

Citation for Honorary Award Candidate – Sister Pat Linnane

Biography

Sister Pat Linnane

Coordinator, Mercy and Justice Centre, and Justice Contact, Bathurst Sisters of Mercy, Bathurst, NSW

Sister Pat Linnane has worked for over 50 years as a tireless advocate for the disadvantaged and marginalised of Central Western NSW through her work in suicide prevention, Aboriginal reconciliation, refugee support and resettlement, mental health support, and prisoner release and inmate family support programs.

Sister Pat has worked with the Mid-Western Area Public Health Unit and Mid-Western Area Mental Health to establish a number of community support initiatives for suicide and domestic violence. These have included the organisation of seminars for health professionals and the general public on suicide and domestic violence; participation in the creation of the local Suicide Prevention Network, which supports people with suicidal tendencies, as well as families and school students affected by suicide; supporting the DUCKS (Depression, Understanding, Care, Kindness, Support) group, formed in response to an identified need for support for people in the local community who suffer from depression and ongoing mental illness; and working to attract prominent experts for educational initiatives and the promotion of community programs – these have included Professor Pierre Baume, World Health Organisation; Margaret Appleby, Executive Director of the Rose Foundation; and the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir.

Sister Pat has worked closely with the local Aboriginal community for many years, primarily through the Towri Aboriginal Centre, the Aboriginal Land Council, and through personal contact with local Aboriginal community members and their families. She has been an active member of the Bathurst Reconciliation Committee, a member of Australians for Reconciliation (AFR) and Aboriginal Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR), and part of the national network of Mercy Commitment to Indigenous Concerns and Aboriginal Partnership. Sister Pat has been responsible for

the development and support of Young Mercies, an initiative of secondary school students in the local area endeavouring to make a difference in their society. She has also organised seminars and hosted meetings of the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) at the Mercy and Justice Centre in Bathurst; approached Bathurst City Council in regards to recognition of Aboriginal identity (resulting in the erection of billboards at the city limits recognising the local area as Wiradjuri Country); and encouraged the city's residents to attend events such as Bathurst's Sorry Day (held in conjunction with and supported by the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) Week, the Walk for Reconciliation across the Harbour Bridge in 2000, Corroborree 2000, and the National Treaty Conference of 2003 in Canberra.

Sister Pat has also supervised the development of a memorial garden dedicated to Aboriginal reconciliation in the grounds of the Mercy and Justice Centre, which involved members of the Department of Corrective Service's Weekend Detention Program. The Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, unveiled the commemorative plaque during her visit to Bathurst to commemorate Federation. The Aboriginal and Australian flags flying together are a feature of this garden, which is planted with native shrubs and flowers.

Sister Pat was a founding member of the Bathurst Ecumenical Refugee Resettlement Committee, and as Justice Contact for the Bathurst Sisters of Mercy, she has been a tireless advocate for refugees and asylum seekers. She has assisted numerous refugees and their families with temporary and long-term accommodation in her place of residence until alternative arrangements could be made. Her work with refugees and asylum seekers has highlighted the plight of these people, helping to create greater understanding and tolerance in the local community. She has also worked with various agencies associated with support for refugees and asylum seekers in detention centres to improve conditions within the centre, and has involved the Young Mercies in providing a homework centre where the children of refugee families receive coaching and after-school tuition.

Sister Pat has worked extensively with the Department of Corrective Services in support of the Department's ThruCare program, providing supervised work and

training at the Mercy and Justice Centre for those recently released from the region's correctional facilities. She has also participated in the Weekend Detention Program, overseeing individuals and groups serving community service sentences, as well as being a member of the Community Consultation Centre associated with the Bathurst Correctional Centre. She has worked to raise public awareness of the need for more accommodation in the region for the relatives of inmates serving custodial sentences, many of whom travel long distances with small children, and has, on occasion, opened her own residence she shares with other Sisters of Mercy to offer families with no other alternative somewhere to stay.

Sister Pat Linnane is the recipient of a number of awards and honours:

- In 2002 she was awarded the NSW Law and Justice Foundation's Regional and Rural Justice Award, for her 'outstanding commitment to improving access to justice for people in regional and rural NSW'.
- In 2001 she was awarded the NSW Probation and Parole Service Award for her supervision of and support for people serving periodic detention and under community service orders.
- In 2001 she was also awarded the Non-Indigenous Person of the Year Award by the Aboriginal Land Council for her work in the creation and completion of the Maronirra Healing Quilt, and the Aboriginal Heritage Trust Award for her promotion and support of Reconciliation. She was also one of three finalists from 200 nominees for the Premier's Award for Active Citizenship during the International Year of the Volunteer.
- In 2000 she was awarded the NSW Department of Education Community Service Award, for her contribution to awareness and support in state schools for youth suicide.
- In 2000 she was also recognized by Rotary for her work in launching Bathurst as a City of Peace.
- In 1998 she was awarded the NSW Department of Education Certificate of Appreciation for her outstanding commitment to local schools.

Memberships

- Bathurst Reconciliation Committee
- Bathurst Ecumenical Refugee Resettlement Committee
- Community Consultation Centre associated with the Bathurst Correctional Centre
- Australians for Reconciliation
- Aboriginal Native Title and Reconciliation
- Mercy Commitment to Indigenous Concerns and Aboriginal Partnership

Sources:

2002 Justice Awards Celebrate Access to Justice

<http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/app/&id=F698155BCE618344CA2570B9007C4DBC>

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