

Home in a Box

2025 Impact Highlights

As we come to the end of 2025, the Mercy Foundation is pleased to reflect on the impact of our Home in a Box program over the past year. We are proud to share that 100 Home in a Box sets have been distributed to individuals and families who have experienced prolonged periods of homelessness, in many cases, for several months or even years.

Each Home in a Box represents far more than essential household items. It offers dignity, comfort, and the sense of security that comes from having a place to call home. Through applications submitted by dedicated case workers, we gain insight into the experiences and challenges faced by their clients. The causes of homelessness are complex and varied: poor mental health, lack of supportive networks, domestic and family violence, eviction due to redevelopment, and the ongoing pressures of an increasingly unaffordable rental market. With limited social housing available, many people are forced to sleep rough, cycle through temporary accommodation, couch surf, or remain in hospital long after they are ready to be discharged, simply because they have nowhere else to go.

The stories behind these applications are deeply human. They reflect hardship, but also extraordinary courage and resilience. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and partners, 100 people and families have been able to take a meaningful step toward stability and independence this year.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who has made this program possible. Together, we are helping transform houses into homes — and offering hope where it is needed most. The Mercy Foundation is grateful for the continued support of **Linen House, Kennards Self Storage, HAG Import Corporation (Australia) Pty Ltd, Hospitality Products Pty Ltd, and HC Distributors Pty Ltd, Hockeys Property, St Leonards and, SHOSJ Craft Group.**

Newtown Neighbourhoods Impact statement:

“The Newtown Neighbourhood Centre has relied on the generosity of the Mercy Foundation for many years now.

It’s important when we house new service users into more permanent housing that their transition from homelessness into their new forever homes is stress free.

Presenting our service uses with a Home in a Box gives us the opportunity to assist them with that transition and gives them some much needed home goods that most of us take for granted.”

From Local Kind:

“As a specialist service supporting people experiencing complex homelessness, we see the Home in a Box program play a genuinely life-changing role. Everyone deserves the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity, especially during the most challenging periods,

After five years of chronic homelessness, a young couple overcame the impacts of family and domestic violence to finally secure stable housing. With limited supports and years spent rough sleeping and couch surfing, they are now beginning a new chapter in a safe home of their own.

- A young First Nations man secured his first-ever home after years of homelessness linked to systemic disadvantage. Receiving a long-awaited housing offer marked a transformative moment, giving him a safe place to call his own for the very first time.
- A middle-aged woman with a long history of homelessness and boarding house living finally received a permanent home. Having lived with instability for many years, she is now settling into her own space and building a more secure future.
- A transgender woman who faced discrimination in previous accommodation finally secured a safe studio unit. After years of instability and hardship, she is now able to build a home where she feels secure and respected.
- A mother of infant twins had been homeless for seven years, including extended periods of rough sleeping and refuge stays. She recently accepted a social housing offer and is now creating a safe home for herself and her babies with case management support.

and access to beautiful, high-quality new household items should be no exception. We are deeply grateful for this partnership and the profound impact it has on the individuals and families we walk alongside.”

We continue to work hand-in-hand with case workers to make sure every Home in a Box reaches someone who truly needs it, knowing that at the right at the moment it can make the biggest difference. Each box is much more than essential household items, it’s a gesture of care, a sense of dignity restored, and the beginning of a fresh, hopeful chapter.

Thank you for helping the Mercy Foundation turn houses into homes.



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From the CEO

This year marks an important milestone for the Mercy Foundation, as we transition from the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney to Mercy Partners. The Sisters chose to transition ownership of the Mercy Foundation to ensure that their mission will continue into the future. We are determined to carry their values and work forward for many years to come.

With your generous support, the Foundation continues its life-changing work by funding initiatives to end or prevent homelessness, especially for women. Our Social Justice Small Grants program helps communities across Australia address disadvantage at the grass roots. The Home in a Box project has helped over 100 families and individuals to set up a warm and welcoming home, and we also delivered modern slavery workshops to at-risk women in Melbourne.

We are grateful to all our donors and supporters, especially the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney and the Mater Hospital Sydney, enabling more projects to be funded, more Home in a Box

sets to be sent out and in turn, transforming the lives of many disadvantaged Australians.

As the year draws to a close, we turn our attention to holidays, Christmas, and celebrations. We are also reminded that not everyone has a safe and secure place to call home. For many families and individuals, this season brings feelings of isolation and uncertainty.

We all share a responsibility to ensure that every person has the chance to celebrate with dignity, comfort, and stability, in a home of their own.

On behalf of the Mercy Foundation team, we wish you a Happy Christmas, a relaxing break, and a New Year filled with peace and joy.

With best wishes,
Sue Mowbray



Encouraging Young Social Justice Thinkers

The Mercy Youth Awards encourages secondary school students to explore social justice issues and consider how they can bring about positive change. Students are invited to create an artwork that expresses their personal response to a selected social justice issue.

This year, the theme was peace. Peace in their community, at their school, in their families, in their country or from a global perspective. Nearly 200 young people entered the competition, submitting many outstanding artworks that made judging very difficult.

The winning artworks come from Narrabundah College in ACT and Monte Sant’ Angelo Mercy College in Sydney. We are delighted to showcase the outstanding artworks from our first, second, and third prize winners below:



First prize



Second prize



Third prize

Thanks to our Supporters



You can also donate by phone 02 9911 7390 or online via the secure website www.mercyfoundation.com.au and click the donations tab.

A Ministry of Mercy Partners



at the service of human dignity





Grants to End Homelessness

Homelessness is a traumatic and devastating experience with long-lasting impacts. We applaud our hard-working grant recipients and the positive outcomes they are achieving for marginalised women and children. Below are brief updates on current projects:

The Northern Community Legal Centre Safe Steps to Legal Rights project provided legal support to women experiencing family violence in crisis accommodation. The project significantly exceeded its target, assisting over 180 women with complex legal needs that placed them at great risk of homelessness.

Uniting WA's Together Program supports pregnant women and new mums experiencing homelessness. The project supported 6 mothers and 6 babies, all now living in their own homes.

Habitat for Humanity Empty Spaces to Homes project transforms vacant properties into homes for women and children who are homeless due to family violence. So far, the project has housed nine people, with more families expected to be assisted in the next few months.

Women's Housing Company: Women's Common Ground Sydney Feasibility Study investigated the viability of establishing

a Common Ground in Sydney for women with complex needs who are experiencing homelessness. There is now a project team in place to further the development of this important project.

Prison Network Update: In 2024, the Mercy Foundation funded a pilot program with Prison Network to develop a best-practice model addressing the barriers women face in securing private rental housing after prison. The project provided safe housing and wrap around support to women as they transitioned back into the community.

We congratulate the team at Prison Network, whose successful pilot program has secured government funding for three additional homes, expanding their capacity to support even more women.

Celebrating excellence in social justice

The Cath Leary Social Justice Award recognises individuals or organisations making significant contributions to social justice in Australia.

This year, the Mercy Foundation Board selected Yumi Lee, CEO of Older Women's Network NSW, as the award recipient, in recognition of three decades spent championing women's rights and preventing violence. Today, Yumi focuses on issues impacting older women such as housing insecurity, homelessness, and violence against older women, including aged care. Through her pioneering Employment Pathways program, she's opened doors for women over 50 to reclaim their financial independence and rebuild their lives.

We congratulate Yumi on her outstanding achievements in restoring and protecting women's rights. Yumi is a very worthy recipient of the Cath Leary Social Justice Award.

We congratulate Yumi and Naomi on their awards, both women exemplify the Mercy Foundation's values of courage, compassion and a steadfast commitment to creating a more just and humane world.



Yumi Lee



Naomi Steer AO

The McQuoin Award, named after Ignatius Elizabeth McQuoin, founder of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney, honours exceptional contributions to social justice, to commemorate significant milestones or acknowledge leadership in advancing social justice.

In celebration of the Mercy Foundation's 35th anniversary, the award was presented to **Naomi Steer AO**. As Founding National Director of Australia for UNHCR, Naomi spent over 20 years advocating for refugee rights and protection. Since retiring in 2022, she continues supporting refugees through her work as Chair of the Mama Rosemary Foundation and Director of Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia.

Social Justice Small Grants

The Mercy Foundation is proud to support grassroots change through our **Social Justice Small Grants Program**. This program provides seed funding to community-based not-for-profit organisations working to address structural disadvantage and build a more just, inclusive Australia.

Each year, grants of **\$1,000 to \$10,000** are awarded to small and medium organisations who often have limited access to other funding. These grants help launch innovative, local projects that strengthen communities, support marginalised groups, and challenge the systems that keep people excluded.

The program focuses on initiatives that create real, lasting change, projects that promote inclusion, amplify the voices of people facing disadvantage, or remove barriers to participation. While we fund start-up or capacity-building work, the program doesn't support core organisational costs, fundraising activities, recurrent programs, or projects delivered outside Australia.

Applicants must be not-for-profit organisations based in Australia, with a legal structure or auspice in place, and must hold a safeguarding policy when working with vulnerable people. Successful projects receive funding in two instalments and provide a brief report on outcomes.

In the most recent round, **18 organisations** across Australia received small grants to support First Nations communities, women and children, culturally diverse families, young people, and intergenerational community initiatives.

In our Winter newsletter we advised that grants had been awarded to the following projects: Inclusive and adaptable soccer for all, Aspire EmpowerHER, Wilya Janta Storytelling, Younger and Older making music and memories, Second chance kitchen, Birthing Strong: Coolamon Care for Aboriginal Mums and Bubs, Natures turn around, Volunteer bus driver and Visitor Centre volunteer, Women's skills network, Volunteer Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness training, People of Colour Climate network, Empowering CALD Women and families through health education, Supporting Stateless Children, Women's Online Drug and Alcohol Rehab, Empowering Young Mums, EMBARK Workshop and Webinar Series, Keep the Fire burning.

We are pleased to share that these grants continue to progress well at their midway point, with each project moving toward the intended outcomes. The Mercy Foundation looks forward to providing further updates as the small grants project advances.

Empowering young Mums Pilot Program

With support from the Mercy Foundation's Social Justice Small Grant Program, Bega Women's Resource Centre is running the Young Mums Collective project. The weekly group provides a safe, welcoming space where teen and young mums can connect, build confidence and support each other while caring for their babies. Five young mums now attend regularly, including a 17-year-old mother, with participants from Aboriginal backgrounds and culturally diverse communities.

The program has grown beyond its original plan, after mums shared how important ongoing connection was as their babies developed. Activities have included making baby food, learning about child development, group walks, play-based learning and conversations about relationships, health and safety. Strong partnerships with local services have helped provide transport, food, resources and specialist support.

Early outcomes include increased confidence, stronger peer friendships, improved access to housing and domestic violence support, and timely health referrals for children. Plans are underway to continue the group, introduce swimming lessons, first aid training and baby music workshops in 2026.



Ending and preventing Modern Slavery

This year, the Mercy Foundation engaged Helena Hassani to deliver modern slavery workshops in Melbourne, focused on preventing forced marriage. These sessions helped raise community awareness about forced marriage, informed participants of their rights to freely choose a partner, and provided guidance on how to recognise, prevent, and respond to risks.

Helena will deliver an additional 10 workshops, continuing to educate communities and offer a pathway to safety for young people at risk of early or forced marriage.

