



# Cluny Sisters in Papua New Guinea Celebrating 25 Years at Bema Catholic High School

Sister Josephine O'Kelly  
Province of Australia/Papua New Guinea

If you look for Kaintiba, Papua New Guinea (PNG) on Google Maps, you will be led to a government outpost in the mountains of the Gulf Province. There are no roads in the area, so access is on foot over mountainous tracks, or by a small plane. A thousand feet higher, along a narrow bush track is Bema Catholic Church, surrounded by a primary school, a high school, and a clinic, along with accommodation buildings for students, staff and missionaries.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny have been responsible for the high school for twenty-five years, and during these years many students have graduated, going on to tertiary studies and various occupations.

But what is remarkable is that these students come from villages where their families live where traditional subsistence agriculture is the only means of livelihood, supplemented at times from the sale of coffee. As there are no roads, the only way to get to school is on foot—maybe a walk of two or three days. Thus, the majority of students are boarders.

For some years, a tractor and trailer brought in by helicopter made the journey from Bema to the airstrip at Kaintiba to pick up building materials and supplies,



Sister Joyeeta and her class

Photos: Sister Gina Delmar

but over the years, landslides and broken bridges, along with the demise of the tractor, have brought this means of transport to an end.

But this does not prevent the school from functioning. At the weekend, some of the students walk over the mountains to a trade store and bring back supplies of canned fish and rice for the kitchen. They are paid, and their income goes towards the paying of their school fees. Such a commitment to their own education indicates their for learning, and their willingness to be involved in it.

*Cluny Connections* congratulates the sisters and students of Bema, and wishes them many more years of growth, academic success, and improved access!



Bema High School nestled in the hillside



Sister Annette