



## L'Arche Australia Newsletter

November 2021

After ten years as National Leader of L'Arche Australia we are fare welling David Treanor from that role. In a spirit of deep gratitude we are saying thank you, David, for your leadership, your understanding, your knowledge and wise counsel, and all delivered in a deeply felt spirit of L'Arche and Community life.

L'Arche as a Federation of worldwide Communities entered a new phase of organization in 2012, adopting a Country-based structure and David's leadership was formed in this new setting. Communities in Australia were at varying stages, and some groups were still in the striving stage as Projects just taking root. Whatever the needs of each Community have been over during the past ten years, in the face of so many changes, David's support, insights and above all commitment to L'Arche's identity with profound understanding of its mission, have been at the service of each community and its unique dynamics.

Even more importantly if that is possible, David has built relationship and shared himself in friendship with core members in every community, especially always remembering and celebrating those important moments in each life. He demonstrated in practice how community life flourishes for all members when it is grounded in faith, prayer, forgiveness and especially cherishing times of spiritual togetherness.

I cannot list all the achievements, challenges met, outreach and organizational projects set up in support of communities across Australia, during David's ten-year leadership as this would be a very lengthy record indeed! But I can say how I deeply respect David as a philosopher, loving family man, lover of life and humour, and great colleague and friend.

Dr. Julia Walters, President, L'Arche Australia Board.



*Welcome to the summer edition!* I hope this newsletter finds you and your families safe and well as we live this time during the COVID-19 lockdown. We continue to be blessed in our efforts to live and announce the Identity and Mission of L'Arche in our lives. David steps down as National Leader of L'Arche Australia after 2 Mandates and this edition focuses on what has unfolded over the last 10 years. Claire Lawler will take up the role of A/National Leader for the next 12 months whilst Rajeevan CC, International Delegate, facilitates the development of a new L'Arche Australia Mandate and leads the discernment/nomination process for a National Leader.

David Treanor National Leader, Claire Lawler, Deputy National Leader and Julia Walter Board Chairperson, L'Arche Australia.

## From the National Leader

I feel privileged to have served in the role of National Leader for the last 10 and half years. We thought we would use this newsletter to recall the changes that we in L'Arche in Australia have lived over the last 2 Mandates or ten years. What follows is a selection of key milestones, it would be impossible to include everything! Whilst I always saw my role as Leader, I was acting on what was mandated by members and I am grateful and thankful to the many people who were also leaders – Shirley Crowe, Dominic Downie and Dr. Julia Walters as Board Chairperson. In addition, my thanks to Claire as Deputy National Leader, along with Peter Ryan and Eileen Glass. I would like to thank my family – *Cindy, Alex, Stella & Niamh* who have supported me over the last ten years to live this role. I could only have lived this time with their support. My love and THANKS.

## The National Structure

The 2011-2016 Mandate launched the 'country' structure which we were required to implement following the resolution at the General Assembly in 2009 Kolkata, India. We also received a 'subvention' or financial grant from L'Arche International which enabled to create a national structure to include a Deputy National Leader and Fundraiser.

We also updated our constitution in 2015 as requested. We have established an effective Executive Leadership team that meets monthly to keep informed on the progress of the Mandate and Strategic plans. The most significant changes included incorporating **National Council** and the **National Listening & Speaking Group** in the constitution as sub-committees of the National Board. **National Council** had always featured as a tradition in Australia and by incorporating it in the constitution we could clearly define its terms of reference.

The **National Listening and Speaking Group** commenced in May 2011 and at the time facilitated by Michael Hutchinson, then Community Leader, L'Arche Brisbane and Cindy Treanor, then Homes Coordinator,

L'Arche Beni-Abbes. As a sub-committee of the Board, it also has a charter and terms of reference. The Committee meet twice a year and it is currently facilitated by Claire Lawler and Cindy Treanor. I have been delighted with the evolution of the **Group**. I am observed how members have developed their self-confidence and personal advocacy skills and this could only have been achieved through the continued emphasis on members with a disability taking control and providing advice to the Board on issues. The **Group** has seen a turnover in membership as required and I would encourage communities to call upon and seek advice of the alumni on community matters. The **Group** have formally provided input into the current L'Arche Australia Mandate, feedback to L'Arche International as requested, represented Australia at the Federation Council and provided feedback to the Australian Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Members of National Listening & Speaking Group, 2015



## My Home in L'Arche

In 2014, with the support of Geoff Rigby (may he rest in peace) we published an anthology of stories, poetry, music and art from members of L'Arche in Australia to honour the fifth anniversary of L'Arche. The publication is a witness to what we live and I think reveals our we live our mission and sustain mutually transforming relationships with one another. Thanks to everyone who contributed.



L'Arche International [www.larche.org](http://www.larche.org) L'Arche Australia: [www.larche.org.au](http://www.larche.org.au)

### ILT visit Melbourne!

In 2015, we have the privilege of welcoming the then L'Arche International Leadership Team to Australia! Members came to Australia, many for the first time, and spent a few days visiting a Communities in Australia before going to Melbourne to meet for a few days. We were also fortunate that some of the team visited Bendigo who were then a seed group to officially open their space as a place of hospitality. Patrick Fontaine, International Leader and Tim Kearney, International Delegate also used this time to visit the Kapiti Community in New Zealand.

### Retreats and Pilgrimages

We were delighted to have hosted retreats and pilgrimages over the last ten years. Whilst it has being difficult to host regular Australia wide retreats, we have come together. I was delighted that Anne Walsh and Claire Lawler could represent us at the Jubilee Festival in France, from all accounts it was a time of great joy and celebration, what a surprise! In this year, we received a Jubilee prayer and some good advice – did we welcome the theme of 'letting the earth lie fallow' or is this what we are living? Have we lived forgiveness and restitution or is this yet to come? I would encourage everyone as our International Leaders then did, to choose this wonderful and challenging path and walk it together as brothers and sisters in L'Arche.

As Australians, New Zealanders (and other nationalities!) we journeyed to La Ferme Trosly, France in 2017 for a week retreat and what a graceful time it was. We were warmly welcome by the Community in Trosly and had the opportunity to meet Community members, to visit households for meals and times for reflection and prayer. My thanks to Eileen Glass who needed to lead the retreat as Jean was ill in hospital – THANKS. It was this retreat that inspired Rob Nichols to book a retreat for the Melbourne Community members in 2019 and invite Eileen to lead the time. Members also took the opportunity to visit other European cities and catch up with old friends.

In 2018, we journey to Alice Spring to mark the fortieth anniversary of L'Arche in Australia. We were 64 people

and some of our friends from New Zealand also joined us. We were also delighted to welcome Stacy our Vice International Leader, Tim Kearney International Delegate and 3 members from the Trosly Community on pilgrimage. We even have a movie made by Michael MacDonald the lead creator of the L'Arche International As I Am series of movies to commemorate our time together. Communities have also held many retreats, some during the day and others for a few days over many years.

I have also been able to make my own personal annual retreat – a time to reflect on my role and deepen my relationship with God which has been a source of many blessings for me.

### Seed Groups and Projects

Our friends in Adelaide and Bendigo have moved being 'seed' group to being endorsed as a 'project' in the Federation of L'Arche and what a great joy to see their flourishing. Indeed, Bendigo has just applied to become a 'probationary' Community in October 2021.

We were sad to farewell our friends in the Hunter as seed group for numerous reasons. Our project in Perth is at a critical stage of welcoming members into community living in the next few weeks – how exciting.

### Conferences

We have hosted many conferences. The first was organised by the **National Listening & Speaking Group** in 2013. Mr. Danny Bishop and Ms. Anne Walsh opened the conference at Mulgoa to review our Mandate and Strategic Plan. Throughout the development of L'Arche Australia Mandates and Strategic Plans we have benefitted from the input of members of the **National Listening and Speaking Group** who attended our planning sessions.

In 2014 we also hosted a conference in Melbourne inviting Prof. John Swinton as keynote speaker to celebrate L'Arche 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We were also able to celebrate our own 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Sydney in 2019 with Prof. Amy Jacobson and Ms Athena Pavlis-Goad as keynote speakers. Katherine Black and Cindy

Treanor also presented the As I Am movie which was filmed in their Community.

### Transition to NDIS

In March 2013, the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act* was legislated, and a transition plan developed to transfer existing state-based disability funding to this Scheme.

The *Scheme* offers many benefits to Australian citizens and also challenges the values that underpin our Identity and Mission. One advantage is that eligible Australians in the *Scheme* now have a set of Disability Practice Standards that all Providers are expected to meet. This is good news for us in L'Arche, we have had our own systems and now these are complimented. The *Scheme*, however, is market-based and focused on individualism and challenges our values of interdependence and community.

I do not see these approaches as mutually exclusive rather I do think we in L'Arche need to embrace the new directions and understand what we can offer and equally important how our members with a disability can use the *Scheme* would live flourishing lives.

### Community of Christ the King

I was fortunate to have met the sisters based in Wangaratta and get to know their charisma and mission. Cameron Cutts, a previous Community Leader in Melbourne and I, also have the pleasure of staying at the monastery and join in their community way of life. The sisters wanted L'Arche to form a Community and use their property for this end however after a period of reflection we could not take up this mission. It was with great delight that we discovered in 2017 that the Trustees on the sale of the property that they bequeathed the proceeds to L'Arche Australia.

What a blessing and our heartfelt thanks, we formed a team to suggest how to use the proceeds and have used the funds wisely whilst also investing in the future of L'Arche in Australia.

### Jean Vanier

Like so many people, I was shocked and horrified to hear of Jean's conduct with some women who had placed him in a position of trust. This reality is part of our story **BUT** it is *not the whole story*. We all have our own story of why we decided to join the mission of L'Arche, we must know why! We must revisit our story and relish in the delight of knowing we have been called to be a partner in the mission. Stephen Ponsner, International Leader reminds us: 'The story of L'Arche...is also the story of each of us. The story of L'Arche is made up of *our* stories in L'Arche'.

### Deaths

In the last ten years, many of our members have died, too many to name. In my Catholic tradition, the month of November is the month of Holy Souls, for each and every person, I offer a prayer of thanks for all you offered us and for your companionship on our shared journey. I pray that each person will have *eternal rest and may perpetual light shine upon each person. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

### Envoy role to New Zealand

I have held this role simultaneously with the National Leader role and it has been a delighted welcoming Mt Tabor into the Federation in 2017 and supporting the Kaipiti Community. I look forward to continuing my relationships with these Communities.

With thanks and gratitude to Claire a great companion on this journey.

