



## Fr Paul Cooney SM

16.3.1953 ~ 5.8.2018

Paul Cooney, born 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1953, was raised the second of eight children of Ben and Joan Cooney in the New South Wales south coast town of Thirroul. After secondary school at St Paul's College, Bellambi, he entered the Marist Fathers novitiate at Armidale in 1971. Completing seminary studies at Toongabbie and Hunters Hill, including an Arts degree at Sydney University, Paul was ordained in Wollongong in 1978.

Fr Paul's first appointments were in secondary education, with a year at Woodlawn (1980) and Bellambi (1981). He then began a long stint in Marist parishes: Burnie (1982–84), St John's Wood / The Gap (1985–86), West Sunshine (1987–93), and St Patrick's, Church Hill (1994–97 and 2000), including being parish priest at West Sunshine and St Patrick's.

After studying for a year in Dublin doing the Religious Formation Ministry Programme, Fr Paul worked in formation for 18 months at the Marist Seminary in Auckland. In 2001 he was elected vicar-provincial and remained in that role until elected provincial at the beginning of 2007.

Fr Paul had always been keen on sport, with his rugby league career ending abruptly in 1981 by a wayward elbow to the cheekbone while playing for his beloved Thirroul against Dapto. He then became a keen walker, especially after a triple by-pass operation in 2002.

Fr Paul was also a member of the Australian Province's "Marist Fathers Women and the Church Committee", set up following the recommendation of the 1993 General Chapter. The committee included three Marist Fathers and three women, conducted a survey of women and ran sessions on listening to the voices of women.

Not long after finishing a double term as provincial, Fr Paul was appointed as Bursar-General of the Society of Mary, taking office in Rome in late 2013, and holding this position until health concerns led to his return to Australia in early 2016.

Lengthy and varied medical regimes followed during which Fr Paul was cared for by family members in his native Thirroul and a short period as a member of the Montbel community Hunters Hill.

His final weeks were spent in Lawrence Hargrave Hospital, Thirroul, where he died peacefully on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018. May he rest in well-deserved peace.