



Women Matter

News from McAuley Community Services for Women

A message from

CEO Jocelyn Bignold

Our annual report for 2017/2018 shows that we supported 1375 women and children. But behind these statistics the report (now available on our website) also brings to life their voices and their lived experience.

We hear from Diana, who says that even two years after leaving a violent relationship, she and her family felt like they were 'in quicksand': McAuley's integrated approach meant that, finally, 'all the jigsaw pieces came together.'

We hear from the women who leave messages in the guest book in our safe house, encouraging others, saying that they 'are never as alone as they feel' in those first days after leaving a violent relationship. We also hear children's voices; in one of the saddest comments, one expressed the fear that he 'will turn out to be bad' like his father.

The annual report also introduces our strategic plan setting out a new vision, goals and objective for the next five years. The plan is on our website.

In Children's Week we launched an evaluation of our Court Support 4 Kids program. This provides a children's worker to play with and distract children, while their mothers organise legal protection to be safe from family violence.

This creative and innovative program responded to a need that we identified, when our staff noticed that women frequently had no alternative but to bring their children along to court – a place not just unsuitable but potentially traumatic.

We were honoured to have Felicity Broughton, Deputy Chief Magistrate, and Liana Buchanan, Commissioner for Children and Young People, speak at the launch. (See the full story on page 2).

RMIT's evaluation confirms the value of the service, finding it was

accessible and responsive to the needs of women and children.

Our plans for developing new accommodation and support services in Ballarat are now well underway. In partnership with the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea and Mercy Health, the new services will be open in early 2019.

Meanwhile, as we continue our work supporting women and children leaving abusive relationships, the overall picture of where we are at as a community in dealing with family violence remains bleak. Nine women were killed in October alone; this year, at the start of November, 59 women had been murdered, already surpassing the number for the full 12 months of 2017. It is a terrible reminder, if any were needed, that efforts to eradicate family violence still have a huge way to go.



Jocelyn Bignold
Chief Executive Officer

IN 2017/18



1375
women and children helped



72%
of children supported are under 10



23%
of women coming to our safe house have no income



64%
of women coming to our safe house had experienced homelessness in previous month



ONLY 4%
of women who came to our safe house or refuges ended up 'safe at home'

‘No place for kids’: support in court a vital piece of the family violence puzzle

In Children’s Week we launched an evaluation by RMIT’s Centre for Innovative Justice of our innovative Court Support 4 Kids program. This program provides support, play and distraction for children, while their mothers focus on getting legal protections in place.

‘Courts are completely unsuitable environments for children,’ says Jocelyn Bignold, McAuley’s Chief Executive Officer. ‘They are crowded, tense, noisy and intimidating places, yet women often have little alternative but to bring their children with them.

‘There are police with their weapons, security checks, lawyers rushing around, people who can be upset and aggressive: sometimes these lead children to think that they’ve done something wrong.

‘As well, mothers who have to bring their children along face long and boring waits. There are no playrooms or child-friendly places, or if there are, they are away from where parents need to be.

‘And when a hearing does get underway, often many hours after the mother and children first arrive, it is far from ideal if mothers, lawyers and magistrates are all distracted by crying infants, irritable toddlers, and bored and restless older children.’

Last year, 524 children were supported at Sunshine Magistrates’ Court. Our partners Bethany Community Support and Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS) supported a further 311 children at the Geelong and Ringwood courts.

At the launch of the report, Deputy Chief Magistrate Felicity Broughton said that for children, courts can ‘be confronting, distressing, confusing or just uninteresting’ and praised Court Support 4 Kids as ‘life-changing for many in our community’.

Commissioner for Children and Young People Liana Buchanan said: ‘The potential for children to be further impacted and further traumatised through attendance at court proceedings is clear, as is the prospect that their mothers will be unable to focus on what is for them also, often, a difficult, distressing and downright terrifying experience.

‘The Court Support 4 Kids program recognised and responded to this reality. I look forward to seeing it continue and indeed to grow so it can help all of the victims of family violence – those who are adult and those who are children – who need it.’

Court Support 4 Kids is reliant on philanthropic and community support to run as we receive no government funding for it.



Image: CEO Jocelyn Bignold with Liana Buchanan and Felicity Broughton.

WEstjustice

The report *Restoring financial safety* was officially launched by Victoria’s Special Minister of State, the Hon Gavin Jennings MLC. The report is an account of the work of WEstjustice, a community legal centre which partnered with us to deliver legal help to women who have experienced family violence. Their work has meant that over \$100,000 of debt was waived for 24 women supported by McAuley.

The report is available on our website and was also covered in the ABC Radio National program The Law Report. Visit this site to download the program.



Image: Stephanie Tonkin, Principal Lawyer, WEstjustice.

Bunnings

The fantastic team at Bunnings Maribyrnong recently dropped by. They set up a new play area as well as some outdoor furniture, vegetables, herbs and an orange and lemon tree. These are for our expanding family violence crisis service. A big thank you to Bunnings and in particular the team at the Maribyrnong store.



10th anniversary celebrates the past and looks to the future

We held two events in August to celebrate the milestone of 10 years since our organisation was formed, with the merging of Mercy Care and Regina Coeli.

We held a morning tea at McAuley House, and it was a privilege to host many Sisters of Mercy, who had taken a gamble on the decision to merge the two organisations; many of them had never seen the beautiful new facility and were delighted to see the progress that has been made.

Our anniversary cake was cut by two of the original Board members who oversaw the establishment of McAuley, Sr Anne Ryan and Sr Nicole Rotaru.

The same day we held an event to celebrate the contribution of our partners, donors and supporters. We heard from Sr Eileen Ann Daffy about how Mercy Care – Victoria’s first safe house providing round-the-clock support for women and children who were escaping family violence - was established through the vision, inspiration and sheer doggedness of Sr Sheila Heywood.

After overcoming obstacle after obstacle, Sr Sheila and her colleague Sr Wilma opened a safe house, available at all hours. ‘Many a time they were roused in the middle of the

night by police knocking on their door to ask them to look after a mother and her children who had nowhere to go,’ Sr Eileen Ann recalled. ‘There always seemed to be another small space on the floor for a mattress.’

Sr Sheila’s passion had another ripple effect which she undoubtedly would have revelled in. When the Minister for Housing and Mental Health Martin Foley spoke at our event, he acknowledged that the teachings of the Mercy Sisters had a profound effect over his own early development of a ‘moral compass’ – and he fondly remembered the influence of none other than our own Sr Sheila, who was principal at his primary school St Macartan’s Parish Primary School, at the time.

Mr Foley also announced at our celebration the very welcome news that we now have security of funding for our 24/7 service for the next four years. For the past ten years, we have had to devote time to raise this money through cocktail parties and other events. While that support has

been phenomenal, we can now move into the future knowing that the basic core of our family violence work – providing a haven for women and children whenever it is needed – is secure.

‘As we celebrate tonight, let us never be silent in our advocacy for those who have no voice whilst striving to empower those persons to have their own voice.’

- Sr Eileen Ann Daffy

Images: (Bottom left) L to R: Sonja Hood, Chair of the McAuley Board; Martin Foley, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing; Jocelyn Bignold, McAuley CEO. (Bottom right) L to R: Sr Nicole Rotaru and Sr Anne Ryan.



Spring fling

The women living at McAuley House recently welcomed the start of spring with a delightful afternoon tea. While Melbourne’s weather can be a tad unpredictable, it was all sunshine in the communal dining room as women, staff and volunteers prepared a feast to mark the end of winter.

Weekly Wednesday lunches at McAuley House, which supports women who have experienced homelessness, are a popular event. They are open to all women who have been supported by our services, and

many return to catch up with friends after they have moved onto new accommodation.

Children are also being welcomed into the house more and more. On this occasion they took part in school holiday activities, painting their own pots and planting seedlings. They also made Hairy Harry plants that sprout grass for hair.

The event was supported by local businesses. We are appreciative of the donations from Baker’s Delight, Footscray; Mister Nice Guys Bakery, Ascot Vale; Common Galaxia Café, Seddon, and Clover Florist Seddon for making the afternoon a special celebration.



Image: The seedlings planted by children at our ‘Spring Fling’ event.

✂ 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)

\$25 \$65 \$150

\$550 My choice \$ _____

Monthly gift

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

(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

HumanUp. Tap & Give

We're excited to announce we have partnered with ImpactPay to bring our valued supporters a first-of-its-kind debit card that lets you Tap & Give to the causes you're passionate about.



With ImpactPay, forget being hassled in the street or interrupted during meal times. Giving is in your control and on your smartphone.

Getting onboard couldn't be easier - ImpactPay issues a Mastercard® prepaid debit card that links to any existing bank account.

Select our cause via the app, set the amount you want to give per tap, load your card with your everyday spending money and away you go. You're ready to make an impact with every transaction.

The app features a digital wallet that lets you track your donations toward our project in real-time. It's transparency to the max!

Our first project on the ImpactPay platform is to raise \$2000 for our Kids to be Kids program. As a launch promotion, ImpactPay is gifting new members a \$5 donation toward our project once their ImpactPay card is activated.

ImpactPay is live on Google Play so Android users jump onboard now! Apple is not far away. More information in the donate tab on our website.

Cut here ✂

Homelessness should never be the safer option.



Donate today to help women and children have a safer option.

Annual high tea delivers fun...and funds!

Our Lady of Mercy College in Heidelberg holds an annual event in support of our services. This year's elegant high tea was again a resounding success, raising \$6000 for our services.



Image: One of the beautifully decorated tables at the high tea.

More than 160 guests enjoyed a beautiful afternoon with high quality food and great company. Staff, parents and students had spent many weeks lovingly preparing and organising food, drinks, table settings and decorations for the occasion.

Carol Vale, our Head of Community Services, was a speaker at the event, providing an overview of the issues we face and the experiences of the women and children we support.

Lucy Bandiera and Clare Manthos, 2017 College Captains, also shared with guests some perspectives of the

societal challenges which contribute to the development of some of the attitudes and behaviours that are linked to family violence.

While all of these women offered guests some challenging insights and messages, there was also a sense of accomplishment that was shared by guests, knowing they were there and supporting some much needed and important outreach work.

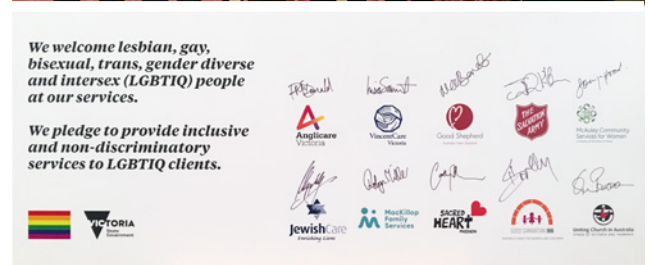
Some of the \$6000 raised came from raffle items donated by the Parents' Association and generous sponsors - a testament to the strong relationships the College enjoys with the wider community. We appreciate this support and congratulate the College on all their efforts.

Pledging inclusive services

Under current legislation, faith-based organisations are exempt from provisions preventing discrimination against people on the basis of their sexuality. McAuley has rejected the idea of utilising such provisions, and over the past 12 months, we have taken proactive steps to ensure our services are welcoming and inclusive to all people who need our support.

We recently joined with other faith-based organisations Anglicare Victoria, Sacred Heart Mission, Good Samaritans, Uniting Church of Australia, the Salvation Army, VincentCare, McKillop Family Services, Jewish Care and Good Shepherd to make the following pledge:


'We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse and intersex people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services to LGBTIQ clients.'




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

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