

McAuley Services for women - at the coalface, beside us



Ed Lagdezin

A morning tea hosted by local MP Danny Pearson was held recently. The venue, upstairs at Crown Stables was a happy affair with children running between adults legs. Nice food and a relaxing atmosphere. But the banners and speeches told the story.. "Family Violence" and "It takes a split second to hit a woman and a lifetime to undo the damage". Maybe that headline was a bit simplistic I thought.

To find out more I went down to Mc Auley Community services for women and spoke with Manager Karen Dynon. I thought they would be in macaulay road somewhere. I got that totally wrong.

They are a small "c" Catholic organization. A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy. Catherine Mc Auley it turns out was the founder of the Sisters of Mercy. The organization is next to a park in a semi industrial street in Kensington. There is the smell of lanolin in the air. No sign out the front, just a logo. I guess they don't rely on passing trade. They get referrals. They are generally at the end of "referral pathways".

It is now the one of the few 24/7 family violence service in the state and the only

one that takes boys under/over 14yo. They have refuges, a safe home, and a children's program. They try to cover all areas of family violence with their integrated approach. That also means they want to become more proactive. Working at the top of the cliff as well as the bottom.

To this end they have been developing an employer awareness program called ENGAGE to CHANGE. The idea is to help employers to respond appropriately and to "refer" to the right supports whilst women maintain their employment. (Two out of three women reporting family violence are in the workplace). They try to offer a holistic and proactive program.

Family violence is in the news. Its a big subject and an Australia wide problem. The Mc Auley service though is special to our community. They are at the "coal face", beside us. Sure they get State/Federal funds and philanthropic help, but they also rely on grass roots fund raising like that morning tea at the stables.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger call 000. Safe steps family violence response centre's 24/7 crisis line: 1800 015 188
Mc Auley Community Services for Women.
Tel 03 9372 6600 W. www.mcauleycsw.org.au

The story of Debney

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Eric Keys

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