

# Brothers mark milestones of religious commitment

FOR Brother Mika Cilicewa and Brother Steve Morelli of the Diocese of Lismore's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, 2013 is a significant year for their religious commitments as they each celebrate extraordinary milestones.

Br Mika, as a Brother with the Marist Fathers, has been professed for 40 years. Br Steve entered the Christian Brothers 50 years ago.

These remarkable people work in the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry which involves day to day support for the Aboriginal people of the Mid North Coast of NSW.

Their work involves providing culturally appropriate masses, reviving the local language, ministry and solace to people in jail, plus a lot of other specialised work.

As part of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Team Br Steve helps with a theology course for Aboriginal people through an Indigenous theology college and works with ecumenical groups like 'Kairos' in the jail.

Br Steve devotes a lot of time working on the revival of culture, story, and song of the local languages.

Br Steve is managing the re-accreditation of a Gumbaynggirr language course and is collaborating with Goori researchers to restore the Gumbaynggirr stories in book form through the Muurrbay Aboriginal and Culture Centre.

He is working on dictionaries, texts and Goori language classes, initiating language groups to revive languages and culture.

"Early on in my religious life I started helping the Aboriginal people in Redfern Sydney," he said.

"I was 'apprenticed' to 'Mum Shir!' accompanying



□ Br Mika Cilicewa, (left) and Br Steve Morelli (right) with Aboriginal Elder Uncle Martin Ballangarry at the celebrations of their anniversaries

her to jails and 'missions' and Aboriginal organisations where she did her work.

"The Christian Brothers had a school in Kempsey, a town with a large Aboriginal population and the work of Br Kevin Moss with Aboriginal students drew me to the region in 1985."

Br Mika echos Br Steve in his description of the work he does with the Aboriginal people.

In 2002 Br Mika accepted the call to join the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Macksville, Bowraville and Kempsey.

Br Mika has an important role in his ministry to the prisoners in Kempsey jail, providing comfort and support.

"My special ministry is to visit the men and women who are in jail in Kempsey where I am a Chaplain. We

have a prayer service in the jail every week," he said.

"Afterwards it is important for me to visit the families of the people who are in jail."

And there is no slowing these men down with their hopes for the future.

Br Mika will continue his important work of visiting people and families in their homes, communities and the hospital and of course, providing support and comfort

for the people in jail.

"Being faithful to my vows and to God gives me inner peace and joy for myself and hope for the people I work with," Br Mika said.

Br Steve is also positive for the future.

"My hope is that I keep listening to my Goori friends and to the Spirit's inspiration and allow the self-empowerment of Indigenous people to gather pace," Br Steve said.