

Home in a Box



at the
service
of human
dignity



Since 2011,
the number of
women aged 65 to 74
presenting as homeless has
increased by 51.1% (AHURI, 2018)

Older Australians now represent 16% of the total homeless population

WPI has now settled on the property and is currently in the design and planning approval stage for the development of four units on the site. Women who have expressed interest in investing in the opportunity to secure affordable, appropriate housing are being consulted in the planning and development stages.

The plan is for construction to be completed mid 2019. This project will not only deliver affordable housing for four women, it will provide a replicable model that will deliver housing security and peace of mind for older single older women on low incomes.





From the CEO



The Mercy Foundation is committed to evidence based policy and programs that will serve to end people's experience of homelessness. Two approaches which have proven effective around the world are Housing First and Rapid Re-housing.

Some people might think these two models are the same, but they're not. They are similar – but different in a couple of ways.

Housing First is a methodology for ensuring people who may have high and complex needs and a long experience of homelessness are offered housing, FIRST. This ensures people do not need to complete a program, move through crisis or transitional housing or meet therapeutic goals for which housing may be a 'reward'. People with high and complex needs are more likely to drop out of such programs and never make it to the end where housing may (or may not) eventuate.

Housing First is based on the notion that people need housing first to help stabilise their lives. Supports can then be put in place to help them with the other issues they have to help them to sustain housing.

Rapid re-housing sounds similar to Housing First, but it is usually a bit different. Rapid re-housing is about understanding that not everyone who experiences homelessness has high and complex needs. Most people who experience homelessness are living in poverty and have few needs other than the essential and urgent need for housing.

Their homelessness can usually be solved by ensuring access to appropriate and affordable housing as quickly as possible. They don't need expensive case managers or 24 hour care in an

accommodation service for 3 months. This is an expense which would be more wisely spent on people that may need a period of support prior to being re-housed.

Neither Housing First or Rapid Re-housing are yet 'business as usual' responses to homelessness in Australia. We are still operating with a crisis accommodation and transitional housing model that was developed during a different time in Australia. A time when there was less unemployment, there were far fewer people experiencing homelessness and a time when State governments were still making significant investment in increasing public housing stock.

While Federal and State governments continue to put a lot of their funding for homelessness services into short term accommodation options we will not see a change. It will not be possible to implement rapid re-housing as a 'business as usual' response to most people's homelessness whilst there are insufficient affordable housing options in capital cities throughout Australia. It could and should be considered as a 'business as usual' response in some rural and regional areas that will have fewer people experiencing homelessness but who may have some level of still affordable private rental housing. This would be significantly cheaper than establishing a crisis accommodation service in all or most of those areas.

The Mercy Foundation will continue to advocate for changes to the structural causes of poverty and homelessness as well as advocate for effective solutions, such as Housing First and Rapid Re-housing. Help us with this advocacy by informing others about some of these effective responses Australia should be implementing to help end people's experience of homelessness.

Felicity Reynolds, CEO Mercy Foundation

Update: A Modern Slavery Act for Australia

We applaud the Australian Government for their recent announcement to allocate \$3.6 million in funding to help establish an Anti-Slavery Unit within the Department of Home Affairs. The unit will manage the implementation of a Modern Slavery Reporting Requirement. We are expecting a Modern Slavery Act to be passed by the Australian Government this year, requiring

more than 3,000 large corporations and other entities to publish annual statements on their actions to address modern slavery in their supply chains and operations. In a world first, the Australian Government has also committed to producing an annual statement concerning government procurement.



Ending Homelessness

Building secure futures for young mums and their babies

Last year the Mercy Foundation awarded a Grant to End Homelessness to Zoe Support in Mildura, Victoria. Zoe Support is an organisation that provides a range of services and programs to support pregnant and parenting young mothers in the region.

At the time of the application, there was a 2 - year waiting list for social housing in Mildura, and as a result, a number of young women pregnant or parenting due to various reasons experienced homelessness. Many were often left to rely on inadequate accommodation ranging from couch surfing or sleeping rough. This unstable housing was not only unsafe but also prevented the young women from securing their future. It is very difficult to seek employment or take on further education whilst entrenched in homelessness.

The project was to fund a project worker to provide advocacy and assist young mothers and pregnant women experiencing homelessness, in their quest to secure and sustain affordable housing. Since the project commenced, 21 young mothers have been

assisted into private rental and a further 12 have been successfully housed in social housing. The project worker is continuing to help young women sustain their housing by facilitating education around living and life skills including - budgeting, cooking and cleaning.

The project worker continues to network and build rapport with a number of agencies within the region, including - real estate agencies/agents, Centrelink, the Department of Health and Human Services and various community service organisations, to provide awareness of those experiencing homelessness, the issues they face and the action needed to achieve better outcomes. This collaborative approach has enabled clients to access long term housing and additional support for young mothers.

We hope that this Zoe Support model will find the recurrent funding it needs in order for the successful project to continue.





Ending Homelessness

Grants to End Homelessness Awarded 2018

The Mercy Foundation Grants to End Homelessness are available for seeding initiatives, services, projects, advocacy and research that will contribute to the goal of ending homelessness by supporting housing first and permanent supportive housing solutions. In May, the following projects were awarded a Grant to End Homelessness:

Swinburne University of Technology: Supporting Homeless Individuals with a history of brain injury to exit homelessness: Assessing Knowledge and building skills among frontline workers

This research study aims to advance our understanding of homelessness and housing workers' knowledge of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Additionally, the grant will help produce resources such as factsheets and an online training module to build capacity among workers. This will assist them in effectively engaging with clients who have a history of TBI to remain engaged in services to achieve sustained housing outcomes.

Don Dunstan Foundation: Adelaide Zero Project Connections Week

This project contributed to the first Connections Week in Adelaide. Connections Week provides the data needed for the Adelaide Zero Project, where by a coalition of government, non-government and business groups are working together to end homelessness in Adelaide.

The plan is to reach Functional Zero by 2020. Functional Zero is when the number of people rough sleeping at any point is no greater than the monthly housing placement rate for people sleeping rough. More information about Functional Zero can be found at www.dunstan.org.au

Ruah Community Services: Aboriginal Housing Initiative

Ruah's Aboriginal Housing Initiative is part of the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign in Perth. The campaign started with a Registry Week in 2016. This collective impact project is working to sustainably house and support the most vulnerable rough sleepers using a Housing First approach. Already, 132 people who were experiencing homelessness are now housed.

This project is a sub-project of the larger collaboration and it is designed to better understand the nature of Aboriginal housing needs and will link people to housing that meets those needs. The grant will design a more culturally appropriate housing response for Aboriginal rough sleepers, taking into account their kinship obligations and networks.



Stop Press: Cath Leary Social Justice Award 2018

The winner of the Cath Leary Social Justice award for 2018 is *50 Lives 50 Homes* Perth, the Housing First collaboration that has brought together more than 30 agencies and organisations in Perth, led by Ruah. The award acknowledges the significant progress the collaboration has made to ending homelessness in Perth. *50 Lives 50 Homes* works to ensure people who are street

homeless are provided with permanent housing and the required support to ensure they sustain their housing.

This fantastic project began in 2016 and so far ensured 132 people who were experiencing street homelessness have moved into safe and affordable housing.



Small Grants

Social Justice Small Grants Awarded 2018

Community organisations and groups working at the grass roots are generally the first to know about social issues affecting their communities that need to change, to create greater social justice. The Mercy Foundation's Social Justice Small Grant program provides seed funding to these organisations, working to bring about greater social justice in Australia.

Social Justice Small Grants awarded

In May 2018, the following projects were awarded a Social Justice Small Grant:

Wellsprings for Women Cooking Group, Victoria

Seed funding will help train up to 25 women in food handling, food presentation and catering to build on their existing cooking skills in a diversity of cultural cuisines. Some of the women struggle financially and have few opportunities to find employment. The women will be trained up to work as caterers and assisted to establish their own small social enterprise and ultimately earn an income.

Be Centre – Working with Aboriginal children

Following a highly successful trial of the program, Be Centre will use evidence based, age appropriate form of play therapy to work with young Aboriginal children in Sydney. The program has been developed with help from Elders, the local community centre and the local primary school.

Cana - Life Transformation program

Cana Farm's Life Transformation Program offers marginalized men and women the opportunity to engage in counselling, vocational training, workplace readiness and education programs. Where possible Cana provides paid employment (casual, part or full time) as a precursor to transitioning to external employment. The Program operates Monday to Thursday, 50 weeks of the year.

RISE Driving Program

Obtaining a driver's licence is a financial burden for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. Chances for employment and education are greatly enhanced by having a driver's licence. There is an identified need for an all inclusive driver education program that addresses the linguistic and cultural needs of refugees.

Mukinbudin Community Resource Centre - Careers Excursion for High Schoolers

Mukinbudin is a remote town in the Central Wheat belt in WA, 3½ hours drive from Perth. Funding will enable 14 students in years 9 through to 12 attend a Careers Expo in Perth. The Careers Expo will provide information about what careers are available, what training is available and the opportunities for digital employment if the students wish to stay in their town.

SisterWorks Home Shepparton - A Home for our regional sisters

Seed funding will help establish a workplace and learning centre in regional Victoria, to help marginalised migrant women find employment, receive basic skill training in sewing, cooking, knitting, and jewellery making, with a view to making their own product line or existing SisterWorks products.

Ballina Region for Refugees Inc - Refugee Family Reunification Campaign

This advocacy project aims to raise awareness about the federal government's policy that fragments families by forcing refugees to choose between the separation of family and the freedom to resettle. The funding will develop an advocacy toolkit and organise a series of workshops with speakers. The advocacy material will be available for use by trained community members

Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, challenged the systems and structures that oppressed and exploited people, leaving them powerless and impoverished. 187 years later, the Mercy Foundation is one of hundreds of Mercy organisations around the world, fulfilling Catherine's legacy in a modern world.





Take Action Now

Campaign Connect

The ABS 2016 Census statistics shows that there are 116,427 people in Australia experiencing homelessness. This is an increase of almost 14% from the 2011 Census.

The Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot, released in April, revealed that of 67,365 properties listed for rent across Australia, there were just three properties in the whole country that were affordable for someone receiving Newstart or Youth Allowance. For single people on the Aged Pension, just over 1% of properties were affordable.

For most people, housing solves homelessness. They don't need any other types of support, they just need an affordable home.

Everybody deserves an affordable, safe and permanent home. Will you join us in asking the government to fix the housing system?

The Everybody's Home campaign is calling on our government to fix the housing system.



The campaign has 5 key asks:

1. More support for first home-buyers
2. A National Housing Strategy to meet the demand for more affordable housing
3. A better deal for renters – abolish 'no grounds' evictions and unfair rent rises
4. Provide immediate relief for Australians in chronic rental stress by increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance
5. A plan to end homelessness by 2030

Please support this campaign at www.everybodyshome.com.au

Raise the rate is a national campaign to increase Newstart, the Youth Allowance and other related payments.



These payments are so low that people cannot afford basic necessities like housing, meals, bills, medication and transport.

In real terms, these payments have not increased in 24 years. Keeping people in poverty makes it impossible to find housing, look for paid work and get on with life.

Poverty is the key cause of homelessness.

Please support this campaign at www.acoss.org.au/raisetherate



Social Justice

Focusing on Domestic Servitude

The Mercy Foundation has been working to understand human trafficking and slavery in Australia. We have been investigating the drivers, causes and consequences of human trafficking and slavery and how we can best make a contribution to addressing this injustice.

Human trafficking and slavery takes the form of forced labour, servitude, debt bondage, deceptive recruiting, forced marriage and organ trafficking. The majority of victims of human trafficking and slavery are women and children and almost all are living in poverty.

Our approach to addressing social justice issues is to focus on a particular area and advocate for evidence based responses to address the issue.

Domestic Servitude

After initial groundwork, we have decided to focus on the issue of domestic servitude. We know that other groups and organisations will continue to work on other issues associated with human trafficking, however as a small foundation we believe that by focusing on one specific issue we will be able to not just raise awareness, but contribute to real change and action on the issue.

Domestic servitude occurs when a person is providing domestic work in a private household, and because of coercion, threat or deception, is not free to stop providing that service. Additionally, they are significantly deprived of their personal freedom and control over many aspects of their lives. They are not free to leave.

Domestic servitude is linked to bonded labour, servile marriage and forced marriage. The victims are often female migrant workers who may not speak English, are unfamiliar with the law in Australia, lack trust in authority figures such as police, may fear deportation and are concerned about retribution particularly concerning their family.

Our plan to address domestic servitude includes:

- Researching the pathways into and out of domestic servitude and identifying ways to better prevent, detect and support victims/survivors of domestic servitude.
- Advocating for the ratification of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention.
- Working to change the perceptions of domestic work and reposition it as a valid service that should be paid appropriately.
- Developing networks with services and agencies involved with this issue in Australia.

Celebrating the Wisdom of Older Generations

Sharing and celebrating the wisdom and cultural knowledge of older generations is the key focus of a Social Justice Small Grant awarded to the LOST IN BOOKS project by the Think + DO Tank Foundation. LOST IN BOOKS is a kids' multicultural bookshop, café, safe space for women, creative learning centre and language exchange hub. It is located in Fairfield NSW.

Half way through the project, many activities have already been completed, including:

- Regular 'open-microphone' evenings to encourage people to attend LOST IN BOOKS and share their stories in evenings of song, poetry and story-telling.
- The installation of a story-booth at the Casula Powerhouse Creative Arts Centre as part of the Motion Room exhibition. The storybooth recorded more than 20 interactions, including narratives, folkloric stories and lullabies. More than 1,200 people visited the exhibition.
- Recording videos featuring a number of Aboriginal Elders, telling stories of country or teaching the Darug language through song and spoken word.
- Recording a video series, entitled Home is where the [] is, featuring local elders from Afghanistan, Syria, Kuwait and Iraq, sharing their stories of significance about an object they brought with them from their homeland to Australia.
- Developed a storytelling platform for **LOST IN BOOKS** called **"BOOKWORMS"** that allows audio works to be hosted in colourful objects that play audio through speakers or earphones, to maximise access to the audio they have recorded.

- During the recent In Other Words Festival, an interactive exchange of traditional Chinese folksongs with artist, Rainbow Chan and her mother was produced as well as the live performances of 5 Arabic poets as part of a **WORD TRAVELS** poetry slam.

All activity aims to promote intergenerational interaction and pride in cultural knowledge and identity, acknowledging the significance and value of older community members.

LOST IN BOOKS is a unique, valuable resource in the local community, targeting culturally and linguistically diverse women and children in South Western Sydney with a focus on support for multilingual literacy and creativity.



Aunt Wendy during a video shoot (Photo Jane Stratton)

Home in a Box Update

From January to June 2018, we delivered eleven Homes in Boxes to people who had moved into permanent housing after experiencing chronic homelessness.



Seven were women who had endured difficult circumstances including:

-  A young Indigenous woman had been homeless for six months.
-  A pregnant woman and her children had been sleeping in a park and in temporary accommodation for a few months.
-  An Aboriginal woman had been homeless for 18 months.
-  Another woman had lived in crisis services for 18 months.
-  A pregnant woman had been homeless on and off for ten years.
-  A seriously ill older woman had been rough sleeping and couch surfing for nine months.
-  An Aboriginal woman had been rough sleeping for over 8 years.

Home in a Box is delivered to the recipient by the service or housing worker that helped find housing for their client. They also ensure that people who require additional support to help sustain their tenancy receive that support.

Home in a Box helps establish a welcoming home with fresh sheets, pillows and quilts, a toaster and a kettle, kitchenware, glasses and cutlery. Buying these items represents a financial burden that is difficult to cover if you are managing on a low income. Home in a Box helps people settle into their new home and start their lives again.

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 our projects and activities is the service of human dignity. Our focus is on ending chronic homelessness for individuals and families through housing and support, and returning dignity to their lives.

Thank you to our generous donors and supporters of Home in a Box, including:

Mater Hospital Sydney volunteers • Sisters of Mercy North Sydney

Thank you to our generous suppliers:

My House • Kennards Self Storage • Maxwell and Williams • HC Distributors • Hospitality Products



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.**



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