

The new National Coordinator of MAGiS, Carmel Traffa, says she hopes to continue building on the group's sense of community and to give young people the resources they need to become leaders.

Carmel recently took up the reigns of the Ignatian young adult program, which is supported by the Loreto Sisters (IBVM), the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), the Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ), the Sisters of Charity (RSC) and the Jesuits (SJ).

'As the National Coordinator, I'm really here as a resource for, and a service to, young people that they might lead other young people on that faith journey.'

Carmel said she was amazed at the calibre of the young adults involved in MAGiS. 'Sometimes we underestimate young people. I think they have a huge amount to give. There's a sense of boldness and enthusiasm and possibility that everyone can take a lesson from. My first MAGiS Circle here I was blown away by these mature, prayerful, balanced, fine young people.'

Carmel says it is important to create a cycle of young leadership, and that MAGiS is perfectly poised to do this. Although MAGiS membership numbers are good, quality is more important than quantity, stresses Carmel. 'If a young person goes on an Experiment and they are deeply changed within, and we never hear from them again, that is a success story.'

And while overseas Experiments remain a part of the MAGiS strategy, Carmel would like to increase the focus on local areas of need.

'I'm planning to get some Experiments up and running in the Top End with Indigenous Australians. I'd also like to concentrate on social justice and service within our communities. The experiences overseas as fantastic – sometimes we need that shock of a different culture to bring us into reality - but hopefully that can translate into serving your local community at home.'

It was her own experiences overseas – working first in conjunction with the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome and then at a parish-run bistro in Paris - that led to some formative experiences for Carmel. 'Living in Rome was a great blessing to me, it allowed me to see the church – not just the bricks and mortar, but the people within it.'

Proceeds from the bistro where Carmel worked in Paris's red light district went to a soup kitchen. 'Sometimes we'd get people in who don't live the night well, or who really had issues and difficulties, and we would all be available to talk to them. It was a time of self-discovery and service, and awareness beyond myself and my comfort zone.'

It's this self-discovery that Carmel hopes to witness in the people she meets through MAGiS. 'There's a joy in seeing young people grow and develop and find themselves.'

*By Catherine Marshall*