



Shaping Our Future

Christian Brothers Oceania

Australia - New Zealand - Papua New Guinea

Newsletter No 17 December 2006

**Faithful to the call of Jesus
and inspired by Edmund Rice,
we Christian Brothers of Oceania
walk with those at the margins of their community, particularly young people,
and,
through education,
proclaim liberation and justice for all.
(Mission Focus Statement for Oceania)**

Dear Brothers and all members of the Edmund Rice Network,

Extra-ordinary Change

Since the Congregation of Christian Brothers arrived in Oceania it has been **most closely identified with education**. Over time, however, the Brothers have welcomed lay staff into their schools in teaching, administrative and leadership roles, and over the last thirty years also into key roles in management.

Now, in Australia, the Christian Brothers are **taking the next step in this journey** – a step which will create a new organization, born of the Christian Brothers and closely linked to them. This organisation will govern what are now called ‘Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition’. These are the schools which are now governed by the Congregation. This organization will be known as **Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA)**.

Other schools, not currently governed by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, will also have an opportunity to **develop relationships** with EREA either as affiliate or associate schools.

Alongside this the Congregation within Papua New Guinea, East Timor, New Zealand and Australia is undergoing a very significant change which will provide **exciting new ways** for the Christian Brothers to work and live alongside other members of the Edmund Rice Network as they respond to the needs of the most marginalised in our societies here in Oceania and in other parts of the world. All of us who are inspired by the gift of Edmund Rice will do this by:

- deepening our heart relationship with each other and with our God
- sustaining and creatively expanding our ministries into the future
- find new ways of addressing emerging needs
- building an organizational structure that promotes our passion for justice
- respecting and cherishing the earth upon which we live
- nurturing each other within the Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Network.

Approval of New Oceania Province

The Congregation Leader of the Christian Brothers, in collaboration with the Congregation Leadership Team, has **approved the formation of one Oceania Province** with a Leadership Team of seven full-time members. The key role of the Oceania Leadership Team is inspirational and prophetic leadership. While trustees and custodians of the new Province, the focus of the Leadership Team will not be management.

Brothers' communities and individual Brothers will be grouped in approximately thirteen clusters across Oceania. The **Oceania Community Clusters** will be discerned by the current Province and Region Leadership Teams and be formed within the present geographical boundaries of the four Australian and the New Zealand Provinces and the Region in Papua New Guinea. Each Cluster will have a leader who is appointed by the Oceania Leadership Team. The Cluster Leader's key role will be the pastoral care of the Brothers in that Cluster. Like the Oceania Leadership Team, the Cluster Leaders will not be overly burdened by day-to-day management responsibilities. Rather, they will support Brothers and others in fostering and nurturing the charism of Edmund Rice and ensure the physical and spiritual needs of the communities are met and they will collaborate with the Leaders of Life and Mission Teams (see below) to promote the mission of the Congregation.

A number of Teams called '**Life and Mission Teams**' will be established by the Oceania Leadership Team and will function across Oceania. These four teams will provide focus on: Edmund Rice Ministries, Formation within the Edmund Rice Network, Edmund Rice Network Liaison and Finance and Resources. The Life and Mission Teams will enable the day to day implementation of the vision and strategies of the Oceania Province, establish networks for support and collaboration across Oceania and develop close relationships with and support of the Oceania Community Cluster Leaders.

To facilitate communication and a shared vision, the Oceania Leadership Team, Cluster Leaders and Leaders of the Life and Mission Teams will meet as determined by the Oceania Leadership Team, possibly twice a year. This gathering will be called the **Oceania Forum**. One of the key aims of the Oceania Forum will be to explore the potential to respond to areas of need within Oceania within the Vision of the Province. These responses will involve Brothers and other members of the Edmund Rice Network working in close collaboration. It will also continue to explore collaboration with Edmund Rice Education Australia.

Workshops

Over the last few weeks there have been a number of **workshops** in various places **across Australia**. The workshops involved staff members from the four Australian Province administrations and Leaders and Board Chairs of Christian Brother ministries which will not become a part of Edmund Rice Education

Australia. They provided an opportunity to explore the new model of governance for the new Oceania Province.

The workshops were lead by Br Kevin Ryan, Chair of the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania (SOFCO), and Dr Debra Rosser, Chair of the Organisation and Resources Team which is working on behalf of SOFCO to develop the more detailed organisational structures for the new Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers. At four of the workshops Br Dean McGlaughlin (Chair of the National Planning Committee for Schools Governance) was present to **simultaneously share information** on the emerging Edmund Rice Education Australia, which is the body which will take over the governance of the 39 Christian Brother schools in Australia next October. Br Clem Barrett, a member of the National Planning Committee for Schools Governance, was present for the remaining workshop to share this information on the schools issues.

In looking at the information discussed on the days and at the feedback sheets these **six key issues** emerged:

1. *People were generally very pleased to have been involved in the workshops, even though specific information about their own jobs/futures could not be given at this stage. (This is a typical example of **the enormous goodwill** with which staff and ministry leaders have been prepared to explore these exciting but sensitive changes with the Shaping Our Future Committee).*
2. *The fact that in various formal and informal ways the Oceania Province, Life and Mission Teams and Edmund Rice Ministries would continue to have **strong and enduring links** with the schools under the governance of Edmund Rice Education Australia was a great relief to most people at the workshops. (People will be updated on how those links will be developed and maintained as the Congregation and Edmund Rice Education Australia move forward with the change process).*
3. *In terms of the change process, people were keen to be involved - not only through regular updates of information, but through dialogue and conversations. The **most meaningful conversations** are likely to occur at the local level, and the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania will be in touch with Province and Region Leadership Teams about how this can best happen in each area of Oceania.*
4. *There was a strong sense from participants that the new Oceania Province should retain a '**local presence**' to deliver services and support the mission of the Christian Brothers and the Edmund Rice Ministries. This was seen as important not only because of cultural differences and the fact that volunteers for ministry were generally drawn from the local area, but because there would be ministries and communities of Brothers who would need access to some business support services at the local level. (SOFCO agrees, and will be mindful of the suggestions made on this as the more detailed operating structures for Oceania are designed) However, participants also emphasised that becoming one Province of Oceania provided opportunities to engage together to meet the needs of people on the margins much more effectively. "Think local, act global" certainly applies here!*
5. *Most of '**the action**' of the new Province would occur through the Life and Mission Teams and their constituent. People were keen to be updated on where their own work area would 'fit' in the Life and Mission Team structure, and also encouraged SOFCO to look for ways to ensure meaningful interaction occurred between the Teams. Lots of good suggestions about how these Teams could best function were offered by participants, and these comments have been sent to the Organisational Design team which is working on the new structure.*

- In terms of **staffing**, people were - understandably - keen to find out about their own jobs. (SOFCO is on target to have the staffing schedule ready for June/July 2007 but if it is possible to begin having specific conversations with staff members earlier, this will happen. SOFCO is also investigating ways to share some roles with Edmund Rice Education Australia and believe there will be opportunities for employment across both organisations.)*

In total, **120 people attended the Future Structures Workshops** held in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane between October 30 and November 16, 2006. .

Each of the Provinces hosted and catered for the events and in all cases **a sense of genuine openness and sharing** was apparent and in the light of the major changes being experienced within the organisation the members of Shaping Our Future Committee and the associated working teams are deeply appreciative of the goodwill shown.

Leadership Team for Oceania Province

A Working Party was established in early October by the Inter-Province Leadership Committee to ensure that **a process was developed and implemented** which would allow for the surfacing of the names of seven Brothers for the inaugural Oceania Leadership Team. Each of the Provinces and Regions has been surfacing names of three, four or five Brothers (depending on the number of Brothers in the current Province or Region) so that twenty-eight Brothers can participate in a Discernment Group which will gather in Melbourne in late February 2007. The names of the Brothers that they believe are the best people to form the Oceania Leadership Team will be forwarded to the Congregation Leader, Br Philip Pinto. He, working in collaboration with the full Congregation Leadership Team, will complete the appointment process by early April, 2007.

In separate discussions **the tenure** (the length of appointment) **of the first Leadership Team** has also been under consideration. The position of the Inter-Province Leadership Committee is that the Team needs to be appointed until the Oceania Province Chapter of 2014, but the Oceania Pre-Chapter Gatherings and Oceania Chapter 2008 and the Congregation Chapter 2008 may take other positions on that matter.

Creation of Oceania Community Clusters

As indicated earlier, Brothers' communities and individual Brothers will be grouped in approximately thirteen clusters across Oceania. How these clusters will function, how they will interact with other clusters, the total Province and the Oceania Leadership Team as well as the Life and Mission Teams will be more deeply explored over the coming months. Definite decisions will also be made on the number of clusters and where they will be located. **To assist the discussion and decision making** on this matter the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania will be asking the Brothers to consider eleven factors which the committee believes need to be explored and which will guide the decision making on this matter. The details of the clusters will be announced by the Inter-Province Leadership Committee at the end of March 2007 and Leaders for the Clusters will be discerned by early August 2007.

Development of the More Detailed Organisational Structure

What is the development of **the more detailed organisational structure** all about? The Models and Transition Team (Chaired by Sr Margaret Endicott) and the Organisation and Resources Team (Chaired by Dr Debra Rosser) are now working together to make recommendations to the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania in relation to such matters as:

- The location of the offices of the Oceania Leadership Team
- What support services to Community Clusters and to Ministries need to be provided and whether they are best delivered locally and which are best delivered centrally.
- How the Life and Mission Teams and the Clusters interact
- What staffing is needed and where is it best to locate that staff.
- Principles for making decisions on future staffing
- What civil structure(s) will best serve the new Oceania Province
- How will the desired interaction between the Oceania Province and Edmund Rice Education Australia at various levels and in various locations be best built into the structures and the processes that are developed
- The sharing of facilities, staffing and resources between the Oceania Province and Edmund Rice Education Australia (It needs to be noted that a Joint Working Party exists to ensure that matters of staffing, facilities and formation are planned for each organisation that meets the needs of each and is also mutually beneficial for each)
- The keeping of current records and archive material
- How best to deal with the transition between the current structures and the new.
- What preparation and support and opportunities do the staff of the current Provinces and Regions, the Brothers and the leaders and chairs of ministries need to contribute to the shaping of the new structure, the transition and the development and growth of new entities.

This is not an exhaustive list! AND it needs **to be read in the light of the issues** explored earlier in this Newsletter under the heading '**Extra-Ordinary Change**'. Vision needs management, structure and process to facilitate the interaction, the conversation, the formation, the prayer, the celebration and the service action which keeps the vision alive. The universe is 'a chaos' which seeks organisation! If the universe needs organisation so does the Oceania Province and the Edmund Rice Network!

Communication

It is clearly implied in the **conversations around Oceania** that a high level of communication is required by the Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania. There also needs to be sharing of information – both in writing and in personal interaction. Most people want as much involvement as possible in the shaping of the decisions that are being made. That is not a universally held view and some would prefer an earlier announcement of some decisions rather than longer consultations!

Much work has already been done on naming the issues that need to be communicated about, what the content of the communication needs to be, who it needs to be communicated to, by whom and by when. The communication journey to October 2007 has been broadly mapped. This was done by Br Joe Lauren and Br Vince Duggan. We thank them for their enormous work. More work is continuing on this and we are exploring the basing of a new and re-shaped **Communications Team** in Sydney which will be able to seek professional support as needed. More information will be shared on this in late February.

Life and Spirituality Group

This group was established by the Inter-Province Leadership Committee in the first half of 2006. The group has done significant work on **developing processes to assist** the Brothers of Oceania to reflect on their personal lives and 'their life together' in the light of the Gospel and our relationship with God. These processes are being or have been shared with small groups of Brothers and with Leadership Teams. In due course these processes will flavour the gatherings of Brothers in small and larger groups over the next twelve months as we move through the transitions that are ahead.

Brothers and others are encouraged to contact the members of the Group to have **further conversations** about this all important opportunity for growth in Heart Centred Spirituality. They are: Br Tony Hempenstall (SFX Province), Br Joachim Toaravit (Edmund Rice Region), Br Phil Redding (SM Province), Br Peter Dowling and Br Peter Clinch (SPP), and Br Vin Jury (SJ Province) and Sr Marie Therese Ryder (from Perth WA and represent HS Province).

Past and Future Meetings

The last Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania meeting was held in **Kensington** Sydney in later November. On one evening during the meeting, the Committee was joined by approximately forty Sydney based Brothers for a barbecue and then an hour long discussion together. We thank the organisers and the generosity of the local Brothers for an enjoyable and a mutually informative time together. The next meeting of the Committee is in Perth and from February 13 - 16.

Formation

To achieve the dreams of Edmund Rice Education Australia and the Oceania Province for the future, formation of the hearts of staff members, volunteers, Brothers and all of us linked in the Edmund Rice movement will be critical. To ensure this happens, the National Planning Committee for Schools Governance, which is developing Edmund Rice Education Australia, has worked with the National Coordinating Group for Formation to shape a Formation Framework for the new organisation. The Shaping Our Future Committee has now asked the **National Coordinating Group for Formation** (in collaboration with key people in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea) to do the same for the emerging Oceania Province.

When each group has examined the **programs that are needed** to express the **frameworks** and the **staffing and organisations** that are needed to deliver the programs, the Joint Working Party (see above) will explore with both groups how to draw together the proposals related to the vision and dreams for formation in each organisation in a complementary and collaborative way.

The Journey of Advent

For all of us in Oceania who are followers of the Gospel in an Edmund Rice way this Advent can be a special time of reflection. **Advent is a time of waiting**, waiting for the celebration of the presence of God among us. It can also be a time of exploring how and where the Word of God which is revealed to us in Creation, in

each other, in the story of God's revelation in the Scriptures and in the prayerful celebrations of communities is leading us.

I quote briefly from a book by Normal Habel called 'Seven Songs of Creation',

'We who know the love of the Creator through the cross of Jesus Christ, are called:

*to honour Earth as one sacred site in all the cosmos
where God has chosen to dwell in person
and which God has chosen to fill with God's glory and presence*

*to explore creation as a web of intricate living relationships
held together by the Wisdom of God
in a mysterious rhythm called life;*

.....'

Our work in the Edmund Rice Network in Oceania is at this time to wait, to explore and then to **reshape our 'intricate living relationships'** held together by the Wisdom of God in such a way that new life will come to us, and more importantly, to those touched by us individually, by our small groups and by our formal projects of service. Let us ponder this during our season of Advent and at Christmas

May you have a wonderful and life giving celebration of '**God among us**' at Christmas and may you and your families and communities be filled with hope, courage and the Spirit of God in 2007.



Brothers Kevin Ryan (Chair), Vince Duggan, Peter Dowling, Luke Quinn, Joe Lauren, Laurie Needham
Shaping Our Future Committee Oceania