

Celebrating the past and embracing the future

In late 2015 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Mercy Foundation. We managed to track down a number of people who had played an important role in the life of the Mercy Foundation over the last 25 years. The guests included Sisters of Mercy, former Board members, former grant recipients, Mercy Foundation staff and our generous donors and sponsors.

The event started with a rendition of the song "Mercy is one of God's names", written by Peter Kearney at the opening celebration of the Mercy Foundation in 1990.

Guest speakers included:

- **Lina Cabaero-Ponnambalam** from Asian Women at Work, who spoke about the FairWear Campaign that brought about new work practices to protect the rights of outworkers in the clothing and textiles industry
- **Margaret Bell**, CEO of Chain Reaction Foundation
- **Sr Lorraine Phelan**, former Executive Director of the Mercy Foundation
- **John Pitsonis**, General Manager of the Mater Hospital
- **Cheryl Barnes**, Wentworth Community Housing.



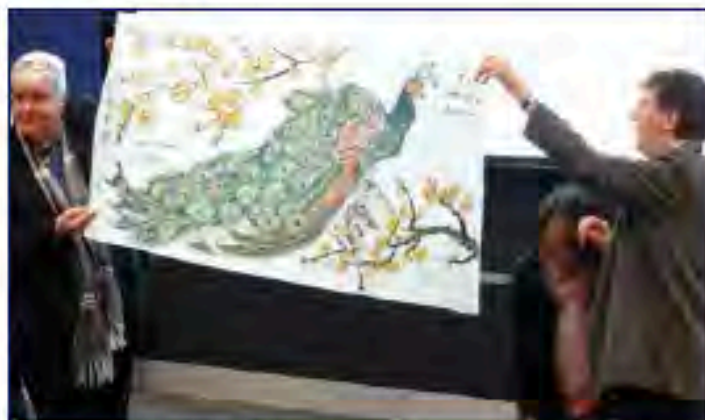
Above: Sr Bernadette Mansour RSM, Sr Bernice Loch RSM, Sr Loreto Conroy RSM and Sr Miriam Grech RSM

Achievements of the Mercy Foundation over the past 25 years include:

- Seed funding to establish the Fair Wear campaign.
- Funding a counselling and assistance program for men and women in rural South Australia, following the devastating drought experienced in the early 1990's.
- Establishing No Interest Loan Schemes (NILS), providing disadvantaged households with the opportunity to purchase necessary household items and repay the loan over time without interest.
- Advocacy and advice on establishing Common Ground Camperdown, housing and supporting 54 people who had experienced chronic homelessness and 54 low income workers, funded by the NSW State Government.

In 2015, the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy celebrated 150 years of service dedicated to eliminating poverty and injustice, providing education and health care and responding to the needs of the times.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the enormous contribution the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney, have made to many lives across Australia; for their courage, commitment and example and for their trust and encouragement as the Mercy Foundation works to continue their legacy into the future.



Above: Sr Loreto Conroy RSM and Annabel Senior, Mercy Foundation Chair, holding up a gift of a hand painted picture, from Asian Women at Work to the Mercy Foundation.

Mercy Foundation Social Justice Youth Awards

Congratulations to the winners of the Mercy Foundation Social Justice Youth Awards. The winners in the primary category were Anna and Jessica from year 6, Sacred Heart Catholic School Mosman and the winners of the secondary category were Hayley, Hannah and Angela, year 8 students from Mercy Catholic College Chatswood.

The judges awarded an extraordinary second prize to Mt Lilydale Mercy College, to students from the CSYMA team for their impressive effort. The competition encourages students to learn about the issue of homelessness in Australia. We believe that we can work together as a community to solve homelessness in our country. This year's topic was "Busting the myths about homelessness".

Thank you to all students who entered the competition. We received many entries of a high standard. Highly Commended certificates will be awarded to a number of students from schools across Australia in recognition of their efforts. The Youth Awards will be running again in term 2, 2016. Please visit our website www.mercyfoundation.com.au for details.



Small Grants Update

Housing for asylum seekers and refugees

A small grant to CARAD (Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees) provided funding for the rental of a property for asylum seekers with work rights and refugees.

The intention was to provide the three clients with temporary accommodation and assist them to move on to permanent accommodation. However, due to the severe shortage of affordable rental properties, it was decided to change the nature of the accommodation from temporary to long term.

The tenants reported that for the first time in their lives they had housing security and felt safe in their surroundings. They felt that they finally had a home.

All clients have been able to secure employment and are now able to sustain their own tenancies in the house so no further funding for this property has been required.



Above: Volunteers at a working bee to help prepare the home for the new tenants.

The Power of Music

Sacred Heart Mission, St Kilda, was granted funding for the development of a music program as part of the Social Inclusion Program for Rooming House residents.

The participants prepared for a musical performance to be performed at the annual Arts Installation Exhibition at St Kilda Town Hall.

The key aims of the program were to provide an outlet for residents coping with stress, anxiety, pain and mental illness and to offer a forum for building social connections. This provided an opportunity to further develop self-awareness, trust and self-respect.

The participants took responsibility for the exhibition and the staff were greatly impressed with the solutions and enthusiasm that the residents brought to the project.

The musical performance was a great success. More than 80 people attended the performance and their feedback was very positive.

Comments from the audience included:

Beautiful and so personal

Mighty works of art and music!

Wonderful work and really talented, great voices!

Great work and theme throughout - keep it going - look forward to the next exhibition!

One of the most exciting exhibitions I have ever seen - simply brilliant!"

Glowing reviews were published in local papers, publicly validating the talents of the group and further building their confidence and self esteem.

The staff witnessed an incredible improvement from individuals participating in the music program. The music program has continued, using equipment purchased with grant funds and from the additional community support as a result of the exhibition.

SIT WITH ME
MY STORY, MY ART, MY MUSIC

An exhibition of visual arts and music performances by resident artists of Sacred Heart Mission's Queens Road Rooming House

10 September - 8 October

SACRED HEART MISSION
sacredheartmission.org

Small Grants Awarded 2015/16:

The Mercy Foundation's Small Grants program has funded hundreds of community - based projects that help address social justice issues at the grass roots. The following projects were approved for funding:

McAuley Community Services for Women: Let the children and women speak

A creative arts program helping women and children who have experienced family violence. The program will assist with the healing process for participants, assist in building resilience, self determination and self worth, dignity and hope.

Community House Port Lincoln Inc: Community Connection

This project brings together the broader community to meet each weekday on the shore and pick razor fish. The project will help people socially connect and participate in a community event with positive outcomes, including making the beach safer for swimmers.

Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre: Strength to Strength Domestic Violence Support Group

A series of 8 weekly workshops for women, addressing elements of domestic violence for women from multicultural backgrounds. The program will provide information, education and support for the participants.

Junkari Laka Community Legal Centre: Aboriginal Corporation, Independent Legal Services to Mornington Island.

This project will provide independent legal services to the extremely remote aboriginal community of Mornington Island.

North Carlton Railway Neighbourhood House: Homework Club for girls and young women of refugee background.

Seed funding to establish a Homework Club for girls and young women from a refugee background.

Woola Woola Netball Club: The Woola Woola Project

This program assists children in this remote area to participate in a team activity.

Manning Valley Neighbourhood Services: Yarning over food and craft

This project brings women from the local community together to participate in activities such as cooking and arts and crafts. A social enterprise will develop from the sale of crafts and goods produced from the commercial kitchen.

Big West Festival: House project

This will pilot a new social housing enterprise that addresses homelessness and youth unemployment in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Shakti Migrant and Refugee Women's Support Group: Strengthening wrap around crisis response system.

The project will develop and extend the culturally specialist and competent wrap-around domestic violence crisis intervention response system.

ChilOut: Youth Ambassador Program

This project gives young people, especially from refugee or immigration detention backgrounds, a platform to engage with government and members of the community, to educate them on the realities faced by children seeking asylum.

Project Respect: Outreach to vulnerable women

Project RESPECT provides specialized services to women in the sex industry, including those who have been trafficked.

Moving Forward Case Management Services: Education Assistance Program for Women

This initiative supports women who are commencing or returning to education after escaping domestic violence in their relationships.

Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation: Mudgin-Gal Mediation Workshop

This project will engage Aboriginal women in the local area to provide them with mediation skills to help them address complex social issues such as family violence and lateral violence.

Grants to End Homelessness Awarded 2015/16:

The Mercy Foundation Grants to End Homelessness are available for initiatives, services, projects and research that will contribute to the goal of ending homelessness. Projects that focus on chronic homelessness and women who experience chronic homelessness are currently priority areas for funding. The following grants were approved for funding by the Mercy Foundation Board:

Kids Under Cover

(KUC) works to prevent youth homelessness by providing safe, stable accommodation in a studio in the backyard of the family home. KUC provides mentors and support for young people to address the issues that may have led to homelessness. This project provides vital information to support KUC's expansion into each state and territory and the development of studio designs suitable for use in any state.

School of Primary Health Care, Monash University

A grant was awarded to the School of Primary Health Care, Monash University, for a Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Connectedness Based Innovations in Promoting Housing Stability using Cochrane methodology. The results of this study will be available later this year.

UNSW Social Policy Research Centre

This project involves a partnership between the researchers, Haymarket Foundation and B Miles Women's Foundation, to identify effective responses that successfully end the homelessness of chronically homeless women and develop plans to implement and monitor improved service responses. The overall aim is to reduce women's chronic homelessness.

Micah Projects

Funding for Hope Street café, a social enterprise operated by Micah, that provides training and vocational opportunities through supported employment for tenants of Brisbane Common Ground and other disadvantaged people in the community.

Asylum Seekers Centre

A grant to the Asylum Seekers Centre for an Employment Assistance Scheme helps asylum seekers with work rights to gain employment. The project is designed to help this group effectively integrate into the Australian workplace.



Above: Young people from ChiOut's Youth Ambassador Program

Grants to End Homelessness Update: Research to Practice Project - Effective solutions to homelessness

Understanding the support interventions that people who have experienced homelessness need to gain and sustain housing was the subject of a research and practice development project by the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP). The Mercy Foundation funded this project through the Grants to End Homelessness Program.

The nature of support provided to people who have experienced or who are at risk of homelessness influences their capacity to find and keep a home. While local and contemporary evidence of effective housing-focused interventions exists, this evidence had not been translated into a practice resource for the homelessness and social housing sectors in Australia.

This research-to-practice project developed an evidence informed model of housing focused support in order to improve the efficacy of current support responses to formerly homeless people in housing.

CHP completed an extensive literature review and held focus groups with advanced practitioners and consumers. Based on this input, five practice guides were developed:

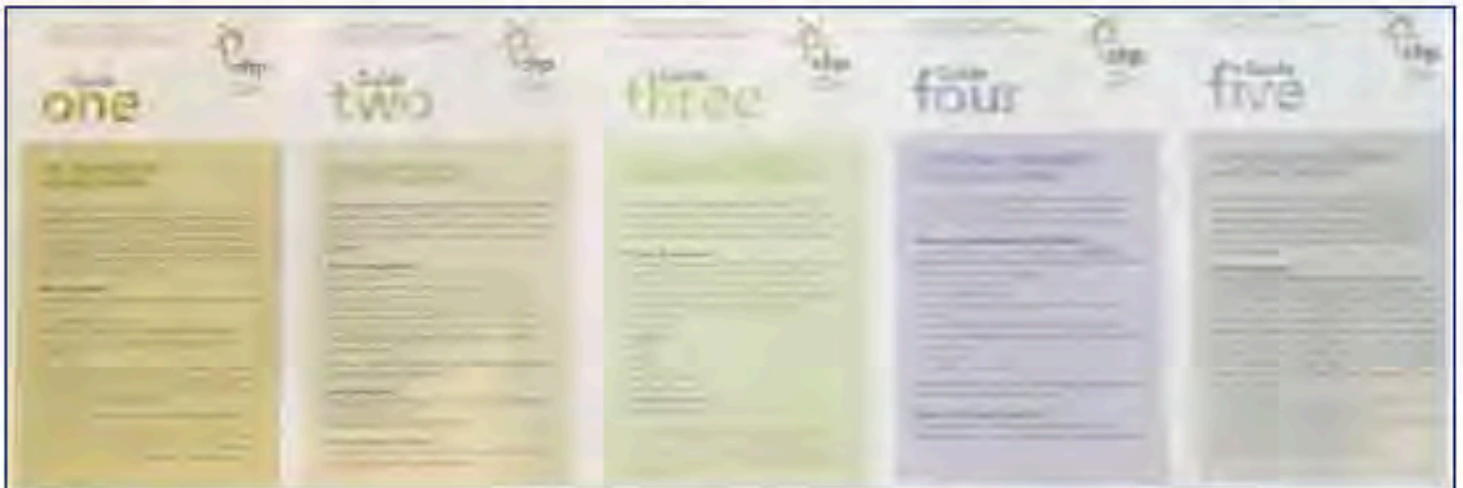
- An overview of homelessness
- Engagement and building rapport
- The role of assessment in housing-focused support
- Supporting consumers to access housing
- Supporting resettlement and stabilization.

The guides contain required practice knowledge for workers and a range of toolkits and case studies. CHP has developed a training module to complement the guides.

The finalised guides were printed and distributed to peak housing and homelessness bodies in each state. A number of organisations are now using the guides for induction of new staff and are being used to create a standard practice for delivering housing focused support in parts of Victoria.

The guides are publically available on the CHP website (www.chp.org.au).

This project has not only delivered a valuable resource for the homelessness sector, it ultimately provides an improved response to effectively house and support people experiencing homelessness.



Cath Leary Social Justice Award

The winner of the 2015 Cath Leary Social Justice Award is Sr Carmel McDonough RSM.

This award recognises the significant personal contribution Sr Carmel has given to issues as diverse as asylum seekers and refugees, indigenous Australians, people living in poverty and people experiencing homelessness. She is recognized as an outstanding educator and role model for young women who are learning about the need to take action on issues of social inequality and social justice.

Sr Carmel has made a long and valuable contribution to the Mercy Foundation as a Board member, retiring from the board last year, and as a member of the Grants Committee.

This award is named after Cath Leary, former board member, long term member of the grants committee and passionate social justice advocate. Cath gave generously of her time and worked tirelessly for people and communities who needed a voice. Cath lived her life in a manner that exemplified the values of the Mercy Foundation.

Cath was a dear friend of the Foundation and Sr Carmel. Cath passed away in 2014 and the Social Justice Award was renamed in her honour. We congratulate Sr Carmel on her significant contribution to social justice and social justice education in Australia.



Home in a Box update

Home in a Box provides essential home wares to people moving into their own home, after spending a significant amount of time homeless. Home in a Box contains pillows, quilts, sheets, cutlery, dinner set, glasses, pots, pans, cooking utensils, towels and more. Home in a Box helps formerly homeless people settle into their new home, to help make a fresh start.



Home in a Box is requested by and delivered to the service worker who has assisted their client into permanent housing. All people moving into housing will continue to be supported by their support worker to ensure they have a successful tenancy.

Some of the recipients of Home in a Box in recent months include:

- A man who had experienced homelessness for approximately 6 years. He was using items found on the curbside to furnish his home.
- A homeless mother and her teenage daughter who had been living rough and couch surfing for the past 7 years. They had no personal

belongings to help them settle into their new home.

- A single father with two children. He did not have any housing items apart from what would fit on the back seat of his car
- A woman who had experienced chronic homelessness for the past two years following severely traumatic events. As a result, she had nothing in the way of furniture, household items or appliances.
- A 44 year old man who had been living rough in the bush for approximately 3 years. He had been offered permanent housing. He had few personal belongings.

We are very grateful to the generous supporters and sponsors of the Home in a Box project.

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



Providing legal assistance to remote communities

A small grant to the Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre has helped provide legal assistance to the very remote community of indigenous people on Mornington Island.

The centre provides a broad range of legal services to support the highly disadvantaged community. Assistance such as Blue Card applications (working with children checks in Queensland) and appeals, complicated Births, Deaths and Marriages registrations, Estate and Wills issues, Consumer Contracts, Insurance and Superannuation claims are examples of the types of services provided.

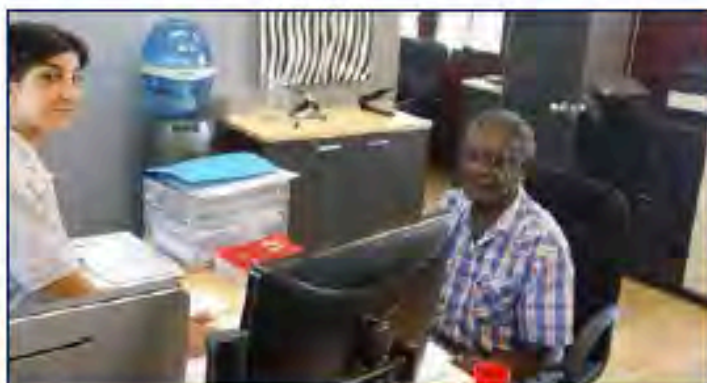
In 2015, a total of 176 cases were opened. More than 50% of clients were women. The bulk of cases were Blue Card matters, dormitory compensation claims (a Redress Scheme for people who had been in a dormitory run by Queensland State and are entitled to compensation as a result of abuse), formal documents such as statutory declarations and Domestic Violence Order applications.

The Centre does not receive any government support and relies on volunteer and pro bono work. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for the people of Mornington Island to resolve their legal matters without assistance from the service.

The picture right features a client of the service who is receiving the necessary legal assistance to claim back wages under the Reparations Scheme. During the 2015 Queensland State election, a commitment was made to establish a fund of \$21 million to address legacy issues

of wages and savings stolen from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders by previous successive governments under the 'Protection Acts'.

The purpose of the Mercy Foundation Small Grants program is to help small organisations bring about social justice to disadvantaged individuals in their local community. The work of Junkuri Laka Community Legal Centre is a great example of a small community organisation working to bring about a fairer society for all Australians.



Olivia Smith from the Centre assisting one of the clients of the service.

Homes for Homes

Homes for Homes is a new initiative developed to generate funds to build more social and affordable houses across Australia for people in need. The Mercy Foundation provided seed funding under the Grants to End Homelessness program to assist with the concept development, planning, establishment and the launch.

Under this voluntary scheme, homeowners and other property stakeholders, eg developers and banks, have the opportunity to make a tax deductible donation of 0.1% of their property price, at the time they sell.

This donation is made through a change in the property title, known as a caveat, at the request of the property owner. The caveat stays in place when the property is transferred to the new owner, allowing a donation to be made every time the property is sold. The property owner can remove the caveat at any stage, at minimal cost.

Funds raised will be distributed to existing social and affordable housing service providers to build properties based on areas of greatest housing need.

Homes for Homes is a long-term generational scheme, a sustainable social enterprise that is designed to operate over generations and create new affordable housing well into the future

Over 30 years, the projected return is in excess of \$1.8 billion which would build at least 2,600 dwellings.

The Big Issue established a Housing Working Group to develop policies that would ensure the greatest housing need is identified. The Mercy Foundation was a member of this group.

The program appears to have already been accepted in the marketplace. Already, four 'live' development projects have committed funding to Homes for Homes, including developments from Grocon and Capital Estate Development.

Homes for Homes funding has been carefully established to ensure its longevity as an alternate source of social and affordable housing in Australia, for many generations to come.



Samuel Micut/Shutterstock.com

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 and click the Donations tab.

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



at the service of human dignity