

Marymead still welcomes all

Marymead is celebrating its 50th anniversary with Mass at Holy Trinity Curtin and lunch at the Canberra Southern Cross Club Woden on June 21. *Catholic Voice* looks back at the journey over the years...

MARYMEAD was established by The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who came to Canberra in 1960 with a plan to set up residential care services for children and families in temporary crisis.

The population at that time was a young one, and family support to help raise these children was often far away.

In 1960, there were no services providing either long or short term out-of-home care for children and teenagers in the ACT.

Against that background, the Franciscans used their financial resources, gathered supporters, formed a fundraising auxiliary and acquired an 11-acre paddock in Narrabundah. Marymead opened in 1967.

The name Marymead comes from the word meadow (or more from its archaic or poetic form mead) and the devoted and tireless Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

While the word meadow conjures up visions of cool and fresh green pastures near clear and running streams, in this instance it referred to the paddock for sheep, transformed into the meadow of Mary.

Marymead's primary function was to welcome children of all



racess and religions who required care.

The care afforded could only be temporary but it was enough to meet the aim of those who founded Mary's meadow.

Children were admitted in various times of crisis including distress following accidents or sudden illness, poverty, a mother

hospitalised, a family break up, disruption of the home or child neglect.

Children were either placed voluntarily by parents or referred by welfare or health officials.

Occasionally police would also bring children to Marymead at night or over the weekend if an emergency arose.

Marymead used its experience and skill base to diversify its services to the entire community and moved into finding and supporting foster families.

Marymead also developed protection services for neglected or abused children and moved into providing day care, occasional care and after-hours care for children in need. It provided residential care for children on remand and, most importantly, developed programs for case work and counselling to families in crisis.

The sisters provided a range of services to Canberra families up until their departure in 1986, leaving behind a viable and expanding service. The responsibility for Marymead was assumed by the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Today, Marymead provides a vast range of specialist family support services in the ACT and throughout southern and western NSW.

Marymead's array of programs and services now include child and family counselling, disability support, foster care and respite care, early intervention programs, family and mental health support, contact and changeover services

for separated parents in significant conflict, support for grandparents raising their grandchildren and a recently opened autism centre based in the ACT.

Led by CEO Camilla Rowland, Marymead is excited about the upcoming anniversary Mass and lunch on June 21.

"This year is without doubt one of the most significant years of Marymead's long history, and I am delighted that the day will include both a special Mass celebrated by the Archbishop and a luncheon for anyone and everyone with a connection to Marymead," Mrs Rowland said.

"It will be a wonderful celebration of all that Marymead, our supporters and clients have achieved over the last 50 years."

- Should you wish to make a booking for Marymead's 50th Anniversary lunch contact Jeff Griffiths, Marymead's Marketing Manager, on 6162 5824 or email jeff.griffiths@marymead.org.au

- For information regarding any of Marymead's programs or services phone Marymead on 6162 5800, email programs@marymead.org.au or visit www.marymead.org.au