

# mercy foundation®

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at the  
service  
of human  
dignity



*Left to Right: Sarah Steele, Corporate Responsibility Manager Ashurst Asia-Pacific, Jessica Roth, Founder and Director Social Impact Hub, Felicity Reynolds, CEO Mercy Foundation.*

## Message from the CEO

It's a tragedy that each year, 12,000 people aged under 25 years present alone to homelessness services in NSW. Sadly, youth homelessness often results from family violence and there is also an over-representation of young people from out of home care who experience homelessness after leaving care. We believe that the statistics may underestimate the total number, as many young people couch surf and don't come into contact with homelessness services. Our research adds to the existing data that indicates many adults who experience chronic homelessness had their first experience of homelessness when they were teens.

Homelessness is always traumatising. When it is experienced in younger, formative years it can have seriously detrimental and lasting effects on physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Over the past year, the Mercy Foundation worked in partnership with the Social Impact Hub to develop a resource for government, private investors, services and NGOs on the different types of impact investing mechanisms available to finance innovative approaches to reduce youth homelessness.

Social Impact investment models draw capital from private investors to fund models that provide both a social return (in this case, reducing youth homelessness) and a financial return, in the form of savings to government that is paid back to investors. The investment not only draws capital from investors but also expertise from

the public, private and not for profits sectors to achieve social outcomes. The NSW government has committed to delivering two new social impact investment transactions each year.

Our new report 'Impact Investing to reduce and prevent youth homelessness in NSW' provides a snapshot of youth homelessness in NSW, the current impact investment mechanisms available, what is happening around the globe in this area and the different options available for impact investment in NSW. The two approaches considered for financing are the Foyer model and the Kids Under Cover studio-housing model.

The report was launched to the public at Ashurst in September 2016, where a panel featuring senior representatives from the NSW Office of Social Impact Investment, Social Ventures, NCOSS and the Mercy Foundation discussed the opportunities to work together to reduce youth homelessness.

I believe this report provides promising mechanisms to develop effective models for reducing youth homelessness in our community. I also believe that if we can successfully reduce youth homelessness then there is nothing to stop us ending youth homelessness in the future. **The report can be found on our website [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)**

Felicity Reynolds  
CEO Mercy Foundation



## The Cath Leary Social Justice Award

The Cath Leary Social Justice Award for 2016 was awarded to Bronwyn Penrith, for her significant contribution to social justice. This award recognises Bronwyn's long and ongoing contribution to equality and justice for Indigenous Australians over many years. The Mercy Foundation Board noted Bronwyn's generosity in sharing of knowledge and for her commitment to the community through the many campaigns and organisations she has actively and energetically contributed to and supported.

Bronwyn is a Wiradjuri woman who has worked all her life for equality and the recognition of Aboriginal people and their rights. She is the Chair of Moreton Consulting's Board of Directors. She is Chair of the Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation near the Block in Redfern and a Director of the Redfern Foundation Ltd. She is also a recent past member of the Redfern/Waterloo Aboriginal Justice Group and the City of Sydney Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Bronwyn delivers mentoring training, cultural awareness and community education workshops. She is also a highly skilled mediator and is a registered Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner with the Australian Government Department of the Attorney General. Many of her roles have and continue to be carried out in an unpaid voluntary capacity.

*Top Left to Right: Sr Loreto Conroy RSM, Congregation Leader of the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy, Richard Jarjoura, Deputy Chair of the Mercy Foundation, Bottom: Sr Joseph Wightley RSM, Bronwyn Penrith, winner of the Cath Leary Social Justice Award.*



Most recently, Bronwyn has performed a leadership role in educating and leading women in the Aboriginal community about lateral violence.

The Mercy Foundation Board awards the Cath Leary Social Justice Award each year to an outstanding individual or organisation that has made a substantial contribution to social justice in Australia. The Award is named in honor of the late Cath Leary, long term Board member of the Mercy Foundation who worked tirelessly for social justice in her lifetime. We congratulate Bronwyn on this significant achievement.

## Are food vans and sleeping bags enough?

Homelessness is devastating. It is lonely, traumatising and dangerous. How do we respond to people experiencing homelessness? Are food vans and sleeping bags enough?

This is the question we posed to hundreds of secondary students across Australia who participated in the 2016 Mercy Foundation Social Justice Youth Awards. The response was overwhelmingly the same. NO. People experiencing homelessness, particularly people sleeping rough, need much more than food vans and sleeping bags. They need a home.

The Mercy Foundation Youth Awards is a video competition for Secondary schools across Australia. The purpose of the awards is to encourage students to learn more about the issue of homelessness in Australia.

We received many high quality, creative and thought provoking entries. The judges awarded the first prize to the exceptional entry from two Year 9 students, Jack and Matthew, from St Luke's Grammar School Dee Why. Students from Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College were awarded second and third prize.

This year's theme was developed to challenge students' ideas about helping people experiencing homelessness. Many students participate in activities that meet the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness; the competition builds awareness that our community also needs to work towards permanent solutions to end homelessness.

The solution to homelessness is safe, affordable, appropriate housing, and in some cases, extra support may be needed to help people sustain their tenancy.

Sue Mowbray, the Foundation's Communications and Projects Manager, once again managed this project which involves liaising with lots of schools and students, developing resources for the project and juggling huge video files from the many entrants to the awards. At their August 2016 meeting, the Mercy Foundation Board formally thanked Sue for her excellent management of this project.

The Mercy Foundation thanks the many students who entered the competition this year. The awards will run again next year. Please visit our website's Latest News section to view the winning entries.





# Grant Reports

## Keeping Safe at Home

Domestic violence is one of the key reasons for homelessness amongst women and children. The Mercy Foundation funded a project in the Upper Hunter, called “Keeping Safe at Home”. The project helps women stay safe and secure in their home, removing the perpetrator and thereby leaving the violent relationship.

Upper Hunter Homeless Support (UHHS) provided women who had experienced domestic violence with personal safety plans, risk assessments, installation of security measures, support and advocacy in applying for AVOs and court matters, referral and case management to address financial and tenancy issues, networking with police and other assistance.

As the project progressed, the service noted a major gap in the need to support women on spousal visas who left their relationship due to domestic violence. These women were left destitute, without any access to housing, income or support.

A variation to the project enabled UHHS to use funds to assist this vulnerable group. In one case, they applied to the Department of Immigration to ensure the woman was able to stay in Australia after leaving her spouse; food and supplies were provided and the service assisted with court support. Another two women were supported under this program.

A total of 17 women were assisted by this project, all have been provided with DV support and education. Whilst some have chosen to leave the area, the women who chose to stay in their home and seek assistance to ensure the perpetrator left the home, are all still safe at home.



## Supporting women through education

The trauma of domestic violence turns lives upside down and makes it extremely difficult to plan for the future. A small grant was awarded to Moving Forward DFV Case Services for a project that helps rebuild self-esteem and self worth and to enhance the participant's prospects for future employment.

The service supports women as they leave their relationship, transition through a recovery period and then encourages them to consider ways to build a new future, through education, training and employment.

Under the project, women were offered the opportunity to take up tertiary studies as a means of increasing their likelihood of employment and create a financially more stable future for themselves and their children. To date, six women have started studying tertiary courses made possible by the support of the small grant. These funds enabled each woman to receive a laptop, software and assistance with textbook expenses. More importantly, their self-esteem and outlook on life has improved.





# Ending Homelessness

## Solutions to Homelessness – Housing First

The Mercy Foundation works to bring about an end to homelessness. We support evidence based solutions that will end people's homelessness.

According to the 2011 census, there are just over 105,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night. Most of these people only need an affordable home to live in. Between 15 – 20% will need a home and more support services to help them stay housed.

No longer should people have to prove that they are 'housing ready' before being considered for a permanent home. We now know that without a home, it is impossible to get a job, to address health issues, to stay connected to your family and friends and to maintain dignity. Housing First is about providing first and foremost a safe, stable, permanent home, with support if needed.

People with significant health problems and complex needs may require Permanent Supportive Housing, which offers permanent accommodation with intensive and ongoing support, tailored to each person's needs.

Rapid Rehousing programs ensure that people with low needs who become homeless are found permanent housing as quickly as possible. The longer people are homeless, the more difficult it can be to turn their situation around. Being homeless can impact your health, employment, education and finances. Most people who become homeless need temporary assistance to find a new home.

Safe, affordable and suitable housing is essential for good health and well-being. It is also a human right.

### The effective, evidence based approaches to solving homelessness are:



**Housing First**



**Permanent Supportive Housing**



**Rapid Rehousing**

## What is a Registry Week?

Registry Week is the name given to a week-long registry process that brings together local people, services and agencies to jointly interview people experiencing homelessness over three mornings using a survey called the VISPDAT. The data is used to provide a report back to the community at the end of the week, that provides a de-identified and broad picture of the people experiencing homelessness in their community and what their health and housing needs are. This can be a wake-up call for each community as they become aware of the level of need and vulnerability of some of their own community members.

The most important part of the project is that it creates a confidential register that details the name and location of people, prioritised by need – so that local services can continue to follow up with those people and help them to get into housing as soon as possible. This is when the real work then starts, to house and support the most vulnerable people in the community. This can be a life-saving intervention.

The Mercy Foundation has been active in managing and advising on registry weeks across Australia since 2010. The Foundation works closely with Micah Projects in Brisbane to ensure that the evidence based methodology used during and after registry weeks is used and that the data collected is managed appropriately and effectively.

These projects also work with local housing providers and state government to line up supply and ensure that the right support services are available to each individual housed.

In Australia, the Mercy Foundation has worked with communities in inner Sydney, Hobart, Perth, the Nepean, Waverley and Sutherland to run Registry Weeks. In late 2016 we worked with the Nepean/Blue Mountains and Newcastle for their Registry Weeks. Registry Weeks have also been held in Brisbane, other parts of Queensland and Melbourne.

Another consequence of solving homelessness is the economic benefit. Chronic homelessness costs the taxpayer around \$48,217 per person per annum, due to the additional burden on emergency, health and justice systems. Common Ground Housing and support saves the government and taxpayer \$13,100 per person. This figure and the saving it indicates includes the cost of actually providing the permanent housing and support. If our policymakers aren't motivated to end homelessness for any other reason than to save money, the evidence is there. It is cheaper to house and support the people experiencing homelessness with complex needs than it is to leave them on the streets.

### The key to success of this model is



**Knowing who is homeless by name**



**Knowing each person or family's individualised housing and support needs**



**Matching up the supply and services with the demand**



**Ability to measure progress and success**

# Grants to End Homelessness

Since 2009 the Mercy Foundation has run the Grants to End Homelessness program, the only grants program in Australia to focus on ending chronic homelessness. The projects funded in 2016 under this grants program are:

## Sydney Women's Housing Alliance – Older Women's Studio Development Project

Older women are one of the fastest growing groups of people experiencing homelessness in Australia. This project will deliver a report on the option of studio accommodation for older women; their opinion on this type of housing, how it might suit their needs and how it has worked elsewhere.

There is a noticeable gap in understanding what accommodation products could deliver for older people. This information will inform housing providers about design and financing for new housing models for older women. The report will be used to advocate with government and aged care providers to consider funding tailored housing for older women with limited or no assets and very low incomes.

## Ending Homelessness in Nepean Blue Mountains

This project brings together government, specialist homelessness services, local businesses and volunteer groups to identify the most vulnerable people in the community, to work together to provide housing and support needed to maintain a home and engage with the community to end homelessness.

The VISPDAT tool was used to build a registry that prioritises the most vulnerable. A media campaign focusing on ending rather than managing homelessness has built community interest and engagement. The lead agency is Wentworth Community Housing. The Mercy Foundation worked very closely with Wentworth Community Housing on this project to provide its expertise and experience in managing registry weeks and training people in the use of the VISPDAT as well as managing the data.

## Cana Communities Life – Transformation Program

Cana Communities Life Transformation Program works with the most vulnerable members of society experiencing homelessness. Cana operates on a relational model; they offer accommodation for as long as people need it, education, personal mentoring programs, an extensive community outreach program and individual companionship, to help each person recover, end their homelessness and restore dignity to their lives. This project provides housing for 5-7 people experiencing chronic homelessness in the inner city of Sydney.

## Jewish House – Managed Alcohol Program Pilot for Inner Sydney

This initiative provides residential accommodation, psychosocial support and medical oversight to people who are chronically homeless and sleeping rough in inner city Sydney who have alcohol dependence. The project will reduce expenditure on health and justice services, reduce the vulnerability of the clients and end their homelessness, and bring them dignity and opportunity. It is based on a very successful model in Canada that has been operating for more than a decade.

## House of Welcome – Havens of Hope

Havens of Hope will provide short, medium and transitional accommodation for people seeking asylum, who have no access to traditional government and non-government support such as social, public and affordable housing. The grant will provide funding for accommodation and support services to assist with health, employment, psychosocial needs and assistance in the visa application process.

Funding will also assist in expanding the reach of the "Enough room" project ([www.enoughroom.org](http://www.enoughroom.org)). This portal allows access to vacant rooms in homes throughout Sydney, providing emergency and on-going accommodation to vulnerable individuals and families while waiting for long term solutions.

Although the Mercy Foundation doesn't usually support transitional or temporary housing under this grants program, the provision of temporary housing for people waiting to hear the outcomes of their visa applications is essential.







## Rosanne Haggerty: Inspiring a generation to END homelessness

In August, Rosanne Haggerty, a leading innovator and global leader in ending homelessness for the most disadvantaged people in the community, visited the Mercy Foundation for a full day workshop and evening talk. The evening event was booked out, reflecting the widely held respect for Rosanne, who is responsible for ending homelessness for thousands of vulnerable people in the US and now Australia.

Rosanne recalled her 'light bulb moment'. When she was volunteering for a homeless shelter in New York in the early 1990s, a frail, homeless woman described by the outreach workers as 'service resistant', was admitted to hospital. She nominated Rosanne as her next of kin. When visiting her in hospital, the woman asked Rosanne if she might be able to move into her building. Rosanne asked her why she hadn't said something before, to which the woman replied: "Nobody ever asked".

"It is not an exaggeration to say my understanding of homelessness changed completely that day", said Rosanne

According to Rosanne, unless we work to house and support those who don't have a voice, those with complex problems, people we label as 'service resistant', we cannot hope to bring about an end to homelessness in each community.

Rosanne started the Common Ground movement to provide permanent housing with on-site support services for people experiencing chronic homelessness. The Common Ground model brings together business, government and community to solve chronic homelessness. The model has now spread globally including the UK, Canada and Australia (the Mercy Foundation led the campaign to ensure the first Common Ground was built in Sydney).

Rosanne has since gone on to start Community Solutions, an organisation that helps communities across the USA address homelessness for their most vulnerable people. Recognising that to make this heartfelt goal a reality, there was a need for an evidence based model that could be replicated and actually worked to end the homelessness of the most disadvantaged people. Another requirement was data to enable communities to measure progress and success.

Community Solutions provides the tools that enables communities to identify, prioritise, house and support their most 'service resistant' members. The same tools are being used in Registry Weeks across Australia; the Mercy Foundation has been active for the past 6 years in helping communities run registry weeks. The proof that this process works is exemplified by the 100,000 Homes campaign in the USA, an initiative of Community Solutions, which housed 105,580 people in 12 months. Her current campaign is Zero: 2016, aimed at ending veteran and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016.

Rosanne has provided us with the inspiration and the tools needed to bring about social justice for some of our community's most disadvantaged people.



Left to Right:  
Rosanne Haggerty and Annabel Senior, Chair of the Mercy Foundation



***Unless we work to house and support those who don't have a voice, those with complex problems, people we label as 'service resistant', we cannot hope to bring about an end to homelessness in each community.***

***Rosanne Haggerty***



### More reading:

Community Solutions <https://cmtysolutions.org>

100,000 Homes Campaign: <http://100khomes.org>

Zero:2016 campaign: <http://www.cmtysolutions.org/zero2016>

# Homelessness and trauma

The Mercy Foundation recently hosted a forum on homelessness and trauma. Approximately 30% of chronically street homeless people self report having had a brain injury. Understanding the impacts of trauma is greatly beneficial when working with clients experiencing homelessness or who have experienced homelessness and are now being supported in housing.

## Traumatic Brain Injury

Dr Jamie Berry spoke about the impact of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Jamie discussed the interchangeable relationship between cause and effect of homelessness and trauma; for some people, the effects of a traumatic event in their life can lead them into homelessness whilst for others, an experience of homelessness can be traumatising. The symptoms to look out for that may indicate a brain injury include poor concentration, memory problems and irritability.

Jamie discussed the types of support that people living with a TBI may need once they are in housing, such as daily living skills coaching, domestic assistance or home care, using technology to set reminders about relevant appointments and direct debit for bills.

## Trauma and children

Professor Max Bennett AO spoke about the effect of trauma on the brain of children. Child abuse has major consequences for negativity, language delay, deficits in memory performance, low self-esteem and poor relationship skills.

As adults, children who suffered abuse are more likely to have difficulty with substance dependence and addiction, post traumatic stress disorder, impulsivity, and at greater risk of depression and suicide.

Experiencing homelessness is not only traumatic for adults but also children. Professor Bennett's presentation reminded us that it is imperative that families and children must be prioritised for safe and secure housing.

## Lateral Violence

Another topic discussed at the forum was Lateral Violence. Bronwyn Penrith, chair of Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation, spoke to the audience about this issue. Lateral Violence is a destructive behaviour where two or more people effected by the same situation turn on each other, rather than confronting the situation that is oppressing them both.



Dr Jamie Berry,  
Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist



## Expert Speakers were:

**Dr Jamie Berry**, Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist

**Professor Maxwell Bennett AO**

Professor of Neuroscience, University of Sydney

**Bronwyn Penrith**

Chair of Mudgin-Gal and expert on lateral violence

This type of behaviour includes gossip, backstabbing, jealousy, bullying, blaming others and shaming. Perpetrators often have low self-esteem and feel stuck in a cycle of oppression.

Bronwyn has devoted much effort to addressing Lateral Violence with communities across Australia. She runs workshops with community groups to help them recognise Lateral Violence and take steps towards ensuring this behaviour is addressed. Treating each other with respect and kindness is a start to combatting lateral violence. Within the broader community, addressing discrimination and negative stereotypes, healthy recognition of diversity and building resilience in communities, including Lateral Violence policies in your Reconciliation Action plan (RAP) will help address the causes of lateral violence.

Bronwyn Penrith was awarded the 2016 Cath Leary Social Justice Award – please see page 2 for more details.

# Homelessness and Trauma Forum Hosted by Mercy Foundation

A professional development forum for managers and staff working in homelessness services, housing organisations or community support agencies





# Home in a Box Update

When people have been homeless for a considerable period of time, they no longer have the basic everyday items needed to set up a home. Once people are permanently housed, there can be problems acquiring enough home wares to create a comfortable home and this can sometimes make this period a difficult time of adjustment. Home in a Box was developed to help people at this important time, when moving from homelessness to being housed.

Buying everyday items like pillows, sheets and towels, cutlery and crockery, pots, pans and cooking utensils can be a significant strain on the household budget. Home in a Box provides brand new items that help individuals and families that have experienced homelessness make their new house a home.



## In the last month, the recipients of Home in a Box included:

- A young woman who had been homeless for 3 years in southern Sydney.
- A woman in her 60's with a disability who had been homeless for 18 months.
- A 22 year old man who had lived in out-of-home care for most of his life. He had been couch-surfing since leaving out-of-home care and has now been housed in his own apartment. He is now working to assist his siblings, who are also coming out of care.
- An older woman who has experienced chronic homelessness with no resources to set up her home.

## We are very grateful for the support of our generous sponsors:

- My House, Kennards Self Storage, Maxwell Williams, Hospitality Products, HC Distributors, Sisters of Mercy North Sydney



## Feedback from the support workers who deliver Home in a Box to their client is always very positive:

*"I just wanted to let you know that I was visiting someone who you helped out with a Home in a Box about 4-5 months ago. I have seen him plenty of times since he moved in, but today he started off by talking about how helpful Home in a Box was to him. He was saying how easy it made the move in because everything he needed for the first few days/ week was right there for him. I just wanted to pass on this nice feedback."* (LK, Support Facilitator)

## Feedback from a Home in a Box Recipient:

*Thanks very much for the great boxes full of goods, which have gone a long way in helping me set up a home. When you come off the street you have nothing only what you are standing in and a backpack. When I received these boxes I was overwhelmed that there are people willing to help a guy like me to set up a home. Thank you all for the wonderful gifts.* (Recipient, B)

*We are also grateful to the young people from Lindfield Killara Parish who enthusiastically and energetically helped us pack boxes earlier this year, and to our generous donors who help make this project happen.*

# Yes, I would like to help bring about an end to homelessness.

Donation Amount  (donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

Name:

Address:

(Please tick) Cheque ☐ Money Order ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa ☐

Card Number:                 Expiry Date:   /

Cardholder's Name:

Signature:

Post this form to Mercy Foundation, 40 Rocklands Rd Crows Nest NSW 2065. You can also donate by phone 02 9911 7390 or online via secure website [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au) and click the Donations tab.

A tax deductible receipt will be mailed to you. **Thank you for your support, it is greatly appreciated.**



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