

# SHARED Journey

ST MARY'S (CASINO & MALLANGANEE)

June 2021

## ST VINCENT'S CENTENARY

■Fr Peter Slack

**AS IN EVERY GREAT ENTERPRISE**, the St Vincent's story begins with an invitation and a response!

On 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1920, the Feast of All Saints, John Carroll, the 55-year-old Irish Bishop penned a letter in his own hand to the Mother General of the Sisters of Charity expressing his desire for a Catho-

lic hospital in Lismore.

He informed the Mother General that a property had been purchased on a good site with a fairly large house in word which might afford temporary accommodation for a few patients and a small community while a more permanent construction would be in the course of construction.

He added, in his dry Irish fashion,

“within a few years there would be an opportunity for establishing a convent and primary school within a mile or two of the hospital.” (Letter, Bishop Carroll, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920.)

Nine days later in a letter of 10<sup>th</sup> November, he received a reply.

It was a cautious response to the Bishop's invitation. Mother Berchmans wrote, in her own



St. Vincent's Hospital  
Opening Day  
circa 1921

### 1921

Four Sisters of Charity travel by train from Sydney to establish the Hospital. The Sisters occupy the attic of the residence with the remainder of the building being the hospital. There were 12 beds.

The first patients were admitted by Doctor Coen and Doctor Fransceschi.

### 1922-23

Within the hospital's grounds a convent was built to house the Sisters of Charity. The convent's foundation stone was laid and blessed by the Bishop of Lismore Rev. Carroll in 1922 and the convent completed in 1923.

### 1924

Electric power and lighting replaced gas facilities at the hospital.

### 1928

An epidemic of dengue fever stretched the little hospital to its limits, sparking an appeal for a bigger and brighter hospital

### 1932

The hospital doubled in size with the opening of the new 30-bed Ryan Wing, which was opened and blessed by the founder Bishop Carroll. The first student nurses began their training in 1932, and a nurses home was created for



hand,

“My dear Lord Bishop,” she wrote, “Thank you so much for inviting the Sisters of Charity to Lismore. It is difficult for me to accept your Lordship’s kind invitation, without going into more detail, and without seeing the district and realising its possibilities. With your Lordship’s permission, Mother M Gertrude and I shall come up to Lismore early in the New Year, when we see the place, and have a little talk with your Lordship, we will be able to judge better. Personally, I would love to say yes at once ...” (Letter, 10<sup>th</sup> November).

Happily, on 20th May 1921, Mother Berchmans was able to inform the Bishop that, following a Council meeting, it was decided to send three Sisters to Lismore by Sunday’s Express. Mother Leonard would be the Rectress with Sr M Clement and Sr M Adrian as assistants with a fourth, Sister Norbert as a domestic sister.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June the Hospital was opened and blessed by Archbishop Duhig. The Archbishop was a busy man as he had done the same in Toowoomba. As the Northern Star reported, High Mass was celebrated on the veranda of what we know as “Tarmons” a word that means

“sanctuary” the same name as the convent occupied by the Sisters in Sydney.

In addition to the Mass and blessing, there was a subscription to meet the cost of 4,400 pounds. Among the donors are the names of well-known Lismore families to this day: Buckley, McDermott, Glynn, McIntyre and Carlton.

There would, of course be further subscriptions and appeals, none more important than the appeal carried out throughout the Diocese in 1929 and again in 1932. An army of priests led by the Bishop and the Coadjutor, Bishop Farrelly, preached the appeal throughout the diocese from the Tweed to the Hastings. This was to be a hospital for the Diocese!



The whole diocese, the Bishop said, unites in raising up St Vincent's Hospital that the Church, true to the example of her founder, cares for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted with a charity that embraces all, no matter what their creed of country.

The Hospital – and medicine - has changed from the simple shelter for 12 beds. The Sisters are no longer with us, but their spirit was passed on to the nursing staff of the hospital and, in particular the directors of nursing who have carried the torch lit by the first sisters. In particular I want to acknowledge the contribution of Marie Tamai, the first director of nursing after the Sisters. On a personal level, how well I remember her fine nursing leadership.

A couple of weeks ago I visited the old Lismore cemetery. There among the graves are the graves of three sisters of Charity: Srs Joa-



chim Hennessy, Canice O'Neill and Luigi Beck.

Looking at those graves, I was filled with gratitude for the generous response of the Sisters of Charity to Bishop's Carroll's request to establish a Catholic Hospital here in Lismore. I prayed also for Bishop Carroll, whose dream for a Catholic Hospital was realised ... splendidly!



Lismore Showground, circa 1900s  
Future S.U.H. site in background

16 trainees in the Tarmons building the following year.

### 1936/37

To care for the region's chronically and terminally ill St Joseph's Hospice was established in Avondale Avenue and blessed in 1937. In the same year 13 nurses complete their training.

### 1941/2

The hospital continued to improve its facilities opening a new improved laundry and extending the nurses home. In 1942 a 20-bed extension to the St Joseph's Hospice opened.

### 1966

KH Lawrence rehabilitation unit opened.

### 1970

Roberts Wing built

### 1980

Sisters of Charity leave.

### 1982

St Joseph's Nursing Home opened

### 1990

St Vincent's was privatized with a flexible

# Bishop John Carroll

■ Newcastle and Maitland Sentinel,  
June, 1949

**BISHOP JOHN CARROLL**, the “founder” of St Vincent’s was the second Bishop of Lismore following Bishop Jeremiah Doyle.

Born in Piltown, County Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1865, he was ordained a priest in 1890, arriving in Sydney the same year.

He served in two Sydney parishes and at Moss Vale before being appointed in 1910 to succeed Bishop Doyle, who had died the preceding year.

Bishop Carroll came from farming stock, and took a great interest in the pursuits and welfare of country people.

During Bishop Carroll’s episcopate an era of rapid expansion affected the whole diocese.

First of all, the cathedral was completed, being consecrated by Archbishop Cattaneo, the Apostolic Delegate on 15th August, 1919.

There was a rapid multiplication in the number of clergy and religious in the diocese, Presbyteries, convents, schools and other institutions were built. Two large boys schools were built at Lismore and Casino, and placed under the Marist Brothers.

An orphanage at Cowper, conducted by the Sisters of Mercy was one of the Bishop’s early undertakings.

The boys college at Woodlawn, un-



der the Marist Fathers, was an outstanding development in the latter phase of Bishop Carroll’s episcopate. It was opened in 1931, and the original outlay was over £50,000.

In 1921, St Vincent’s Hospital was founded in the charge of the Sisters of Charity. In 1931 two important additions were made to this fine institution.

When he died in 1949 at the age of 85, there were 88 churches in the diocese, 44 diocesan priests, 13 religious priests, 13 religious brothers and 294 sisters. The diocese contained 16 girls boarding schools, 8 boys secondary schools, 26 secondary schools and 40 primary schools,

About 6000 children were students with a Catholic population of 30,000 out of a total population of 150,000. ■

component of public beds. Approval was received for a licence of 100 private beds.

## 1991

The Private Wing was officially opened by Mr. Peter Collins, Minister of Health and the Arts. The Bishop of Lismore, the Most Reverend John Satterthwaite, D.D. blessed the facility.

## 1992

To support hospital staff with young children, the Friends Long Day Child Care Centre was opened by Anita Keating, wife of Prime Minister Paul Keating and blessed by Bishop of Lismore, the Most Reverend John Satterthwaite, D.D.

## 1996

The Eye Unit adjacent to the day surgery was opened.

## 1997

Friends Coffee Lounge and the Specialist Medical Centre was officially opened and blessed by the Bishop of Lismore, the Most Reverend John Satterthwaite, D.D.

## 1998

The newly refurbished Day Surgery Unit was opened and blessed by the Most Reverend John Satterthwaite, D.D. As a modern facility it provided a safe and convenient environment for surgical and investigative procedures.

## 2008

The hospital’s Oncology Unit, staffed by a multi-disciplinary team expert in treating and supporting patients with cancer, was

# SISTERS OF CHARITY

**OUR STORY** begins in Cork, Ireland in 1787 with the birth of Mary Aikenhead.

Bishop Polding requested our foundress, Mary Aikenhead, to send Sisters of Charity from Ireland to help women convicts sent to Australia. Mary Aikenhead asked for volunteers. Mother Mary John Cahill, Sister Mary John Baptist De Lacy, Sister Mary Xavier Williams, Sister Mary Lawrence Cater and Sister Mary Francis de Sales O'Brien volunteered and left Ireland in August 1838.

After a journey of over four months on the *Francis Spaight*, they arrived in Sydney on the last day of 1838.

From January 1839 the Sisters lived at Parramatta and visited the Female Factory where many women convicts lived and worked for the government.

The Sisters' main concern was religious instruction and care of the sick poor. Parramatta and Sydney still had few good roads and the Sisters walked everywhere, going to government hospitals, orphanages, schools and gaols.



## Impact

The Sisters of Charity were the first religious women seen in Australia. The religious profession of Sister Xavier Williams, on 9 April 1839 at Parramatta was a "first" and made a great sensation among Catholics and others. Other young women asked to join the Sisters.

The distinctive dress of the Sisters made them conspicuous and drew on them at times the hostility or bigotry. The good they did brought them support. However, especially in Sydney, life was difficult as they often relied on paying for rented accommodation.

Fr Therry asked for Sisters to go to Tasmania but many deaths and poverty kept them from expanding there until 1847, when the Sisters left Parramatta. Three went to Tasmania and the others stayed in Sydney, where they had the new responsibility

blessed and officially opened by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore on 1th April.

## 2010

The Renal Dialysis Unit, providing outpatient dialysis services for patients with advanced kidney disease, was blessed and officially opened by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

## 2011

The hospital's Education Centre was officially opened by Page MP Janelle Saffin and blessed by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore.

## 2012

The St Anne's Wing at St Joseph's Nursing Home added an additional 20 single rooms. It was officially opened and blessed by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore.

## 2013

The Endoscopy Suite, a dedicated area using hi-tech endoscopes (cameras) for exploratory medical procedures was opened. In the same year the Short Stay Unit was completed and both were blessed by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore.

## 2014

St Vincent's opened an interventional hybrid theatre, the first of its kind in the Northern Rivers and another two new operating theatres, blessed and opened by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore. This was supported by four other fully equipped operating theatres with a well-appointed Post Anesthesia Care Unit.

Ozanam Villa was purchased by St Vincent's and integrated as the fourth wing of St Joseph's



of assisting women who wanted to live better lives.

### Stability

Good friends helped raise money to buy a convent where the Sisters could establish a hospital and school, as well as a permanent home for themselves. General Catholic problems hampered further growth, but the Sisters' hospital and school flourished, while they continued visiting the sick poor and prisoners.

### New Beginnings

After some years, there were Sisters of Charity who had been born in Australia. When the government stopped paying teachers in our schools, the Bishops encouraged vocations and brought new religious institutes to Australia to teach. Cardinal Moran encouraged our Sisters to begin more schools. New hospitals were opened.

The Sisters' business dealings in the early days were often conducted by Father Angelo Ambrosoli, who helped choose places for their convents and designs for their chapels.

Two Sisters of Charity who helped them to flourish were M. Francis McGuigan and M. Gertrude Davis, both born in Australia. They went to Ireland to renew links with the Irish Sisters of Charity and joined the Sisters in Tasmania with those in Sydney.

### Modern Times

Since World War II Australia has become more multicultural, with new needs arising as different ethnic groups arrive. Sisters of Charity

have led the way in many fields, establishing ministries that others can now continue.

Once works are established, Sisters have looked to respond to new needs. There are always people needing help, consolation, encouragement, and inspiration.

Vatican II recalled us to our founding charism, our main reason to exist as a separate institute in the Church. Our call is to bring the love of God to all, especially the poor.

Our vow of service of the poor is another way of describing a call to establish social justice.

Australia has changed since our first Sisters arrived in 1838. The kind of poverty that our Sisters met when they arrived has changed. Australia is now a developed nation.

The Sisters of Charity response has been flexible enough to deal with new forms of poverty. Physical poverty will always endure but we must also deal with the poverty caused by narrow-mindedness, prejudice, mental illness, drug addiction and drunkenness, as well as the more familiar kinds of sickness and lack of money.



Nursing Home. It was blessed by the Most Reverend Geoffrey Jarrett, D.D. Bishop of Lismore, and renamed Mary's Grange.

### 2015

Ward 2 (Roberts Wing) was refurbished to accommodate rehabilitation patients. Ward 4 became a medical ward with patient access to private rooms.

### 2017

St Vincent's Private Day Surgery in Uralba Street provided a sixth operating theatre for the hospital. It was previously Lismore Private Day Surgery.

### 2018

The hospital completed a Master Plan with a vision to support the demand for community services for the next 20 years.

### 2019

To cater for our growing community's healthcare needs, the hospital's purpose-built Specialist Consulting Suites in Ballina were opened.

### 2020

The hospital celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the opening of the Renal Dialysis Unit, which received an upgrade of 12 new renal dialysis machines, chairs and a new reverse osmosis system.

### 2021

St Vincent's Hospital celebrates 100 years of service to the community. Across the decades it's been the hospital's doctors, nurses, support staff and volunteers whose spirit has defined St Vincent's.





St Marys Parish Casino NSW