

# Chairman's Report

Annual Report 2000/2001



## To go forward responsibly, we need to go back faithfully

The wisdom so aptly captured in these words has certainly been enfolded in the activities and experiences which have been integral to MacKillop Family Services during the past year.

The decision of the Heritage and Information Committee to support a series of reunions for past residents and staff of the seven founding agencies has resulted in very special experiences for all who have been able to participate. Each occasion held moments of great joy and sometimes a little sadness. Friendships were renewed, memories treasured, stories shared – all in a spirit of gratitude and trust. The support offered by the Board and staff of MacKillop Family Services has been most generous and sensitive, and I wish to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of each person to these gatherings.

In a special way these words resonate with the experience of Board Members when we were privileged to visit the Mary MacKillop Centre in North Sydney in March for our Retreat and Planning Days. Thanks to the generous hospitality of the Sisters of St Joseph, we had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of Mary MacKillop's story and to reflect together on the challenges it holds for our organisation today. The conversations with the Sisters, together with the tour of the museum, offered us a wonderful opportunity to engage with the story of the foundress, Mary MacKillop, in new and challenging ways.

During the past year, many Board Members have been involved with staff and volunteers in the development of a Strategic Plan for the next three years. Throughout this process one had great confidence that MacKillop Family Services is *going forward very responsibly* as it responds to the special needs of the poor and needy in our world today, in new and creative ways. The enthusiastic involvement of staff at all levels is indeed heartening, as we search to express the spirit of the founding agencies in ways that are appropriate and meaningful in a changing welfare environment.

During the past twelve months many people have worked assiduously to ensure that our organisation continues to develop with sound financial management and creative programs. On behalf of the Board, I thank each one who has contributed so responsibly in this regard. In particular, I acknowledge the outstanding leadership of Paul Linossier and members of the Senior Management Team who so generously support his endeavour.

The Annual General Meeting marks further changes in the personnel of the Board of Directors. As we farewell Ms Kate Redwood, Mr John Loughnan and Mr Brian Luby, we thank them for the many gifts they have shared and the sound guidance they have offered to the development of MacKillop Family Services.

As my appointment as Chairperson of MacKillop Family Services draws to a close, I am mindful of the words of the poet, Seamus Heaney, who writes:

A cobble thrown a hundred years ago  
Keeps coming at me.....\*

As I reflect on my privileged experience to be associated with the early development of MacKillop Family Services, I recall the many cobbles '*thrown a hundred years ago*' that have continued to come in my direction. Cobbles of the cry of the needy, of hardships and loneliness. Cobbles of shared vision and practical responses so reminiscent of the founders of '*a hundred years ago*'. Cobbles of professional excellence and collaboration, as MacKillop Family Services continues to develop as a most significant organisation in the welfare sector. Cobbles of compassion and respect which are so evident in the responses offered by staff in each encounter.

As I offer my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this treasured and life-giving experience for me personally, I leave confident that the spirit of MacKillop Family Services is very much alive. In these foundational years, MacKillop Family Services has been faithful to the best of the past, and therein has found an energy and vision which ensures it will continue to go forward responsibly in future years, especially in those moments when:

A cobble thrown a hundred years ago  
Keeps coming at me.....\*

**Mary Duffy RSM**  
**Chair**  
**Board of MacKillop Family Services**

• Seamus Heaney, "Clearances" in *The Irish Times Book of Favourite Irish Poems*