

*GOOD SAMARITAN EDUCATION*



# A HISTORY



## ORIGINS OF GOOD SAMARITAN EDUCATION

John Bede Polding OSB, Australia's first Catholic Archbishop, founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict in Sydney on 2 February 1857. He was assisted by a Sister of Charity, Scholastica Gibbons, who became the Congregation's first Superior.

This new Congregation, the first to be founded on Australian soil, was begun in direct response to a specific social need that was urgent and immediate in Sydney in the mid-1850's - the care of disadvantaged and abused women.

Polding, however, provided the Congregation with a broad and flexible scope in its mission and, by giving the name, "Sisters of the Good Samaritan," he indicated that the Sisters were to have a Christ-like attitude of compassion and care for those they served.

They would be *"ready to teach in schools, to visit and assist the sick in their own homes and in hospitals, to instruct ignorant persons in the faith, to conduct orphanages, to reform the lives of penitent women, and to apply themselves to every other charitable work"* (Rules of Polding: Scope and Character of the Institute n.1)

From the very beginning, commitment to women and the education of young people have been at the heart of the congregation's mission. Within five years of their foundation, Sisters began teaching in a school in Sussex Street, Sydney in 1861.

In subsequent decades the ministry of Good Samaritan education spread to other Australian States, to Japan, the Philippines and Kiribati. Education in the faith and adult education are features of Good Samaritan ministry.

It is clear from the words of Polding that he envisaged the work of education as encompassing the wider vision of life-long learning. Hundreds of thousands of Australians have been educated as a result of the partnership between the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and dedicated staff.



In 1948, at the invitation of Bishop Yamaguchi, the Congregation sent six sisters to Nagasaki, Japan, to open a clinic to care for the victims of the nuclear bombing. Four years later, in the city of Sasebo, the sisters began their work of education which was later extended to Nara and Tokyo.

In Australia, in 2011, the sisters' ministry in Catholic education comprised ten Schools in five Dioceses: the Archdioceses of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney and the Dioceses of Broken Bay and Wollongong.

The Congregation valued these schools as a sphere of its apostolic activity within the mission of the church.

The schools are:

### Sydney Archdiocese

- Rosebank College, Five Dock, NSW
- St Scholastica's College, Glebe Point, NSW

### Broken Bay Diocese

- Stella Maris College, Manly, NSW
- Mount St Benedict College, Pennant Hills, NSW

### Wollongong Diocese

- St Mary Star of the Sea, Wollongong, NSW
- St Patrick's College, Campbelltown, NSW
- Mater Dei, Camden, NSW

## Melbourne Archdiocese

- Mater Christi College, Belgrave, Victoria
- Santa Maria College, Northcote, Victoria

## Brisbane Archdiocese

- Lourdes Hill College, Hawthorne, Queensland

As Good Samaritan schools, they share a common foundation story and spiritual tradition. At the same time, however, they have also developed their own distinctive character as they responded to the 'signs of the times', especially as these were expressed in the needs of the communities in which they serve.

The story of the foundation and subsequent developments in the governance of these schools can be described in three phases.

## GOVERNANCE PHASE ONE

From the earliest days of the colony, Catholic schools, including most of the schools conducted by Good Samaritan Sisters, were administered initially through local parishes and then later through diocesan systems. Others, however, were owned by religious orders. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan retained ownership of the ten schools listed above.



## GOVERNANCE PHASE TWO

In the second half of the twentieth century, fewer women and men were entering religious life. Providing suitably qualified religious for both teaching and administrative positions became increasingly difficult. At the same time, many church agencies were asking for religious to work in newly emerging ministries to the poor and marginalized. Many religious discerned that their call was to these works rather than to remain in the well-established school system.

On a more global level, the teaching of Vatican Council II acclaimed the rightful position of lay people and their “proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church”<sup>1</sup>. This view became fundamental to the vision of a new form of governance for the ten Good Samaritan schools.

All engaged in Catholic education were being challenged by Vatican II to adjust Christian thinking to the modern world.<sup>2</sup> The Sisters of the Good Samaritan applied this new thinking to the governance of their schools.

## INCORPORATION OF GOOD SAMARITAN SCHOOLS



Sr Mary Ronayne

Sr Mary Ronayne, Superior of the Good Samaritan Sisters (1969-1981), sought legal and canonical advice and opened up discussion about finding a suitable governance structure that would take the Good Samaritan schools into the future.

In 1981, she established a working party for Mater Christi College, Melbourne, and commissioned the development of a Memorandum and Articles for the incorporation of the College.<sup>3</sup> In that same year, the process of incorporation for St Patrick’s College,

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- 1 Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Aactuositatem*, 1965
  - 2 Declaration on Christian Education “*Gravissimum Educationis*”, Second Vatican Council
  - 3 Good Samaritan Archives, Glebe Point. Box 276.

Campbelltown, was begun as a Memorandum and Articles were drawn up and Directors and Members appointed to govern the College.

Across the Congregation and schools, conversation was widened to include principals and school communities regarding the future governance structures of all the schools. Sr Anselm Hall wrote a paper giving an ecclesial perspective for this new mode of governance and a reassurance that the Sisters would continue their commitment to these educational enterprises as part of their apostolic work within the mission of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Sr Helen Lombard, Superior (1981-1993), continued to guide the schools into a new form of governance. By 1993 each of the ten Good Samaritan schools in Australia was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and governed according to a Constitution.

Under this governance arrangement, the Members of the Company represented and were accountable to the Congregation through the Superior and her Council. The Board of Directors, appointed by the Members, was responsible for the management of the school. Responsibility for the leadership and administration of the College remained with the Principal who was accountable to the Board.

This model worked well and the schools were governed for three decades by dedicated women and men working in partnership with the Sisters.

In 1996, Sr Sonia Wagner, Superior (1993-2005), established the Good Samaritan Education Council (GSEC), with its own Charter,<sup>5</sup> in order to assist and advise her in providing stewardship and coordination of the governance of the schools.



*Sr Helen Lombard*



*Sr Sonia Wagner*

4 *ibid*

5 Charter of the Good Samaritan Education Council

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN EDUCATION COUNCIL (1996 – 2011)

The Education Council addressed matters that related to both the ecclesial and the civil responsibilities of the Congregation. The ecclesial responsibilities, which had been integrated into the Constitution, focused on two areas:

- the Catholic ethos and mission (embraced by the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition); and
- the temporal goods of the school

With its chief focus on the building and strengthening of relationships across the Good Samaritan Education Community, the Education Council worked effectively and well with schools, Boards and Company Members.

Over time, however, it became increasingly clear that this structure of governance of Good Samaritan schools lacked long term sustainability. In reading the signs of the times as they relate to the Congregation and its schools, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan discerned that it was time to embrace a new and different future.

At the behest of the Superior, Sr Clare Condon (2005 - ) a process was begun to discern the governance structure most suited to the current and future needs of the ten Good Samaritan schools. This marked the beginning of Phase Three.



*Sr Clare Condon*

## GOVERNANCE PHASE THREE

An extensive consultation (2009-2011) was undertaken with Sisters, Members, Directors, Principals and Leadership Teams to determine the best model of governance to take the Good Samaritan schools confidently into the future. Knowing that, *"at all times the Church carries*

*the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel if it is to carry out its task,*<sup>6</sup> a comprehensive Report was prepared by the Education Council.

The Report identified relevant signs of the times and established criteria and principles against which the Superior and Council could discern the most suitable governance model.

From this process, it emerged that a diocesan collegial public juridic person (PJP) was the most appropriate governance structure for the future life of the ten schools.

In common accord with the Archbishops of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney and the Bishops of Broken Bay and Wollongong, Sr Clare Condon established *Good Samaritan Education*.

With the agreement of the other four participating Bishops, the Archbishop of Sydney, George Cardinal Pell, constituted *Good Samaritan Education* a collegial public juridic person on 22 July, 2011. *Good Samaritan Education* assumed the Congregation's rights and obligations pertaining to the ministry of Catholic education.

## A COLLEGIAL PUBLIC JURIDIC PERSON

As a collegial PJP, *Good Samaritan Education* is committed to *communio*, (the building of an authentic community) and to discernment as fundamental to life. As a community of faith, established to participate in the ministry of Catholic education, *Good Samaritan Education* is enriched by its heritage, now taking on new form and new expression according to its Statement of Charism.

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6 Gadium et Spes, 4

## STATEMENT OF CHARISM

The charism of *Good Samaritan Education* is centred on the person of Jesus Christ in the communal seeking of God, believing that it is together – not as isolated individuals – that we go to God (Rule of Benedict 72:12), our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love (RB Prologue 49).

Enriched and inspired by the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), the Rule of Benedict and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, the mission of *Good Samaritan Education* is to sustain and nurture communities of learning in the Catholic tradition.

Such faith communities of learning are formed by essential values drawn from the Rule of Benedict: love of neighbour, prayer, stability, *conversatio*, obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality, community, justice and peace.

The Good Samaritan Schools are conducted in accordance with the beliefs, teachings and legislation of the Church and the Charism and the Philosophy of Education of *Good Samaritan Education*.<sup>7</sup>

The ecclesial identity of each school as an apostolic work is dependent upon the approval of the diocesan Bishop. Furthermore, the school must comply with the general regulation of Catholic schools issued by the diocesan Bishop.<sup>8</sup>

The collegial aspect of *Good Samaritan Education* resonates with the Benedictine tradition. Whenever important matters were to be decided in the monastery, Benedict sought to hear from the entire community<sup>9</sup>.

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7 Statutes 33

8 Canon 609 and 806 §1

9 Rule of Benedict 3

In continuing the mission that Jesus Christ gave to the Church, *Good Samaritan Education* is called to ensure that *In All Things God May Be Glorified*  
- *In Omnibus Glorificetur Deus*



