



**CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**  
**Holy Spirit Province (W.A. & S.A.)**

ABN: 13 243 256 081

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**Communication to Members of the Edmund Rice Network**  
**South Australia and Western Australia**

I write to you about some immense changes that are about to take place within the Congregation of Christian Brothers and within the wider Edmund Rice Network in Oceania. Many of you may be aware of some or all of these already.

The changes are twofold. Firstly on October 1 of this year, the thirty seven schools currently governed by Christian Brothers in Australia will come under the governance of an organisation called Edmund Rice Education Australia.

Secondly, on that same day, the five Provinces within which the Congregation operates in New Zealand and Australia, and the Region in Papua New Guinea, will come together in an entirely new structure which will be known as the Oceania Province.

Edmund Rice Education Australia will ensure the continued dynamic expression of the Charism of Edmund Rice in Catholic Schools in Australia. This will occur in the schools currently in existence and in new developments which are already in the planning stage.

In relation to both the move to Edmund Rice Education Australia and to the new Province we believe that while these changes in structures are in some places causing disturbance and anxiety they are being accompanied by a deep and prayer-filled openness to the Spirit in the Brothers and in other members of the Edmund Rice Network. There is also excitement and hope! The changes are about releasing, and better channelling, the enormous energy in the Edmund Rice Charismatic movement which is sweeping across Oceania.

This energy will be expressed in new ways in ministries which already exist in the Oceania Province and in new ministries which respond to changing needs in our society and to 'the ecological state of the world'. This energy will be nurtured in small and large groups which come together to spend time in prayerful silence and reflection and in conversation about the Gospel and the expression of the Edmund Rice gift in the Church community and in the world. These gatherings will take place within the Oceania Province and in gatherings which bring the Province and Edmund Rice Education Australia together. A change in structures does not mean a loss of relationships – let us nurture these relationships in this time of transition.

Incorporated in W.A. as Trustees of the Christian Brothers in Western Australia Incorporated. - ABN: 41 872 516 792  
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These strong relationships include the bond between the Christian Brothers and all others inspired by the life of Edmund. This strong relationship is vital for the Brothers as they continue the exploration of their own identity as Brothers and their role in the Church and in society into the future.

In the course of the life of the Congregation of Christian Brothers over the last two hundred and five years our identity has been very closely linked to the schools which the Congregation has governed and/or other schools in which the Brothers have worked.. Over the last thirty years, while many Brothers have continued to work in schools, others have worked in a growing range of other ministries and the Congregation has formally created many other ministries. During that period, however, our identity has for many, both within the Congregation and outside of it, continued to have been closely linked to our schools.

In the coming few years, Christian Brothers will continue to seek to live out their Constitutions which state the ideals of our life and to express in day to day living the dreams of our recent Congregation Chapters, both in work within schools and in many other ways.

As we do this we will be shaping a new identity and a new chapter in our Congregational story. We are shaping that new identity and 'writing our next chapter' within a new context – the context of an Edmund Rice charismatic movement of which the Brothers in Oceania are a very significant part – but we are not the total picture. In some ways the Christian Brothers will need to 'live or act' our way into this new identity and new chapter in our Congregational life. We will need to complement this 'living and acting' with deep contemplation and dialogue so that we can in time surface the words which will allow us to express a common understanding of identity and a vision for moving forward. This dialogue will need to include both Brothers and other members of the Edmund Rice Network and so the relationships need to be strong. There is no doubt about the critical contribution that the Christian Brothers can make in the Edmund Rice Charismatic movement but we will do that in partnership with others.

This partnership is already lived out in many different ways:

in day to day work,

in planning for the future of our projects,

in developing Edmund Rice Education Australia,

in prayer and reflection groups,

and over cups of tea and coffee, glasses of wine or a mixer..... and in many other ways.

The partnership has also been expressed by Brothers and other members of the Network spending time together in our local formation programs and in similar sharings in international programs and gatherings such as:

Trasna and Toir in Ireland,

the Karibu immersion in Nairobi,

God is in the Now Retreats all over the world,

the Flare up Like Flame exploration of Justice and Eco-Justice in Kolkatta,

the Spirituality Gathering in Vancouver and

the Exploration of the Christian Brother Vocation in Auckland

All of these conversations and shared experiences, whether small and local or large and international, explore the Charism of Edmund and its expression in the world today. They

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also shape the identity and role of the Edmund Rice Network and the identity and role of the Christian Brothers within that network. You may be surprised to read that I also believe that you are creating a new expression of the Catholic Church!

With all that in mind I invite you to pray for a very special gathering of Brothers and others in the Edmund Rice Network on July 14 and 15 in Perth. About fifty to fifty five Brothers and about 30 other members of the Edmund Rice Network from South Australia and Western Australia will come together to explore possibilities for the future of the Edmund Rice Network and the Christian Brothers. These conversations could have a whole range of outcomes, locally, across Oceania and on the wider international scene.

In the short term it will impact on a meeting of approximately forty Brothers in Brisbane in the first two weeks of October this year. That gathering will celebrate the commencement of the Oceania Province and will provide for significant preparation for the six yearly Chapter of the Congregation in Munnar (India) in March 2008 and for the first Chapter of the Oceania Province in July 2008. Both the March and July Chapters will have other people from the Edmund Rice Network participating with the Brothers for at least some of the gatherings.

As well as praying for this important gathering you are welcome to have conversations with participants about your own dreams and ideas and/or to submit your ideas in writing. Please contact Br Pat Kelly ([kelly.pat@westcourt.wa.edu.au](mailto:kelly.pat@westcourt.wa.edu.au)) or Br Peter Negus ([negus.peter@westcourt.wa.edu.au](mailto:negus.peter@westcourt.wa.edu.au)) to obtain a list of participants or to submit your ideas.

I invite you to join with others in praying .....

*We believe in God who has been active in this planet for millions of years,  
we believe in a God active in the emergence of humankind,  
we believe in a God who taught us how to live and love through the life of Jesus,  
we believe in a God who shaped the life of Edmund Rice,*

*May the Spirit of God inspire and guide us all  
as we respond to the needs of our planet  
and to those most in need in our world*

*We place our minds, hearts and hands under the guidance of that same Spirit.*

Thank you for your prayerful and other support of this very significant gathering on July 14 and 15.

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Please also keep in mind our two significant celebrations of the past, and more importantly of the future, of the Christian Brothers and the total Edmund Rice Network. The first is in Western Australia on August 26 and the second is in South Australia on September 3. Contact Anne Pinzon on 08 9365 2800 or [pinzon.anne@westcourt.wa.edu.au](mailto:pinzon.anne@westcourt.wa.edu.au) if you have not received any information about these very important events.

Yours sincerely



Br Kevin P Ryan  
Province Leader

8 June, 2007

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