

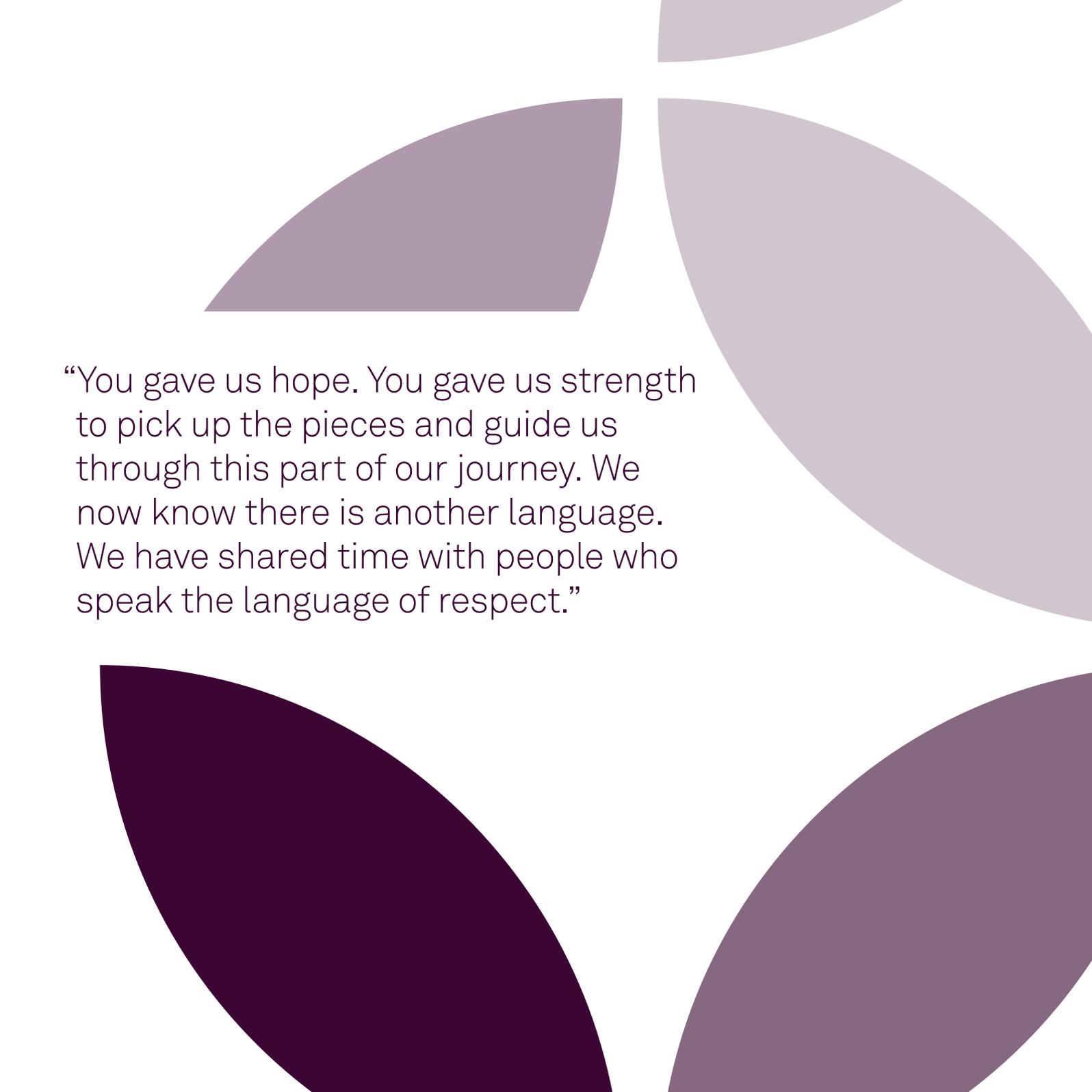
# Picking up the pieces: A refuge from family violence

**McAuley Care** Women's Family Violence Program



McAuley Community  
Services for Women

A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

The background features several large, stylized leaf shapes in various shades of purple, ranging from light lavender to dark plum. These shapes are arranged in a circular pattern, with some overlapping and others partially cut off by the edges of the frame. The text is centered within the white space between these shapes.

“You gave us hope. You gave us strength to pick up the pieces and guide us through this part of our journey. We now know there is another language. We have shared time with people who speak the language of respect.”

# Women's family violence program

## Hope and safety

Women and children who are escaping family violence are at their most vulnerable. They have made a momentous decision to leave daily, even hourly, abuse. They leave often with nothing but the clothes on their back and perhaps a bag.

For many, McAuley Care is the key to a new future, however bumpy the journey may be. We are Victoria's only safe house that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We provide crisis accommodation to women and their children. Our refuge program offers women and their children longer-term safe accommodation.

As part of McAuley Care, we operate a Children's Program, addressing the traumatic effect family violence specifically has on children and the mother-child relationship. We also run Victoria's only Court Play Lady service from Sunshine Magistrates' Court.

McAuley Care was formerly known as *Mercy Care*.

## What McAuley Care offers

Each woman and child who comes to McAuley Care is supported by experienced specialist staff who provide intensive support for women and children throughout their stay. Our crisis and refuge program provides:

- A safe and welcoming women only place where families are provided with meals, clothing and toiletries
- Emotional support as well as practical assistance with legal, medical and financial matters to help women assess their next steps and feel free and safe to make choices
- Facilitated referrals to housing and local community resources
- Access to a unique Children's Program, helping children to process their experiences and express their feelings through art activities, play and conversation
- Contact with a specialist child worker who enables school-aged children continue going to school while staying at our refuges
- Access to McAuley Works, our job ready and vocational training program, that works with women who are employed retain their job.



## Picking up the pieces: How McAuley Care works

All women and their children coming to McAuley Care are welcomed and treated with respect. We recognise that leaving a dangerous situation is a courageous first step towards a safer and brighter future. McAuley Community Services for Women is known for its pioneering work with women and children fleeing violence. McAuley Care runs Victoria's only safe house that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Our safe house**

Our safe house offers secure accommodation designed to help women and children take the time to prepare for a new life. Our specialist workers provide emotional support as well as access to legal, financial and medical advice as well as housing or refuge referrals.

### **Our refuge program**

Our refuges are available for families fleeing violence, who are still at risk and who have no recourse to public funds or alternative housing. We assist families to rebuild relationships that have been damaged by violence. Moving to a refuge can be a difficult transition: our team works to support women and their children throughout their stay.

### **Our children's program**

Our program addresses children's emotional wellbeing in a supervised environment so mothers are free to plan their next steps. The team includes a Refuge Children's Worker, Court Play Lady, a play therapist and volunteers who work in McAuley Care playroom.

Our case worker links families to early intervention services, assists with school enrolments, addresses children's mental health needs and provides parenting support.

Our child-centred play therapy program – where our volunteer therapist help mothers to rebuild their relationship with their children – has been recognised for its ability to help mothers and children form closer relationships. This is vital: one of the direct impacts of violence is a disconnection with the bonding relationship between mother and child.

### **Pioneers in play**

In 2014 McAuley Community Services for Women initiated a program known as the Court Play Lady. Funded through the Barr Family Trust for one year, the Court Play Lady attends Sunshine Magistrates' Court on days when family violence hearings are held. The program aims to reduce the stress and impact of the court process on children and enable mothers to follow through on court matters. She entertains the children while the mothers are discussing sensitive information with the Registrar.



## Who we support

Over 2013 – 2014, McAuley Care supported:



**302**  
women



**27** were **Aboriginal** or  
**Torres Strait Islander** origin



**182** came from  
**other countries**



**168**  
children



**65%** were five  
and under

## The cost

It costs us \$847,000 to run our family violence program.

We receive funding from the Victorian Government towards McAuley Care, and the remainder from community and philanthropic giving.

## You can help us achieve our mission in many ways, such as:

- Hold an event to fundraise to help a woman move from homelessness into her own life. It costs \$1,000 to provide shelter, food and support to each woman
- Donate: Every little counts. \$20 will buy toiletries for a family; \$30 will help a woman with public transport to attend legal matters; and \$4,000 to buy furniture for a new refuge
- Provide movie or restaurant vouchers to women and their children staying in our refuges
- Check out our wish list on [mcauleycsw.org.au](http://mcauleycsw.org.au)
- Consider workplace giving and offer to match your employee's donations
- Ask your employer to purchase our Engage to Change program, where we educate managers and staff about family violence in the workforce.
- Volunteer in our playground.

Start now by ringing us on (03) 9371 6600 to learn more about McAuley Care and how you can become involved.



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A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

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 Twitter: [@mcauleycsw](https://twitter.com/mcauleycsw)

## About McAuley Community Services for Women

McAuley Community Services for Women specifically works with women and their children who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, as a result of family violence or mental illness.

We are a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy and run a holistic program made up of three services:

### **McAuley Care**

Victoria's only round-the clock crisis accommodation and support for women and their children escaping domestic violence, as well as a refuge program.

### **McAuley House**

Provides accommodation and support for women who are homeless, many with poor physical and mental health.

### **McAuley Works**

An intensive employment program that assists women to secure jobs and access training to support themselves financially.

We also run a social enterprise **Engage to Change** that offers training in the workplace for employers on family violence and its impact on business and staff.

All funds raised through **Engage to Change** are reinvested into McAuley Works' program to help women who have experienced family violence and who are either homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to get job ready and find work.