

Mercy Foundation and the United Nations

A home is much more than four walls. A safe, affordable home is necessary to meet our most basic needs. Without a home, physical and mental health declines; it's difficult to work, to study, to participate in the community, to maintain friendships, to eat well and to meet our hygiene needs. A home provides security, privacy and a sense of belonging.

Homelessness can be solved. It requires a decent supply of long term, affordable housing and the appropriate support to ensure that housing will be sustained.

In March, we collaborated with Dr Jessie Hohmann, an international expert on the right to housing, to engage with the UN regarding homelessness in Australia. In 1975, the Australian Government ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. By ratifying this Covenant,

The importance of a
HOME
cannot be overstated.
It is a fundamental
HUMAN RIGHT

Read about our discussions with the UN on
our website, www.mercyfoundation.com.au.

under international law, Australia has agreed to respect, protect and fulfil these rights, including the right to housing and an adequate standard of living.

At a Zoom meeting with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, we highlighted a number of issues where the government is breaching its responsibilities under the Covenant. Amongst people experiencing homelessness, we are particularly concerned about the over representation of young people, older women and First Nations Peoples.

Our discussions helped inform the UN's List of Issues that the Australian government will be asked to respond to in its report to the UN in 2023. The List of Issues were released in April, and we were pleased to see a number of references to our concerns around the right to housing.



Ending Homelessness

We continue to focus on ending homelessness, especially where women are concerned. This year we are funding five new projects through the Grants to End Homelessness program, featured on page 2. We also share with you the outcomes of some remarkable projects that are either preventing or solving homelessness.

Supporting communities to create change

Our Social Justice Small Grants Program is funding many small organisations across Australia to address poverty and injustice at a local level. Through the hard work and dedication of the many

workers in organisations funded under this grants program, many lives have been transformed. You can read about some of these terrific projects on pages 6 and 7.

Creating a warm and welcoming home

Home in a Box continues to help many formerly homeless families and individuals to set up their own home. We are privileged to work in partnership with workers from services across Sydney, who are committed to housing and supporting some of the most marginalised people in our community.

We take this opportunity to thank you for your generous support and encouragement. Your generosity enables us to positively impact on more lives, addressing injustice and inequality across Australia. We ensure that 100% of your donation is directed towards additional projects or Homes in Boxes.



Working to End Homelessness



THE GRANTS TO END HOMELESSNESS PRO prevent homelessness particularly

Congratulations to the following organisations that were awarded a Grant to End Homelessness for 2022:

St Kilda Gatehouse: Step Up program for women experiencing chronic homelessness

The Step Up program will assist women who are reliant on street-based sex work and experiencing chronic homelessness, with direct referrals to specialised housing, health and legal supports ensuring they have the best chance of stepping up into safe and secure housing. Step Up will provide the support and advocacy a woman needs to access safe housing and then help her maintain that housing.

Brigid Justice: Legal assistance fund to protect women leaving abuse from homelessness

This initiative will address the difficulties faced by women leaving abusive partners, to access housing and secure a fair share of joint property and resources. Women leaving abusive partners are at a high risk of homelessness, with domestic violence the main cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia.

The fund will finance legal fees, which will expedite property settlement and housing matters. Once a woman receives her property settlement, the fees will be repaid into the fund, and this money will be used to pay the legal fees of future applicants. With access to financial resources from the settlement, the risk of becoming homeless is greatly reduced.

Bridge for Asylum Seekers: Safe Homes for People Seeking Asylum

A major barrier to housing for people seeking asylum is raising the money needed for a rental bond. People seeking asylum are ineligible for all rental bond loan schemes. This pilot project will enable single women and women with children to enter into private rental agreements, often for the first time in Australia. Being able to pay for a bond and rent-in-advance is the first step to achieving longer term stability and sustainable tenancy.

Action on Housing Older Women: Share Housing for Older Women (SHOW) Project

This project will assist women over 55 years in need of housing to secure private shared rental accommodation. A project worker will provide case work and community education to older women who register interest in shared housing. This pilot project will decrease the risk of homelessness and increase social inclusion for older women participating in the program. It has potential to provide a replicable model for share housing for older women in other communities across Australia.



GRAM SUPPORTS PROJECTS THAT END OR where women are concerned.

Project Snapshots: Ending Homelessness

CatholicCare Wilcannia Forbes 'My Time' project (NSW)

- 23 women in safe, long term housing.
- This project helped house and support women aged over 50 years at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- At the end of the project, 28 women were assisted and 23 women are now in safe and secure, long term housing.

'Women experience a powerful sense of shame to find themselves without a home or the means to acquire employment. The impacts of domestic violence, poor health and mental health issues can create fear of accessing the support system. Aboriginal women in this age group are less likely to reach out for support as a result of cultural beliefs, fear and intergenerational impacts that will affect their children and grandchildren.'

National Homelessness Collective 'Sisters in Safe Housing project' (VIC)

- 28 families rehoused.
- This project is helping to rehouse women escaping domestic violence situations and women experiencing chronic homelessness.
- This grant provides funds for the payment of bonds and rent-in-advance, given as a loan.
- The loan is repaid at a rate that is affordable to the recipient. Repayment of the loan means that more women can be assisted by this program.

"That is such an incredible difference the Mercy Foundation has provided for so many lives"

BaptCare Camberwell 'Houses of Hope for women seeking asylum'

- This project is providing housing and support for two women with young children seeking asylum, who were in desperate need of accommodation.
- Baptcare caseworkers and volunteers have helped them to access local services such as health care, early learning and childcare, English language and employment support, and food and emergency aid.
- The success of this project has led other churches to partner with Baptcare to sponsor their own House of Hope.

"For people seeking asylum in Australia today there are relatively few welfare 'safety net' provisions. The risk of homelessness is extremely high, especially when there are young children in single parent families with no income. Through this project, Mercy Foundation has been able to collaborate in securing a roof over the heads of these women and young children and helped create a tangible pathway to future independence."

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group Inc

- This project provided rental assistance for 10 households for a total of 10 weeks.
- In total, 32 people were assisted by this project, which included a family of three generations, a family of 6, and a man recently released after 8 years in offshore detention.
- The project aimed to help stabilise the mental health of 10 households of unemployed and underemployed people seeking asylum, by helping ease the pressure of paying unaffordable rent.



Forced Marriage: A slavery-like practice in Australia

What is forced marriage?

According to Anti-Slavery Australia, forced marriage is when a person gets married without freely and fully consenting because of coercion, threat or deception or because they are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony because of age or mental capacity. Most reported victims are young women and girls.

Forced marriage is a slavery-like practice that is a crime and a form of gender-based violence. In 2020 – 2021, there were 79 reports of forced marriage to the Australian Federal Police. Given its hidden nature, it is believed that forced marriage is under reported in Australia.

HerSpace project

A Modern Slavery Grant was awarded to **HerSpace** to assist women survivors of modern slavery, such as servitude, forced labour, debt bondage and forced marriage, to take part in a therapy program to help women overcome trauma. The weekly sessions included art therapy, animal assisted therapy, and psychoeducation. As a result, the participants reported an increase in self confidence, improved their self awareness, were better able to process trauma and valued the experience of connecting with other survivors.

Preventing forced marriage

A second grant to **ACRATH** expanded its reach in delivering training courses to secondary schools, pre-service teachers, social workers and midwives to educate them about forced marriage. The training helped participants to identify victims of

forced marriage and learn how to make appropriate referrals to protect young women and men from forced marriage.

ACRATH also provide training to community groups to engage with at-risk populations about Australian laws on forced marriage and the rights of young people in Australia.

ACRATH engaged with more than 250 people via Zoom training sessions and provided online training materials. These can be viewed at <https://acrath.org.au/resources/forced-marriage/>

Assisting survivors of forced marriage

This year a Grant to End Homelessness was awarded to the **Lighthouse Foundation** to establish a second safe house for women and girls escaping a forced marriage. The program complements their Young Women's Freedom Program, providing accommodation and wrap around support for young women impacted by forced marriage.

This project will provide accommodation and support for young women ready to move on to more independent living, freeing up space for more survivors to join the program. The young women will continue to be supported as they recover from trauma and will determine when they are ready to leave the program.



Youth Awards

mercy foundation®
YOUTH
2022 awards



Mercy Youth Awards: Caring for our earth

Caring for our earth has never been more important or urgent. In the last few years many of us have experienced the impacts of climate change. Disasters such as drought, flood and fire have featured locally, nationally and globally. Climate change needs to be managed by government, however individuals can also make changes in their day to day approach to life that will help make a difference. With the proper approach and care it is possible to maintain or return our earth to a better state than we currently find it in.

Your challenge is to:

1. Create a visual representation (eg artwork/photo/cartoon/collage) that shows everyday actions that help make a difference. Be as creative as you dare!
2. Upload your entry to www.mercyfoundation.com.au and briefly explain your entry.
3. Answer a quiz about climate change.
4. Visit www.climatecouncil.org.au to find out more about climate change and to making a difference.

Prizes:

- 1st prize:** \$1,400 (\$700 to the winning school and \$700 to the winning student)
- 2nd prize:** \$700 (\$350 to the winning school and \$350 to the winning student)
- 3rd prize:** \$400 (\$200 to the winning school and \$200 to the winning student)

ENTRIES CLOSE FRIDAY 5 AUGUST 2022



Social Justice Small Grants

Since 1990, the Mercy Foundation has helped community organisations across Australia address social justice issues at the grass roots. As a result, thousands of people now face a fairer, more just future. Congratulations to the following organisations that were awarded a Social Justice Small Grant in our recent grant round:

Agape Outreach: Women in Crisis Accommodation Sessions (NSW)

Monthly workshops will offer women the opportunity to learn the legalities and affordability of share accommodation and meet other women in similar circumstances. It is expected that 120 women will benefit from this project.

Stepping Out Program Inc: Safe Circle Relationships Workshop and Post Workshop Counselling (NSW)

Counselling sessions will be offered to women survivors of childhood trauma, to help them journey through trauma and develop healthy and meaningful relationships with family, friends and work colleagues.

Corpus Christi St Ives Social Justice Group: Tibetan Refugee Health Project (NSW)

The parish has a long association with Tibetan refugees in Sydney. This grant will help fund medical needs that are unaffordable for this group of refugees. At least 47 refugees are expected to be assisted.

Ulladulla and Districts Community Resources Centre: Literacy Project for Adults (NSW)

An increasing number of people are requiring support to read letters and engage with websites such as Services NSW and MyGov. This project will provide training for volunteers to become literacy and numeracy tutors for adults in the Shoalhaven area. Up to 290 adults may be assisted.

Asylum Seekers Centre: Ready for school for children seeking asylum (NSW)

The Ready for School program supports equal access to early education by providing financial relief to families seeking asylum by covering preschool and childcare fees. The project will enable 30 children to attend childcare or preschool.

Community Housing Limited: Peace of Mind (NSW)

This grant will provide a number of security upgrades, as recommended by police, to ensure the safety and security of women and children living in a DV refuge in country NSW.

Settlement Neighbourhood Centre: Creating Opportunities and Connecting Community (NSW)

This program is a long-established community-based Children's Holiday Program for families who experience socio-economic disadvantage in the inner Sydney area. This project is funded by the Cath Leary Social Justice Foundation.

Mercy Works: Mercy Connect (NSW, project in WA)

Mercy Connect recruits, trains and supports volunteers with an educational background to assist refugee and asylum seeker students to overcome barriers to education. The program is offered across 22 educational facilities in Perth.

Prison Fellowship Australia: Extraordinary Lives (NSW)

'Extraordinary Lives' delivers services to children with an incarcerated parent. The project involves volunteer training, mentoring and program delivery costs. The grant includes funds to support the Extraordinary Lives 'Camp for Kids'. Mentoring will assist 10 children and the camp will host 30 children of current and recent inmates.

Inspiring Brighter Futures Foundation: Onwards and Upwards Wellbeing and Mentoring Program (QLD)

The program teaches valuable life skills including mental health resilience and self-confidence to young women in Brisbane. Participants will engage in workshops and be supported by a mentor. Twenty young women are expected to participate.

Prison Network: Women in Recovery (VIC)

This project will fund social inclusion activities for women who are seeking to recover from addiction and past trauma. Around 40 women are expected to participate in the program.

Little Dreamers: The Young Carer Tutoring Program (VIC)

The program provides young carers with extra support in their education with regular one-on-one sessions. The program targets 20 young carers aged 5-18 years with 20 volunteer tutors.



Zoe Support, Mildura

Project Snapshots: Social Justice Small Grants

Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services

Ishar's Young Women's Project is supporting young women aged 14 – 25 years, who have experienced family or domestic violence and assault. The strengths-based program provides client advocacy, workshops on health and well-being, improved confidence and more. The project started in January 2022 and had already supported 13 young women in the first three months.

Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention Legal Service

A Social Justice Small Grant to Binaal Billa funded essential packs for women and children escaping domestic violence. The packs provided all the essentials needed, including a towel, underwear, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste. Eighty bags were distributed, enabling recipients to maintain personal care of themselves and their children.

Police Vet Support Inc

This pilot Outreach Program assists Police Veterans and their partners who are living with physical and mental health challenges and social isolation. Sixty Veterans and partners are participating in the program, receiving one-on-one telephone support to address these challenges.

Zoe Support Inc

Zoe Support in Mildura, Victoria supports young mothers aged from 13 to 25 years. The program is assisting 50 young women with 70 children. In order to provide specialised support for clients struggling with their mental health, Zoe Support applied for a Social Justice Small Grant to enable staff, volunteers and clients to participate in Youth Mental Health First Aid training. This training accredited participants in Youth Mental Health First Aid.



Zoe Support, Mildura

Sixteen people engaged in the program and, after the workshops, all reported feeling more confident in their abilities and better prepared to respond to mental health issues.

HOME in a BOX UPDATE

The Home in a Box project helps create a welcoming home as families and individuals move from homelessness into their own home. Since January, we have sent out 43 Homes in Boxes to help families and individuals make a fresh start. Home in a Box not only creates a home, it helps restore dignity and self-esteem.

We continue to receive many requests for Home in a Box from dedicated workers from services in Sydney. It is a practical and much needed contribution to help families and individuals to settle into their new home, lay down roots and recover from the experience of homelessness.

"It's got everything you need to set up a home, it's the best. It had all the basics and was very handy. I loved it".

"Thank you for your support, it makes a huge difference."



Sarah from The Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

This year, Homes in Boxes have assisted the following families and individuals:

- A young mum and two children, homeless for 24 months due to domestic violence.
- A mum and two pre-schoolers, escaping domestic violence and homeless for 6 months.
- A mum and her daughter who were homeless for 9 months.
- A woman in her 40's, living with disability, who was homeless for 7 years.
- A woman with a long history of trauma and illness, homeless for 18 months.
- Another woman with a history of rough sleeping for most of her life.
- A man who was homeless for 10 years.
- A man in his 50's who was sleeping rough for many years.
- A young woman with complex needs, homeless for 11 months.



Thank you to our Home in a Box partners:



We are very grateful for your support of Home in a Box, which has helped provide a warm and welcoming home for mums with children and many individuals who have experienced the trauma of homelessness.



Yes, I would like to help bring about an end to homelessness.

Donation Amount (donations over \$2 are tax deductible) A tax deductible receipt will be mailed to you.

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 Road 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.

Thank you for your support, it is greatly appreciated.

