



12 August 2016

ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Brothers, Colleagues and Friends in the Oceania Province

RE-IMAGINING OCEANIA

Our way forward, responding to the challenges in our time

The OLT wishes to announce decisions resulting from its discernment during the past 12 months in the re-imagining of Oceania Province. The OLT has taken this discernment reflectively and slowly as it maps out a sustainable future for the mission of Oceania and its commitment to the support of our world-wide Congregation. During the process, the OLT invited the Directors and Head of Secretariat to be part of its deliberations. More recently, the OLT engaged consultants from Johnston & Goldsmith to assist in the implementation phase of the changes articulated below. The OLT acknowledges the challenges associated with change, especially for individuals whose employment with the Province will come to an end.

In the context of the Nairobi Chapter Statement, the Chapter statement of the Oceania Province and its own strategic directions, the OLT initiated the Re-imagining Oceania project in response to the challenges being faced by the Province.

As the OLT acknowledges the realities of today in responding compassionately and fairly to the victims of historical abuse and the ageing membership of the Christian Brothers, we are facing unprecedented financial pressure and are unable to continue to operate the way we have in the past.

The following changes are an attempt to address the challenges we face now and into the future:

Relocation of the OLT to Melbourne

The OLT will relocate to Melbourne by the end of April 2017. We will work from offices on the third floor of Garvey House at the Treacy Centre, currently used as visitor accommodation. The OLT will form community at the Province-owned house at Wellington Street, Flemington. We realise that this move will mean changes to those residing at Flemington and appreciate their understanding and willingness to relocate to a new community during 2017.

Closure of Oceania Province Centre, Nudgee, Queensland

With the move of the OLT to Melbourne, there is a need to review the current lease arrangements with the Sisters of Mercy regarding the use of our present Nudgee offices. The present thinking of the OLT is to negotiate with the Sisters of Mercy to extend our lease by a few months until the middle of 2017. The current lease expires at the end of March 2017. We anticipate the closure of the Oceania Province Offices at Nudgee during June/July of next year.

During the coming months consultation will be held with the local Queensland brothers and staff of the Oceania Province Queensland Support Centre to find a new and suitable Centre.

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) and staff formation

After discussions with EREA, the OLT has decided to withdraw from providing the delivery of formation programmes for the staff of EREA. The Province will continue to offer formation experiences for Province personnel.

From the beginning of 2017, EREA will take carriage of formation services for staff associated with EREA schools. This is a natural progression from the joint staffing of formation programmes by the Province and EREA. It is the hope of the OLT that the Province and EREA will continue to find ways to co-operate with each other in the development of the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.

Province Mission Directorate

The cessation of the Province's role in formation for EREA staff will necessitate adaptation and change to the current Mission Directorate. After 1 October 2016 an interim structure will operate for the Mission Directorate under the direction of a member of the OLT. This arrangement will signal the start of a consultation period with members of the Directorate and engage them in a process of re-designing the Mission Directorate. We expect this project will progress over the next months with a new structure in place by the end of April 2017.

The OLT is committed to supporting Province ministries and will work to strengthen its partnerships with the Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA) and individual ministries to ensure the Province's continued involvement in the delivery of services to those made poor.

Integration of the Province Archive and Records Centres

The current Province Archive and Records Repositories located in Brisbane, Sydney and Perth will, by the end of 2019, be located in one place at Kelty House, the Treacy Centre, Parkville, Melbourne. The Kelty Archives at Treacy will be modified to increase its storage capacity. Under the guidance of Anne Pinzon, consultation has already commenced with personnel associated with the current Archive Centres to ensure a smooth transition during the next three years.

Staff redundancy and non-renewal of employment contracts

The planned changes to the Province structures as outlined above will result in a number of Province staff positions becoming redundant and, in some cases, staff contracts of employment not being renewed.

As already announced, Bill Sultmann will be leaving his employment with the Province at the end of September and we wish him every blessing as he moves towards the next chapter of his career. Bill's contribution through his leadership of the Mission Directorate has been substantial and we will remain indebted to him for his collaborative approach and commitment to seeing the charism embedded in all that we do.

Earlier today, a number of staff members were advised that the Province is unable to fund their positions into the future. While it is always challenging to make such difficult decisions, we call on all those in our community to demonstrate the care and compassion that we embody as a Province to support these people through their next career transition. We believe it is best for the individuals themselves to advise their families, friends and work colleagues of the end of their employment with the Province when they are ready and able.

Conclusion

The intention of these changes is to make the Province's mission with those made poor sustainable, to meet the needs of the brothers as they age, to justly and compassionately respond to the victims of historical abuse and to support the Congregation outside Oceania.

The OLT realises the impact on some people will require significant change and adaptation. If you have further questions or concerns, please make contact with any member of the OLT. Please remember that you have additional support available through our Employee Assistance Provider, Access EAP, who may be contacted on 1800 818 728.

My sincere hope is that, through the changes named in this letter, will come new opportunities, especially for those leaving the employment of the Province. As I conclude this letter I quote from page 18 of the Nairobi Congregation Chapter Statement: *"The Spirit impels us to open our hearts and minds, to embrace our fragility with newfound humility"*.

I remain

Your brother with Edmund

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "P. B. Clinch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Clinch cfc
Province Leader
Christian Brothers – Oceania Province