

SOLIDARITY MATTERS



Summer 2021

GIVING THE GIFT OF CARE

Christmas Appeal underway

UPDATES FROM OUR PROJECTS

*Sharing stories from
Asia and the Pacific*

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 acting CEO	3
Christmas Appeal	4
Around the schools	6
Summer recipe	8
Project updates	9
Board and operations update	13
Board member profile	14
How to donate	15

Got a story?

We'd love to share it with our supporters! Please send it to us at ams@marists.org.au



Thanks to Conor Ashleigh for the front cover image and all the other wonderful images of his that we use.



From the acting CEO

Dear friends

Welcome to our Summer issue, and a very Merry Christmas to you all. Or, as we say in Ireland: 'Nollaig Shona'.

As we come to the end of another challenging year, I hope you are staying safe and well, and that restrictions have eased where you live. We have enjoyed hearing from project partners over the past month that in-person delivery is again possible and want to say thank you to all our project partners for the inspiring work you continue to do. All of our partners did a superb job moving to online or restricted activities during the nearly two years of pandemic, but there's nothing like being able to come together face to face at schools and activity centres.

One of those projects that is open again is Anondo Neer in Bangladesh. We were delighted to receive some artwork from their classes – so much so, we asked if we could use one of the drawings for our 2021 Christmas card. We are very appreciative to the artist, Malina: massive thanks, and you are so talented! Keep an eye on your inbox for this!



Reflecting on the year, I want to take this opportunity to thank all

of our AMS friends: our school networks who continue to show such interest in the work of AMS and raise funds for our projects; as well as our donors for your generous support, even in the midst of a global pandemic. We truly are blessed with our dedicated community. Your ongoing support of AMS has meant that our projects have been able to continue to support their local communities throughout this difficult period. We hope you enjoy reading the inspiring updates from some of our project partners in this issue.

This is my last Welcome letter, as my acting role as CEO finishes in January when Bec returns from parental leave, and I will return to my position as Business Manager. I have really enjoyed this opportunity, the highlight of which has been getting to know our donors and supporters a bit better. We wish you and your family a safe and happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Yours in solidarity

Deirdre

Deirdre Looney
Acting CEO



Staff profile



This issue we would like to introduce you to Christopher Boevink, our design officer who joined the team in May.

Chris has more than 15 years of experience in graphic design. He's a design, brand, and finished art specialist with expertise in brand development, promotional materials, packaging, signage, catalogues, advertisements, trade displays, educational material and online assets across multiple industries and the not-for-profit community sector.

In his AMS role, Chris loves to create Solidarity Matters, design the visual elements of fundraising appeals across print and digital formats, and our social media. He covers all the visual elements of AMS and looks forward to further developing our materials in 2022.

Chris enjoys camping with his family, cycling, fixing bicycles and old cars. He also enjoys solving handyman problems at home and for family and friends. Chris is a committee member of the Brisbane Land Rover Owners Club and owns a 1998 Defender named 'Basil'.

On his days off, Chris takes his 8-year-old son indoor climbing and his 11-year-old daughter to play AFL. He also is finishing a kitchen and bedroom at home.



Together, we can give the gift of care this Christmas

Many children living with a disability in Asia and the Pacific are impoverished, cannot attend school, and experience bullying and discrimination.

To help these children get the services they need now, Australian Marist Solidarity has launched a Christmas appeal. The *Give the gift*

of care this Christmas campaign will fund disability services projects in our nearest neighbouring countries. Donating to the appeal is a gift that will change lives.

AMS has a strong history of supporting inclusive, all-access educational opportunities for vulnerable young people in Asia and the Pacific.

Projects such as:

- the Marist Champagnat Institute in Fiji, which offers programs to young people with learning disabilities who have struggled to fit into mainstream schooling.
- KATILOSA in Timor-Leste, a program that works to improve the lives of children and youth with disabilities by catering for their needs, advocating for their human rights and educating those around them
- the Anondo Neer centre in Bangladesh, which enables people with a disability to receive medical care, life skill training, basic physiotherapy, literacy and numeracy education, income generating skills and opportunities for socialisation outside of their home.
- LaValla in Cambodia, a boarding school that caters for children and young people with physical disabilities, means children can attend primary school on site, and then stay in safe, accessible accommodation when attending the local high school.

With our supporters' help, children living with a disability in these regions will get the services they need.

By giving the gift of care this Christmas, together, we will change their lives. Funds from the campaign will provide support that means children with a disability will be able



to attend school; have improved health and education outcomes, experience less discrimination; and increase their feelings of self-worth and confidence.

Donations will help children like Bopha, in Cambodia and Violet, who lives in Fiji.

BOPHA'S STORY



“ I'm Bopha and I live in the north of Cambodia with my mum, dad, three sisters and two brothers. I was diagnosed with polio at a young age and now I use a wheelchair.

I used to attend a local primary school but it was difficult because I wasn't treated well and other children discriminated against me because of my disability.

My mum and dad enrolled me into LaValla [a school funded by AMS] and it has been life changing for me. I've made lots of friends and it is much easier for me to move around easily with my wheelchair.

I completed my primary school education at LaValla and because of that I was able to graduate to high school where I'm very happy and have lots of friends. I hope to continue to Grade 12 and study to become a primary school teacher.”



Donations are tax-deductable and will help children with a disability gain the care and skills they need to achieve their potential. Together, we can bring inclusive educational opportunities to vulnerable young people in Asia and the Pacific.

To donate, please visit the AMS website at australianmaristsolidarity.net.au, call (07) 3354 0600 or turn to page 15

Please give the gift of care this Christmas

Donate today to help a child with disabilities get the services they need now.

To make a cash, cheque or credit card donation, fill in this form and mail to: Australian Marist Solidarity, PO Box 273, Ashgrove West QLD 4060

Donate online at: australianmaristsolidarity.org.au or scan the QR code to donate.

Make direct deposit donations to: Australian Marist Solidarity BSB 082 500 Account No 1628 5262 Please email the details of your donation to: ams.accounts@marists.org.au

Name: _____ Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____ Email: _____

Give once ☐ Give monthly ☐ Amount: _____

Credit card number: _____ Expiry date: ____/____/____

Name on card: _____

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

A gift in your will can leave a legacy to transform the education of future generations of young children.

Once you have remembered your loved ones, would you please consider leaving a gift in your will?

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my will to AMS.



VIOLET'S STORY

“ I'm Violet and I live in Fiji with my mum and younger brother. I have learning difficulties. At my previous school I had a lot of problems doing my schoolwork and this made me feel angry and unhappy. I am now enrolled at the Marist Champagnat Institute, which is the only school of its kind in Fiji that supports students like me. It's helped me so much. I have sessions with a school counsellor where I can share how I feel. My schoolwork has improved, and I feel happier and more at peace with myself.”

AROUND THE SCHOOLS

St Augustine's College Cairns



An understanding of the massive challenges facing schools in Timor-Leste gave St Augustine's students the motivation to ensure their annual AMS appeal was a great success.

The students learned that Timor-Leste is one of the least-developed countries in the world and one of the poorest in Asia. Funds raised during the appeal would be life-changing for students in the tiny country, providing them with access to better facilities and improved educational outcomes.

It demonstrates that our faith in service can provide greater justice in our world.

A very big thank you to all the students, families and friends who donated this year. Students involved themselves in many activities within the college including selling cakes, pikelets, spiders, ice cream cones, ice blocks and chocolates. Other activities such as guess the lollies in the jar; a car wash; BBQs; cleaning the school concrete; and a numbers board were used to raise money!

We are very happy that our contributions can make a difference for others in our global Marist family.

Christine Cross
Director of Mission
St Augustine's College



AROUND THE SCHOOLS

Marist College Kogarah



Students and staff at Marist College Kogarah also raised generous funds for AMS projects in Timor-Leste with the College's annual Marist Solidarity Walkathon.

This year, fundraising for the Walkathon was launched early in term 2 and included fun, community activities throughout the weeks leading up to the big day.

Fortunately, it was a bright day on the bay the Friday the walkathon was held. Staff and students had the great privilege of welcoming Mr Luciano Valentim da Conceicao, the Consul General of Timor-Leste, who joined College Captain, Max Efremidis, College principal, Mr Simon Ghantous, and Year 12 students for the scenic walk along Botany Bay from Kyeemah to Dolls Point.

The College community celebrated the spirit of solidarity and friendship, joining together for a barbecue lunch to round off the day.

Paul Frazer
Business Manager



CHRISTMAS RECIPE

To celebrate Christmas in our region, we have a suitably green and red festive recipe, that's served cold! Huge thanks to AMS board member Norman Chan for his version of the Fijian Kokoda (pronounced co-con-da) dish.

KOKODA Fijian Coconut Milk Ceviche

Ingredients

- 500g fresh Snapper fillet, cut into cubes
- 4 limes, juiced
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 1 cup Kara coconut milk (try to find this brand – it's less diluted than many others)
- 2 medium shallots, finely diced
- 1/2 medium red onion, finely diced
- 1 medium green capsicum, finely diced
- 1 Lebanese cucumber, remove seeds and finely dice
- 3 long red chillies, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons parsley, finely diced
- 2 tomatoes, remove seeds and finely dice
- 1 coconut split into equal halves (to do this use the blunt side of a heavy knife and tap on the three vertical lines on the coconut. This will split coconut into two neat halves.)



Method

- Place your cubed Snapper in a large mixing bowl, then pour the mixed lime and lemon juice over top until the fish is submerged.
- Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, then place into the fridge for at least 2 hours.
- After at least 2 hours (or more), the fish fillet should be opaque and ready to go. Drain the excess liquid.
- Pour the coconut milk over the bowl.
- Add your chopped shallots, red onion, capsicum, cucumber, chillies, tomatoes, and parsley and mix everything well. Add a pinch of pink salt to taste (add more if required).
- Serve your kokoda cold in the coconut halves. Enjoy!



PROJECT UPDATES

Chetana | India

Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel celebrated Teachers Day in India in September. The community celebrated with cake, followed by dinner and cultural dancing. Thank you to the Brothers and teachers for continuing the hostel boys' education during challenging times.



St Michel's College | Vanuatu

Huge thanks to all the AMS supporters who donated to rebuild St Michel's College in Vanuatu following destruction by Cyclone Harold in April 2020.

The year 9 class rooms, technical workshop, and toilet blocks have all been completed. The next part of the reconstruction has begun, with building materials arriving for the teachers staffroom!



PROJECT UPDATES

St John Evangelist Community High School | Solomon Islands

Preparations are well underway for St John's School to expand to offer form 6 (year 12) from 2022.

This has involved a project to build new staff houses to accommodate the extra teachers, with two houses planned.

However, thanks to generous support from some of the school's former students, donations exceeded expectations so three houses have been built!

What a wonderful example of education supporting success and development into the future – and what a way to thank teachers!



Anondo Neer | Bangladesh

As outlined in our CEO's Welcome on page 3, the students at Anondo Neer are very creative. Our Christmas card artist Malina and her friends have been busy producing gorgeous drawings and artwork, celebrating the return to in-person activities in Bangladesh.

A new project set to start at the centre in the New Year will focus on using creativity for vocational purposes. A candle-making initiative will teach local families living in poverty how to make and decorate candles and sell them to generate income for themselves.

Candles are in high demand in Bangladesh and there is always a shortage in supply, especially on special days such as Hindu Puja and Easter and Christmas. Candles can also be sold to religious congregations for their chapel

services and celebrations. Candle-making training is a way to teach those without an income, to learn a new skill in which they can earn money.

Anondo Neer has three centres and the project coordinator is planning to have two candle-making sessions

in each centre per month. A staff member will also be employed to aid with language translation between the teacher and the participants.

The program will additionally give participants some simple accounting skills for beginning and running a business.



PROJECT UPDATES

Katilososa | Timor-Leste

There are so many good news stories coming from KATILOSA this issue!

Firstly, there's improved access. Despite its small size, it takes a long time to drive anywhere in Timor-Leste due to poor roads. However, the road to KATILOSA is being widened by the Ministry of Public Works. This will help with access for the KATILOSA participants and staff to continue promoting and providing equal rights and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in Timor-Leste.



KATILOSA has also been successful in its application to rejoin Rehabilitation International, the global body whose mission is to advance the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities around the world.

Inclusive education has started recently at the centre. There's been a very good response from students and families. Over the past two months, diploma placement students at KATILOSA were able to provide Braille lessons to three blind students. The aim is to be able to support more vision-impaired students in the future.

Another area for future growth at the centre is education and wider capacity building for the disability sector. An agreement



has been signed with the State University of Java, to provide training for KATILOSA teachers to assist them to develop learning modules for teachers in public schools for working with children with disabilities. Following the government's recent announcement of the end of the state of emergency in the country, the in-centre support program has just been reactivated in person at Darasula. Outreach activities had continued but in-person delivery at the centre had been suspended during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Following family requests, a sewing course is about to start at Darasula. Many women are accompanying their children at Darasula and would like to use their free time for vocational sewing lessons. The centre has obtained a sewing machine and fabric for practice and may need to employ a trainer to deliver this course.

And finally: the Ministry of Public Works is also considering the centre's request for a 50x50m futsal field. This will be used for recreational space for disabled people, families, and young people in Darasula.



PROJECT UPDATES

Talit Family Nutrition | India

The pandemic has had many ramifications in our project countries, including children not being able to attend school due to lack of food.

This is the focus of a special one-year project in India generously funded by Lenity Australia.

Running out of the Chetana Hostel, the Talit Family Nutrition project's aim is to distribute food and essential items – Parcels of Joy – to families so children can continue their education. Many of the severely disadvantaged children in the region can't attend school because of financial problems, so they must assist either at home or by working to provide food and essential items for the family.

The families will also have access to much-needed nutritional support

and receive education around the importance of their children's learning.

Chetana Tribal Boys' Hostel is a project of the Marist District of Asia that aims at providing safe and convenient accommodation and better opportunity for school education and a holistic approach and positive intervention in the growth and development of Santali Tribal children in Talit in Burdwan district, West Bengal (see article page 9).

The pandemic has had a huge impact on local people's ability to earn an income.

Chetana has already supported 70 Talit families (195 beneficiaries in total) through hygiene education, medical assistance, nutritious food,

and necessary supplies to keep their families healthy and safe during the pandemic. However, the need has grown in the wider community due to loss of income as a result of the pandemic in India.

The provision of food parcels and necessary items for the household is a continuing priority to assist the most vulnerable families in the community with basic, essential goods.

This new project will ensure 100 families receive support to meet basic nutritional needs; provide 400 individuals with increased knowledge of health and hygiene; and allow at least 200 children, in particular young girls, the opportunity to attend school instead of working to support the family.



GOVERNANCE

Board update

The AMS Board met in November and considered a number of matters:

Following a strategy planning weekend held in early October, the Board worked on formalising the **2022-24 AMS Strategy**, incorporating learnings from a number of deep dive themes discussed during the year. The Board has now refined the AMS vision, mission and values as part of the strategic planning process and has set a number of key priority areas for the coming years.

The Board received updates on the situation facing several AMS **project partner countries** and considered two new project proposals in

Vietnam and the Solomon Islands. The Board continues to keep an eye on the challenges facing many of our partner communities.

AMS Directors monitored progress against the **2021 budget** and are pleased that income and expenditure are tracking well so far this year. The **2022-24 budget** was reviewed and approved by the Board.

The Board checked in with the **AMS Risk Register** and was provided with an update on new rules requiring Directors to obtain a Director Identification Number.

Following review from the Projects Committee and Finance and Risk Committee, the Board has approved updates to the **Safeguarding Policy**.

Operations update

With uncertainty around COVID restrictions, AMS made the difficult decision to move our community events to an online format. On 11 November, we hosted our **supporter appreciation event** online. Please see the article on the right for all the details.

We look forward to connecting with friends in-person again next year. We also look forward to hosting more short Q&A sessions with some of our other project partners in 2022, where you will be able to register to hear more about your favourite projects.

Earlier this year, AMS advertised for a number of volunteers to support us in our work as a small team. We had an overwhelming response and have since welcomed three new volunteers on board. AMS would like to thank all of our volunteers for the fantastic contribution they make in helping us achieve our mission.

At the beginning of November we launched the **AMS Christmas Appeal**, which focuses on supporting

children with disability in Asia and the Pacific. Thank you to all our supporters for your generous donations to date. You will find further information on the appeal on page 4 of this edition.

The **2022-24 AMS budget** has been finalised and was approved by the Board at the November meeting.

Throughout this edition, you will see some of the fantastic work being achieved by our **project partners**, including updates on KATILOSA in Timor-Leste; St John the Evangelist School, Solomon Islands; St Michel School, Vanuatu, and the Chetana project in India.

Finally, we look forward to welcoming our CEO Bec back from parental leave in January. It will be wonderful to have the full **AMS team** back on board and we look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Supporter events

Due to ongoing lockdowns and restrictions throughout the country, our end-of-year supporter appreciation event had to be held online again this year.

According to attendees, it didn't diminish the enjoyment of the event one bit.

Hosted by AMS board member Allison White, supporters were treated to an online photography exhibition by Conor Ashleigh, featuring his favourite photos from AMS projects in Asia and the Pacific.

In a captivating presentation, attendees heard the background stories of the images, along with details of Conor's eyewitness reporting.

Acting CEO Deirdre Looney then provided an overview of the 2021 Christmas campaign, and how the focus this year is on giving the gift of care to young people living with disabilities.



We also Zoomed over to Cambodia, where Marist Solidarity Cambodia director Dr Sothun Nop gave an interesting update on the LaValla School and other initiatives. Sothun spoke with our projects coordinator Nigel about how the pandemic affected activities at the school, and the many exciting plans for the project.

Thanks to everyone who was able to log in for this event. We've included a link to the recording of the event on our website.

60 SECONDS WITH Allison White, AMS Board



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

A. I went to Mt Maria in Brisbane, which is a Marist school, so I have a long Marist connection. Through the Marist network I heard about LaValla School for children with disabilities in Cambodia and I went

to volunteer there in my early 20s, writing funding proposals. It was the start of a long connection and I've had volunteer roles with AMS ever since as a freelance journalist, committee member and now as a board member.

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

A. Access to education is life changing. I love that our work helps connect young people to opportunities through education that they might not have otherwise had. We don't shy away from complex challenges. We work with our communities to make a real impact.

Q. *What is your role with AMS?*

A. I'm a member of the AMS Board. It's a real privilege to contribute to the sustainability and future direction of AMS with such a dedicated and

thoughtful group of people across the Board, as well as our CEO, team members and supporters.

Q. *Why do you support AMS?*

A. I've been involved with AMS for almost half my life now – I guess you could say it's a part of me! I've supported AMS in different ways – as a volunteer, donor, MC at the supporter events – and I think I always will. It's amazing to see how AMS has grown and how it continues to make a difference in the lives of more and more young people around the world.

Q. *What is your wish for 2022?*

A. That our connections to our families, our friends and our communities continue to grow stronger no matter what challenges we face.

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 **07 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

Please give the gift of care this Christmas

Donate today to help a child
with disabilities get the
services they need now.

To make a cash, cheque or credit card
donation, fill in this form and mail to:
Australian Marist Solidarity,
PO Box 273, Ashgrove West
QLD 4060

Make direct deposit donations to:
Australian Marist Solidarity
BSB 062 000 Account No 1628 5262
Please email the details of your donation to:
ams.accounts@marists.org.au

Donate online at:
australianmaristsolidarity.org.au

or scan the QR code to donate.



Name: _____ Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____ Email: _____

Give once: ☐ Give monthly: ☐ Amount: _____

Credit card number Expiry date /

Name on card: _____ CCV

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

A gift in your will can leave a legacy to transform the education of future generations of young children.

Once you have remembered your loved ones, would you please consider leaving a gift in your will?

☐ **Please send me information about leaving a gift in my will to AMS.**

Connect with us to find out more.



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