

Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent

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The work of the Sisters of the Sacred Advent (SSA) began in Brisbane in 1892 with the arrival of its founder, Sister Carol Amy Banguy, who had been professed in the Anglican community of John the Baptist, Clewer, England. She came to Brisbane to do welfare work for the young women and girls, and soon also realised there was a need for schooling for girls, noting in order to “have a progressive and tolerant community, educated women are a pre-requisite”.

Education in Queensland in the nineteenth century was a two-tier system, with schools run by government and by the churches. By 1860, the first Anglican Archbishop, Dr Tufnell, had arrived in time to observe the abolition of financial aid to church schools and restricted religious education in state schools. The church’s response was to establish a network of church schools throughout the Diocese. Canon Stone Wigg in 1895 clearly defined the church’s attitude: “While most anxious to extend the schools, we are determined not to open them unless the teaching offered is of the very best.”

The Sisters’ educational philosophy, based on religious principles and never narrowly academic, also actively sought to educate “the whole personality, physical, mental and spiritual that the girls may live to their fullest capacity”.

This philosophy informed each of the SSA schools: St Margaret’s (established in 1895) and St Aidan’s (established in 1900) both of which remain SSA schools.

The Sisters also established St Michael’s in Brisbane, St Catherine’s in Warwick, St Anne’s in Townsville, St Gabriel’s in Charters Towers, St Mary’s in Herberton and All Saints Hostel in Charleville, together with Tufnell Home for Children and Martin’s Hospital.

The Society of the Sacred Advent believes that one of the best gifts that we as a society can give young women for an empowered future that contributes to the common good is an education. This enduring educational vision is as true now as it was in the early 1900s.