

# Sister Monica McNamara O.A.M.

*Obituary by Ana Yeo*

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## SISTER MONICA FAREWELLED

She dedicated her life to the church and the teachings of others, now Sister Monica McNamara, formerly of Riverstone, has been farewelled with a Thanksgiving Mass at St Joseph's Chapel, Baulkham Hills.

Sister Monica OAM was born in Riverstone in 1930 as one of six children to Henry and Olive McNamara, and at the age of 22 joined the Sisters of St Joseph of Sydney at the Stella Maris Novitiate in Australia.

This began what was to be a successful and selfless career for Sr Monica, who from 1981, began a career in teaching that took her to all corners of the globe.

Sr Monica studied at Catholic Teachers college in North Sydney where she received her diploma in Theological studies in 1967.

From 1979 to 1981 she studied for and received a certificate in social welfare at the NSW Technical and Further Education Commission.

Later Sr Monica did the Life's Journey Experience in Douglas Park in 2001; the Wells of Living Water program in New Zealand in 2002; and the Journey in Faith Freedom program from 2002-2004.

Sr Monica had served as an elementary school teacher for more than 20 years when an extraordinary opportunity came her way.

While visiting California, she interned for six months at the St Madeline Sophie Training Center for developmentally disabled adults in El Cajon.

While she had never previously felt drawn to this work, it wasn't pure accident that she explored this area.

She studied all that she could about serving people with a disability.

Sr Monica encountered the SPRED program (Special Religious Education program) in Oakland and then travelled to Chicago to study SPRED program in more depth.

In April 1985, Sr Monica was asked by Bishop Kelly of Toowoomba, Queensland, to start the SPRED program in his diocese.

While setting up and directing the program, Sr Monica continued learning and establishing connections within the SPRED program by travelling to Switzerland twice, in 1994 and 1997, to attend SPRED conventions.

The quality of the ministry program she designed and in which she trained others, was attested to by the fact that in 2006 she received the Medal of the Order of Australia.

She was nominated by Major General Michael Jeffery, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

It was given to her for “service to people with intellectual disabilities as a spiritual educator through the Special Religious Development Ministry of the Catholic Church”.

According to her Australian Sisters, Sr Monica was “generous, a willing worker, ready to help out with any of the hard work and was the best bathroom cleaner in the business”.

“She laughed readily and was a good companion to everyone in the group,” a spokesperson said.

“She loved to perform, and had the very best educated English accent to render poems she knew”.

The Mass of Resurrection for Sr Monica was celebrated in Orange, California at the Motherhouse Chapel on May 18.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Sr Monica’s name were made to the Sisters of St Joseph of Orange for the support of their ongoing ministries.

