



Tuesday 22 September 2020

Dear Fathers, Deacons, my sisters and brothers in Christ,

In 2021, the **Palms** programme celebrates **60 years of reaching beyond**. Since first being prepared in 1961 for mission to Papua New Guinea, Catholic participants from all over Australia and New Zealand have been placed in 40 countries, assisting the development of 408 communities globally.

Marking a jubilee in this era is a stark reminder that no-one can rest on their laurels. Like all of us, Palms Australia has adapted to 'COVID normal'. Some Palms mission participants returned from the field earlier this year but have continued to support their host communities remotely; others have remained working in distant placements. Palms staff have maintained their office from home, and the proverbial Palms Information Sessions are now hosted through Zoom.

Office disruptions are insignificant compared to the impact of COVID-19 on the communities Palms supports. Even in countries relatively COVID-free, continued travel restrictions have left planned progress in health, education and community development on hold.

Palms is redoubling its efforts in response to communities' requests to assist develop individual and organisational capacity through skill exchange. Palms will enter its 60th year with an **Orientation Course in January 2021**. A fresh group of skilled and committed applicants will be thoroughly prepared for this cross-cultural mission in remote parishes, schools and communities as soon as international travel resumes.

I urge that you please promote the Palms programme and their January Orientation Course among your parishioners and staff. COVID 19 has caused us to reflect deeply, and many in our Catholic community are discerning ways to more fully and practically live our Call to serve others.

Those considering a Palms global mission placement can be advised of our Church's support in these ways:

1. The Diocese will support the preparation costs of participants at Palms' Orientation course and a re-entry weekend on their return from mission placement.

MOST REVEREND ANTHONY RANDAZZO BISHOP OF BROKEN BAY

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2. Catholic Bishops support a Lay Missionary Gratuity Fund that provides a payment of \$2,500 for each year one is on this mission.

3. Palms negotiations with Catholic schools assures great support and benefits for teachers giving up to two years for this mission. Teachers should talk with Palms about the details.

The Palms mission offers the rewarding challenge to truly reach beyond cultural, class and gender differences, to affirm the dignity of all while *“promoting and implementing the development goals that are supported by our deepest religious and ethical values.”* (Pope Francis).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Anthony Randazzo'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay