

mercy foundation®

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From the CEO

On Monday 13th October, Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor General of Australia, officially launched 'Project Stay' at Bankstown Arts Centre in Sydney.

Project Stay is an innovative project for homeless young people being managed by St George Community Housing. This project has been funded through the Mercy Foundation's Grants to End Homelessness program.

The project aims to link ten homeless young people with permanent housing and provide them with the necessary support to undertake training and improve job skills and find employment. The young people will access housing in the private rental market and a portion of their rent will be subsidised by Project Stay for six months. After this period, it is then intended that the young person will remain in their housing and take full responsibility for their rent once they are employed.

This is a great innovation to help 'at risk' young people get into employment and get a good tenancy history and a stable place to live.

At the launch, Sir Peter spoke eloquently about the need to give young people the opportunity to secure a stable place to live and to get into employment. I spoke at the launch about the work of the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy through the Mercy Foundation. Two young people who are being assisted by Project Stay also spoke of their appreciation in getting help to access housing.

The Mercy Foundation is looking forward to hearing more about the success of Project Stay and there is some hope that this innovative model might be replicated elsewhere.

Felicity



His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) addresses the audience at the launch of Project STAY.

Grants to End Homelessness: Housing young families Chameleon Housing

This year, Chameleon Housing applied for a grant to end homelessness to fund their "I CaN HOPE" program.

Through the collaboration of a number of organisations, young indigenous families will be provided with support to access long term accommodation, education to assist employment prospects and budgeting skills, health care for themselves and their children, parenting skills and general living skills.

The progress report from Chameleon Housing noted that since June 2014, seven previously homeless Indigenous families have moved into safe, secure, long-term housing and they have all recorded an improvement in health outcomes for both the mothers and children involved.

These are great results for the dedicated team at Chameleon Housing in Redcliffe, Queensland.



Grants to End Homelessness: Breaking the cycle of poverty Micah Projects

Last year, the Mercy Foundation funded Micah Projects in Queensland for their “Breaking the Cycle: Employment and training outcomes for families at risk of homelessness” project.

The project assisted young parents in jobless households who had experienced significant disadvantage since childhood. Some had a history of addiction, mental health issues, some experienced a disability and others had very limited schooling and training. Micah Projects identified the need to bridge the gap between community services that engage with this group effectively, and mainstream programs that offer the services needed for individuals to enter the workforce.

Seventeen families have taken the opportunity to increase their family income and help break the cycle of homelessness. All participants worked with a family employment worker to develop targeted employment and training programs and identify barriers that may be preventing them from gaining employment. At the time of reporting, two participants now have stable employment and four had job interviews and seven had completed a training or education program.

All participants remained in stable housing during the project and three have improved their housing circumstances.

A well deserved Getaway for Women with High Support Needs Bayley House

Bayley House supports more than 200 adults with an intellectual disability. Bayley House approached the Mercy Foundation for a small grant to cover the cost of a supported Getaway for up to five women with high support needs. Many have never been away without their parents or carers.

The grant enabled five women to enjoy a three day getaway to Philip Island in April this year. They visited a number of tourist attractions, went out for meals and stayed in a wheelchair friendly holiday house. As the days went on, the women became increasingly more relaxed and keen to explore all that Philip Island has to offer.

The staff reported that as a result of the program, the women increased their confidence and self-esteem, reduced their anxiety about spending time away from their family and carers, increased participation in activities of their choice and had an opportunity to

relax in a holiday setting and to enjoy new experiences. The women had the opportunity to get to know each other better, thereby building stronger support networks.

The carers and families of the women were able to have a short break from the demands of caring for an adult child with very specific and high support needs, knowing that their child was well cared for during the break.

Staying away from home for three days was a significant milestone for each person.

This small grant gave the five women an opportunity to have a holiday away that they enjoyed and deserved, like everyone else in the community. As a result of the success of this program, Bayley House is in the process of planning more getaways for their other high-needs clients.



Help at hand for people at risk of homelessness: Rental Brokerage Web Clearinghouse

The Mercy Foundation provided a grant to Homelessness NSW to develop an online tool to assist people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and service providers.

The aim of this project was to establish a means of assisting people at risk of homelessness and people who are homeless to access information easily about the assistance available in their area to help maintain their tenancy (eg financial assistance) and gain access to long term accommodation.

By entering their suburb and search terms, (eg Hornsby and financial hardship), a number of services and their contact details are listed that may offer assistance.

Following the Going Home Staying Reforms Homelessness NSW is updating the database to ensure that the information provided is the most accurate. The website is available from www.homelessnessnsw.org.au.

Small Grants

Supporting young families in rural SA

Food Smart was set up by Mt Barker Community Centre to support young families who have a child with a disability, to learn about healthy meal choices and practise preparing meals. Mt Barker is located in rural South Australia.

Thirty-seven families have enjoyed participating in this program that was funded under our small grants program.

The program linked with the local community garden "Duck Flat", to help participants learn how to propagate their own herbs and

vegetables. Twenty-one families joined the Magic Harvest program, enabling families to have access to their own garden beds and grow their own produce.

The project is now continuing as part of a long-term program with the Centre and a number of families have signed up for another term. The team at Mt Barker Community Centre has now set up the program so that it is run sustainably, without relying on external funding.



Building community and breaking down barriers

Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association (AAHYA)

Forty newly arrived Afghan women were given the opportunity to meet new people and build new friendships while attending sewing classes at the Afghan Women's Sewing Group in Auburn. The Mercy Foundation provided a grant to help pay for materials and other costs.

Malikeh Michels, manager at the AAHYA, described the project as "One of our most successful projects in the last financial year".

Malikeh described the most valuable lesson from the project as being

"The value of providing women with a space to meet and share skills and life experiences. The women have gained self-confidence, made new friends and have created some beautiful items. The project has helped ease the social isolation of women. It also helped to promote inclusion and broader social participation".

The project helped build a new supportive network, and decreased the social isolation that the women were facing in Australia since moving from their homeland.



Participant Bibi Moosawi, Holroyd Deputy Mayor, AAHYA's Public Officer Sayed Moosawi and participant Bibi Karimi

HOME IN A BOX

Thank you to the students from Mercy Catholic College Chatswood who enthusiastically helped us pack another 25 Home in a Box kits. The students worked efficiently together to complete the job in a matter of hours. We were very grateful for their assistance and we were very delighted and grateful for their generous donation of \$200.



Our fundraising focus this Christmas is on Home in a Box. By the end of the month, we will have delivered a total of 65 boxes to previously homeless people, moving into permanent housing. None of these people owned any possessions to set up their own home. Thanks to your support, all recipients of Home in a Box now have the essentials they need to help set up their home and start afresh. If you wish to donate to the Home in a Box program, please use the donation slip below.

The Mercy Foundation is committed to social justice and structural changes that bring about greater social equity and inclusion in our community. At the heart of all projects and activities is the service of human dignity. Our focus is on ending chronic homelessness for individuals in extreme need and returning dignity to their lives.

Mercy Foundation Christmas Cards

Our Christmas Cards are now available to order, at \$15 per pack of 10, with \$2 postage fee. Our cards feature 3 types of stained glass nativity scenes and a modern design.

An order form has been included with this newsletter or call 02 9911 7390 to place your order.

Proceeds from our Christmas Cards support our projects that help end homelessness and our Home in a Box project.



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