



## Sponsorship Committee meets for last time

By DENNIS HORTON

**History was made on April 13 when the Sponsorship Committee, formed three years ago to plan for the creation of a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP), held its last meeting.**

The conclusion of its work was signalled in the completion of documents to be sent to Rome, in support of a request from Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand that the Holy See approve the establishment of the MPJP, to be known as Whānau Mercy Ministries.

Project facilitator and Brisbane Sister of Mercy Marg Endicott told Karanga Atawhai that Sponsorship Committee members were in high spirits as they met via Zoom for the last time. "We were aware that with most of our documents ready to be sent to Rome, we had reached a key moment. 'The rubber has begun to hit

the road,' was how one member summed up the feeling of the meeting."

The Sponsorship Committee began its work early in 2018, following a call from Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand for a clear plan to ensure the sustainability of their ministries. The committee moved swiftly to form three working parties - for Mission, Legal and Financial issues. Within a matter of months, the working parties had prepared drafts sufficiently for the Congregation to affirm the direction towards a PJP at its Chapter in August 2019.

*\*continued overleaf*

## Documents for PJP almost ready to be sent to Vatican for approval by Holy See

A set of 10 documents being sent to Rome in support of the application from Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand (the Congregation) run to around 120 pages.

The longest of these, containing the civil constitution of Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust which will form its by-laws, is more than 70 pages long. The canonical statutes hold the essence of a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) and the civil constitution is written to reflect this emphasis.

Most of the other documents run to just a few pages. They include a letter of application from the Congregation to the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Also included is a short description of the history and charism of the Congregation and its current ministries.

Another document lists the ministries whose ownership will in time be transferred from the Congregation to the MPJP, with their technical descriptions and approximate values. Rome is always concerned about the sustainability of religious congregations, so there will be evidence from an independent expert, showing that the Congregation will be financially secure after the MPJP has been established and that it will not be disadvantaged by the transfer of properties which this process will involve in due time.



Another crucial document describes the reason for the Congregation's decision to establish an MPJP and the process of discernment and consultation with other relevant persons and institutions which led to this decision.

An extract from the general council meeting which approved the petition to the Holy See and signed by the Congregation's Leadership is among the documents, as are letters from New Zealand's diocesan bishops indicating their support for the Congregation's decision to set up a MPJP.

The documents include a summary of the formation programmes which will support the leaders and executives of the new MPJP.

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*\*from front page*

By the end of 2019 the mission working party had completed its task and a small mission formation group was established; the legal working party had finalised some of its drafts, including canonical statutes and a civil constitution; and the finance working party had developed a clearer understanding of the issues it faced. Ongoing conversations with Australian canonist Sister Mary Wright continued, and a group of Sisters of Mercy and lay colleagues from New Zealand travelled to Brisbane to confer with PJP personnel there.

"Throughout 2020, even with the problems of COVID-19, we didn't fall behind where we hoped to be," Marg



*FLASHBACK: Photos from inaugural meeting on 24 January 2019 of (top) the Finance Working Party– Doc Godfrey (chair), Rosemary Revell rsm, Luke Ryan, Sheryl James rsm and Bruce McDonald; (above) some members of the Mission working party– Peter Buckland, Kath Fox, Anna Burrowes rsm, Kath Rushton rsm, Richard Kerr-Bell, Patricia Rowe rsm and Piripi McLean; and (below) some of the Legal Working Party–Gerald Scanlan, Denise Fox rsm (chair), Margaret Martin rsm, Lauren Semple and Kathy Lynch rsm.*

Endicott noted. "Our meeting in January 2020, when we decided on the statement of purpose and the name of the new entity - Whānau Mercy Ministries - was such a Spirit-filled day. I travelled home to Brisbane in March, just ahead of lockdown."

She reports that the Congregation's Leadership Team is responsible for setting up the process to select and appoint the trustees who will have oversight of the PJP. It is expected that the selection and appointment process will take place between May and August.

The Leadership Team will also see that two new committees are formed - one to coordinate the transition/implementation phase to introduce the PJP and another to oversee the formation of trustees, following the programme developed by the mission working party and finalised by the mission formation group. The initial formation is likely to run from October until early next year when the PJP may be launched.

The Sponsorship Committee ended its meeting with a prayer, God of Many Names, led by Leadership Team member Mary Wood rsm, taken from Inoi Whakarangatiratanga Prayers for Enrichment. "E te Atua Atawhai God of Mercy, God of many names, we are people of many backgrounds, talents and places," she prayed.

"We are united in Mercy by a spirit and tradition born in a house in Dublin, now spread to the outer reaches of the earth and the inner recesses of the heart. As Whānau Mercy in spirit and story, we commit ourselves to preserving the best of the past, fostering the best for the future.

"May Catherine's original vision and the wairua of our founders inspire us today, not to do what they did then, but to be where they would be if they were here now, standing in our shoes.

"We thank you for the gifts of time, insights and abundant wisdom shared at this table. Bless us as we leave our gathering with your gift of peace and a safe return to our home and whānau. Amen."

