



# Diocesan e-News

## PARTNERSHIP MAKING A DIFFERENCE



**In October 2013**, Catholic Mission Ballarat hosted a visit from Bishop Felix Lian Khen Thank, Bishop of Kalay Diocese, Myanmar. Bishop Felix (*pictured left at St Malachy's School Edenhope*) spent five days in the Diocese visiting eight schools to gain an understanding of the operation of Australian Catholic Schools. This visit culminated in a meeting between the Catholic Education Office Director of Education, Ms Audrey Brown, CEO consultants, Bishop Felix and Catholic Mission Directors, Kevin Meese and Sue Searls. A dialogue began between Catholic Mission and Catholic Education, Ballarat as to the possibility of forming a partnership with the aim to support the establishment of Catholic Schools in Myanmar.

**In November 2014**, three teachers from the Ballarat Diocese went on immersion to Myanmar to:

- clarify the extent to which a partnership might be possible between the Ballarat Diocesan Catholic Education Office, Catholic Mission and Kalay/Yangon Dioceses with the aim to improve educational outcomes by focusing on skill-sharing and capacity-building for Burmese teachers.
- engage in a process of discovery to establish a clear understanding of the current Education system in Myanmar and to make recommendations on return to the key stakeholders for future engagement.
- enhance the understanding of Catholic Mission's role in the life of the people of Myanmar and also within the Catholic Education system of Australia.

The teachers who volunteered for the immersion experience were Carmel McCormick, Education Officer, Religious Education Ballarat, Stacey Aitkins, teacher at St Coleman's Primary School, Mortlake, (*now teaching at St. John's Primary School Dennington, pictured right with Myanmar trainee teachers*) and Kerin Johnson, teacher at St Patrick's Primary School, Ballarat. Kevin Meese, Catholic Mission Diocesan Director, Archdiocese of Melbourne organised and led the immersion supported by Norma McCluskey, Program Officer, Catholic Mission, Melbourne.

The purpose of the immersion was to consult with Bishops, Education staff and teachers in Myanmar to discern ways to support educating teachers. The process decided upon is to take the best of the best of the rote learning system and match that with analytical, logical and creative teaching and learning strategies and processes.



The Ballarat contingency, as they strove to experience the successes and challenges of the Myanmar education system, kept in mind the key areas of:

- Catholic School Culture
- Learning and Teaching
- Wellbeing
- Leadership and Management
- School Community

In 2016, the dialogue continues and has entered a new phase. It has been agreed that a partnership be formed between Catholic Mission, Catholic Education Ballarat Diocese and the Episcopal Commission of Education, Myanmar. During June, two educators from the Episcopal Commission for Education Myanmar, Naw Kyu Khin (Lucretia) and Irene Ho visited the Ballarat Diocese prior to attending the National Catholic Education Commission Conference held in Perth recently. Thanks to the support of St John's Primary School Dennington and Stacey Atkins, Lucretia and Irene had the opportunity to observe firsthand the teaching and learning practices and processes demonstrated in an Australian Catholic School classroom. This visit was an outstanding success with Lucretia and Irene going away highly impressed with the teaching and learning strategies practiced in these classrooms along with the student achievement, satisfaction and wellbeing in the classrooms and the enthusiasm and professionalism of the classroom teachers. Following this visit another meeting took place at the Ballarat Education Office affirming that there would be a partnership established between Catholic Education Ballarat, Catholic Mission and Myanmar Episcopal Commission for Education, Myanmar to support the establishments of Catholic schools in Myanmar.



Catholic Mission is committed to providing financial support towards this project. Catholic Education Ballarat is committed to supporting the Episcopal Commission of Education with enhancing the training of the teachers in Myanmar, in particular through professional development and classroom activities via the internet. The Episcopal Commission for Education, Myanmar is committed to training twenty-five teachers to begin teaching in 2017 initially offering a Formation class adding another Formation class each year, with the intent to grow slowly and professionally. In addition to this, Catholic Education Ballarat has offered to provide opportunity for classroom experience down the track for a few committed and dedicated Myanmar teachers to gain experience in an Australian Catholic School classroom through supervised work experience in a volunteer Ballarat Diocesan school.

*Sue Searls, Ballarat Diocesan Director for Catholic Mission.*

*Kevin Meese, Melbourne Archdiocese Diocesan Director for Catholic Mission.*

*Norah McCluskey, Program Officer for Catholic Mission, Archdiocese of Melbourne.*

**Photos:**

Top: Lucretia, Stacey Atkins, Norah McCluskey and Irene Ho

Middle: Visiting St John's Primary School, Dennington

Bottom: Meeting in Ballarat, L-R Carmel McCormick, Audrey Brown, Kerin Johnson, Kevin Meese, Sue Searls, Lucretia,, Norah McCluskey and Irene Ho