

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

WINTER 2026

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Winter 2026 Edition of the Mercy Foundation Newsletter!

My name is Maeve Brown and I am honoured to join the Mercy Foundation as the new CEO and step into this work at a time of both continuity and renewal. The Foundation has a long legacy grounded in dignity, social justice, and a commitment to ending homelessness and modern slavery, and addressing a range of other critical social justice issues. I look forward to building on the vision of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney with clarity and purpose.

This moment is also one of gratitude. I would like to sincerely thank our former CEO, Sue Mowbray, and former Chairperson, Annabel Senior, for their leadership, care, and dedication to the Foundation's mission. Their stewardship has shaped not only the direction of our work, but the values that underpin it, ensuring our focus remains firmly on those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, and on addressing the complex drivers and impacts of modern slavery. We are deeply grateful for their service and the lasting contribution they have made. We also warmly welcome our new Chair, Kevin Gardner, and Deputy Chair, Jennifer Burn, and look forward to their leadership in this next chapter.

I would also like to thank Leesa Feilen for her service as Projects and Communications Lead, particularly for her dedication to the Mercy Youth Awards and Home in a Box Programs. Leesa's care and commitment have made a lasting contribution to our work, and we wish

her all the very best as she moves on to a new role in education and learning support.

Looking ahead, this next phase is about sharpening our focus on solutions that end homelessness for good, while continuing to strengthen our contribution to ending modern slavery through prevention, awareness, and partnerships. We will continue to prioritise evidence-based approaches, support innovative collaborations, and invest in work that delivers measurable and lasting outcomes.

Just as importantly, we will keep listening and learning from the communities we serve and from the organisations doing vital work across both sectors.

I am excited about what lies ahead, and about the opportunity to work alongside committed partners who share the goal of ending homelessness and modern slavery in Australia. Together, we can ensure that the Mercy Foundation continues to play a meaningful role in driving change and creating pathways to safety and dignity for all.

With gratitude & solidarity,

Maeve Brown



The Mercy Foundation would like to congratulate 2025 Social Justice Small Grant recipient, Aspire Community, for the incredible outcomes achieved by the EmpowerHER program.



School-based trainees, advocates, & mentors -
Sawadu Tabuai and Lisa Fatnowna

In the last year, Aspire worked with 22 First Nations young women in urban and regional Cairns to enhance employability through workshops focused on resume and interview skills, digital literacy, mentoring, developing cultural identity, building self-esteem, leadership skills, and community engagement.

The EmpowerHER program delivered transformational impact, moving participants from disengagement towards confidence, capability, and leadership opportunities. EmpowerHER has also become a foundational program within Aspire's broader model, contributing to the evolution of the Field 2 Future framework, using sport and engagement as pathways to career development.

We are also proud to share that the EmpowerHER program contributed to Aspire being recognised as the winner of the 2026 Queensland Reconciliation State and Community Awards. In addition, one of the program participants was named as a finalist in the 2026 Channel 7 Queensland Young Achiever Awards.

26/27 Grants to End Homelessness

The Mercy Foundation's **2026/27 Grants to End Homelessness Program** supports initiatives, services, advocacy, and research that advance permanent housing, Housing First, and supportive housing solutions. Priority is given to projects addressing women's homelessness and those delivering lasting, evidence-based outcomes, demonstrating measurable impact, and showing how their work contributes to ending chronic homelessness or deepens understanding of pathways into and out of homelessness. This year, we're excited to fund the following 9 projects:

Agape Outreach - Psychological Wellbeing & Resilience Program (NSW) will support women experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the Tweed region through trauma-informed care. It will provide one-on-one counselling, case management, and access to essential services, alongside practical supports, training, and housing pathways to improve wellbeing, build resilience, and enable sustainable exits from homelessness.

Asylum Seekers Centre - Stable Homes, Strong Futures (NSW) is a pilot program supporting women seeking asylum to secure housing through employment. It provides tailored plans for 20 women, including childcare, job readiness training, employer partnerships, and financial assistance for work expenses. Ongoing mentoring and support will help participants gain sustainable employment and reduce the risk of homelessness.

Bridge for Asylum Seekers, Inc - Asylum Seekers Support Program (NSW) will provide financial assistance to people seeking asylum in NSW who lack government support and face barriers to work. Payments cover rent and essential living costs, helping prevent homelessness during lengthy visa decisions.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes - Future-Proofing Women (NSW) is an early-intervention program that will support Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women aged 40–59 in Far West NSW at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence. Through culturally safe case management, housing navigation, financial support and partnerships, it will help secure housing, build independence and prevent homelessness before it occurs.

Central West Women's Health Centre, Inc - Reclaiming Home (NSW) will support women who have left abusive relationships to safely and successfully navigate the property settlement process, reducing their risk of homelessness and long-term poverty. The program provides wraparound legal, financial, counselling, and health support to separated women balancing work, parenting, and recovery from trauma.

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia - Home Away from Home (NSW) will provide short to medium-term accommodation for women on temporary visas experiencing violence who are excluded from housing options. Combining safe housing with dedicated case management, the program will connect women to essential services and advocacy, offering a pathway to safety, stability, and independence for them and their children.

Mary's House - Beyond Refuge (NSW) will support women and children leaving domestic violence refuges to secure safe, sustainable housing. Through targeted brokerage assistance, it covers essential relocation and setup costs, helping families rebuild stability. The program will bridge the gap between crisis accommodation and independence, enabling safer transitions into long-term housing and recovery.

OneBridge - Nambour Health2Housing Project (QLD) is a collaboration between OneBridge and Nambour Community Centre that will provide on-site nurse-led primary healthcare services to individuals experiencing homelessness, particularly vulnerable women, to establish pathways into housing and sustain precarious tenancy.

Southern Highlands Older Women's Network - Homes for Older Women - Southern Highlands (NSW) will support women aged 55+ experiencing homelessness by matching them with affordable, under-utilised local housing. Based on a proven model, it will create permanent housing outcomes, reducing reliance on crisis services while promoting stability, dignity and independence within the community.



26/27 Social Justice Small Grants

The Mercy Foundation **Social Justice Small Grants Program** provides seed funding to help community-based not-for-profit organisations build capacity, address structural disadvantage, and contribute to greater social justice in Australia. It is designed for smaller scale projects and focuses on local initiatives. In 2026, the Social Justice Small Grants program prioritised projects that will create long lasting change to address poverty and disadvantage, with a special focus on women. This year, we will be supporting the following 10 projects:

Boland Parwaz & Some Kind of Squirell Productions - Dil ba Dil (Heart to Heart) is an innovative mobile app/game designed to prevent child and forced marriage in Australia and globally. The app will use interactive storytelling and role play to take users through real-life scenarios, building empathy and motivating behaviour change among potential victims and perpetrators.

Kerang Neighbourhood House - Rural Women Rising: Pathways to Economic Security (VIC) is a 10-week structured capacity-building program designed to address the structural drivers of poverty experienced by disadvantaged women in the Gannawarra region. The program will support women on low-incomes, including carers, single mothers, and women experiencing financial hardship to strengthen financial literacy, digital capabilities, and pathways to employment or further education.

Got Your Back Sista - EmpowerYOU - Healthy Relationships in Teens (NSW) is a newly developed early-intervention youth development and community outreach program for young women aged 13-18 who are at-risk of domestic and family violence. The program will deliver age-appropriate education on healthy relationships, boundaries, consent, human rights, and how to seek help safely.

The Reily Foundation Mums Together: Healing Through Creativity, Connection & Community (SA) is a year-long wellbeing initiative developed to support mums experiencing disenfranchised grief following the long-term placement of their children on 18-year orders. Mums Together will create a safe, welcoming space where participants can gently reconnect with others who understand their experiences, helping to rebuild confidence, emotional strength, and a sense of belonging.

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia - The Refugee Advocacy and Leadership Training Program (NSW) is a six-week initiative building leadership and advocacy skills among refugee leaders through weekly sessions on political systems, organising, and wellbeing. The program will prioritise women's participation, fostering collaboration, and equipping participants to influence decision-makers, mobilise communities, and access paid advocacy pathways through the RLP.

Olivia's Place - The Gathering Place (VIC) is an innovative seed-funded initiative which will establish Gippsland's first dedicated safe-circle workshop series for disadvantaged women and their children. Through trauma-informed sessions, participants build skills, connection, and resilience, with a sustainable peer-led model designed to create lasting support networks and empower women to lead future circles independently.

Prison Fellowship Australia - Extraordinary Lives (NSW) will support children aged 5-16 with an incarcerated parent. The program will engage children through day camps that bring together participants with shared experiences to foster friendship, confidence and connection. The program will provide opportunities for children's carers, who are mostly women, to connect with local services and informal support networks, reducing isolation and strengthening family and community ties.

Refugee Advice and Casework Service - Addressing Barriers to Employment for Refugee Women (NSW) will provide specialised legal assistance to women seeking asylum who are experiencing severe financial hardship due to being denied work rights. The project will work to remove a key structural barrier that traps women in poverty while they await the outcome of their protection claims.

Sharing with Friends - Amplifying the 'Missing Middle' (QLD) will focus on trauma-informed narrative digital storytelling with older women facing housing insecurity. The digital stories will be shared with policy makers, impact investors, and the broader community to advocate for the right to secure housing.

Success Works - Candidate to Volunteer Mentor Program (NSW) will be a structured peer-led initiative designed to empower women with criminal histories as they transition into employment. The project will train women with lived justice-system experience to become volunteer mentors who can support others facing similar challenges.

Proudly supported by:



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North Sydney



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HOME IN A BOX UPDATE

In 2025/26, the Home in a Box program **supported over 100 individuals and families** as they moved from temporary accommodation to a more permanent place to call home. This includes a fresh start for women who left violent relationships, a single mother caring for children with complex health issues, single men needing longterm mental health support, and many individuals recovering from years of unemployment.



The Mercy Foundation would like to sincerely thank our donors and partners for helping to ensure that people can rebuild their lives in safety and with dignity. We would also like to thank our partner organisations and the caseworkers who support people in vulnerable situations to move from crisis to security.

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MERCY YOUTH AWARDS NOW OPEN!

mercy foundation®
**UNITY
THROUGH ART**



This year, we invite secondary school students to use creativity to explore how unity can bring people together to address social justice challenges particularly those effected by homelessness and mental health.

Through their art work, students are encouraged to communicate messages of compassion, inclusion, understanding, and hope, showing how communities can stand together to support those who are often unseen or unheard.

**YOUTH
2026 awards**

Great prizes for you & your school!

Entries Close: 10th August, 2026

To enter & for more information visit:
www.mercyfoundation.com.au

TO MAKE A DONATION & FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your compassion can help break cycles of homelessness and exploitation.

To donate to the work of the Mercy Foundation, please visit our secure website at www.mercyfoundation.com.au or call us on 02 9911 7390.

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