

At the Service of Human Dignity

In Australia, more than one in eight adults and one in six children are living in poverty. Poverty denies people of human rights such as the right to housing, the right to education and the right to an adequate standard of living. Poverty strips away dignity and hope.

The Mercy Foundation strives to uphold human dignity. We work to end homelessness, end human trafficking and slavery and support community organisations to address poverty and inequality. We achieve this through our grants programs, advocacy, education and research. This year, the Social Justice Small Grants program is funding 12 projects from community organisations that are addressing poverty at the grassroots. A few of these projects are:

Creating Opportunities and Connecting Community - Ensuring Accessibility and Inclusion through Community - based Children's Programs.

A project with The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre in inner Sydney is funding school holiday programs for children from families that are not able to afford mainstream or fee-for-service programs.

Thirty-eight children took part in the July School Holiday Program and 42 children in the September/October program. Children enjoyed excursions to Taronga Zoo, the Sydney Sea Life Aquarium, the cinema, a bush walk and workshop at Berry Island with Koori Kinnections. They kept active with excursions to the local swimming pools, tennis courts and parks. The children loved the activities and the opportunity to connect with their peers, with many children coming to the programs with their siblings and cousins.



Young Carer Tutoring Program

This program from Little Dreamers provides young carers with extra support to help keep them engaged in their studies, reduce isolation, improve self-esteem and strengthen mental health. The program provides the opportunity for mentorship with trained volunteer mentors. In 2021, 14 young carers were matched with 14 mentors, positively impacting on their studies and personal circumstances. The project was funded again this year, and already 40 young people have registered for extra support, starting in Term 1, 2023.

Ready for School program

The Ready for School program from the Asylum Seekers Centre is helping pre-school age children to prepare for the transition to school. Since July 2022, 4 children were supported to attend day care for 2 days a week. Another 13 children benefitted through partnerships with service providers.

The program enables children to socially engage with other children and to attend early childhood education programs preparing them for school. Additionally, parents are able to find employment or attend work readiness programs on the days that children attend childcare or preschool.

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. We wish 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

It is possible to end or prevent homelessness, as illustrated by the impressive outcomes of projects funded through the Grants to End Homelessness program. These outcomes would not be possible without the dedicated and hard-working teams in each organisation, or without the support of our generous donors.

Brigid Justice

A recently funded project with Brigid Justice helped prevent homelessness for five women who were forced to flee their homes due to domestic violence. By providing access to funds, the women accessed legal representation that would not otherwise have been possible. Having a lawyer enables them to obtain a just property settlement, preventing them from becoming homeless. Recipients include older women and young mums with children. As the legal proceedings are completed, the recipient repays the loan to provide funds for another person in need.

National Homeless Collective

Twenty-seven women and their children were prevented from becoming homeless by the timely provision of funds to pay for rental bonds and/or rent in advance. They were all fleeing violent situations and were helped to connect with support services as needed.

Lighthouse Foundation

Six young women escaping early or forced marriage now have the opportunity to recover from past trauma and rebuild their lives in a newly renovated home in Melbourne. A grant to Lighthouse Foundation is enabling the organisation to support young people escaping early and forced marriage and to develop the skills needed as they take steps toward independent living.

YWCA Canberra update

We received good news from the Rentwell project, funded in 2019, where 143 people are now living in affordable private rentals, who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness. The tenants include elderly women, single mums and their children, young refugee families and First Nations women.

We congratulate all organisations on these life-changing outcomes.



Right At Home Forum

In October, we hosted the Right at Home online forum, to learn more about the Right to Housing and to hear from recent recipients of a Grant to End Homelessness.

Dr Jessie Hohmann, an expert on the Right to Housing, spoke about the right and the Australian Government's commitments to ensure this right is fulfilled. Jessie spoke about the opportunities for advocacy and how other countries are successfully fulfilling and protecting the right to housing through advocacy for their disadvantaged citizens.

Guest speakers from Cana Communities, CatholicCare Wilcannia Forbes, St Kilda Gatehouse, Brigid Justice and Queensland Shelter discussed how their projects are ending or preventing homelessness and the opportunities and challenges that they have experienced.



Ending Human Trafficking and Slavery

Beyond Storytelling

Engagement with survivors of modern slavery is key to developing effective responses. The latest National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020 – 2025 notes the importance of ensuring that voices of victims and survivors inform our responses to slavery.

The Mercy Foundation funded a research report with UTS to help ensure that the voices of survivors are included in the development of policy and practice. In September, the report *Beyond Storytelling: towards survivor-informed responses to modern slavery*, was launched. The report is written by Frances Simmons and Professor Jennifer Burn from the Faculty of Law, UTS. It analyses Australia's response to modern slavery and finds that opportunities to learn from the expertise and experience of survivors have been missed. It draws on interviews with survivor leaders in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom as well as front-line Australian services, to identify opportunities to engage with survivors to embed their expertise in Australia's response to modern slavery.

One of the recommendations is the development of a Survivor Advisory Council, to provide advice and guidance to the Commonwealth Government. Members of the Council should be appropriately remunerated to reflect their expertise. The report recognises that survivors have a vital role to play in improving Australia's response to modern slavery.

Engagement with survivors must be meaningful, ethical and trauma informed. The report is a valuable resource for organisations and governments working with survivors. It recognises that to ensure survivors are truly heard, it is necessary to move beyond storytelling and develop frameworks that empower survivors and create opportunities for survivor leadership.

The report is available on our website and the Anti-Slavery Australia website. Articles about this research will be published in academic journals in the coming months.

The launch of the report featured a keynote address from Dr Minh Dang, a leading survivor scholar and Executive Director of Survivor Alliance as well as the insights of Moe Turaga, a modern slavery advocate, Lina Garcia Daza, the Lead for Trafficking, Forced Marriage and Forced Labour at the Australian Red Cross, Claudia Cummins, the program manager for Lived Experience Engagement Program at the Salvation Army, and Professor Jennifer Burn.



Mercy Youth Awards 2022

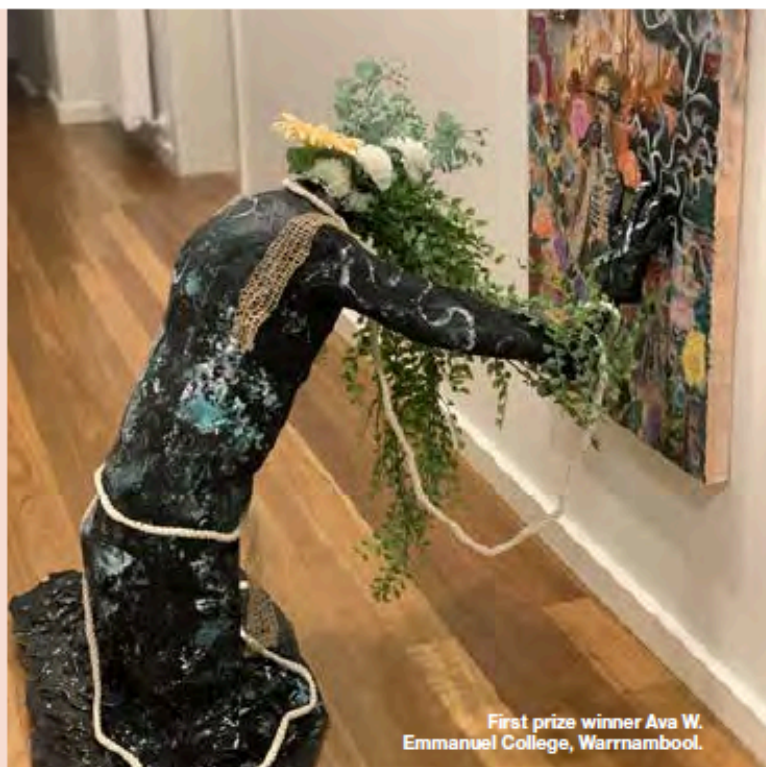
Since 2013 Mercy Youth Awards have been encouraging secondary students throughout Australia to learn about social justice issues.

In 2022 the focus was "Caring for the Earth", inspired by the Australian Catholic Bishops Social Justice statement. The focus resonated with school students and their artworks reflected their serious concerns about climate change.

The winners of the competition came from across Australia:

- 1st Prize Ava W, Emmanuel School Warrnambool, Victoria
- 2nd Prize Anjani M, Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College North Sydney, NSW
- 3rd Prize Emma K, Orange High School NSW.

Another 11 artworks were judged as Highly Commended, from schools located in city and rural areas. We were grateful to Kylea Tink MP who helped us with judging.



First prize winner Ava W.
Emmanuel College, Warrnambool.

Cath Leary Social Justice Award 2022

The recipient of the Cath Leary Social Justice Award for 2022 is Norma Tracey AM. Norma has dedicated her life to working with mothers, particularly first time Aboriginal mothers, fathers and children, helping them to recover and heal from trauma and intergenerational trauma. The Mercy Foundation Board acknowledged Norma's leadership in combining best practice in psycho-analytic therapy with Indigenous Australian spirituality in the Dreaming and Dadirri.

This award recognises Norma's outstanding work, effort and lifelong commitment to upholding human rights and human dignity.



Since January, Home in a Box has helped to set up a warm and welcoming home for 94 families or individuals moving into their own home after experiencing an extended period of homelessness. The feedback we receive from services notes that Home in a Box not only helps people to settle into their new home, it also contributes to building their sense of worth and self-esteem following a traumatic period of homelessness.

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.

