

# mercy foundation®

Winter 2017 | 40 Rocklands Road Crows Nest NSW 2065 | T 02 9911 7390 | office@mercyfoundation.com.au

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## Message from the CEO

It is always gratifying for the Mercy Foundation to hear about the ongoing success of projects that we have seed funded. The Mercy Foundation is focused on

assisting new and innovative projects that address the structural causes of social justice problems.

In relation to homelessness, we were very pleased to receive news that the 'Homes for Homes' Project we seed funded in 2014 to help it get started has now attracted Federal Government interest and \$6 million. This was announced in the Turnbull government's 2017 budget.

Homes for Homes is an innovative model for financing more affordable housing in Australia. The Government committed \$6M over 4 years in seed funding to the Homes for Homes project, to help address the critical shortfall in social and affordable housing in Australia. This program encourages homeowners and organisations to donate 0.1% of a property's sale price to the initiative. Funds raised through Homes for Homes will be invested with experienced housing providers to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.

At the Mercy Foundation we remain concerned that a lot of homelessness in Australia is created by unaffordable housing and poverty. It is a relatively small group of people who may also have additional support issues.

Another project, 'Impact Investing to Reduce and Prevent Youth Homelessness' which was a partnership between the Mercy Foundation and the Social Impact Hub in 2015/16 is now also creating further significant benefit.

The Social Impact Hub referenced this report in their submission to the Federal Government's Social Impact Investing Discussion Paper in February. More information was requested and shared with Treasury. In the recent Federal Budget, the government announced an investment of \$10.2M over 10 years to trial the use of Social Impact Investments aimed at improving housing and welfare outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness.

We congratulate the Federal Government on their concern about affordable housing in Australia and some of the initiatives outlined in the budget are a good start.

**Felicity Reynolds, CEO Mercy Foundation**

*A participant enjoying the Hope for Health Cooking Class. Refer to page 7 for more details.*



*at the  
service  
of human  
dignity*





## Ending Human Trafficking and Slavery in Australia

Since 1990, the Mercy Foundation has remained focused on tackling poverty in Australia. Challenging unfair structures and systems that result in poverty and taking action by working in partnership with other organisations, providing seed funding for projects through our grants programs, advocacy with all levels of government and education has helped bring about real change for disadvantaged Australians.

We work to address the drivers of poverty, such as inadequate access to housing, health care, education and income, discrimination because of race or gender and social exclusion.

Human Trafficking and slavery exploits highly vulnerable men, women and children experiencing poverty. It denies fundamental human rights and strips people of human dignity. Human Trafficking and Slavery is a new area of action for the Mercy Foundation. Globally, the Sisters of Mercy have been working to address this issue over the last few years and are making inroads in prevention and responses to this issue, especially where women and girls are concerned.

The Mercy network is working to eradicate human trafficking through addressing root causes, raising awareness and lobbying to change policies to prevent human trafficking, whilst ensuring there is national legislation in place to protect, facilitate justice for, and offer full support to survivors of trafficking.

We are in the process of learning about this issue and working on how we can best make a contribution to ending human trafficking and slavery in Australia. We have already made a submission to the Joint Committee Inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act in Australia and the focus of our Youth Awards this year is ending human trafficking and slavery in Australia. We will keep you updated with our work in this area.

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## Mercy Foundation Youth Awards

Ending Human Trafficking and Slavery in Australia is the theme for the Mercy Foundation Youth Awards this year. The video competition is open to students in years 10, 11 and 12 across Australia. The competition closes on 23 June 2017.

Students are asked to develop a campaign about one area of human trafficking and slavery in Australia – in either restaurant work, agricultural work or in domestic servitude. They are also challenged to think about how they can do something about it.

It's difficult to believe that human trafficking and slavery exists in

Australia. The Global Slavery Index estimates that there are over 4,000 people currently trapped in slavery or slave-like conditions in our country.

The Youth Awards encourages students to become more informed about social justice issues in our country, to become advocates for change and to think about what they can do to help bring about justice in this area.

More information about the Youth Awards can be found on our website, [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)





## Social Justice Small Grants Funded 2017

**This year's Social Justice Small Grants have a special focus on projects concerning older people, prioritising projects that bring about a more inclusive society for older people, projects that restore dignity and foster solidarity among all generations.**

Congratulations to the following organisations who were awarded funding in the recent round of Social Justice Small Grants in May 2017:

**Produce to the People Inc.:  
Community Food Project, Tasmania**

This project brings together older and younger members of the community, to participate in a range of activities at the farm on Burnie High School campus.

**Women's Welcome and Wellbeing:  
Regional Access and Awareness Initiative, Queensland**

This project aims to take women and children to regional interest destinations in an effort to expand their personal horizons and experiences.

**Russian Ethnic Representative Council of Victoria:  
Capacity Building in the Russian/Slavic Community, Victoria**

The project will provide information about the Australian legal and welfare system to the Russian-speaking community, especially Russian Brides in the Melbourne Metropolitan region.

**Red Bend Catholic College: Outreach, NSW**

Outreach is a program run by Year 12 volunteers, after school, to support people in need in the community. Most clients are elderly or suffer from a disability.

**Grandparents For Grandchildren SA Inc:  
Grandcarers Education Support Fund, South Australia**

This project will provide grandparents, who have limited income and are caring for their grandchildren, with access to funds to assist them in purchasing educational resources.

**The Nest Community Inc: The Garden Project, Queensland**

This activity will provide disadvantaged senior women an opportunity to work together to produce a garden on the grounds of The Nest Community Home

**Dress for Success Sydney: Get Smart Youth Workshops, NSW**

This grant provides funding for a pilot workshop series to specifically target and support young girls from out of home care to increase their employability skills.

**HerSpace Ltd: HerCommunity, Victoria**

Seed funding for HerCommunity will support older women, including women who have been trafficked into sex work, who self-identify as being affected by sexual exploitation.

**Think & Do Tank Foundation Ltd: Elders Storytelling Circle, NSW**

This project celebrates the wisdom and cultural knowledge of older generations, working with them to tell stories to children each week, in their own languages.

**Fighting for Justice Foundation: Brothel Outreach Program, ACT**

Many migrant students and migrant workers in debt bondage are coerced into sexual slavery against their will. This project will provide support to this group and offer a means to leave the industry.

**The Bower Re-use and Repair Centre Coop Ltd:  
House to Home, NSW**

"House to Home" will help furnish houses for women and children who have been victims of domestic violence.





# Ending Homelessness



## “Heading Home” campaign in the Nepean

Since 2010, the Mercy Foundation has worked with communities around Australia to help them bring about an end to homelessness in their area, by advising them on the methodology to run a Registry Week. A Registry Week is a grass-roots campaign that mobilizes the community to gather actionable, person-specific data to prioritise and house the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness.

Key to the success of Registry week is the collaboration of local community organisations, business and government organisations. This collaboration is essential to ensure that there are housing solutions for those identified in the register.

Registry Week uses a survey tool called the VISPDAT. Over three mornings, community volunteers interview people sleeping rough to capture data about their history of housing and homelessness, as well as their health and housing needs. Local services survey people in refuges and drop-in centres to ensure everyone experiencing homelessness is included.

This data is processed and then forms a prioritised register that services use to find people experiencing homelessness and work to match them with appropriate housing and support services that may be required

Wentworth Community Housing was the lead organisation for this project that spanned from Penrith to the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains LGAs. Volunteers surveyed 66 individuals and 12 families

during Registry Week and a further 13 people have been surveyed since and added to the register.

A high-profile campaign entitled “Heading Home” was developed to harness community support and to develop new housing solutions.

So far, housing and support has been provided to 28 people from the Register. Four highly vulnerable young people were housed within a week of being identified.

Heading Home received a prestigious ZEST Award for Exceptional Partnership across a Region. ZEST is the premier Award program for not for profit organisations across greater Western Sydney.

Members of the project team are to be congratulated on their efforts and their results to date.

### Newcastle Update

***In October 2016, we worked with Vinnies and a number of organisations to run Registry Week in Newcastle NSW. In May this year, there were 57 people on their register, of which 28 have now been housed.***

***This is a fantastic effort. Newcastle has now halved the number of people experiencing street homelessness in their city. A great example of how a community can work together to end homelessness for their most vulnerable neighbours.***





# Designing Housing for Older Women at Risk of Homelessness

The Sydney Women's Homeless Alliance (SWHA) was awarded a Grant to End Homelessness in 2016 to investigate the suitability of small studio accommodation for older women who had experienced homelessness and were eligible for affordable housing. Previous research has identified that some older women are at risk of homelessness due to lack of resources and the low supply of affordable housing options.

The project involved a co-design methodology engaging with older women who had experienced homelessness to identify their issues and concerns about smaller accommodation models and to understand what design and management features would be desirable.

Over two workshops, they shared their stories and discussed their individual needs for housing. Fear and insecurity were common experiences.

Overwhelmingly, each woman preferred a home of her own that was safe, secure and permanent. They also noted the importance of having a home that was suitable for them to age in place. The five key design elements identified were:

- Security
- Location
- Community and social belonging
- Design supported well-being (privacy, sustainability, ventilation, outdoor space)
- Livability

*"We need flexible spaces that can change over time as we age."*

Small studio apartments and shared housing design concepts were developed with input from the group of women.

Following this research, SWAH will engage with a number of NSW government departments to improve housing policy and engage with care providers with a view to developing prototypes.

The second stage of the project will model the costs of delivering studio accommodation for older women in Sydney and, subject to financial feasibility, the NSW Government will be requested to further test, prototype and evaluate the preferred design concepts.

The report Older Women's Studio Development Project is available on our website [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)





## Transforming lives

Cana Communities was funded under our Grants to End Homelessness for the Life Transformation project. Cana provides accommodation, education, personal mentoring programs, an extensive community outreach program and individual companionship, to help each person end their homelessness and restore dignity to their lives.

The original project was to provide housing for 5 to 7 men experiencing chronic homelessness in the inner city of Sydney. Halfway through the project, the results are remarkable, with a total of 9 people assisted by this program. This included 3 women, who are now all living in stable, independent living.

Cana Farm in western Sydney has become a valuable part of the work of Cana. It provides a safe space where people can learn new skills, study a TAFE course, and develop friendship and support networks. In early May, we were welcomed to Cana Farm to see the farm in

action. Cana Farm is a working farm, where produce is harvested and sold at the gate and by order. The volunteers and workers care for horses, goats and chickens. It is also a social enterprise that includes furniture restoration, candle making, woodwork, packing of hampers and more.

We were impressed with the sense of community at the farm. This was especially evident at lunch, when everyone on the farm takes time to sit and share a delicious, freshly prepared meal.

Cana Farm is a special place of nature, peace and healing, with much community spirit.

Cana is volunteer run and receives no government funding. It is completely reliant on donations and grants.



## Grants to End Homelessness funded 2017

Congratulations to the following organisations that were awarded Grants to End Homelessness in 2017:

### **Zoe Support: Secure futures for young mothers and their babies (Victoria)**

This initiative will help young mothers and their children access and maintain safe, affordable and appropriate private rental housing. The Mildura LGA is the third most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria. Many young mothers experience chronic homelessness, exacerbated by a 2 year waiting list for social housing. Zoe Support is currently working with 70 young mothers.

### **Victoria Women's Housing Association trading as Women's Property Initiatives: Shared Equity Housing for Older Women**

This is a pilot project of a shared equity home ownership scheme between Women's Property Initiatives (WPI), a registered housing provider and individual women over 55 years of age. The project has the potential to prevent homelessness for women over 55 who are not eligible for social housing and have limited access to resources to sustain private rental housing into the future. It provides a permanent, appropriate and affordable housing ownership option for this group of women.

### **Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation: Mudgin-Gal Heart and Home (NSW)**

The aim of this project is to permanently house and support Aboriginal women and their children, to help women address any issues that arise in their tenancy and to leverage cultural restoration programs and other shared knowledge and self-care programs to help women rebuild confidence. Where possible, women will be reconnected with family, community and culture.

### **Just Home: The Augusta Margaret River Housing Advocacy Project (WA)**

This is a community based pilot project in the rural area of Augusta Margaret River, WA. The project aims are to help end homelessness of local community members by engaging a Housing Advocacy Worker to assist in finding permanent housing for their clients. The worker will also provide information, referrals, advocacy and support to community members experiencing homelessness.



# Seeding Social Justice Small Grants

**The Social Justice Small Grants program provides kick-start funding for projects run by small organisations working to address local social justice issues.**

The following two projects illustrate how the Social Justice Small Grants program is helping communities address these drivers of poverty at the grassroots.

## Access to education

Making school more engaging and culturally relevant for students in years 8 and 9 was the objective of a small grant awarded to Taree Indigenous Development and Employment Ltd (TIDE). The Parent and Community Engagement Program (PaCE) was borne from discussions with Biripi elders, to help keep students engaged with education.

The project provided an opportunity for Aboriginal students to plan, develop and learn about a traditional bush garden and learn first hand about growing local bush tucker. The small grant paid for the necessary materials to help build the garden.

A serpent shaped garden bed was prepared and planted out by the students, using native food plants such as Lomandra, Midgen Berries, Pig Face, Flax Lily, Davidson Plum, Plum Pine, Native mint and Gymea Lily.

The students greatly enjoyed participating in this program, which was reflected in a significant increase in school attendance.

The project is ongoing and students continue to be involved in the gardening program.



## Access to Health Care

Hope for Health is a project of Why Warriors, a community driven project that supports Yolngu people in remote Indigenous communities on Elcho Island in north eastern Arnhem Land to help address chronic disease. The project originated from a group of Yolngu women who wanted to better understand the causes of chronic health issues and to consider culturally appropriate responses that could connect with mainstream health services and empower Yolngu people through education, training and employment.

Adults in remote communities are four times more likely to have diabetes than other Australians and one in two is suffering from a chronic disease. The diet of Yolngu people has shifted from healthy, traditional foods to less nutritional foods readily available in stores of remote communities.

Hope for Health is establishing a Wellness Centre, where they will run nutrition, cooking and exercise programs, and provide access to healthy food alternatives and supplements. The Mercy Foundation awarded a small grant to assist in setting up the kitchen for the program.

The Wellness Centre compliments the indigenous-led health retreat program, led by a group of 12 Yolngu women, the first ever of its kind in Arnhem Land.

More than 40 participants have attended workshops and continue to purchase healthy foods for their households. Many participants are community leaders.

The kitchen equipment is being used for cooking and nutrition workshops, to provide reliable access to fresh food and to produce health products at low cost that are otherwise not available locally.

Funding from the community, government and crowd sourcing platforms enables the project to continue.

[www.hopeforhealth.com.au](http://www.hopeforhealth.com.au)

**The Mercy Foundation is a work of the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney. It works to combat poverty and exclusion and challenge the structures that bring about social inequity.**

# Home in a Box Update

This year we have delivered 13 Homes in Boxes to people who have been placed in permanent housing after spending a long period of time homeless, without resources to set up a home.

These included:

- A young Aboriginal woman who had been homeless for a number of years, moving into permanent housing with her children.
- A young man who had been homeless for over 4 years and had been sleeping rough on the trains for most of this time.
- A middle aged man who had spent the last 20 years without stable accommodation. He had spent most of this time camping or couch surfing.
- A middle aged Aboriginal woman who had been homeless for a number of years, sleeping in her car for most of this time.
- A woman who had been homeless for many years moved into permanent housing and now has custody of her child.
- A young Aboriginal woman who had been homeless for a number of years. She has successfully obtained a private rental and is now looking for employment

We are very grateful to our suppliers whose generosity makes it possible to run this project:



*We sincerely thank the five energetic students from year 11 at Monte Sant' Angelo who generously helped us with packing the boxes.*

*We are also very grateful to the many donors to the Home in a Box project. Home in a Box helps make a welcoming and comfortable home for the recipients, thanks to the dedication and commitment of case managers and tenancy workers who work to permanently house and support the most vulnerable people living on our streets.*

*No words are needed to describe the mixed emotions this woman felt when she was unpacking her Home in a Box.*



## 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.**



at the service of human dignity