


# A safe place to call home

**McAuley House** Women's Homelessness Program



McAuley Community  
Services for Women

A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy



“I was abused by my husband for years but stayed with him because of the kids. They have grown up now. I couch surfed when I left him but ran out of places to stay. I came to McAuley House. It is so much more than a bed, and food on the table for me: I was homeless, but I now have friends, and have learned new skills, I feel safe and ready for the future.”

# Women's Homelessness Program

## Safe and ready for the future

Women who are homeless are among the most vulnerable in our society. Women's homelessness often occurs after the person has experienced poverty or trauma, including physical, sexual and emotional abuses, as well as mental illness.

McAuley provides women-only housing and support for women whose lives have been torn apart by family violence or mental illness and who have been left homeless.

McAuley has built a new state-of-the-art building in Footscray that will provide safe and secure medium term housing for women. The facility will also be used as a community hub for women who are homeless.

## What McAuley House offers

Each woman who comes to McAuley House is supported by staff who are experienced and trained in the specific challenges that women face when homeless. Our homelessness program at McAuley House offers:

- Women only space and support including after hours and respite support
- Individual case planning
- The opportunity to take part in social and recreational activities and marking important rituals of life
- Facilitated referrals to housing and local community resources
- Access to programs to build confidence and motivation
- Access to accredited vocational training and involvement in McAuley Works, our job ready program
- Peer and community support.



## How our homelessness program works

Accommodation is offered to women according to need, from full support to more independent living. We recognise that women who come to McAuley House are at different stages of rebuilding their lives and so we provide a safe and welcoming environment to support them during this time.

### **McAuley House: Security, stability and intensive support**

Secure accommodation designed to help women to develop the skills and confidence to move into permanent housing, re-establish social connections, find employment and access training.

### **Recreation program: Building skills for the future**

With an on-site recreation program, McAuley House offers women the opportunity to participate in activities to build self-esteem through conversation, outings and social activities.

### **Living in the community**

Women move into long-term housing with ongoing access to McAuley House's case managers and social, vocational, employment and recreational programs.

## McAuley House review

In 2015/2016, we undertook a major review of McAuley House.

Major findings included:

- Over half of the women stayed at McAuley House for more than a year, providing a level of stability that is known to promote positive and enduring change.
- McAuley House as a women only space, was deemed important to all respondents.
- The majority of women agreed that they felt safe at McAuley House. Support, friendship and companionship were the most valuable aspects of the program for many women.
- Some women were overwhelmed by communal living, and made suggestions for increased one-to-one support.
- Case managers provide both practical and emotional support while helping residents achieve their self-determined goals, and are highly valued.



## Who we support

Over 2015 - 2016, of the 59 women we accommodated and supported:



**29** women were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds



**23** women were aged between 45 - 54 years



**3** women used our respite service on repeat occasions through out the year



**39** women had been diagnosed with a mental illness



**20** women said family violence was the main reason for seeking help



**All** were homeless, or at risk, when they arrived



**30** women in the community used our social and recreation programs

## The cost

It costs us around \$15,000 each year to assist each woman in our homelessness program.

We receive funding from the Victorian Government towards McAuley House, 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 \$15,000 to provide shelter, food and support to each woman
- Donate: \$25 will buy a birthday cake for a woman living in McAuley House
- Provide movie or restaurant vouchers to our recreation and social programs
- Consider workplace giving and offer to match employee's donations
- Volunteer your skills.

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



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# About McAuley Community Services for Women

We specifically work with women and their children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness usually as a result of family violence or mental illness.

A Ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, we 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 family violence, as well as five refuges.

### McAuley House

Provides accommodation and support for women who are homeless as a consequence of family violence or mental illness.

### McAuley Works

An intensive employment program that assists women to secure employment and increases their ability 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.