

Media Release

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Calvary Health Care launches history of the Little Company of Mary with *In Good Company*

A new historical text on the arrival in Australia of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary and their lasting legacies that span the last 140 years has been published and launched in Sydney.

In Good Company by author and historian Margaret A. Clark is an authoritative work that brings overdue recognition to the Catholic Sisters, who helped build Australia's fledgling healthcare system and was officially launched in Sydney by Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales.

The book covers the Sisters' heritage from the original vision of the Foundress Venerable Mary Potter and her wish to extend compassionate health care around the world. The remarkable growth of the Little Company of Mary in the late 19th and early 20th century has now been masterfully documented in this work with particular emphasis on the Congregational reach in Australia.

Having celebrated its 140-year anniversary in Australia last year as Calvary Health Care, the legacy of the original six Sisters who sailed into Sydney on a hot November day in 1885 is formidable. With more than 13 hospitals, 57 residential aged care homes, 17 retirement villages, 17 home care service centres, and employing more than 18,000 staff and volunteers across four states and two territories, the collective endeavours of those associated with Calvary over the years is celebrated in this tribute to all of the Sisters, past and present.

In Good Company represents seven years of meticulous research and writing by the author, who as a child met the Sisters at Lewisham Hospital in Sydney where her father was a visiting surgeon.

"This book documents the Sisters' foundational role in establishing various health services in Australia," said Ms Clark.

"It highlights how their distinctive ethos of hospitality shaped patient care and institutional culture.

"I found the historical record dominated by newspaper reports of building openings: renovations, extensions. But these tell us little about the life within.

"I've deliberately chosen to focus on the women who filled those buildings with long days of service to suffering humanity.

"All the while, they welcomed new members into their community, inducting them into their way of life – especially the interior spirit, as well as training them to nurse the sick and the dying," she said.

According to Calvary Chief Mission and Public Affairs Officer Mark Green, this lively work stands as both an historical record and an examination of the level of faith, both personal and religious that drove the early

beginnings in the new colony.

“For our national story it illuminates the extraordinary contribution of religious women whose vision, courage and compassion helped lay the foundations of modern Australian healthcare,” Mr Green said.

“Calvary staff demonstrate enormous pride in the heritage story of their organisation and understand the important role Calvary has played in delivering healthcare services that others have selectively chosen to ignore.

“The spirit of ‘being for others’ is at the heart of Calvary, and this history explains so much behind the Congregation of the ‘Blue Nuns’ and the special mission they worked so hard to make their own,” he said.

Former Calvary Board Chair John Watkins AM writes in the Foreword “The history covers the myriad ways in which the Sisters have navigated the complicated terrain of public healthcare policy ... across multiple time periods and jurisdictions.”

The genesis behind the name “The Little Company of Mary” and the meaning behind the use of the name “Calvary” are given, explaining the spirit behind the organisation. The collective stories build a vivid picture of the ongoing contributions made to general nursing, specialised nursing and nursing training, as well as home care services which continues today.

Over the years, the vision and mission of Mary Potter have survived not only the translation to Australia but the Sisters’ adaption to momentous changes in the 21st century. The book is a nostalgic look at both historical and personal content – with the Calvary heart of care for the poor, the sick, the dying and the homeless at its core.

Historical note

The Sisters of the Little Company of Mary united all their health care services, under a single Board in 1997. This Board, the Little Company of Mary Health Care Board, assumed responsibility for the governance of the organisation, now known as Calvary Health Care. In 2011, to ensure the continuity of the healthcare mission into the future, the Sisters transferred their stewardship of Calvary Health Care to Calvary Ministries, whose directors act as Trustees and stewards of Calvary Health Care.

Copies of the 424-page *In Good Company* can be purchased for \$69.95 through Calvary Health Care, Level 15, 345 George St Sydney. Payments can be made via credit card only.

For media enquiries contact 1300 450 108 or email media@calvarycare.org.au

About Calvary:

In 1885, six courageous Sisters sailed into Sydney to continue the mission of Venerable Mary Potter and the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary to care for those in need. Thus began Calvary’s enduring legacy of care in Australia. Today, we continue their mission, in our hospitals, home care services, retirement living and residential aged care homes across four states and two territories.

For more information, visit www.calvarycare.org.au.