

SOLIDARITY MATTERS



Winter 2021

LET CHILDREN LEARN

*Our mid-year
appeal supporting
Bougainville*

UPDATES FROM 9 PROJECTS
It's been a busy quarter!

NEWS FROM OUR BOARD
Find out what's happening



Who we are

Australian Marist Solidarity (AMS) works to ensure that all young people have access to educational opportunities.

We believe education has the power to eradicate poverty. With your help, we support grassroots movements run by local people, by empowering them to make a change in their community.

Working across Asia and the Pacific, our projects focus on providing access to education for vulnerable young people, building facilities for the future to ensure safe spaces for learning, and investing in resilience and readiness to help young people who need a little extra support to thrive in learning environments.

Together, we transform the lives of young people by raising awareness of the power of education, and the funds that make it possible.

Together, we bring hope.



Contents

From the CEO	3
Mid-year appeal	4
Winter-warming recipe	6
Around the schools	7
Project updates	9
Annual report	13
Board and operations update	14
Board member profile	15
Ways to help	15

Got a story?

Share it with us and send it to us at ams@marists.org.au





From the CEO

Dear friends

June is always a special month for our Marist family, as we celebrate Champagnat Day and reflect on our Marist foundations and our role in continuing the mission of St Marcellin Champagnat and the early Brothers. What better way to continue that incredible legacy than working with our Marist brothers and sisters in this region to ensure that young people can reach their brightest potential. Even during these challenging times we've been so inspired by the work that continues to be carried out by our partners and by the people here in Australia who contribute to make their work possible.

In this edition of Solidarity Matters you'll find updates from St Louis High School, Kiribati (the focus of our 2020 school campaign) and learn about the incredible work being carried out in the Solomon Islands. You'll see a glimpse of the work being done in our Marist schools to support AMS projects and hear about our mid-year appeal – to extend a school in Bougainville. There is a delicious Vietnamese stew for you to try as the chill sets in and updates from our team and Board so that you know what is happening 'behind the scenes'.

It was particularly wonderful to recently catch up with many of our friends and supporters in Adelaide and Sydney as we resumed face-to-face AMS gatherings. Special thanks to Sacred Heart College Adelaide, St Joseph's College Hunters Hill, and Parramatta Marist High School for hosting us so generously. We look forward to connecting in a similar way with our friends in Brisbane and Melbourne towards the end of the year. Watch this space, our social media accounts, and our website events page for details.

Thank you all so much for your kind messages of support as Stephan, Maddy and I prepare to welcome our newest family member.

As many of you will be aware I will be taking parental leave from mid-June to the end of December, leaving AMS in the capable hands of our Acting CEO, Deirdre Looney. Deirdre joined AMS earlier this year as our inaugural Business Manager and has demonstrated exceptional management capabilities and a strong commitment to our mission and vision. I know you'll join me in welcoming her to this new role, where she will be supported by our energised and skilled AMS team.

Yours in solidarity

Bec

Staff profile



As Bec mentions in her CEO column opposite, there's going to be some change in the AMS office while she is on parental leave.

We'd like to introduce you to Deirdre Looney, our fairly new Business Manager, who will be stepping into the CEO role in an acting capacity until the end of the year.

Deirdre joined the team in March and brings with her 15 years of financial and operational experience, primarily in the education sector.

In this role, Deirdre has been responsible for overseeing our business operations, including compliance, risk management and policies and procedures. Deirdre's focus will be ensuring AMS continues to meet contemporary best practice.

As acting CEO, she is excited to contribute to the inspiring work of AMS and be part of a wonderful team of passionate individuals donors and partners.

Deirdre and her family moved to Brisbane from Sydney at the end of 2020.

On her days off she enjoys taking a yoga class, catching up on some reading and taking long walks with her family.

Together, we are letting children learn in Bougainville

Imagine if you weren't able to finish high school? Not because you couldn't do the work, but because there just wasn't one for you to physically attend?

That's the reality for many students in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

There are currently only four senior secondary schools in the whole of Bougainville, offering around 500 positions for an estimated age cohort of several thousand.

That means just 1 in 4 children will reach senior secondary school due to the scarcity of schools.

This is a situation AMS is currently striving to change. The aim of our recent mid-year appeal, Let Children Learn, was to fund the expansion of St Joseph's College in Bougainville. We're excited to share that we met our fundraising target!

Thank you to all the AMS supporters who generously donated to this appeal.

At present St Joseph's, situated in the town of Mabiri, only operates until Grade 10.

This is a critical time for Bougainville, which is on the path towards independence from Papua New Guinea. The urgent expansion of the education sector is crucial to

empower today's youth who will become tomorrow's leaders.

By expanding St Joseph's to provide senior secondary education plus boarding for young people in Bougainville, students will be able to complete their full education.

AMS has a strong history of delivering important educational projects in Bougainville. The Marist Brothers first established St Joseph's College in the village of Rigu in 1949, having been in Bougainville since 1941.

During the Bougainville conflict the school was burnt to the ground along with most buildings on the island. In 1999 the Marist Brothers established a new St Joseph's College in the village of Mabiri.

The new St Joseph's was purposely developed to educate ex-combatants and other young men of the crisis generation. Marist Brothers were at the forefront of peace and reconciliation efforts in the area, pioneered by Australian Brother Pat Howley who facilitated reconciliation through restorative justice practices.

This project involves the construction of a "4-1 building" - a two-storey building with two classrooms on the ground level and a dormitory on the upper level.

One classroom will be for 40 grade 11 students, the other classroom for 40 grade 12 students, while the dormitory will have a capacity of 20 students.

Once this project is completed there are still a number of important things to do at St Joseph's, so please do let us know if you are interested in continuing to support the young people of Bougainville in the future.





WINTER WARMER

If you're after a hearty dinner idea for winter, try this recipe from our project partners Blue Dragon Children's Foundation in Vietnam. Thanks so much for sharing, Blue Dragon! Please see page 11 for their latest update.



Beef stew with Asian spices



Serves 4

Ingredients

For the marinade

- 1 kg of beef (the best cuts for this dish are chuck, cross-cut shanks, or fatty brisket)
- 3 tsps of salt
- 2 tsps of brown sugar
- 2 tsps of five-spice powder

Cut the beef in bite-sized cubes and marinate it with all the ingredients above for at least half a day. Marinating it overnight in the fridge would be ideal.

For the stew

- 500 g of chopped tomatoes
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic peeled and chopped into small pieces
- 2 tbsps of unsalted butter
- 2 or 3 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper
- 3-4 carrots peeled and cut into one-inch chunks
- Potatoes: you can use baby potatoes, or just regular potatoes peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 tbsp of tomato paste
- Star anise
- 1-2 tsps of five-spice powder
- Fresh coriander (alternatively you can use parsley) chopped into small pieces

Step 1

Add butter to the pot over medium heat and, when it melts, add the chopped onion, and let it cook for a few minutes, then add the tomatoes. When the tomatoes are soft, put the beef and garlic in the pot. Cook over medium-high heat until the beef turns brown.

Step 2

Pour enough hot water into the pot to nearly cover the beef, add the bay leaves, 2 or 3 stars of star anise, five-spice powder, and the tomato paste. Reduce the heat to medium low, then simmer for 30-40 mins before adding the chopped carrots and potatoes.

Step 3

Cook for 15-20 mins, then check if the beef is tender and all the ingredients are cooked. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



AROUND THE SCHOOLS

Marist College Ashgrove Mother & Son Breakfast event supporting AMS



It was difficult to work out whether it was a tasty, cooked breakfast shared amongst Marist mums and their sons or the calibre of the guest speaker that attracted nearly 1400 people to the annual Mother & Son Breakfast in the days leading up to Mothers' Day 2021. Such was the interest that we had to extend the breakfast to three mornings, one with nearly 400 people and the other two with 500 guests each day. The College Services Team and the Mission Captains did a magnificent job serving the multitudes.

Our guest speaker this year was Australian Marist Solidarity CEO, Rebecca Bromhead. Bec pitched her reflections within a context of Marist Motherhood (and Manhood) both global and local and the enduring message of hope that inspires the work of AMS out of its Marial origins. The audience came to know some of the projects in which AMS has been involved and which we will be supporting – providing sanctuary for the children of sex-workers in Balay Banaag in The Philippines; schooling at St Joseph's College



Mabiri on previously strife-torn Bougainville; St Marcellin School and Hostel which provides free education for the children of workers in the tea gardens of Bangladesh; Chetana Tribal Boy Hostel which provides schooling for sons of poor farming families belonging to ethnic minorities in India; the women's sewing project in Myanmar; and teacher education in Timor-Leste.

Bec situated the work of AMS within the broader context of the challenges we face in our own culture and society – COVID19,

drought, Black deaths in custody, sexual abuse and the issue of consent, to name some. And made sure to remind us of the humble but inspired origins of our Marist identity that we strive to remain faithful to at Marist College Ashgrove.

Thanks Bec and our very best wishes as you embark upon your own journey of motherhood for the second time. Funds raised from the breakfast, together with those raised during the College Lenten program have been donated to AMS 2021.

Luke McMahon, Head of Mission

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

Marcellin College Randwick

This year's Champagnat Mass was a wonderful acknowledgment from our community of the outstanding work of St Marcellin Champagnat and the 'Fratres Maristae a Scholis' (FMS), or Marist Brothers.

We welcomed to his first College Mass, the Principal Celebrant, Fr Gerard McCormick, parish priest of OLSH Parish Randwick. Con-celebrating with Fr Gerard for our Mass was Fr Phil Hicks, parish priest from St Brigid's Parish Coogee. We were also joined by some special guests; former Headmaster, Br Robert O'Connor, Br Michael Akers, Marcellin Community House Supervisor and the Brothers of the Marcellin Randwick community.

Also joining us was Dr Marjorie O'Neill, State Member for Coogee. We thank these friends of the College for taking time out of their busy schedules to join us for our special Mass.

We were also joined by parents and families for the first time in 18 months. It was great to be able to welcome back our parent community to our celebrations and have the opportunity to thank them in person for their unwavering support.

Also, for the first time in a year and a half, we were able to sing as a whole school gathering. Ms Anita DeFrancesco and Mr Fintan Keane did a fabulous job in preparing our boys, the choir, and the singing arrangements for the celebration.

Following the Mass, the 2021 Champagnat Awards were given out to selected students from Years 7-12 who exhibit the qualities of St Marcellin Champagnat. Selected Staff were also recognised for 'Staff Service' and 'Staff Contribution' Awards.

We also held a variety of Champagnat Day activities. We are absolutely delighted to share that these resulted in more than \$7500 raised for AMS.

Chris Shields, Director Faith and Mission



PROJECT UPDATES

ICFP | Timor-Leste

A COVID-19 resurgence in the country has led to a difficult time for students in Timor-Leste over the past few months. Schools continue to be shut due to restrictions.

The Instituto Católico para Formação de Professores, or ICFP, is the Marist-administered teacher training college in Baucau, Timor-Leste. AMS has been involved with ICFP since it was established.

ICFP Deputy Director Domingas came up with an innovative

solution for the teaching practicum component of the course. As school attendance wasn't possible, he suggested asking teaching students to gather pupils around their homes to teach for the practicum period.

Domingas organised this a video showcasing this, which is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/gS0uUqLX1oM>.

At right is a still from the video.



St Michel Technical College | Vanuatu

Construction of the year 9 classrooms is continuing slowly but surely, with workers doing what they can despite delays with sourcing materials.

There is a severe shortage of building materials in the Pacific region currently, due to problems with transport, supply, and COVID-19 movement restrictions.

Here are some photos of the classroom work in progress.



PROJECT UPDATES

LaValla Project | Cambodia

Despite a promising start with schools reopening in January in Cambodia, a COVID-19 resurgence in February put the country back into lockdown and schools remain shut. Unfortunately, the virus outbreak is much more serious than any in 2020.

Online learning

Many schools are providing online lessons to their students but LaValla students, being from very poor rural families, have no ability to access these lessons due to cost and isolation. Recently the school was told that if the Grade 12 students did not begin to join classes, they would not be allowed to sit for their senior exams later in the year.

The school is looking at ways to overcome this disadvantage and have decided to provide phones, initially to Grades 12, 9 and 6, the examination classes, and possibly extend this to other students if there is no sign of schools reopening soon. As well as the phones, costs

for phone charges also have to be covered. The project is now sourcing funds for this.

Food support

During 2020 staff surveyed families and found that many needed assistance with basic food supplies as many places of employment had closed due to the pandemic. LaValla initially distributed food to 50 of its families and will do this again once travel restrictions are lifted. The plan is to put together food packages worth about US\$60 and distribute them to the families, to 120 in total this time.



Centru Tinamentu Uai-Lili (CTUF) | Timor-Leste

In some very good news: restrictions were lifted around the Uai Lili area in Baucau at the beginning of June, allowing for the gathering of crowds. So, computer education classes for rural children at CTUF have been able to resume. We just received this image from our project partners – and are delighted to see how happy the children look!



PROJECT UPDATES

Blue Dragon | Vietnam

Blue Dragon Children's Foundation helps young people and families in Vietnam survive human trafficking and build new lives. Being freed from oppression is just the beginning for trauma survivors, so the foundation provides psychological support and health care; access to education, career preparation and vocational training; and assistance for children to reunite with their families.

During the past six months, support by AMS and Lenity Australia have enabled eight teenagers and young women to start vocational training courses; eight more have attended school; and two young women have found new jobs. The support has also allowed 84 survivors of trafficking to receive emergency care and accommodation after being rescued.

During a recent therapeutic activity, the girls drew a tree to hang their wishes for the future. Eighteen-year-old Chu shared: "I may not always

shine, but I always walk towards the sun. My tree is small, but it is resilient and can withstand rain and storms."



St Louis High School | Kiribati

Phase 2 is underway! We are thrilled to report that the second stage of our work at St Louis High School in Kiribati is progressing well, with the construction of new senior school toilet blocks now completed.

This project was the focus of our Schools Campaign in 2020 and in September we reported on the opening of the junior school toilet blocks.

After a slight delay due to COVID and material sourcing, work is now back on track. The next step will be

a new administration block. Thanks to all our schools who supported this campaign!



PROJECT UPDATES

Kuya Centre for Street Children | Philippines

Thank you and farewell!

We would like to say a huge thank you to Sr Kate O'Neill, who finished her role as Executive Director with the Kuya Centre for Street Children at the end of April. The Kuya Centre supports vulnerable children in the Philippines to transition from the streets into a secure home and to engage with education.

Sr Kate has been involved with Kuya Centre since 2004 and has been Executive Director since 2017. She has been a wonderful partner to

work with and we wish her all the best as she takes a well-learned break and then begins a new mission working with trafficked persons.

The Board of Trustees for Kuya Centre has appointed Ms Fatima Elahe as the new Executive Director. Fatima has many years of experience working with children in need of special care and protection both in the Philippines and abroad.

We look forward to working with Fatima in her new role and continuing our involvement with this important project.



Our Lady Queen of Martyrs | Solomon Islands

We were absolutely thrilled to receive this photo in April showing the materials for six new classrooms at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs officially arriving in Wainoni Bay!

Due to the remote location of the school and the recent bad weather, there was a delay in shipping the materials from Honiara.

This project is being supported by AMS in partnership with Catholic Mission.

We also spoke recently with some local community members who are working on the construction site. Site foreman Michael said he was enjoying being able to work in his home village rather than travelling to Honiara.

"I am really enjoying the job – it's a challenge. This is a very big building.

I can also train local people, so they develop new skills," he said.

"It also has let me live at home, instead of working away in Honiara. It can be difficult to get home when you are working in town. But now I can spend my weekend going to see my family.

"My family is really happy to have me home – I get to sleep there at night. I have six children – five sons and one daughter. I am also a grandfather."



2020 Annual Report

One of our favourite jobs in the AMS office is preparing the Annual Report. It's an opportunity for us to see in one succinct, colourful document just how much our supporters and team have achieved in a year!

This year's report was particularly rewarding. Yes, 2020 with its

pandemic and the associated challenges was tough. But it was so gratifying to see how together – we can get through anything.

Because despite those challenges, we were still able to accomplish some amazing achievements. With the continued support from our generous supporters, we worked

in 18 countries and delivered more than \$2.2 million to 41 programs. Read all about it here: <https://www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/news-2/news/publications/>



GOVERNANCE

Board update

The AMS Board met in April and again in mid June and considered a number of matters, including the following:

The Board presented its **2020 Annual Report** to its members, the Marist Brothers Province of Australia at the May Annual General Meeting.

AMS Directors continue to monitor progress against the **2021 budget** and are pleased that income and expenditure are largely as anticipated so far this year.

Following review from the Finance and Risk Committee, the Board has approved updates to the following policies: Counter-Terrorism Policy; Risk Management Policy; Investment Policy; Fundraising and Donations

Policy; and Delegations of Authority Policy and Schedule.

AMS Directors **welcomed new staff members** Nigel Sydney (Projects Coordinator) and Christopher Boevink (Marketing and Design Officer) to the organisation.

The Board received updates on the situation facing several **AMS project partner countries** in the region, including Fiji, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Timor-Leste and continues to keep an eye on the challenges facing many of AMS' partner communities.

AMS Directors continued to participate in 'deep dive' discussions as part of the **strategic planning process**, considering matters

including the breadth and depth of the current project portfolio, AMS' relationships with a variety of Marist family agencies and new communications and fundraising strategies.

The Board checked in with the **AMS Risk Register** and was pleased to report that a cyber-security insurance policy for the organisation has been put in place.

The Board approved new Communications and Fundraising strategies for the organisation.

The Board also wished CEO Bec Bromhead well as she starts a period of parental leave and welcomed Deirdre Looney as Acting CEO until the end of 2021.

Operations update

While it seems that the AMS staff team is growing exponentially, actually it has only increased by half a full-time position, but there are now lots of **part-time staff** working in the office. This brings a wide variety of specialist expertise to the team, which is wonderful, but does mean that you won't always be able to catch every staff member on every day. Team members will be sure to get back to you as soon as possible and you can always reach AMS on ams@marists.org.au or by phone on (07) 3354 0600 if the matter is urgent.

In May the team spent **two days offsite** sharing skills from the different portfolios and planning for the current year. It was an energizing time and all staff are excited by the work ahead and the opportunity to learn from each other across a range of areas.

As you'll see in this edition, there is **positive news from our partners** Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School in the Solomon Islands, St Louis High School in Kiribati and St Michel Technical College in Vanuatu with building work progressing well for their new facilities. Work is also proceeding well at St Teresinha's Primary School in Quelicai, Timor-Leste – watch this space for an update soon!

It has been wonderful to **connect face to face with AMS friends and supporters** recently in **Adelaide** and **Sydney**. Special thanks to Parramatta Marist High School, St Joseph's College Hunters Hill and Sacred Heart College Adelaide for your generosity in hosting our gatherings. AMS looks forward to connecting in person (restrictions allowing) with friends in **Melbourne** and **Brisbane** in November this year.

The AMS team worked hard to present the mid year **'Let Children Learn' Appeal**, gathering support to provide access to senior secondary education at St Joseph's College in Mabiri, Bougainville. You can read more about this inspiring work on page 4.

While it is not the most exciting thing to talk about, one of the most important things the AMS team is currently working on is improving our **records management systems** in the office. There are upgrades that need to be done over the coming six to 12 months and the team is excited that this will allow them to work more efficiently and effectively, ultimately over time enabling us to send even more resources to our partners.

60 SECONDS WITH

Brother Jeff Barrington, AMS Board

Q. *How did you come to know about/connect with AMS?*

A. I was there at the start. In 2004 Br Chris Wills came to live with me at Rosalie and began the MAPS organisation, setting up the office there and developing programs, as well as communicating with and connecting with schools. Br Allen Sherry had just recently returned from Rome and sometime later joined Chris at Rosalie, to combine the work he had begun in Melbourne. Soon after, Br Chris went to Rome and Br Allen continued their work forming and establishing AMS. I moved to Emerald for five years and then six at John Therry Catholic School at Rosemeadow. During that time a strong connection between AMS and Marist schools developed, and thus, I stayed connected.

Q. *What aspect of work of AMS are you most passionate about?*

A. There are two areas that I see are important and am passionate about in AMS. Sorry, I can't pick one because they go together. One is supporting, developing, resourcing, and educating, those young people who have very little in various places around the world. Therefore, the outreach programs are critically important. The other aspect that I highly value is the education of, awareness building, and challenging of Australian children to be generous, thinking beyond themselves, and being aware of others.

Q. *What is your role with AMS?*

A. I have been a member of the AMS Board since moving to Ashgrove at the beginning of 2019, and trust that I can influence decisions for the greater good of all. I hope my 45 years in schools does help the board to understand young people.

Q. *Why do you support AMS?*

A. I support AMS because it is Marist, and it is a good thing to do, and good for me going beyond myself.

Q. *What is your wish for 2021?*

A. My wish for 2021 is that the organisation of the AMS team will continue to settle and grow, that all of us will become more deeply immersed in and understand more of the Marist spirit, and that the already wonderful work can continue as it is.



Ways to help

Together, we can make a difference. Our work is only possible because of our generous donors and supporters. You can help us in whatever way is best for you.

Make a monthly donation

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Call 3354 0600 or donate securely at www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au

Get your school involved

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Head to www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/learn on how your school can help.

Keep up-to-date

Sign up to the AMS newsletter www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/sign-up-for-the-latest-news

Leave a gift in your will

If you are able, we encourage you to consider leaving a legacy that will live on. www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/partnerships/gifts-in-your-will

Workplace giving

One of the most cost effective and simple ways of making a donation. Head to www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/partnerships/workplace-giving for more.

Get active

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Youtube, and read our updates at www.australianmaristsolidarity.net.au/news-2

Connect with us to find out more.



australianmaristsolidarity.net.au



ams@marists.org.au



PO Box 273
Ashgrove West
QLD 4060



[@MaristSolidarity](https://www.facebook.com/MaristSolidarity)



[@AusMSol](https://www.instagram.com/AusMSol)



(07) 3354 0600



[Australian Marist Solidarity](https://www.youtube.com/AustralianMaristSolidarity)



[@AusMSol](https://www.twitter.com/AusMSol)

