, including women religious, many of whom began to identify with issues prominent in the public debates around the rights of all people, regardless of gender, class, race or sexual preference, but with the particular emphasis on the barriers facing women aspiring to full participation in public life. The message was understood, even though the means of delivering it might have caused disquiet, particularly in the early days of the movement.⁶⁶² But the irreversible nature and rapidity of the changes constituted a

⁶⁶⁰ For analysis and discussion of Catholic lay feminists, see for example, Edmund Campion, *A Place in the City*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1994, pp.54-141; Sally Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism: Catholic Women's Struggles for Self-Expression*, Studies in the Christian Movement, Manly, 1985. See also, Sophie McGrath rsm, 'Annie Golding, feminist and Catholic, 1904', *Woman-Church*, No.13, Spring, 1993.

⁶⁶¹ This was most profoundly demonstrated in the responses to the *Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia: Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 1999. Amongst women theologians who have led the argument for inclusive language are Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, Crossroad, New York, 1992 and Sandra Schneiders, *Women and the Word*, Paulist Press, New York, 1986. Male commentators include Paul Collins, *No Set Agenda: Australia's Catholic Church Faces an Uncertain Future*, David Lovell Publishing, Melbourne, 1992, Chapter 3, 'Ministries'; Collins comments: "Given the sexist attitude and language manifested by so much Catholic worship in Australia, women in particular require a special commitment to keep going." p77. See also Thomas P. Rausch, *Catholicism at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1996, pp213-219; Denis M. Doyle, *The Church Emerging from Vatican 11: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism*, Twenty Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 2002, Chapters 26 and 27, and Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, SPCK, London, 1972.

⁶⁶² Christine Burke argues that "I know that many fear feminism as strident, but this fear can trap us on the surface, so we fail to recognize the ways this movement carries the signs of the Spirit moving in the world. What stridency there is, is accentuated by the media and other institutions which have much to gain by keeping women as consumers rather than shapers of policy...Often stridency [amongst radical feminists] is born out of pain inflicted in dysfunctional families, in relationships that control, use or abuse, and in cultures that presume that women are less valuable and less important than men. This pain cannot be dismissed, but must be heard and responded to." Christine Burke, 'One woman's view of the Beijing forum', *WATAC Victoria*, Vol. 3, No 2, May-July, 1996.

revolution unlike any other in the twentieth century, affecting all women, regardless of whether they were actually involved in the struggle to bring about change.

In seeking to identify parallels in the re-shaping of women's lives, the most striking feature is the timing during which both religious and secular women undertook the process. Whilst acknowledging that the 1950s sowed the seeds of re-formation, for both sets of women the turbulence began in the mid to late 60s and only began to settle by the early 1980s. For women religious the catalyst was Vatican II as it was for many Catholic lay women, while the Pope's statement condemning artificial contraception, *Humanae Vitae*, represented the first serious test of their acceptance of papal authority.⁶⁶³

For women religious, their Renewal Chapters between 1968 and 1980 provided structures within which the changes were made. For secular women, the structures which they created ranged from formal organizations such as the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) to the myriad of organizations which grew from single issue advocacy groups and women's service providers, often arising from the efforts of women associated with the more radical strands of women's liberation. Formal leadership within an accepted hierarchy provided a stability and continuity with pre-Vatican convent life, but structured leadership was a strategy strongly resisted amongst second wave secular feminists, who adopted the model of collective decision making and a rejection of "leaders".

Whilst both groups relied heavily on research, the production of position papers and their endless discussion, the other major difference, beside that of formal leadership, was the strategy of prayerful discernment, which underpinned the decisions of women religious. While both groups struggled to reach consensus, few in the women's movement could ever point to introspective "discernment" as a factor in their decision making, as anyone who ever lived through the organised chaos of tumultuous collective meetings would readily concede.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Many religious and secular women were influenced by a combination of social forces relating to the anti-war, anti-colonialism and anti-racist movements, growing concern with environmental issues and the model of women's liberation being reported out of the United States and Europe. On this point, for example, see Veronica Brady, 'We are such stuff', in K. Nelson and D. Nelson (eds), *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids: Journeys from Catholic Childhoods*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986.

⁶⁶⁴ For the definitive summary of the debate about fragmentation and the sometimes chaotic debates about structures (and the lack of them) in the women's movement, see Joreen, 'The tyranny of structurelessness' in Jane Jaquette, *Women in Politics*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1974. Such was the heat around this debate, that the author, Jo Freeman ('Joreen') chose to remain anonymous at the time of its publication.

The critical factor which enabled both religious and secular women to bring about transformation during the 1970s was their education. Women who led the second wave of feminism in Australia were the beneficiaries of an education system transformed after the Second World War, and particularly, by the removal of fees from universities brought in by the Whitlam Labor government (1972-75). During her research on the history of the Women's Electoral Lobby, Australian social scientist, Marian Sawer found that:

Of the WEL members who joined in 1972-75, just over half had at least a bachelor degree; this proportion rose to around three quarters in later years with the removal of tertiary fees. Of those in paid employment, the most common profession was teaching. The contrast with the broader population was very marked, with the 1971 census showing only one percent of women having a university degree.⁶⁶⁵

The parallels with women religious are obvious: sisters belonged to communities which had a long tradition of education, and, following Vatican II had its unimpeachable authority to build on that tradition by undertaking higher studies through the pursuit of both accredited and more informal courses in secular and religious studies. This movement into further education had two sources – the need for upgrading qualifications to fit new educational requirements and/or changes in professional careers, and the encouragement and opportunities that came from the Vatican II reforms, including the fact that women were now more readily able to undertake accredited courses in theology.

Women religious who undertook graduate and post-graduate studies joined the growing ranks of a 'new breed' of Australian Catholic scholars. Overwhelmingly female in numbers, these emerging social commentators were informed by new sociological and psychological perspectives about the role of women in the church and society, able to draw upon outstanding international scholars, particularly amongst women religious in the United States, and upon the insights of women from other Christian denominations in Australia.⁶⁶⁶ Highly qualified women religious, equipped with doctorates in the fields of

⁶⁶⁵ Marian Sawer, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2008, p.19.

⁶⁶⁶ Women and men in the major Christian denominations became increasingly vocal in the 1980s about the status of women in their congregations. See for example, Muriel Porter, *Women in the Church: The Great Ordination Debate in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1989; Margaret Ann Franklin, 'Institutional sexism and the Anglican Church', and Marie

theology, biblical studies and liturgy, entered universities as lecturers and have made a significant contribution to academic research and university life.⁶⁶⁷

A further parallel that emerges from this period is the unremitting work required by both sets of women seeking to achieve personal, professional and social change. Already stretched and overworked in terms of their daily lives as either religious sisters or wives and mothers, feminists took upon themselves other layers of commitment – as part-time students, as agents of change within their respective communities, as meeting goers, as mentors to younger women and as contributors to policy development. Very few from either group were freed up from their primary responsibilities to enable them to study full-time; even rarer were women free to concentrate full time on the quest for social change or change within the church.⁶⁶⁸ The archives of both the convents and secular women's organizations are packed with records of unrelenting work, balanced by the excitement and enthusiasm that often accompanied it, reflected in this comment by former politician, Dr Carmen Lawrence in her introduction to the history of WEL:

[But] perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of WEL was the enormous amount of energy and enthusiasm people threw into pressing for change. And the seriousness. And the impatience. And the intelligence. And the affection. And the sheer excitement of it all.⁶⁶⁹

Their work was carried out in the era before photocopiers and faxes, when long distant telephone calls were extremely expensive; as Marian Sawer comments, "Changing the

Tulip, 'Affirmative Action in the Uniting Church', both in Margaret Ann Franklin (ed), *The Force of the Feminine: Women, Men and the Church*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986; Rt. Rev. Bishop John. S Spong, 'Women: Less than free in Christ's Church' in Marie Louise Uhr (ed), *Changing Women, Changing Church*, Millenium Books, Newtown, 1992, and *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1999.

⁶⁶⁷ On this issue, see Elaine Wainwright rsm, 'Weaving a strong web: Feminist theo/alogising in an Australian context', in Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and M. Shawm Copeland (eds), *Concilium: Feminist Theology in Different Contexts*, SCM Press, London 1996; Elaine Wainwright rsm, 'In fear and great joy: Forty years of feminist Biblical scholarship', *Compass*, Vol. 39, Autumn 2005.

⁶⁶⁸ In contrast to the image portrayed in the media of "radical feminists" as man-hating separatists intent on destroying families, Marian Sawer's research showed that "Around three quarters of the first cohort of WEL members were married and had children when they joined. In fact, 38% had children under school age. Early surveys of membership, such as the one conducted in Western Australia in 1974, confirm the WEL history's finding that the statistically average member at that period was aged between 26 and 35, was married and had between one and three children." *Making Women Count*, pp.20-23. See also, Christine Burke, *Freedom, Justice and Sincerity*, "Despite efforts of media and some church groups to use the term in conjunction with 'radical', so that it always sounds uncompromising or destructive, many tenets held by feminists, both women and men, have good gospel precedents." P.109.

⁶⁶⁹ Carmen Lawrence, Forward, Marian Sawer, *Making Women Count*, p.xvi.

world started with learning how to make stencils and use the Gestetner.”⁶⁷⁰ The admonition to young novices in the early twentieth century, “let us be up and doing”, proved to be somewhat of an understatement in the light of work done in the process of change by women in and outside of convents.

For both groups of women, the appearance of groundbreaking books and other publications, constituted much of their informal or self-directed learning. For women involved in the church, 1968 saw the publication of Mary Daly’s critique of the institutional church.⁶⁷¹ This, according to Schneiders, began “...ecclesial consciousness-raising, ie in the realization by many Catholic women that they were excluded from significant dimensions of the Catholic experience”.⁶⁷² Five years earlier, the appearance of the Betty Friedan’s exposure of the “problem that has no name”, the deep malaise that undermined the happiness of American women, is widely acknowledged as marking the beginning of feminist consciousness raising in the United States, spreading quickly to the rest of the Western world.⁶⁷³ Within the next eight to ten years, Australian women had access to the pioneering work of their own feminists scholars: Germaine Greer, Miriam Dixon, Anne Summers, Edna Ryan and Ann Conlon, and Beverley Kingston, all provided the basis from which a burgeoning industry of feminist writing and research emerged.⁶⁷⁴

There are also strong parallels with the ambivalence felt by both groups of women at being labelled “feminists”. This sprang in part from their unease at defining all men (fathers, husbands, brothers and sons), all priests, as the cause of oppression, which many would

⁶⁷⁰ Marian Sawer, *Making Women Count*, p25. One woman religious commented in an informal conversation that after years of copying, folding and sticking down envelopes, a saying developed that “the sisters who fold together, hold together”.

⁶⁷¹ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1968. Daly subsequently left the Church, her radical stand arguing that no amount of feminist theologising could alter the patriarchal institution of the Church; at the other end of the spectrum, the argument was mounted that women could not simultaneously be Christian and feminist. For this argument and a vehement criticism of women religious in the United States, particularly those who came to fill bureaucratic posts within the church, see Donna Steichen, *Ungodly Rage: the Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1992, and for a reply, see a review by Trish Hindmarsh, *Woman-Church*, 13, Spring, 1993, pp.50-51.

⁶⁷² Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*, p32.

⁶⁷³ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1963.

⁶⁷⁴ Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, Paladin, London, 1971; Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1976; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police: the Colonization of Women in Australia*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975; Edna Ryan and Ann Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1975; Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, (eds) *Uphill all the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1980. For analysis of these early works, see for example Kay Daniels, ‘Women’s History’ in Greame Osborne and W.F. Mandle, (eds) *New History: Studying Australia Today*, George Allen and Unwin, North Sydney, 1982, and Ann Curthoys, ‘Visions nightmares and dreams: Women’s history, 1975’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 106, 1996.

not have identified as part of their experience, as practising Catholics or as women in the secular world. Attacks by radical feminists on what were perceived as ‘family values’, and in particular, their advocacy of the right to abortion, to contraception and to the rights of homosexual women, constituted deep moral issues which lay at the heart of women’s commitment as Catholics. Many women, religious and lay, could point to men who were supportive, indeed sometimes essential to adding legitimacy, skills and access to power necessary to achieving the reforms women were pursuing. Cardinal Suenens, for example, suffered criticism and derision for suggesting that the absence of women at Vatican II was unacceptable; it was through his efforts that women (including women religious) were given limited access as observers to the later proceedings, albeit without the right to vote. The cardinal also wrote *The Nun in the Modern World*, which proved to be a groundbreaking book on the future life of women religious, providing legitimacy for the women pioneers in the 1950s and 60s whose own legitimacy was far from assured within the church hierarchy.⁶⁷⁵

At the highest level of decision making in the secular world, Senator Susan Ryan writes, The Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunities in Employment) Act was finally passed in 1986. This would never have happened without the personal involvement of Bob Hawke. I had been all too aware of business opposition to my proposals. My contacts here were minimal. The Prime Minister, whose standing in the business community was excellent, agreed to become involved...He was at the height of his huge popularity, and this was a determining factor in this historic Bill’s passing without too much fuss.⁶⁷⁶

Compounding the issue was the vehemence with which all forms of feminism were attacked by some Church authorities and groups which took it upon themselves to speak for traditional or ‘mainstream’ Catholics, particularly those who identified a range of social movements as fronts for the communist party.⁶⁷⁷ Sister Veronica Brady, ibvm wrote:

⁶⁷⁵ In the opinion of Sister Rosa MacGinley, pvbm, “I would say that many were influenced by Suenens’ *Nun in the Modern World*’, also by journal articles in for example, ‘Review for Religious’ which soon picked up on the issues raised in this book in particular.” Email to the researcher, 6 August, 2009.

⁶⁷⁶ Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves: Life in and out of Politics*, Harper Collins Publishers, Sydney, 1999, p.244.

⁶⁷⁷ Amongst the most vocal critics of feminists were groups associated with Bob Santamaria – particularly the National Civic Council (and later through the publication, *AD2000*), the ‘Women Who Want to be Women’, (and later, The Endeavour Foundation). On this point see for example, Wendy McCarthy, *Don’t Fence Me In*, Random House, Milson’s Point, 2000, pp.127-140.

[The church] has also been responsible for anonymous letters and phone calls to me and pressure on my superiors from people who label me “communist” and see me as “doing the work of the devil”. I find this painful. But it also offers an occasion to re-examine my motives and performances.⁶⁷⁸

The 1970s and 80s for both religious and secular women saw further growth in internationalism and links with like-minded woman across the world. In this respect, the women religious were initially at some advantage over secular women, given the nature of many of their institutes which provided them with a strong sense of their international presence in most countries in the developed and developing worlds. For secular women, the international nature of second-wave feminism drew them into world-wide networks, most importantly, into the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), which introduced countless numbers of women to the importance of UN Conventions as the basis upon which to build domestic legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination. For educated religious and secular women, particularly, but not exclusively, academics, attendance at international conferences became increasingly more common during the 70s and 80s.⁶⁷⁹

There are very obvious differences between religious and secular women as they sought out their “founders” and “fore-mothers”. For the former, revisiting their foundresses was mandated as part of renewal and adaptation after Vatican II, and their records of early local pioneering sisters were presumably much richer than those available to secular feminists, whose search was driven to a large degree by a new breed of feminist historians and sociologists, often involved in the emerging academic fields of women’s studies. Together with their students, they were to uncover the lives and the deeds of women who had gone before them as seekers of justice for women. Yet there are parallels. Both sets of women (re) discovered women who were role models of their times, by virtue of their commitment and determination, resistance to what they perceived as threats to their independence, and/or because, in their time, they were women whose voices demanded to be heard. Renewed appreciation of the women religious who founded the major institutes was

⁶⁷⁸ Veronica Brady, ‘We are such stuff’, pp.27-28.

⁶⁷⁹ In addition, by the 1980s and 90s, leading international feminists such as Marilyn Waring (NZ parliamentarian and author of *Counting for Nothing*), Marilyn French (author of *The Women’s Room*), Dale and Lyn Spender, Glenda Jackson, Beatrix Campbell and Australian-born Germaine Greer, visited Australia, enabling women to feel part of the international movement. Similarly, for women religious, visits to Australia by leading thinkers such as Sister Joan Chittister and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, added to the international dimension of their lives after Vatican II.

accompanied by an understanding that the vision of each for her institute could be translated into the needs of the twentieth century. Similar understandings were being made with the rediscovery of secular women who had been written out of history, often pioneers in the union and labour movements, in literature and art, in commerce and human rights movements.

The importance of role models for young women, whether they were sisters who taught them, or the saints they promoted (leaving aside Maria Goretti), is an aspect of feminism amongst women religious which enabled the stories of strong, independent Christian women to be brought back to life, including many of the “mothers” of the church – Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich amongst them. Re-discovering their lives, in particular, how they reconciled loyalty to the church with their vision of religious life for women, gave strength to post-Vatican II women:

Remembering the remarkable lives and very real struggles of our ancestors in faith expands our imaginations of what is possible in our day – and what will be required of us. Yet the same spirit who empowered our ancestors in faith provides the energy and courage for our retelling of the story of Jesus in our day.⁶⁸⁰

Another source of strength available to women religious envied by many secular feminists, was their life style of communal living, which resonated strongly with many isolated women struggling in the suburbs with little support, and for those in the environmental movement who saw communal living as a real alternative to growing consumerism and environmental degradation. In preparation for their 1980 Chapter, the Loretos asked an ex-student of Loreto, Mandeville Hall, Melbourne, to comment on a position paper relating to Social Justice. Her written comments are a valuable insight into how many Catholic women who identified as feminists thought at that time:

You live in community, which is what most people long to do. You discovered before the Women’s Liberation Movement the power of sisterhood and found long ago the necessity to build “alternative lifestyles”. Community is a radical value, a root value and today more than ever isolated urban people are searching for valid

⁶⁸⁰ Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Speaking with Authority: Catherine of Siena and the Voices of Women Today*, Paulist Press, New York, 2008, p.14.

and practical ways to live together for others. The need for community has never been so widely recognized, nor so earnestly pursued.

You live with power: you are powerful because you have traditions, institutions, people, a network of communication, a strong solidarity. All of these are resources which you could use for the liberation of people. I believe you have a commitment to this.

Another strength which I see in your life is the priority you give to prayer, quietness and reflection. This is a human need, a desperate need of many people who do not have the chance or the skill to pray, to reflect, or to listen.

I certainly do not think that it is easy for you to be prayerful, or powerful or to live out those ideals of poverty and community. But your attempt to do so is important to me, important to people. I ask that you recognize all the power you have, and search for ways to share it.⁶⁸¹

Whether or not women religious felt this “power” as a gift they could offer to all women struggling with human rights issues would be an interesting subject for further research, but those women religious who defined themselves as feminists, or who at least, felt comfortable with many of its aims, could proudly point to their foundresses and the sisters who went before them as strong, independent women, many of whom consistently resisted what they perceived as the misuse of power. Defining women of a different age by what is essentially a twentieth-century definition – “feminism” – is fraught with linguistic and historical problems. But when second-wave feminists sought examples of groups of women to whom they could attribute the “feminist” label, some at least recognized women religious as amongst them. Many individual feminists have attributed their strength and determination to the nuns who taught them. Germaine Greer is one example:

⁶⁸¹ Wendy Poussard, Letter dated 22 January, 1980 to Sister Libby Rogerson, commenting on the position paper, ‘Social Concern: Report to the Provincial Chapter, 1980’, Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, Item 20, Proposals and submissions, Provincial Chapter, 1980. Ms Poussard is a much respected leader in the field of international development, and was for many years Executive Director of the International Women’s Development Agency, a Melbourne based not-for-profit organisation.

Convent girls are inducted into life by a rare and eccentric breed of women who reject the servility of marriage with all the paraphernalia of middle class acquisitiveness. If it hadn't been for the nuns, I might well have gone to secretarial college, had streaks put in my hair and married a stockbroker.⁶⁸²

Susan Ryan acknowledges the Brigidine sisters who taught her when she writes with passion and conviction in her biography:

If convent girls did what the nuns told them – examined their consciences, tried to find the truth, stood up for themselves, strove for altruistic rather than individualistic motives – it is no wonder they took to the second wave of feminism like ducks to water. Effective school debaters, winners of eisteddfods in public speaking, straight shouldered in pursuit of truth and justice rather than what was 'comfortable' (that tedious mantra of our time), we were certainly not among those feminists who would approach the microphone at the big, rowdy women's conferences of the 1970s only to break down into tears or inarticulate stammering, claiming inability to speak because the microphone was a phallic symbol, or that language itself had been invented by men and therefore could not be used...those of us who had easily beaten Christian Brothers boys in debate and engaged in dangerous brazen argument with ferocious nuns looked at each other in amazement.⁶⁸³

Anne Summers, although highly critical of the Catholic Church and of many of the sisters who taught her, nonetheless acknowledges the crucial role one sister played in forcing her to abandon her "naughty girl act" when she said,

'Don't be a fool: You've got a brain. Use it. You do not have to accept the given. You have the ability to be different, to shape the world to your liking.' No one had ever suggested such a thing to me before, and I was reluctant to let her down...this

⁶⁸² Quoted in Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1988, p156. Campion also records the gratitude of Kathleen Fitzpatrick to the Presentation Sisters, and Katherine West to the Good Samaritan sisters for their love of music, literature and art.

⁶⁸³ Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, pp.37-38.

wonderful, smart woman gave me the first great gift of my intellectual life, a perspective.⁶⁸⁴

Feminist religious: Mere imitators of a secular trend?

This question was posed by Sister Christine Burke ibvm, in answer to which she wrote: “If one reads the best theological and scriptural work produced by Christian feminists, their priorities are clearly rooted in the gospel and a deep commitment to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶⁸⁵ In another context she argues that:

As Institute members we have an identity and an *esprit de corps* which can support the on-going effort to critique from within. However finding the words and the courage to name dysfunction without hostility requires on-going self-discipline. We need to articulate our love for the church, the base from which we question, even as we stand on the margins with others who struggle to remain within these pilgrim people... Mary [Ward] glimpsed the glory possible for the church if only it recognized and utilized women’s gifts. It seems important to hold her charism high as a way of showing this call to women comes not only from secular society, but from God.⁶⁸⁶

Sophie McGrath rsm defines feminism as follows: “I use the term ‘feminist’ as referring to one who is particularly concerned for the welfare of women, especially in advocating for rights and opportunities for them to use their God-given gifts to contribute to the social and political life of humanity *including of course the Church*.”⁶⁸⁷ (My emphasis). Veronica Brady argues that despite all the valid criticisms of the Church, feminists can draw upon its teachings in relation to the legitimate aspirations of women, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation and to the role models of women such as Mary Ward and Catherine McAuley. She sums up by arguing,

If much of our Australian culture involves a radical forgetting of the traditional values, the Church, despite everything, still keeps alive at least one of these

⁶⁸⁴ Anne Summers, *Ducks on the Pond: An Autobiography 1945-1976*, Penguin, Ringwood, 2000, p38.

⁶⁸⁵ Christine Burke, *Freedom, Justice and Sincerity*, p.111.

⁶⁸⁶ Christine Burke, ‘Glimpses of Glory – ‘defence and propagation of the faith’ in ways congruous to our time’, *Religious Life Review*, Jan/Feb., 2009, p.7.

⁶⁸⁷ Sophie McGrath, ‘Voices of women’, *Compass*, 39, Summer, 2005.

beacons, a sense of the transcendent and thus of the absolute value of each individual not for what she/he possesses or has achieved in material terms but for her/himself, as sense which thus gets beyond sexual stereotyping.⁶⁸⁸

In an early contribution to the debate on women and the Catholic Church, Veronica Brady acknowledges the deep hurt and anger of women in the church, and adds her own trenchant criticisms of its failure to speak out on a range of social justice issues, particularly those concerning Indigenous Australians.⁶⁸⁹ Nonetheless, her critique is firmly based on her understanding of her life and commitment as a woman religious, summing up in a way that is presumably common for all those women who continue to live within religious communities and those who remain committed lay adherents:

Why, then, stay in the Church? I suppose my answer lies with the answer Peter gave in John's Gospel when Jesus asked him a similar question: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe in you.' Warts and all, the Catholic Church is for me the place where I first heard and still hear the word of God and where I celebrate this word in which I believe... It also happens to be true, I believe, that God showed himself in Jesus and that his spirit lives on in the church, hidden more often than revealed there perhaps, yet speaking there to me and to our world.⁶⁹⁰

It is stating the obvious that those women who remained within the formal structures of the institutional church did so primarily because of their faith and commitment to its basic teachings, despite whatever misgivings they may have had as to its patriarchal nature. And it is as part of this faith that their feminism finds its roots, particularly in relation to social justice for all humanity. In this sense, women religious who identify as feminists cannot be described as "mere imitators of a secular trend", however much they may at a personal level have been influenced by the political and social analysis of their secular sisters. As

⁶⁸⁸ Veronica Brady, 'A quixotic approach: The women's movement and the Church in Australia' in Margaret Ann Franklin (ed), *The Force of the Feminine*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p.147. See also, Veronica Brady, *Caught in the Draught*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1994, 'The shape of stillness' pp.297-307.

⁶⁸⁹ Veronica Brady, 'We are such stuff'.

⁶⁹⁰ Veronica Brady, 'We are such stuff', p.31.

Christine Burke has commented, “The major difference between religious life and other vocations is that without belief in God, religious life makes no sense at all”⁶⁹¹.

A squandered resource? Women religious in the wake of Vatican II

*The practical expertise of those ministering in parishes, prisons and hospitals, the academic expertise of those in tertiary education, the organizational expertise of those who run complex networks of schools and hospitals, as well as the spiritual wisdom of the many hundreds of women spiritual directors raise a question. Will the official church recognize this new sign of the Spirit, blowing where it will, as a gift from God showing a new way? Alternatively, will these developments continue to be considered as some sort of pastoral and theological poly-filler, a makeshift attempt to hold up walls that are no longer creating the right space for community?*⁶⁹²

Perhaps the most striking parallel between secular and religious women has been the reluctance to take advantage of the talents of both sets of women, particularly in relation to their inclusion in decision-making. In this respect, secular women are ahead of their religious sisters whose acceptance as full participants in the life of the church has been much slower than even the glacial pace of women entering public life.

Along with the expertise of the large group of professional educators remaining in schools, in parish ministry and similar professional work, the theologians and liturgists who emerged after Vatican II were an invaluable resource for the church and significant contributors to the emergence of the study and importance of women’s spirituality. An assessment of the extent of their influence lies outside the parameters of this chapter, but the literature relating to the silencing or squandering of their talents resonates in any examination of the challenges facing the Church after Vatican II. Although the following comments relate to women religious in the United States, the parallel situation has been evident in Australia:

⁶⁹¹ Christine Burke, ‘Religious life: Its implications for today’, *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 79, No 1, January 2002, p.58.

⁶⁹² Christine Burke, *Freedom, Justice and Sincerity*, p.108.

It is sad to contemplate a lost moment of grace and possible transformation. John Paul II might have been the first pope to harvest the gifts of women for the Church. The critical mass was there – in 1978 when he was elected to Peter’s chair, women were entering the public sectors in unprecedented numbers, particularly in North America. In 1978, John Paul had access not only to the energies of increasing numbers of lay women prepared for leadership in the Church and society, but also to the extraordinary capabilities and human resources of religious women in community. In the wake of the reforms and socializations that the Second Vatican Council generated in religious orders, women in religious communities in the United States – by 1978 – had reconstituted their way of life, with remarkable developments in consciousness, lifestyle, and mission. They were being described as the largest single group of educated, articulate, bonded women the world had ever seen.⁶⁹³

The publications of Australian women religious strongly reflect the frustration of their international sisters. Christine Burke *ibvm* argues that: “Much in the official Church structures and cultures both deliberately and unconsciously sidelines the gifts of women”.⁶⁹⁴ The following provides a compelling summary of her views on the role of women in the church:

Our reflection on the gospel and our own experience as women, raise questions about church structures which exclude women’s experience and gifts from official ‘teaching, sanctifying and governing’ roles in the Catholic community. Many women have found the entrenched sexism of the church too much to struggle against, and have left. Many religious orders of women have placed a priority on the opportunity to study theology (a possibility not available to women in Australia before Vatican II), and with women from other walks of life and other Christian traditions bring new questions, rituals and insights to theology and ministry. The strengthening voices of women unmask many church practices as dysfunctional

⁶⁹³ Madonna Kolbenschlag, ‘John Paul II, US Women Religious and the Saturnian Complex’, quoted in Morag Fraser, ‘The Silenced Majority’ in Chris McGillion, (ed), *A Long Way From Rome: Why the Catholic Church is in Crisis*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003, p.78. See also, Sandra M. Schneiders, *Beyond Patching*; Camille Paul, *Equal or Different? Women, the Papacy and Social Justice*, John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, 1999; Joan Chittester, *Women, Ministry and the Church*, Paulist Press, Ramsey, NJ, 1983; Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1993.

⁶⁹⁴ Christine Burke, ‘Glimpses of glory’.

and patriarchal, and they search for ways of moving towards a more participative and inclusive approach.

Some in the hierarchical structure recognize the truth behind these criticisms, and yet find they too are trapped in a system resistant to change. A defensive wariness is the more usual response to church leaders with regard to articulate women, especially religious women.⁶⁹⁵

Veronica Lawson rsm, writes:

The story of women in the post-Vatican church is a story of one step forward and one step back. There is no denying the power of the data that emerged from the enquiry into the participation of women in the Australian Catholic Church... The constraints imposed by papal teaching on the place of women in the church can only function as a powerful deterrent to any substantive change.⁶⁹⁶

Women religious had been employed as an invaluable, indeed, irreplaceable resource in schools and hospitals before Vatican II in the absence of government funding. Their gradual withdrawal and replacement by lay people in the 1970s and 1980s saw their emergence as a new source of strength for the Church, yet one that was not fully utilised in the challenge to adapt to the Vatican II changes, with the exception of those women who moved into tertiary education.⁶⁹⁷

Conclusion

Changes achieved by 1980 were largely in place, irreversible and in many cases, enshrined in either legislation and/or government programs (in the case of secular women) or changed constitutions and rule books, in the case of women religious. While the women

⁶⁹⁵ Christine Burke, 'Religious life: Its implications for today', pp.61-62. In another context, Christine argued the need for "...utilising the wonderful pool of people doing theology from backgrounds that are concerned with other walks of life than narrowly church-centred ones, ensuring that their insights feed back into theological reflections and formulations". 'Common Good: The Church and the Australian conversation', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXX1, No 3, July 1994. See also Marie Farrell rsm, 'Women within a changing church', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXX, No 3, July 1993 who writes: "The breaking out from a nineteenth century and anti-feminist form of life has enabled religious women to discern where they are being called to use their talents in order to minister to Christ's people wherever there is a need."

⁶⁹⁶ Veronica Lawson, 'Vatican II in hope and memory: The power of Vatican II and the structures of power', *Compass*, Vol. 38, No 1, Autumn, 2004, 23.

⁶⁹⁷ As one woman religious in an informal "aside" mentioned, "We have done what we were asked to do". Many a participant in the women's movement would strongly relate to that sentiment, even though they may have felt much less certain of the source of the "asking".

religious embarked on their journey of change earlier than their secular counterparts, due to the imperatives of Vatican II, by the 1980s secular women had arguably achieved more in terms of forcing change on the institutions they had identified as barriers to women's full participation. The excitement and the sense that all things were possible had largely begun to dissipate by the early 1980s.⁶⁹⁸ Many of the hopes of Vatican II went unrealized while, for secular women, several of the early gains made, particularly under the Whitlam government, were under threat. Of greatest importance was the absence of the next generation of women to take the place of those, religious and lay, who had been formed in the 1950s and who led their respective struggles for recognition in the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless, while a new generation may be less visible in organizations associated with feminist struggles, their lives have been irreversibly changed by these second-wave feminists and those committed to social justice, amongst whom are women holding highest office in state and federal politics, unions and civil society. Their voices have a legitimacy largely denied to women religious within church decision making structures.

Understanding or respect between Christian and secular feminists has been difficult. For women religious the issue of abortion presents a fundamental moral dilemma; for secular feminists who may wish to defend their religious sisters, the issue of clerical abuse and what is perceived (rightly or wrongly) to be the silence of Catholic women is the Rubicon beyond which their understanding cannot stretch. The solution to mutual understanding for women religious may grow because "Our love of Jesus Christ provides a starting point, but understanding will not grow unless all seek the grace of reconciling love, which is always God's gift".⁶⁹⁹ For many secular women, and for those within the Church who fear the voices of strong women, the challenge to understand will only become clearer if those voices are allowed to be heard. In this sense, women religious of vision are indeed a "squandered resource" to all who are struggling to bring about social change in the interests, not only of women, but of all humanity.

⁶⁹⁸ On this point, see for example, Lavinia Byrne, *The Ordination of Women in the Roman Catholic Church*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1994, and Margaret Brennan, 'Enclosure: Institutionalising the invisibility of women in ecclesiastical communities', in Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza (ed), *Concilium: Women: Invisible in Church and Theology*, Stitching Concilium, Edinburgh, 1985.

⁶⁹⁹ Christine Burke, 'Reflections on Woman and Man', *Compass*, Vol. 34, No 1, Autumn, 2000, p.12.

Chapter 11: Conclusion: They did what they were asked to do

Above all let us plunge trustingly into this “now” of our history as an institute, and believe that God who has called each of us will fulfil His promise through each one’s personal vocation, her name of grace, which corresponds to the founding graces of Mary Ward.⁷⁰⁰

All we have to do is to surrender entirely our own will ...and give ourselves up generously to be directed and governed by Him who brought us into religious life.⁷⁰¹

Introduction

The world in 1980 was radically different to that of 1950. Russia had invaded Afghanistan, US hostages were still imprisoned in Tehran, Saddam Hussain had risen to power in Iraq and the Islamic revolution in Iran had installed the Ayotollah Khomeini as head of state; Islamic extremism began to replace the fear of communism as the dominant threat to world stability. Margaret Thatcher had become the first woman Prime Minister in the United Kingdom. In 1979, Pope John Paul I died to be succeeded by John Paul II, the first Polish Pope and one who would oversee what many perceived as the “roll back” of the Vatican II reforms. By the 1980s, the Church in Rome was becoming increasingly uneasy about the extent of the changes to religious life, particularly about the activities of religious women in the USA. John Paul II was also the first pontiff to visit a communist country when he returned to his native Poland, an important factor in what were to become the “Velvet revolutions” which would eventually culminate in the fall of communist states in Eastern Europe.

In our own region, Malcolm Fraser’s government was dealing with the arrival of over 20,000 Vietnamese refugees; relations with Indonesia became increasingly hostile over the status of East Timor following the deaths of five Australian journalists in Balibo in 1975. Australians were awakened to the terrible consequences of the “killing fields” in Cambodia where an estimated 1.7 million people had died at the hands of Pol Pot.

⁷⁰⁰ Sister Noni Mitchell ibvm, Opening of the Loreto Provincial Chapter, 1983.

⁷⁰¹ Catherine MacAuley

Australia experienced its first home grown terrorist attack with the bombing of the Hilton hotel in Melbourne. Bob Hawke entered the federal parliament as the Labor member for Wills, paving the way for the return of a federal Labor government in 1983.

Fr Tom Doyle succeeded Fr Frank Martin at the Melbourne Catholic Education Office in 1979, and was to consolidate many of the achievements of his predecessor, despite the constant undermining of his position by conservative forces within the laity and the clergy. Bipartisan support from all political parties for state aid was by now entrenched, allowing the employment of staff who, by now, were almost exclusively lay people, paid according to union rates with fledgling unions to protect their wages, portability of superannuation and other industrial conditions. If 1970 was seen by Cardinal Knox as the transition year or “holding period” for Catholic education as authorities anticipated state aid, 1980 became a year of consolidation of a new system of administration and planning. At the local level, when Bishop Mulkearns agreed to meet and be photographed with the then Labor Leader, Bill Hayden and John Mildren as the ALP candidate before the 1980 Federal election, union historian Colin Cleary was of the view that “This election was undoubtedly the end to the long Ballarat Catholic antagonism to Labor... A *Courier* photograph took half the front page. The bridges had been mended.”⁷⁰² Mr Frank Sheehan won the seat of Ballarat South in 1982, joining the first state Labor government in twenty-seven years under the leadership of the John Cain Junior.⁷⁰³

Ballarat between 1950 and 1980 can be studied as a microcosm, if not of all Australia, then certainly as a study of provincial cities which for years relied on either their own local industries and/or their proximity to wealthy farming regions. The changes which occurred between 1950 and 1980 resulted in a transformed economy, and in a significant shift away from the male conservative dominance of local and state politics, beginning an era when the new professional class involved in the service industries began to replace landowners and local elites in positions of authority. The shift from heavy industry to light manufacture, tourism and service industries over the three decades brought into play a new demographic which would provide educated and competent candidates for public service, including parliamentary candidates.

⁷⁰² Cleary, *Ballarat Labor: From Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age*, Colin Cleary, Epsom, 2007, p39. Mr. Mildren, a Catholic and a University lecturer, had been a member of the DLP in his earlier career.

⁷⁰³The following year John Mildren became Ballarat’s representative in the federal parliament under the leadership of Bob Hawke.

The culmination of change for women religious

During one of the innumerable informal conversations held with women religious in the course of writing this thesis, the following anecdote was recounted. A sister who had “held on” during all the changes to religious life experienced in the 1960s and 70s commented that if she had known how it would all turn out, she “would have married Bert”. Many a secular feminist could have replied that if they had known the consequences of marrying “Bert” at far too young an age in the 1950s and 60s, they may have made the reverse decision.

Leaving aside the humour contained in this observation, looking back over three decades of change for the women religious in Ballarat, a number of serious conclusions arise from the research undertaken in this thesis. The most obvious was the unrelenting work of the women. When the Sisters of Mercy relinquished their role at St Mary’s parish school in Robinvale in northern Victoria, the Chairman of the Board, Mr Phillip Englefield summed up their contribution over 50 years: “I find it hard to get my head around the fact that in 1959, we had the same number of students we have now and five nuns teaching. Now we have 25 staff.”⁷⁰⁴ This typifies the extent of the heavy workload carried by all members of the institutes. Lay sisters ensured the day-to-day running of convents; women in leadership positions faced a new world of administration, planning for uncertain futures, juggling their human and physical resources, supporting professional development and caring for the spiritual lives and health of their members. Well into the 1980s, women religious held the fort in parish and private schools while overseeing the hand over to lay teachers and boards of management. No assessment of their contribution to the community is complete without acknowledgement of the work loads borne by each member, and of the skills they acquired to live and work as professional women in the modern world. They were the most educated, experienced and diversely qualified cohort of women in the Catholic (and possibly secular) community in Ballarat.

The second observation arising from this research is that these women certainly were not “victims”, but were indeed forces for change. Despite the complexity and rapidity of changes in the world around them, women religious retained control of their assets, made their own decisions regarding their professional lives, shaped the processes for initial and

⁷⁰⁴ *Our Diocesan Community*, No. 28, August 2009, p7.

on-going spiritual formation, updated their constitutions and governance structures, retained responsibility for their ageing members and supported those members whose work took them outside the corporate work of the institutes.

As a third observation, this research has demonstrated how the women continued their long history of “doing what they were asked to do” – initially by staffing and managing schools in cooperation with the bishops, gradually moving into positions within the newly created diocesan and parish structures and welfare agencies, supporting the laity to assume positions of authority, fulfilling a critical role in the spiritual life of the community. Their expanded view of education was built on nearly 100 years as leading educationalists in the diocese; they may have “left” the schools, but their new roles became even more critical with the declining number and ageing of the priests in the diocese.

The importance of leadership merits a thesis in its own right. In the case of the women under study, the most striking observation is that in the most difficult times for religious life, Ballarat women drew upon the skills of women in both elected and unelected positions of authority. Looking back to the lives and work of both Mother Gonzaga Barry and Mother Xavier Flood, strength was drawn from their spiritual leadership, educational philosophies and from their astute management of their fledgling communities. The reforms demanded after Vatican II and in the light of new government and societal expectations required a new type of collaborative leadership. Elected leaders, Dympna McNamara, Noni Mitchell, Valda Ward and Clare Forbes were not only outstanding leaders in their own right: they exhibited all the qualities necessary to make the best use of the talents of the women in their institutes, those who could inspire others to find new forms of religious life. “Leadership from behind” was needed to steer these difficult years and to establish structures within which the next generation of women religious could take them confidently into the next century. This is not to “lionize” elected leaders, nor to ignore the fact that it was the “ordinary” women in the institutes who did the heavy lifting; nor does it ignore the fact that many women at the time left religious life. But to acknowledge those who were mandated to steer the changes within existing structures, while having the vision to change from within, is a vital component of writing an accurate

history of women's progress and change.⁷⁰⁵ A very real strength of women religious has been the heritage of structures and leadership able to adapt to the needs of the times. Increased emphasis on subsidiarity, consultation and participation in decision-making, however difficult for some, could be incorporated into the existing structures to provide stability and continuity for those women who chose to remain.

It was these Vatican II leaders who oversaw the explosion of further education and professional development for women religious. Again, this was not a radical break with the past – both institutes had always had highly educated women in their communities. But the extent of re-education of women engaged at all levels of further education was perhaps the most striking observation an outsider could make, as well as being the most obvious parallel that can be drawn between religious and secular women seeking change in the 1970s and 80s. The brief window of opportunity provided by the Whitlam government when it abolished fees for universities and for the emerging TAFE system was of inestimable benefit for women and a phenomenon in their history that deserves much more rigorous and thorough research.

The retention, expansion and management of buildings and other infrastructure also merit further research and acknowledgement, particularly in the case of a city such as Ballarat which markets itself so successfully for its heritage value. The long tradition of convents being led by astute businesswomen, informed by a culture of frugality and responsibility, has benefited their host communities with a legacy of buildings and other physical assets for the enjoyment and economic benefit of all. The Bishop's Palace in Ballarat may have been sold at fire-sale rates, but the convents, the hospital, the aged care facilities and the beautiful Little Flower church remain as tributes to the foresight, business acumen and stewardship of women religious.⁷⁰⁶

The transformation of Ballarat into a service and educational centre has benefited from the generations of women who attended the two convent schools, the Loreto commercial college and Aquinas teachers' college. Again, further sociological research on this topic would be invaluable. What proportion of women entering the new professions or standing

⁷⁰⁵The contrast with the secular women's movement lies in the frustration of not having "elected" leaders as the public face of change, leaving the way open for the popular media to exploit the more sensational or extreme voices.

⁷⁰⁶ The Bishop's Palace was auctioned in 1996 for \$700,000.

for public office owe their education to women religious? What value can be put on the emphasis on social justice learnt from the example of the sisters, particularly for those whose work centred on the vulnerable in society? To what extent can the strength of civil society in Ballarat be said to stem from those who went through the Catholic education system? Is it possible to quantify in some way the cultural heritage passed on from the women religious who introduced generations of students to music, art and literature?

This thesis has demonstrated that women religious stood as role models for their students as independent, professional women motivated by their commitment to improving the status of women. Leaving aside heated debates on the definition of “feminists”, few girls under their care left school doubting the strength of the sisters who taught them. Their particular brand of feminism, when combined with a strong commitment to social justice, was not a pale imitation of secular feminism, nor a fad born from the counter culture of the 1960s. It may yet prove to be the future of the institutionalized church now suffering the worst effects of patriarchal leadership and unresolved sexual scandals.

In every field where they were required to work for the church, women religious in Ballarat responded, just as they did to the many causes which emerged from a heightened sense of responsibility for the poor and vulnerable in the broader community. That their contribution was often recognized by secular authorities is tribute to their dedication as professional women. As has been demonstrated, many of their careers have strong parallels with those of women in secular society as administrators, policy makers, public advocates, adult educators and members of non-government agencies dedicated to the marginalised. Of particular importance has been their role in raising awareness of the needs and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, and the commitment of women from both institutes to work with Indigenous communities and in south east Asia.

Yet little progress has been made in transforming the structures of the church, despite the obvious qualifications and skills the women could bring to an institution which was (and is) struggling to retain credibility and relevance three decades after Vatican 11. To an “outsider”, it is incomprehensible that these women are not able to preach to church goers on Sundays, nor are they any nearer to breaking the barrier prohibiting their ordination. This is not to ignore the advances that have been made, nor the importance of women religious who are shaping theological debates in Christian thought. But just as their

strength has always been their immediate contact with parishioners through their schools, it seems, if nothing else, illogical to bar them from the only on-going contact many laity may have with the institutional church, that is, their attendance at Mass. To an “outsider”, this squandering of talent that is so obviously needed to be the public face of the church, would be like telling Joan Kirner or Susan Ryan or the dozens of women who’ve struggled within political parties for recognition and structural change, that they would be barred from speaking in public. Regardless of what arguments are mounted by the church, to ordinary people this is incomprehensible. The fact that several leading female theologians have mounted comprehensive arguments based on scripture and historical research to refute the official teachings indicates that it is not just “common sense” or a feminist fad that demands full inclusion of women in an institution to which they have devoted their lives.

As a final observation from an outsider, the living presence of both Mary Ward and Catherine McAuley shaping the lives of women religious met during the course of this research has been palpable. Both foundresses emerge continuously in conversation, as well as in the documents tracing the post-Vatican II changes. Neither is purely an historical figure; both inform and inspire the dedication to continue the work of their institutes, and, perhaps of greater importance, to pass on to their associates, lay teachers, board members, pupils and ex-pupils the spirit which continues to sustain those women remaining in religious life. Both foundresses are women who proved to be prophetic in identifying the needs of their own historic times and imbued with visions that have been adapted to those of the 21st century. Whatever shape religious life emerges with the demise of what we recognized so visibly before Vatican II, it is obvious that it will rest upon the wisdom and vision of these foundresses whose inspiration is alive and well among the members of their respective institutes.

Conclusion

The public profile of women who identify as feminists in all walks of life constitutes a revolution in society, one that has added immeasurable diversity and talent to civic life. Women religious have achieved comparable professional skills and talents. They have continued their unbroken contribution to the church, which was built upon the unrelenting nature of their work and commitment to the ideals of their foundresses and to the ideals of social justice. That their talents as the public face of the church have been at best,

underutilized, at worst, sidelined, is an historical loss, made even more tragic by the current crisis in the church. This study has demonstrated that women religious have all the skills required to manage change of historic proportions, while at the same time, they have retained the trust and respect of the majority of those with whom they have had contact, across the broadest range in society. As highly educated women, they are bonded by community and spiritual ties with each other and with the people and the church they serve. Were they to be asked to take on the public face of the church, the lives of the women examined in this study strongly indicate that they could revolutionise the structures and the public perception of an institution to which they have remained loyal and to which they remain committed. That this has not been recognized by those in authority is, to an outsider, a tragedy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Publications by Loreto Sisters who taught in Ballarat and Portland between 1950-1980.

Publications by Loreto sisters before and after these dates, and those who did not teach in the Ballarat diocese, located in Loreto Province Archives, Mary's Mount, Ballarat.

Veronica Brady,

Note: Published books and articles relevant to the thesis only; further articles, book reviews and lectures authored by Sister Veronica are located in Loreto Province Archives.

South of My Days, A Biography of Judith Wright, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1998.

'Called by the land to enter the land' in C. Hammond (ed), *Creation Spirituality and the Dreaming*, Millenium Books, Newtown, 1991.

The Future People: Christianity, Modern Culture and the Future, Spectrum, Melbourne, 1971.

The Mystics, Dove Communications, East Malvern, 1974.

'We are such stuff', in K. Nelson and D. Nelson (eds), *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids: Journeys from Catholic Childhoods*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986.

'A quixotic approach: The women's movement and the Church in Australia' in Margaret Ann Franklin (ed), *The Force of the Feminine*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986.

Caught in the Draught, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1994.

'Every Christian in her own place: Women's writing and theological understanding', in Maryanne Convoy, Dorothy Lee and Joan Nowotny (eds), *Women Thinking Theology*, Dove, Blackburn, 1995.

Can These Bones Live? The Federation Press, Annandale, 1996.

The God-Shaped Hole, ATF Press, Adelaide, 2008.

Christine Burke,

'The problems facing religious educators today', *Dialogue*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March 1970.

Through a Woman's Eyes: Encounter with Jesus, Collins Dove, Melbourne, 1981.

'Ministry as a barometer of change', in Peter Malone, Co-ordinator, *Discovering an Australian Theology*, St. Paul's Publications, Homebush, 1988.

'A wisdom figure from our past', *WomanChurch*, No.11, Spring 1992.

'Common Good: The Church and the Australian Conversation', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXX1, No 3, July 1994.

'One woman's view of the Beijing Forum', *WATAC Victoria*, Vol. 3, No 2, May-July, 1996.

'Reflections on Woman and Man', *Compass*, Vol. 34, No 1, Autumn, 2000.

'Changing patterns of leadership', *Compass*, Vol. 35, Autumn 2001.

'Globalisation and ecology', in Denis Edwards, (ed), *Earth Revealing, Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology*, The Liturgical Press, Collegville, Minnesota, 2001.

'Religious life: Its implications for today', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 79. No 1, January 2002.

Freedom, Justice and Sincerity: Reflections on the Life and Spirituality of Mary Ward, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2009.

'Glimpses of Glory – 'defence and propagation of the faith' in ways congruous to our time', *Religious Life Review*, Jan/Feb., 2009.

Margaret Callaghan ibvm and Susan Emilson , *A School with Spirit: Loreto Kirribilli*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 1983.

Jennifer Cameron, *A Dangerous Innovator: Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, 2000.

Regina Cameron, 'Advertising art and religion', *Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 37, No. 2, May 1989.

Anne Carter, *Beyond All telling: A History of Loreto in Western Australia, 1897-1997*, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Perth, 1997.

Anne Carter and Elizabeth Murphy rsj, *A Rich Harvest: St Gertrude's Chapel*, Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, South Perth, 2006.

Therese Daly,

Note: Published books only; a full listing of educational resources produced by Sr. Daly located in Loreto Province Archives.

Graphics for Sunday: Illustrations and clip art for the church's year cycles A, B and C, Collins Dove, Melbourne, 1987.

More graphics for Sundays and feast days, Collins Dove, Melbourne, 1990.

Deepest Longings, Experience of the Spiritual Exercises Mary Ward's Ignation Way, Jesuit Publications, Melbourne, 1990.

Graphics for Sunday Year C, Dove Publications, Melbourne, 1995.

Graphics for Sunday Year A, Dove Publications, Melbourne, 1995.

Graphics for Sunday Year B, Dove Publications, Melbourne, 1996.

Denise Desmarchelier, *Voices of Women: Women and the Catholic Church*, Spectrum Publications, Melbourne, 2000.

Roberta Hakendorf, 'Reflections on priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church', in Marie Louise Uhr (ed), *Changing Women, Changing Church*, Millennium Books, Newtown, 1992.

'A lay revolution looms in the Catholic Church', *National Outlook*, November 1988.

Margaret Hill, 'A Marginal Church', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LX, No. 2, April 1983.

Brigid Jones, 'Not counting the cost: A history of Loreto Convent, Portland', *Unpublished Paper*, located in Loreto Province Archives.

'Reminiscences of the J.C.W.L. Catholic Action for girls (1929-1948)', *Unpublished Paper* located in the Loreto Province Archives.

Josephine Little, 'Towards helping adolescents to pray', National Pastoral Institute, Melbourne, 1973.

Margaret Manion,

Note: Published books by Sr. Manion only. Further articles and commentaries by Sister Manion available in the Loreto Province Archives.

The Warncliffe Hours: A Study of a Fifteenth Century Prayerbook, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1972.

Margaret Manion and Vera Vines (eds), *Medieval and Renaissance Illuminated Manuscripts in Australian Collections*, Thames and Hudson Melbourne, 1984.

Margaret Manion and Bernard Muir (eds), *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1998.

Margaret Manion and Bernard Muir (eds), *Medieval Texts and Images: Studies of Manuscripts from the Middle Ages*, Harwood Academic, Chur, Switzerland, 1991.

Susan McGowan, Note: Other entries in collections of poetry located in Loreto Province Archives,

The Song in the Shell, Neptune Press, 1984.

Graceful with Giving, St. Paul's Publications, Melbourne, 1981.

Walking on the Wind, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1990.

With Undefending Heart, Openbook Publishing, 1995.

'A celebration of spirituality: The quatercentenary of Mary Ward', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXV11, No. 3, July 1985.

Joan Nowotny (ed), with Maryanne Convoy, Dorothy Lee, *Freedom and Entrapment:*

Women Thinking Theology, Dove, Blackburn, 1995.

Elizabeth Nowotny, 'Religious education in a secular society', *Dialogue*, December 1976.

Young People's Ideas about God, Religion and Meaning of Life, Dove, Melbourne, 1978.

'Our place in the Australian church in the 80s, given the charism of Mary Ward, Loreto Province Archives, Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial Chapters/Congregations*, 1980 Chapter, Item 15, Appendices.

Mary Wright, 'The Bar Convent', *History of Women Religious Workshop Papers, April 9-10*, Institute of religious Studies, Strathfield, 1992.

'What Claims do Women Make?: Mary Ward, Muzio Vitelleschi and the Institute (1630), *The Champion Lectures, Congregations, Generals and Jesuit Spirituality*, JTC, 1995.

Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity, Crossing Press, Darlinghurst, 1997.

Publications by Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy

Elizabeth Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke*, T and T Clark International, London 2001.

'The absence of women in John 21, *MAST*, Fall, 1999.

'Rise and fall: The changing status of Peter and women Disciples in John 21, *Australian Biblical Review*, Vol. 52, 2004.

'Slave parable in the Gospel of Luke – Gospel 'Texts of Terror?' *Australian Biblical Review*, Vol. 56, 2008.

Anne Forbes, rsm, *They Came Uninvited: A Short History of Sacred Heart College Ballarat East, 1881-1994*.

'Healy, Eileen Mary (1888-1966)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Clare Forbes, rsm, *A Widow's Mite to Chile*, Unknown Publisher, Ballarat, 1990.

B. C. Kenna (Sr Luke), Note: Unpublished papers by Sr Luke are located in the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy Archives, Series 1100.02.02

With Heart and Mind: A Case Study Evaluation of a Reading Comprehension Program to Year Students, Deakin University, Geelong, 1989.

Literacy through Literature, Books 1-2, Hawker Barlow Education, Cheltenham, 1992.

Text and Film Studies of the Australian Movie, 'Devil's Hill', Mentone Educational Centre, Carnegie, 1995.

Learning Skills Through Literature Studies: A Literacy Program for Junior Secondary Students, Mentone Educational Centre, Carnegie, 1997.

'In pastures green: An evaluation of a reading and comprehension program years 7 and 8, Sacred Heart College, Ballarat East', 1988.

'Such is Life: A collection of short stories for junior secondary students, 1993.

Veronica Lawson, 'Scraps of sustenance for the journey out of patriarchy', in Maryanne Convoy, Dorothy Lee and Joan Nowotny (eds), *Freedom and Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology*, Dove, North Blackburn, 1995.

With Elaine Wainwright rsm, 'Through feminist biblical eyes', in Rosemary Crumlin (ed), *Beyond Belief: Modern Art and the Religious Imagination*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1998;

With Elaine Wainwright rsm, Biblical Commentary, *Mercy and Justice Shall Meet: An Interactive Journey*, CD-Rom, Fraynetwork Multimedia, Melbourne, 2004.

'East Timor: A call to jubilee', *Mast*, Vol. 10, No.1, Fall 1999

'Vatican II in hope and memory: The power of Vatican II and the structures of power', *Compass*, Vol. 38, No 1, Autumn, 2004.

'Vatican II: The call to renewal', in Damien Casey, Gerald Hall and Anne Hall (eds), *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Social Science Press, 2004.

'Tabitha of Joppa: Disciple, prophet and biblical prototype for contemporary religious life', in Rekha M. Chennattu and Mary L. Coloe (eds), *Transcending Boundaries: Contemporary Readings of the New Testament*, LAS, Rome, 2005.

'What does it mean to be prophetic today?' *The Mix: Journal of Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated*, Vol. 11, No.05, July 2006.

Anne McMillan, 'A Statement of concern occasioned by the growing practice of Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest', *Compass*, Vol. 35, Summer 2001.

Mary Nuttall, 'Parent opinion of parish education: A study of the Ballarat East Region', *Ballarat College of Advanced Education Occasional Papers*, No. 2, 1976.

'Curriculum development: From connoisseurship, through collaboration, to control', *Curriculum and Teaching*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2003.

'Curriculum as conversation: The teachers' voices', in P. Haywood et. al, *Towards Re-enchantment: Education, Imagination and the Getting of Wisdom*, Post Pressed, Flaxton QU, 2005.

'Soulful learning: A vital component of curriculum development', in M. de Souza et. al (eds), *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2006.

'Metaphors for well-being: Enhancing students' learning and teaching perceptions within a pre-service education course', in M. de Souza et. al (eds), *International*

Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2009.

Therese Power, 'Dancing on a moving floor: Lay women and the principalship in Catholic primary education', in Deirdre Duncan and Dan Riley (eds), *Leadership and Catholic Education: Hope for the Future*, Harper Collins, 2002.

Valda Ward, Two Plays: *Murder in a Nunnery* [and] *Heavens Above*, Located in Ballarat East Mercy Archives, *Series 1100.01.07*.

'Discovery, classification and annotation of local records, Casterson and surrounding districts, Located in Ballarat East Archives, *Series 1100.01.07*.

M. Phillip Welsh, 'Mercy unto Many', *Journal of the Institute of Catholic Education*, Vol. 6, November 1985.

The Golden Echo, Sisters of Mercy Ballarat East, 2006.

Collections of poetry located in Ballarat East Archives, *Series 1100.02.01* by Sr. Welsh

In Mercy Habit, 1965.

The Christmas Rose, 1967.

Vision, 1969.

A Voice in Rama, 1972.

Light of the World, 1974.

Spadge, 1989

Appendix 2: Details of Lay Sisters

Loreto sisters (Note: Not all details are available in the Loreto Province Archives.)

Sisters of the Second degree who worked at Mary's Mount

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|-------------|
| Sr. Elizabeth Whelan | House | 1895 -1959 |
| Sr Vianney Waide | House | 1925 - 1967 |
| Sr Martin Cassidy | Children's refectory | 1927 – 1999 |
| Sr. Malachy Wilson | Kitchen | 1930 - 1970 |
| Sr Presentation Marnell | Portress | 1937 - 2003 |
| Sr Claudia Murphy | Laundry | 1937 - 2007 |
| Sr Ita Brady | Second in Kitchen | 1937 - 1987 |
| Sr Patricia | House, domestic infirmarian | |
| Sr Vincent Cody | First in Kitchen | 1947 - 1997 |
| Sr. Olivia Murphy | Laundress | 1936 - 1970 |
| Sr. Finbar Courtney | House duties | 1930 – 1979 |
| Sr Dympna | | |
| Sr Bruno (Anne Reidy) | Care of house, dining room | 1936 - 2000 |
| Sr Malachy | | |
| Sr Brigid Kehoe | Portress duties, infirmary | 1909 - 1979 |
| Sr Anne Reidy | Care of the house, children's dining room | |
| Sr Olivia Murphy | Laundry | |
| Sr. Katherine Brady | In charge of kitchen | 1937 – 1987 |

Loreto sisters who worked at Dawson Street convent, Ballarat

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Sr Margaret Fitzsimmons | Laundry | 1912 - 1965 |
| Sr Ephrem McDermott | Kitchen | 1928 – 1963 |
| Sr Ephrem McDermott | Cook, house duties | |
| Sr Isidore Byrne | Kitchen, house | 1931 - 1987 |
| Sr Finbarr Courtney | House duties | 1930 – 1979 |

Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East, whose primary work was domestic service within the Ballarat diocese; information provided by Sr. Lesley Dickinson, archivist from her recollections of 1950.

Srs M. Catherine Quinn
Evangelist Brennan
Dominica Donnellan
Gabriel O'Hannessy
Gerard Briody
Veronica Scanlon
Peter O'Donoghue
Imelda Sinnott
Peter O'Donohue
Michael Fitzpatrick
Eymard Leonard
Clement Ryan
Irene McGann
Hilary Healy
Assumpta Kent

Appendix 3: Community Leaders

Loretos

General Superiors

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| M. Pauline Dunne | 1948 – 1968 |
| M. Agnes Walsh | 1968 – 1986 |
| Sr Noni Mitchell | 1986 – 1999 |
| Sr Mary Wright | 1999 – 2006 |

Provincial Leaders

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| M. Colombiere Lillis | January 1948 - April 1958 |
| M. Dympna McNamara | May 1958 – June 1970 |
| M. Antoinette Hayden | July 1970 – June 1974 |
| Sr Noni Mitchell | July 1974 – 1983. |

Superiors at Mary's Mount, Loreto Abbey 1950-1980

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| M. Aluigi Bell | 1949 - 1951 |
| M. Magdalen O'Hagen | 1952 - 1954 |
| M. Dympna McNamara | 1955 |
| M. Clare Birrane | 1956-1960 |
| M. Antoinette Hayden | 1961-1969 |
| Sr. Theodore Gillick | 1970-1975 |
| Sr. Ellen Moran | 1976 -1981 |

Mistresses of Schools/Principals at Mary's Mount

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| M. Aquin McPhee | 1950-1954 |
| M. Clare Birrane | 1955 |
| M. Antoinette Hayden | 1956-1960 |
| M. Margaret Manion | 1961- Easter 1961 |
| M. Josephine Little | 1961- 1963 |
| M. Margaret Manion | 1964 -1966 |
| Sr. Denise Desmarchelier | 1967 -1976 |
| Sr. Mary Wright | 1977-1980 |

Dawson Street Superiors

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| M. Angela Finn | 1946 - 1951 |
| M. Canice Woods | 1952 - 1954 |
| M. Magdalen O'Hagan | 1955 - 1956 |
| M. Aluigi Bell | 1956 - 1961 |
| M. Raymond Drew | 1962 - 1967 |
| Sr. Mary Morrissey | 1968- 1973 |
| Sr. Margaret Mary Armstrong | 1974 - 1975 |
| Sr. Leonie Petersen | 1976 - 1979 |
| Sr. Consuela Braithwaite | 1980 - 1982 |

(Dawson St. Convent closed in 1982)

Mistress of Schools/Principals, Dawson St Convent

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| M. Juliana Coughlan | 1949 – 1957 |
| M. Canice Woods | 1958 – 1959 |
| M. Anne Carter | 1960 – 1963 |
| Sr Magdalena Hynes | 1964 – 1969 |
| Sr. Jennifer Collins | 1970 – 1975 |
| Sr Yvonne Lamerand | 1976 - 1977 |

(Dawson Street amalgamated with Mary's Mount in 1978.)

Principals, Loreto Commercial College

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| M. Raymond Drew | 1962-1967 |
| Sr. Jan Barlow | 1968-1970 |
| Sr. Ellison Taffe | 1970-1974 |
| Sr. Bernadette Gray | 1974-1979 |
| Mrs June de Beer | 1980 |

Leaders of Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy (Note: Prior to Vatican II, the Superior of the Institute would also have been the designated superior of the schools and the training college.)

Superiors/Provincials between 1950-1980

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Mother M. Alacoque | 1918 – 1959 |
| Mother M. Bonaventure | 1959 - 1966 |
| Sr Carmel Keane | 1966-1973 |
| Sr Valda Ward | 1973-1974 |
| Sr Clare Forbes | 1974-1988 |

Head Mistress of Schools, Ballarat Sacred Heart College

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Mother Bonaventure | 1952-1966 |
| Sr. M Genevieve McDonald | 1967 - 1969 |
| Sr. M. Adrian Parsons | 1970-1971 |
| Sr. M. Dorothea Ballinger | 1972-1973 |
| Sister Therese Power | 1974 -1985 |

St Martins in the Pines

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Sr. Genevieve McDonald, | 1967 - 1976 |
| Sr. Veronica Lawson | 1977 – 1978 |
| Dr. Deirdre Duncan | 1979 – 1981 |
| Rev. B. McPhee | 1982 |
| Sr. Valda Ward | 1983 -1990 |

Directors of Sacred Heart Teachers' Training College (Aquinas) (1950-1980)

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mother M. Alacoque | |
| Sr Marie Therese Morgante | 1966 - 1968 |
| Sr Valda Ward | 1967 - 1973 |
| Sr Clare Forbes | Acting Principal 1973 - 1974 |
| Dr George Pell | 1974 – 1984 |

Directors of Nursing (Mercy Home Nursing Service)

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Sr Barbara Lemke | 1963 – 1965 |
| Sr Padua Gleeson | 1966 – 1969 |
| Sr Barbara Lemke | 1970 – 1971 |
| Sr Desley Walsh | 1972 - 1986 |

Appendix 4: Bishops and Administrators of the Ballarat Diocese, 1950-1980

Bishops

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Bishop O'Collins | 1941- 1971 |
| Bishop Mulkearns | 1971 -1997. |

Administrators at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Monsignor Fiscilini | 1952-1964 |
| Fr T O'Brien | 1964-1966 |
| Fr T Bohan, | 1966-1967 |
| Fr J. Martin | 1967-1968 |
| Fr F McKenzie | 1968-1972 |
| Fr P Culligan | 1972-1976 |
| Fr F Madden | 1976-1982 |

Appendix 5: Women who entered religious orders from within the Ballarat Parish⁷⁰⁷

| | |
|--|----|
| Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East | 42 |
| Sisters of Mercy, Union | 12 |
| IBVM, Loreto | 43 |
| Sisters of Charity | 14 |
| Sisters of St Brigid | 13 |
| Sisters of St John of God | 9 |
| Sisters of St Joseph | 8 |
| Our Lady of Sion | 7 |
| Sisters of Nazareth | 6 |
| Our Lady of the Sacred Heart | 5 |
| Congregation of the Good Shepherd | 3 |
| Missionary Sisters/Sacred Heart | 3 |
| Society of Presentation Cong/Australia | 3 |
| Sisters of the Good Samaritan | 2 |
| Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion | 2 |
| Little Sisters of the Poor | 1 |
| Benedictine Missionary Sisters | 1 |
| Franciscan Missionaries of Mary | 1 |

⁷⁰⁷ *Parish Magazine for the parochial district of Ballarat, Centenary Issue, No. 5, March, 1972.*

Appendix 6: Theses and academic work completed by Loreto and Sisters of Mercy who taught in Ballarat, 1950-1980

- Veronica Brady ibvm *Patrick White's discovery and exploration of Australia: A study in the tension between a tradition and the tradition*, Master of Arts, School of English, University of Toronto, April 1966.
- The hard enquiring wind: A study of Patrick White as an Australian novelist*, Doctor of Philosophy, School of English, University of Toronto, October 1968.
- Frances Browne ibvm *Evaluation in the Australian Secondary Educational Scene*, Dissertation in partial fulfillment to the Mt. Gravatt College of Advanced Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Graduate Diploma in School Administration, 1979.
- Christine Burke ibvm *Poverty: a vice and a virtue: Its impact on what it means to be a Christian in an affluent society*, Master of Divinity, Jesuit School of Theology, Chicago, 1977.
- Credible Christian Participation in Public discourse towards a just society: social, philosophical and theological obstructions and opportunities*, PhD in Arts, Centre for Religion Studies and Theology, Monash University, 1995.
- Margaret Callahan ibvm, *The need for a divided approach in Catholic school religious education*, Graduate Diploma in religious Education, South Australia College of Advanced Education, December 1983.
- Jennifer Cover ibvm *Morale in Eight Schools: An empirical Study of Teacher Morale in Eight Catholic Schools Administered by the One Religious Congregation in Five Australian States*, Diploma of Educational Administration, University of New England, October 1973.
- A Study of the Identification and Internationalisation of the Goals of a School System by the Members, Teachers, Lay and Religious, Parents and Students*, Master of Administration, University of New England, October, 1974.
- Therese Daly ibvm *Applying the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius Loyola to religious education in secondary schools: Mary Ward's Ignatian way*, MA thesis, Graduate school of education, Latrobe University, December 1995.
- Marie Davey rsm *Church Music at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, 1900-1957*, Church History 111, Catholic Theological College, Clayton, 1982.

- Denise Desmarchelier ibvm *The Management of Change: Case Studies in Six Non-Government Schools*, M.Ed Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 1981.
- Voices of Women: Women's Experience of the Catholic Church in Australia*, Doctor of Philosophy, University of New England, Armidale, 1999.
- Elizabeth Dowling rsm *John 21 and the Absence of Women*, In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology, Melbourne College of Divinity, Melbourne, July 2000.
- Carina Flaherty ibvm *Spiritual direction and the art of supervision*, Doctor of Ministry, Andover Newrton Theological School, 2000.
- Anne Forbes rsm *Music as a Dimension of Religious Education*, Diploma of Religious Education, National National Pastoral Institute, 1976.
- Rose Marie Glennen rsm *Aha-Me! An Exploration of Self*, Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies: Pastoral Guidance, Mt. St. Mary's College of Education, Strathfield, 1981.
- Veronica Lawson rsm *A Study of Colossians 1:12 and 1:21-29*, Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of San Francisco in partial fulfillment of the degree of MA in Theology, August 1976.
- Margaret Manion ibvm, *A study of the Wharncliffe Horae in the National Gallery of Victoria*, Master of Arts, School of fine Arts, University of Melbourne, February 1962.
- The frescoes of S. Giovanni Porta Latina in Rome*, PhD. Diss, Bryn Mawr College, USA, 1972.
- Jacqui McGilp ibvm *School Experience Workshops*, Graduate Diploma in Business and Administration, Western Australian Institute of Technology, 1982.
- Children Writing*, Partial fulfillment of requirements for Master of Education, School of Education Deakin University, September 1985.
- Parental involvement in children's artistic learning*, PhD, Centre for the Study of Community, Education and Social Change, Latrobe University, 1991.
- Veronica Lawson rsm *Gender and Genre: The Construction of Female Gender in the Acts of the Apostles*, PhD Thesis, Trinity College, University of Dublin, 1997.
- Joan Nowotny ibvm *Gabriel Marcel's philosophy of hope*, PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1974

- Therese Power, rsm *How were principals affected by reform during the period 1967-1987?* Masters of Education, Deakin University, 1988.
- Dancing on a Moving Floor: Lay Women and Principalship in Catholic Education*, PhD Thesis, Deakin University, 2001.
- Diaan Stuart ibvm *Finlayson school climate scales: A study of the climate of four Catholic Secondary schools*, Master of Educational Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 1980
- Ellison Taffe ibvm *Attitudes required for community living according to Mathew's Gospel – chapter 18*, Research paper, School of Religious Studies, Gonzaga University, Washington, towards an M.A. in Spirituality
- Valda Ward rsm *An investigation of the organizational climate of certain elementary parochial schools in the Diocese of Ballarat*, Diploma in Educational Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 1971.
- An impressionistic study of a Diocesan Education Board as an instrument in the governance of education*, In partial fulfillment of requirements of the Degree of Master of Educational Administration, University of New England, 1972.
- The relationship between selected organizational characteristics and the process of change leading to a new structure of governance for the Sisters of Mercy (Australia) in 1981: A case study*, Centre for Administrative Studies, Armidale, University of New England, PhD. 1986.
- Mary Wright ibvm *Mary Ward's plan for apostolic religious life for women*, Faculty of Canon Law, St Paul's University, Ottawa, Canada
- The foundation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Pembroke*, Faculty of Canon Law, St Paul's University, Ottawa, Canada
- The canonical development of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Degree of Doctor of Canon Law, St Paul University, Ottawa, Canada, 1992.

Appendix 7: Membership of professional and decision making bodies

Within in the Ballarat Diocese

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Denise Desmarchelier ibvm | Foundation member of Ballarat Pasotoral Care (1974-5) Foundation member of Ballarat Careers (1973-4) Foundation member of Ballarat Health Education (1974) |
| Clare Forbes rsm | Chair of Catholic Diocesan Ecumenical Commission |
| Rita Hayes rsm | Board member of Ballarat Children's Homes and Family Services Founding member of Lifeline Member, Ballarat Refugee Support Group Founding member of GROW, a support group for people recovering from psychiatric illness Founding staff member, Centacare, Ballarat Chair of the local Central Highlands West Papuan Association Patron, <i>Lisa Lodge</i> , accommodation and support for young women at risk. |
| Therese Power rsm | Board member of Child and Family Services President of Ballarat Health Services (2002) |
| Valda Ward rsm | Foundation member, Ballarat Diocesan Education Board (1969-81) Foundation member, Aquinas College Advisory Board (1974-81) Ballarat Regional Council for Educational Administration, (1973) President of Ballarat Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools, (1984) |

State and National Organisations

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Veronica Brady ibvm | National Committee for the Teaching of English, 1975 First religious appointed to the board of the ABC (1983) |
| Denise Desmarchelier ibvm | Member, Commonwealth Schools Commission, (1984-5) Part-time member, Western Australian Schools Commission |
| Clare Forbes rsm | Executive member of the Victorian Council of Churches |
| Toni Matha ibvm | Member of Victorian Council of Social Services and Treasurer of Australian Council of Social Services |
| Margaret Manion, ibvm | Member of the Australian Research Grants Committee, the Australia Council, the Victorian Arts Centre Trust, Council of Trustees, National Gallery of Victoria (Deputy Pres. 1984-1990), |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| | Trustee of the Felton Bequest Board member of CAE and Council of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Board member of the Melbourne College of Divinity. |
| Noni Mitchell ibvm | Victorian Catholic Teacher Education Board Board member of the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) |
| Joan Nowotny ibvm | Board member of the Melbourne College of Divinity |
| Therese Power rsm | Member, Western Regional Forum, 1997-2001 Board member, Mercy Secondary Education Inc., 2002-2006 |
| Libby Rogerson ibvm | Convenor, Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace Member, Diocesan Justice, Peace and Ecumenical Commissions |
| Valda Ward rsm | Member of the Advisory Board, National Pastoral Institute (1976-1980) Member, Victorian Catholic Teacher Education Board (1973) Member, Advisory Council of Green Hills Foundation, (1979) Member of the Commonwealth Council of Educational Administration and Victorian Council of Educational Administration (1973) |
| Mary Wright ibvm | Judge on the Melbourne Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal |

Appendix 8: Information Letter To Participants.

TITLE OF PROJECT: The history and social significance of women religious in the Ballarat Dioceses, 1950-1980

STAFF SUPERVISORS: Dr. Rosa MacGinley and Dr Sophie McGrath

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Heather O'Connor

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: PhD (Arts and Science.)

Dear

I am enrolled as a PhD student of the Australian Catholic University to undertake a study of the contribution made by women religious in the Diocese of Ballarat between 1950 and 1980. It is hoped that the research will make a significant contribution to the history of the Diocese, and in particular, to women's history in the areas of education and social welfare.

You are invited to contribute towards this recorded history which will provide information from women religious, diocesan and parish authorities, members of the laity who contributed towards the organizations under study and other community leaders with knowledge of the congregations and their work. With your permission, a personal interview could be conducted and recorded, which would mean about one hour of your time.

During the course of any such interview, you may at any time request that I stop recording or taking notes to ensure that areas of sensitivity are respected. You may choose not to respond to a particular question for any reason and/or to stop the interview at any point without any reference being made to your decision. You may also ask me any questions you wish at any time before, during or after the interview.

The questions will cover your knowledge of the history and contribution of the religious congregations and you will be free to explain as much or as little as you wish. The following process will be put in place to ensure confidentiality and protect the identity of individuals:

During the study itself, only the researchers will have access to raw data, which will be stored in a secure location in my office. I will be the only person who will hear the tapes, transcribe them and type up the notes. Apart from information which will be generally known (for example, position of responsibility/ authority or employment) the interview is a confidential one. When it is necessary to combine your ideas with those of others to get a general picture, individual names will be deleted in order to safeguard privacy.

This study will be reported in a thesis and possibly at conferences and/or in journal articles, and specific identifying information relating to names and positions held within religious orders may be included to authenticate information. This information will only be reported if you give consent by selecting the first option in the consent form. Alternatively, you can select the second option in the consent form, that is not having your identity reported and having any information from your interviews reported in a way that you cannot be identified. The only limitation to this option is the possibility of a person's identity being revealed indirectly, because of the small number of people in specific/key roles in the congregation. However, if you select this option, we will minimize the possibility of revealing your identity by reporting information that is in an amalgamated

form, that is, the combined results of all information obtained. If requested, a transcript of your interview will be supplied for your corrections or amendments before being included in any report.

If you have any questions about the interview itself or the way it was conducted, you may contact me or either of my supervisors, Dr Rosa MacGinley and Dr. Sophie McGrath:

Dr Rosa MacGinley: ACU McAuley Campus, PO Box 247, Everton Park, Qld. 4053.
Phone: 07)3623 7418, Fax: 07)3623 7262. Email: r.macginley@mcauley.acu.edu.au

Dr Sophie McGrath: ACU Mt St Mary Campus, Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield, NSW 2135.
Phone: 02)9876 4609; Fax: 02)9876.4609. Email: s.mcgrath@mary.acu.edu.au

If you have any complaints, you may contact the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University, which is the ACU body that has approved this research project for doctoral studies. Address your correspondence to:

Chair, HREC, c/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University, Strathfield Campus, Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield, NSW, 2135. Phone: 02)9071.4059; Fax: 02)9701.4350.

Be assured that any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project on the women religious of the Ballarat Diocese, would you please sign two copies of the Consent Form, one for your records and the other to be returned to me? Your support for the research project would be most appreciated.

Thanking you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

.....

*Heather O'Connor
16 Fairhaven Point
Wallaga Lake NSW*

*Phone: 02)6493.4811
Email: h.oconnor@bigpond.com*

Appendix 9: Informed Consent Form

Copy For Participant to Submit

TITLE OF PROJECT:

The history and social significance of women religious in the Ballarat Diocese, 1950-1980

STAFF SUPERVISOR: Dr. Rosa MacGinley, and Dr. Sophie McGrath

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Heather O'Connor

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Ph.D (Arts and Science)

Participant section

I (*the participant*) have read and understood the information in the letter inviting participation in the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, including the taping of my interview, realising that I can withdraw at any time.

I agree to my name being published. I also agree that research data collected for the study may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way

Name of participant:
(block letters)

Signature: Date:

Research Student:

Signature: Date:

Staff Supervisor:

Signature: Date:

Appendix 10: HR Ethics Committee Approval Form

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Rosa MacGinley Brisbane Campus

Co-Investigators: Dr Sophie McGrath, Dr John Molony Brisbane Campus

Student Researcher: Ms Heather O'Connor Brisbane Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:

The history and social significance of women religious in the Ballarat Diocese, 1950-1980

for the period: 5 June 2008 to 31 December 2009

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: N200708 17

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Pashley".

Signed:

Date: 5 June 2008
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

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Primary and other sources

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Secular authors

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M. D. Clarkson, *Catholic Teachers' Colleges, Commonwealth Funding and the State College of Victoria*, Minor Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education, Monash University, Clayton, 1973 (located in ACU Ballarat, History-Aquinas and Government Funding, Folder No. 2)

Dr Anne Doggett, *'And for harmony most ardently we long': Musical life in Ballarat, 1851-1871*, Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Ballarat, School of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Humanities, March 2006.

F. Eggleston, *Lay teachers associations in Victorian Catholic schools*, Master of Education, Monash University, 1980.

Margaret Hariss, *The Role of Women in Music Education in Victoria from 1875-1910*, Master of Educational Studies, Monash University, Clayton, July 1985.

Peter Julian Lynch, *Gertrude Healy: The Australian Violinist*, A thesis in the Department of Music, Monash University, Clayton, in partial fulfillment of Masters of Arts, January 1996.

Carmel Robbins, *Nazareth House, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, History and Heritage Studies Research Project, Bachelor of Arts, University of Ballarat, Located in Ballarat Diocesan Archives.

Deborah Zion, *Order and Disorder: A History of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1950-1974*, Master of Arts in History, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, February 1987.

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Jennifer Cover ibvm, *A study of the identification and internationalisation of the goals of a school system by the members, teachers, lay and religious, parents and students*, Master of Administration, University of New England, October, 1974.

Morale in eight schools: An empirical study of teacher morale in eight Catholic schools administered by the one religious congregation in five Australian states, Diploma of Educational Administration, University of New England, October 1973.

Marie Davey, rsm, *Church music at St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, 1900-1957*, Church History 111, Catholic Theological College, Clayton, 1982.

Denise Desmarchelier ibvm, *The Management of Change: Case Studies in Six Non-Government Schools*, M.Ed Administration, University of New England, Armidale, 1981.

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Anne Forbes rsm, *The establishment of the Convent of Mercy Training College, January 1st 1910*, Bachelor of Education, Located in ACU Aquinas, Ballarat files.

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Series 53, *Pro-Loreto.*

Series 61, *Correspondence from Provincialate to Communities.*

Series 67, *Formation Records.*

Series 79, *Records relating to Sister Noni Mitchell.*

Series 82, *Records relating to Sister Carmel Cody.*

Series 89. *Records belonging to Sister Brigid Jones.*

Series 122, *Records relating to Loreto education: Report on data survey (IBVM schools), 1973-1974.*

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Series 159, *St Patrick's and the Ballarat Diocese*.

Series 161, *Diocesan Sister's Council*.

Series 162, *Records relating to Religious Sisters Australia*.

Series 163, *Records Relating to Major Superiors in Australia*.

Series 168, *Loreto College Ballarat Past Students*.

Series 182, *Records relating to Provincial chapters/Congregations*.

Series 187, *Theses and Books by Sisters*.

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900.6.1 *Mercy sisters – Parish pastoral assistants.*

908 *Individual ministries.*

900.2.1 *St Martin's in the Pines.*

901.1.09 *Old Collegians.*

1100-0109, *Valda Ward File.*

910 *Teacher training.*

910.1.01 *Early history.*

910.101 *Relating to Sacred Heart Training College.*

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