



## Celebrating the Catholic legacy in Mission

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, Catholic and inter-cultural community groups came together to celebrate the individuals and organisations working towards reducing global poverty at the 2024 Palms Solidarity Awards.

The annual event was hosted by [Palms Australia](#), an international development organisation inspired by Catholic Social Teaching that has been sending participants on global mission since 1961. For 63 years, Palms Australia has been offering Australians an opportunity to mentor in overseas communities to provide valuable skill exchange. During this time, they have had some notable participants including-

- Professor Paul Kelly, Chief Medical Officer in Australia who worked as a Medical Officer Mentor in Malawi from 1991 -1995,
- Dr Rosaleen Smyth who was initially placed at Divine Word University, PNG in 2008 and later mentored refugee students on the Thai-Myanmar border, gaining them degrees through ACU until 2020.
- Dramatist, lecturer and Community Development Mentor, Polyanna Forshaw, who trained teachers of Instituto Catolico para Formacao (Catholic Teachers College) in Baucau, Timor Leste 2003-05.

Palms' relationship with the Pacific was celebrated with an address by Emelda Davis, Chairwoman of the Australian South Sea Islander Port Jackson who spoke about the history and experiences of the Australian South Sea Islander community. There was also a performance from the Solidarity Choir who had just returned from a tour in Timor-Leste during the Pope's visit and sang songs from Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.

Luke Tobin, Mission Formation Educator at Catholic Mission took home the Cyril Hally Award for his Catholic Social Teaching sessions at the Palms' Orientation Course, whilst David Tutty, Executive

Officer for the Social Justice Commission at the Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba was awarded the Community Engagement Award for engaging community groups in support of just and sustainable development.

Joining was Alopi Latukefu, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre along with Albert Tevita and his son Zephaniah, who work with youth to provide guidance and mentoring to help navigate the unique challenges that young people face through their organisation Choose Life.



*Left: Alopi Latukefu, Director of the Edmund Rice Centre, back right: Zephaniah Tevita, front right: Albert Tevita*

Sr Annette Parker OLSH was joined by Sr Merrilyn Lee, who collected the Sustainable Relationships Award on behalf of Holy Family Care Centre in Limpopo, South Africa. The centre provides support for disadvantaged and sick children in the Limpopo province. The Holy Family Care Centre also includes residential facilities and treatment for up to 75 orphaned babies and children, including those undergoing treatment for HIV/AIDS and TB.



*Sr Annette Parker in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea (1964)*

Sr Annette was one of Palms' first members alongside Roy Boylan, Mary Gilchrist and Len Burney, helping to recruit and send people overseas. She travelled to Rabaul, Papua New Guinea in 1965 at the age of twenty-two and stayed in placement for two years before returning to Australia. Her experience in Papua New Guinea would inspire her to return and work with the community for more than forty years as a Sister in the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

*"The culture of the time we were in was to help people. Now Palms has evolved and now it is about showing local people how to do the job and leave. It's not about you, it's about the community."*

Earlier this year, Palms Australia said goodbye to its long-standing Executive Director, Roger O'Halloran. Roger was awarded the Roy Boylan Award for his commitment to Palms as Executive Director. For over two decades, Palms was guided by Roger O'Halloran through many unforeseen challenges that affected its mission to reduce global poverty however, Palms still remains to this day evermore committed to the journey that is creating a world that is free from inequality. The role of Executive Director has now been handed to Soraya Kassim.



*Left to right: Bridgette Barrett, Ben Oh, Christine O'Halloran, Roger O'Halloran, Soraya Kassim, Emelda Davis, Peter Fletcher, Paul Barrett.*

“Since joining Palms as its new Executive Director, I have been struck by the unique strength that Palms has, to offer the opportunity for genuine encounter demanded by faith. The Solidarity Awards Luncheon was a fantastic opportunity to meet more of the Palms family, as they all have inspirational stories to tell,” said Soraya Kassim.