

# mercy foundation®

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at the  
service  
of human  
dignity



## From the Chair

*Our guest contributor this month is the Chair of the Mercy Foundation, Annabel Senior.*

In August I was privileged to be able to attend the Mercy Ethos Programme for Partners in Ministry in Dublin, Ireland, organised by Mercy International and supported by the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney.

The experience was extremely rewarding on a number of levels and will have a long-term impact on my involvement with the Mercy Foundation.

I spent 6 days in the company of inspiring people from Ireland, New Zealand and Australia. I spent 6 days being inspired by the vision and strength of Catherine McAuley and by the enormity of her legacy and the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy.

Being in Catherine's house and walking the streets of Dublin reinforced my understanding of both the challenges faced and the extent of Catherine and her companions' achievements.

The social policy context of the time was the provision of alms for the poor and the concept of the deserving and undeserving.

The image of the genteel ladies visiting the poor and doing charitable works as so clearly depicted in the work of Jane Austen, a contemporary of Catherine, is one I'm sure many can picture.

Catherine was so far ahead of her time in terms of her response to poverty and injustice. We learnt from the wonderful presentations made

on the course of Catherine's early work in recognising and responding to need without judgement; of establishing what we today would call social enterprises and of the essential role played by education and the right of all to have that education.

This focus on structural issues that impact on human potential and dignity continues as the core of the Mercy tradition.

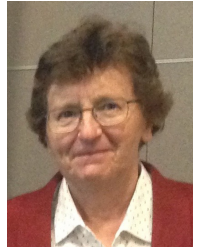
As the Mercy Foundation continues to work to achieve social justice and structural change and greater social equity and inclusion in the Australian community, the ethos of Mercy will continue to be the basis from which we work.

The course provided the historical, cultural and spiritual background for participants, it also, very importantly, provided context for the future.

Partners in Mercy, such as those involved in and supporting the Mercy Foundation, will play an increasingly important role in carrying forward the Mercy tradition.

The challenge is to ensure that we hold true to that tradition and that the structures and processes we have in place enable us to respond to changing needs with the ethos of Mercy as the core of our work.

I feel very confident that the Mercy Foundation will be able to meet that challenge.



## Thank You

*to everyone who has generously supported  
the work of the Mercy Foundation this year.*

Like you, we know that it's not enough to only provide band-aid solutions to social problems. That's why we are working to ensure that the most vulnerable people among us have access to safe, affordable housing, the equal right to freedom and a future free from poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.

*Wishing you a Happy Christmas,  
especially to all who are finally home for Christmas.  
May this season fill your hearts and homes with peace and joy.*





# Ending Homelessness

## Mudgin-Gal Update: Heart and Home

Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation supports Aboriginal women in inner Sydney. It provides a number of programs including family support, referrals for accommodation, legal and medical support, court support and post-release services. Mudgin-Gal provides a drop-in centre that is a place for positive cultural and social networking.

The Heart and Home project has been funded by the Mercy Foundation. The project assists Aboriginal women experiencing homelessness into permanent housing and provides continued support to help women (and any accompanying children) to settle into their new home. The organisation's workers bring expertise that will encourage, where appropriate, reconnection with family, community and culture.

Mudgin-Gal is currently working with 22 clients, of which five have been assisted into permanent housing and one has safely returned to her family outside of Sydney. Mudgin-Gal continues to provide support to those women as needed.

The Mercy Foundation has provided a Home in a Box to three of the women, to help them re-establish a comfortable home, as they re-entered permanent housing.

The key obstacle to housing Aboriginal women in the local area is the chronic lack of affordable housing. We commend the valuable work of the team at Mudgin-Gal who continue to provide much needed support to Aboriginal women experiencing homelessness in the inner city.



## The House of Welcome Update: Havens of Hope

People seeking asylum are one of the most marginalised groups in our community, especially those who cannot access traditional government or non-government support such as social, public and affordable housing.

The House of Welcome in Sydney provides support and housing for people seeking asylum. Over the last 12 months, the Mercy Foundation has provided funding for four properties, consisting of two family homes, a women's shelter and a men's shelter.

In total, the project provided accommodation to 26 people seeking asylum. Of this total, five have moved into independent living in the community and another two are expected to move into the community over the next few months.

Changes in the Federal Government's policies regarding people seeking asylum has resulted in individuals and families needing to remain in accommodation for longer periods of time. According to

Katherine Nelson from The House of Welcome,

*"The current process to seek protection can cause large amounts of emotional, social and financial hardship for those affected. Clients have expressed the invaluable support that stable accommodation has given them during this process and The House of Welcome has moved to accommodate the project to clients' needs, by extending the length of accommodation where needed, determined on a case-by-case basis."*

The House of Welcome provides many services including case management support, employment assistance, English lessons, community programs, financial assistance and accommodation to people seeking asylum. According to Katherine,

*"Safe, stable accommodation is the key to providing a stable platform where people can focus on other areas of their new lives in Australia and on the complicated process of seeking asylum."*

## Older women and the injustice of homelessness

The Mercy Foundation co-facilitated a NSW working group focussed on older women's housing and homelessness issues from 2015 to 2017. This group was successful in articulating a policy and program advocacy agenda to address the State Government related issues.

The group's efforts led to greater public and government awareness of the problem and most recently, the NSW government announced that Phase 2 of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund will target older women. The problems haven't all been solved, but there is now greater awareness of the issue and some of the policy solutions.

Following the success of the NSW advocacy group, the Mercy Foundation recently established a national group focussed on older women's housing and homelessness issues. National issues include income support, the gender pay gap and women's superannuation. With key academic, policy and practice representatives from NSW, Queensland, Victoria, ACT, SA and WA – the plan is to articulate a national advocacy agenda and raise these important issues and their solutions at the federal level.





# Small Grants

## Assisting Grandparents and Grandcarers: Educational support fund

Grandparents for Grandchildren South Australia (GFGSA) is an organisation that formed as a result of the need to support and encourage grandparents and other carer relatives who are struggling with the responsibilities of raising their grandchildren.

Many grandparents are elderly, retired and have limited financial resources, not expecting to have the responsibility of bringing up children later in life. They recognise that by caring for their grandchildren, the impact of separation is much less upsetting than if they were to go into foster care.

The Mercy Foundation awarded a small grant to the organisation for the Grandcarers Education Support Fund, to help grandparents afford the materials, experiences and services that children need to support their learning and for extra curricular activities.

To date, 14 families have been assisted by this project. Funds have been used to pay for sports club fees, computer laptops, school camp fees, school uniforms, sports shoes, and ipads for school.

Grandparents for Grandchildren is completely volunteer run. It provides resources and referrals for grandparents and carers, assisting them with medical, housing and financial issues, food bank vouchers and food hampers, and are continually reviewing their services to ensure they are meeting the needs of grandparents, grandcarers and the children.



The Mercy Foundation CEO, Felicity Reynolds, had the opportunity to visit the office of Grandparents for Grandcarers when she was in Adelaide to speak at a conference in August. She was impressed with the professionalism of this volunteer run organization and the day to day work they do to support grandparents in South Australia.

## A Modern Slavery Act for Australia is imminent

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is currently wrapping up public hearings into an inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act for Australia.

To date there have been 219 submissions to the inquiry and 10 public hearings. The Mercy Foundation made a submission to the Inquiry earlier this year. An interim report was released in August. The Committee recommended that the Australian Government consider the development of a Modern Slavery Act in Australia, including supply chain reporting requirements for companies, businesses, organisations and governments in Australia, as well as the appointment of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

The Final Report, due in December, will provide further recommendations for the content of the Modern Slavery Act.

If you would like to add your voice to this campaign visit [www.beslavefree.org](http://www.beslavefree.org) for more information and to sign the petition calling for a robust Modern Slavery Act.

Trafficking can thrive where there is poverty, violence, discrimination and lack of transparency. It is always about the exploitation of people for profit. We believe that the human rights of the victim should always be at the heart of all responses to human trafficking and slavery.

The Mercy Foundation joins the many organisations asking our Federal Government to develop a robust act that learns from other countries and demonstrates Australia's leadership on this issue. The 'Be Slave Free' campaign calls on our government to:

- Require mandatory due diligence and reporting provisions for businesses on measures that they are taking to address human trafficking, slavery and slave like practices in their supply chains. This would be mandatory for businesses that reach an appropriate threshold or source raw materials from high-risk areas of the world. Entities that fall outside these parameters should be able to voluntarily report their activities to minimise the risk of slavery in their supply chains.
- Denounce support for companies that fail to take measures to minimise the risk of slavery in their supply chains.
- Take into account that the first and most immediate obligation is to ensure the victim is protected from further exploitation and harm.
- Ensure that victims should be afforded support that is not conditional on the cooperation with criminal justice agencies on the prosecution of their exploiters.

# Inclusionary Zoning—What is that?



You may have heard the term 'Inclusionary Zoning' and wondered what it means. It is a concept that the Mercy Foundation fully supports and we have been actively supporting the Sydney Alliance in their efforts to have inclusionary zoning targets incorporated within the Greater Sydney Region Plan.

Inclusionary zoning targets can vary, but the Mercy Foundation supports targets that require developers to ensure that 15% of dwellings built on private land be 'affordable'. In addition, we also recommend that 30% of dwellings on formerly public land be 'affordable'. We, along with other housing advocates, believe that targets such as these will eventually lead to a stronger supply of affordable dwellings in Sydney for key workers and minimum wage workers.

Sydney must deal with its affordable housing crisis. It is not ok that too many people are locked out of housing all together. And it's not ok that many key and minimum wage workers have to live so far away from their workplaces that they have daily commutes of 2 hours or more. We need a plan to fix this. Inclusionary zoning will be a good start. **Felicity Reynolds, CEO Mercy Foundation**

## INCLUSIONARY ZONING



15%

of new dwellings built  
on **private** land is



30%

of new dwellings built  
on **public** land is

**A F F O R D A B L E**

## Home in a Box Update

Providing people who have experienced chronic homelessness with crisp sheets and towels, soft pillows and quilts, a dinner set, glasses and kitchenware to help set up their new, permanent home, helps people start their lives again.

Home in a Box is possible because of our generous suppliers, including My House, Kennards Self Storage, Maxwell & Williams, HC Distributors and Hospitality Products. We also have a number of supporters who have generously contributed to this project. We sincerely thank all of you for enabling us to make this project possible.

The recipients of Home in a Box in the last three months include three women, who have all experienced chronic homelessness. In one case, the woman had been sleeping on the streets of inner Sydney for the last 6 years. She had no family in Australia and was picked up by a local service that was able to quickly move her into

social housing. The woman had no possessions to help set up a home. Once we were contacted, we quickly organised a Home in a Box to help her re-start her life in safe, secure affordable housing.

We recently received this card in the mail from her worker: ***Just wanted to say thanks so much for your help and for sending the Home in a Box for our client. Our client was blown away by all the items she received and said that it made moving a lot less stressful. The boxes really helped to make our client feel valued.***

We gratefully acknowledge all our supporters and the exceptional work of the dedicated service workers who are working to house and support the most vulnerable people on our streets.



## 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