



Women Matter

News from McAuley Community Services for Women

A message from

CEO Jocelyn Bignold

This year brings a significant milestone for McAuley, with the opening of our first service based outside Melbourne. McAuley House Ballarat will bring our model of integrated support – a proven method of eliminating homelessness for women - into regional Victoria.

The opportunity to do this came about because of our connection to the wider Mercy family. We have now converted a property that had previously been used by the Sisters of Mercy, into medium-term housing and providing support for at least seven women.

The building has been completely refurbished and has many of the trademarks associated with our pioneering services at McAuley House Footscray: individually decorated bedrooms each with an ensuite, vibrant artwork, a sense of tranquillity and space, and views onto a sunlit garden. It also has a communal kitchen and shared dining area.

Importantly, the building is adjacent to a new aged care facility operated by Mercy Health. This development, Mercy Place Ballarat, opened in September last year, and is pioneering

an innovative approach to supporting people as they age, involving 14 small and connected households rather than a large, impersonal and institutional setting.

In fact the Mercy Place aged care model - with its emphasis on relationships, personal choice, and reducing loneliness and isolation - is very much in harmony with our own approach to supporting women who have been homeless. Being neighbours is a natural fit and will lead to some exciting new ways of doing things.

Our employment program, McAuley Works, is a central part of this development and now has a new case manager working from McAuley House Ballarat. We will be assisting women who are experiencing multiple barriers to employment find work. As well as Mercy Place Ballarat, we will be

making connections with local health, housing and legal services. As you can see by the graphic below, women who have been homeless have multiple and complex needs. Having the security of a roof over their head is of course vital, but with that settled, addressing the trauma, mental and physical health issues and financial disadvantage that they have experienced is also essential.

This expansion outside Melbourne is an objective of our strategic plan for the next five years. The establishment of Ballarat is the first step in achieving that vision, and is of course new territory for us. We know we can't just transport the McAuley House model, lock stock and barrel, and make it work. There is a lot to learn, but it is also very exciting, and we will be able to use that knowledge to fine-tune how we roll this out further.



Jocelyn Bignold
Chief Executive Officer

AS OF JANUARY 2019



Images of McAuley House Ballarat



Image: Some of the laptops donated.

Keeping up with school

St Joseph's Primary School Northcote made a wonderful donation at the end of the school year of some pre-loved laptops. The school was upgrading their stock of laptops and decided to give the 'old' ones to McAuley to use in our family violence programs.

Children arriving at our safe house have frequently left home with no possessions. They have been abruptly uprooted from home, school and friends, may have missed a month or more of schooling while living in motel rooms, and their education is likely to suffer simply because they need to be kept safe from violence. These computers will be invaluable in helping us keeping them engaged with their education and learning whilst at McAuley.

Harold ‘the legend’ brings joy



Image: Sylvia and Harold.

“...the joy that he gives to others has me leaving each visit absolutely grinning.”

Lort Smith’s pet therapy team Sylvia and Harold were spoilt with Christmas goodies when they arrived at McAuley House for their most recent visit.

Sylvia and Harold - a Maltese cross who is a former rescue dog - have been visiting us since July, and they always receive a rockstar welcome.

‘Harold is like a celebrity when he arrives, and to share the joy that he gives to others has me leaving each visit absolutely grinning,’ says Sylvia.

It is so beautiful how Harold knows his role and adores the attention, and brings out the fake leg injury and all to maximise cuddles. He is so at home there.’

‘We were startled to hear that Harold’s leg injury is fake!! But the pair are part of the McAuley family and a real asset to our Skills for Life program,’ says our Social Inclusion Worker Shivani.

‘Thanks again for all the wonderful work Lort Smith does. Most importantly, heartfelt thanks to Harold and Sylvia for being legends.’

Sylvia and Harold are just one of the 95 incredible Pet Therapy teams who volunteer their time to visit around 60 facilities across Melbourne and surrounds, sharing the love only a furry friend can. You can read more about their work at www.lortsmith.com/volunteer/pettherapy

Man With A Van really deliver for women in need

Moving house because you’re escaping family violence is a deeply emotional and upsetting experience. Our ongoing partnership with removalists Man With A Van has been vital in alleviating some of that stress.

For several years they have provided regular pro bono support in helping women and their children into their new homes.

The financial cost of moving would otherwise be an insurmountable burden at a time when resources are already really stretched; in 2017/2018, for example, 23 per cent of women coming to our safe house had no income. Having to come up with the funds to leave behind a violent relationship would make it virtually

impossible for some women to leave, so the support of Man With A Van is playing a crucial role in keeping women safe.

Not only that, but the responsiveness of Man With A Van and their ability to organise moves at short notice has sometimes been vital in ensuring that a property, available within a limited timeframe, can be secured.

Our staff and women have found the moving teams sensitive and respectful of the women’s needs at this stressful time, including being supportive of women with physical disabilities.

Explaining why Man With A Van has offered this support, their director Tim Bishop said: ‘Domestic violence is all too common in our communities. In our line of work we often see the incredible difficulty women face in leaving an abusive partner.



Image: Man With A Van team members.

‘Through our partnership with McAuley we hope we’re assisting in a small way to make the moving process easier for women in need.’

McAuley thanks and acknowledges the difference Man With A Van is making to the lives of women and children at a time when they are vulnerable.

Thanks to the community for generosity

Each year throughout December in the lead up to Christmas, the community continues to amaze us with their amazing generosity. School students, community groups, workplaces, groups of friends, families and residents at apartment blocks collect gifts and vouchers for the women and children who will be with McAuley over the Christmas period.

St Brigid's Parish covering Gisborne, Macedon and Riddell collected over \$5,000 in gift vouchers through giving trees. The vouchers were for food, clothes, movies, activities and so much more. We are able to use these not only for Christmas but also throughout the year. Three apartment complexes once again showed their incredible generosity with residents leaving gifts under the tree in the respective lobbies. A big thank you to Clarendon 150, Yve Apartments and Balencea residents. A bit thank you to the staff at UHG (United Health Group) for the incredible collection of presents they donate.

One more shout out to the Footscray community. The library once again collected items for McAuley with members of the community dropping off items in the two weeks leading up to Christmas.



Image: Some of the wonderful Christmas gifts donated.

✂ Cut here

Yes, homelessness shouldn't be the safest option

My details

Title: _____ First name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

I would like to donate (All donations over \$2 are tax deductible) Monthly gift

\$25 \$65 \$150 I would like to donate \$ _____ each month (min \$15)

\$550 My choice \$ _____ (Charged to credit card on 1st day of each month)

Cheque (Made out to McAuley Community Services for Women) Visa MasterCard

Card number: _____

Expiry date: _____ / _____

Name on card: _____ Signature: _____

Please send me information on:

Workplace Giving Remembering McAuley in my Will Becoming a volunteer Catherine Circle

Please send to:

McAuley Community Services for Women
 Reply Paid 91406, Footscray, Vic 3011
 T: 03 9362 8900 E: fundraising@mcauleycsw.org.au

I do not wish to receive information from McAuley Community Services for Women

Thank you for your generosity

Our community Christmas a hit



Images (Top): Helpers in the kitchen. (Bottom) Amy, Food for Life coordinator and Pete from Black Forest Meats, Woodend.

Our 2018 Christmas community lunch at McAuley House was a big hit, with around 50 women, volunteers, and staff getting together to celebrate another year.

In keeping with the many nationalities of women supported through our services, and our location in the heart of multicultural Footscray, the menu wasn't about ham and turkey; instead, tandoori chicken, beautifully scented middle Eastern lamb dishes, dahl and vegan cookies were features. Many local cafes and restaurants generously supported the event with their donations...but it still took an army of willing helpers to bring the event together.

Throughout the year, weekly community lunches have been a vibrant celebration of friendship and all women who have used our services are always welcome to attend. Several women who lived at the 'old' McAuley House in North Melbourne — but have remained connected to us even many years later — enjoy coming along to our Christmas celebration.

A popular innovation this year was the introduction of karaoke, and after a tentative start soon there was no stopping some spirited renditions of 'Mustang Sally', 'Tiny dancer', 'True colours' ... and most appropriately of all: 'I am woman.'

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Many Ways to Give

We love hearing about all the creative ways that organisations and individuals support McAuley's work.

From themed fundraisers as varied as self-defence classes and photography auctions, possibilities to give are truly endless! Giving also offers opportunities for people to engage with critical issues and have fun at the same time! But you don't need to spend lots of time and effort organising events to make a difference. There are simpler ways to give.

Here are some ideas:

- Donation boxes: set up McAuley's donation boxes anywhere you'd like - your workplace, community group. Request for a donation box to be sent to you.
- Workplace giving: every pay day, you can change lives. Speak to your HR or payroll team about nominating McAuley.
- Fundraising Page: Set up an online page for donations in lieu of gifts or doing a run/walk. You can do this through Everyday Hero or Go Fundraise

It's that easy! And remember - all donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Contact us and let us know your fundraising activity or to request a donation box – fundraising@mcauleycsw.org.au or call 9362 8900.



Images: Sample of the collection tins available.

Your gifts are changing the lives of women and children who rely on McAuley.

All home safely: how do we make it a reality?

In the lead-up to Christmas 2018, we noticed that the Victorian government had issued a bleak warning: the peak period of family violence would soon be underway.

Based on previous years, authorities predicted that over the holiday period an additional 44 cases of family violence would be reported to Victoria Police every day. Boxing Day is usually the worst day of the year for family violence, closely followed by New Year's Day. These are Christmas traditions we can definitely do without.

So instead of unwrapping presents and playing with new toys, some children would have been leaving home, sometimes in the dead of the night, with just the clothes on their backs.

There were 23,595 family violence incidents where children were present in 2017/18. That is a lot of children witnessing or experiencing trauma, in the place that should be a haven.

The impact on them is profound and long-lasting. We recently worked with a child who asked us whether he would 'turn out to be bad' like his father. Another young child confided that they wanted to kill them self.

This is something that as a community we should not accept as an inevitable fact of life. Perhaps we need to start with community conversations. Instead of talking about women 'escaping' and 'fleeing' violence, we should be focusing on a woman's right to stay safely in her own home.

Instead of: 'But why doesn't she just leave?' we should be asking: 'why doesn't he stop?'

We don't, after all, expect victims of home invasions and robberies to leave home; we focus on holding to account those who commit these reprehensible acts.

Yet family violence typically involves women and children leaving the family home, while the perpetrator stays. Courts have the power to ban the perpetrator; this, in our experience, is not frequently exercised. Yet when women are the ones who leave, a disastrous cycle of housing instability, poverty, disruptions to jobs, friendships, schooling and family connections begins.

If they could remain at home - safely - these damaging consequences would be avoided. The key word, of course, is "safely"; a Melbourne University study showed that of 22 women who attempted to stay home, all but one

reported that their former partner had breached an intervention order.

Alarming, there were 41,085 breaches of intervention orders last year — almost double the number from five years ago. While some of this rise is explained by new policing practice and legal reforms, still each one represents unwillingness by a perpetrator to abide by a court-mandated order.

It is hardly surprising, then, that last year only four per cent of the women we support were able to return to their own homes.

Last year, there was also a 14 per cent rise in phone calls last year to Victorian emergency family violence services, and 69 women were killed across Australia, many at the hands of violent partners. We need to address this appalling toll as a matter of urgency, and as a community, set targets so that, in Christmas 2019 we will not, again, hear the same gloomy warnings about an imminent spike in family violence.

“There were 23,595 family violence incidents where children were present in 2017/18. That is a lot of children witnessing or experiencing trauma...”



McAuley Community Services for Women
A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

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