



Women Matter

News from McAuley Community Services for Women

A message from CEO Jocelyn Bignold

In the lead up to the Federal election there was a welcome focus on addressing the issue of family violence. Both major parties made commitments to a range of measures — preventative and early intervention strategies to tackle underlying causes, and frontline emergency responses to keep women and children safe.

Whilst increased resources will help address the huge impact of family violence on our community, there is one significant aspect of our response to family violence that involves more than just dollars, and where it is proving difficult to make genuine progress.

This is about the rights of people who are victims of family violence to remain safely in their own homes. Achieving positive change in the numbers who can do so has proven to be frustrating slow, because it involves quite significant shifts in attitudes and thinking. Conventional wisdom has been that women and children are the ones who must 'escape' violence. Our system is geared around places of 'refuge' and 'safety' and encouraging women to leave homes that have become unsafe. While immediate crisis responses will always be necessary, the question of what happens next — because they are effectively homeless — remains problematic.

In 2017/2018, for example, we at McAuley recorded that only four percent of women who came to our 24/7 safe house were able to go home safely. So far this year our figures demonstrate a similar pattern, meaning that the vast majority go on to further unstable options — transitional housing, staying with families and friends, couch surfing and homelessness.

Women are largely unable to return home safely because the legal powers available to remove the perpetrators from the family home are not regularly used by the courts, and, typically, perpetrators remain in the family home. Even if this is not the case, his knowledge of her whereabouts, and the still too common situation that he refuses to abide by intervention orders, can still make it too dangerous for her to return home.



The right of a woman and her child to stay home is also about justice. We don't expect victims of other criminal acts to upend their lives, yet women and children pay this additional price for the violence they have endured, because their home, which should be a haven, is now unsafe.

Our responses would be quite different if as a community we regarded a woman's right to return home as the first, fairest and best option rather than a comparatively rare event. We need to see it as normal, a community responsibility, to make that home safe, with the perpetrator excluded by whatever legal, security and policing protections are necessary. Security cameras, locks and technological solutions are important but it is this change in the community mindset that is most likely to bring about better outcomes so that the decision to leave a violent relationship doesn't lead to a cycle of poverty and disruption that will have far-reaching consequences.



Jocelyn Bignold
Chief Executive Officer

Lights, cameras, action!

Recently McAuley House Footscray welcomed the Gardening Australia team to help us overhaul our rooftop garden.

Over three days, the team from the ever-popular ABC gardening show shared their energy, creativity and expertise with us as they helped revamp the space, which enjoys breathtaking views of the city - but with its sunny, exposed position, can also present gardening challenges.

The House soon became a hive of activity as new planter boxes and watering systems were installed, and the space was transformed into a place that is not only beautiful but sustainable.

The rooftop garden is adjacent to McAuley House's kitchen and dining room. The kitchen is the heart of the building - a place for community celebrations, and a hub for people to gather and share a meal together.

For women who have experienced homelessness, as most living at the house have, it may have been many years since they enjoyed the simple pleasure of preparing a meal.

While the garden enjoys breathtaking views to the city, and herbs and small plants had previously been planted there, recently our Skills For Life program has been working with women living at the house to come up with ideas on how the space could be better used and more productive. Being able to see a crop flourish and pick plants straight from the garden into the salad bowl or evening's dinner were all high up on the list of what the women hoped the garden would provide. After ideas for design were developed, the Gardening Australia team gave practical advice

To see the transformation watch **Gardening Australia** on the ABC on Friday 28 June.



on the materials, tools and plants needed for the transformation. In preparation, women and children got busy painting large pots in vibrant colours.

After months of planning, the Gardening Australia team arrived and set to work. It was definitely all hands on deck as their team worked alongside women, staff and volunteers, shovelling soil and compost, while presenters Jane Edmanson OAM and Millie Ross (with her popular sidekick Squid the dog!) were generous in sharing their knowledge and tips. The filming process itself was fascinating to observe, with a drone being employed to give a birds-eye view of both the 'before' and 'after.'

We can't reveal the full extent of the transformation, but here's a tantalising peek at some of the work in action. The segment will go to air on Friday 28 June.



Images: (Top) Amy, McAuley's Food for Life coordinator with Gardening Australia's Jane Edmanson OAM. (Bottom) Jane Edmanson OAM and Gardening Australia's film crew.

Tina's off to the World Cup!

A few years ago Tina was living at McAuley House in North Melbourne, the forerunner to our present-day McAuley House in Footscray.

'I was crying and feeling unwell,' she recalls. 'I was very depressed and unmotivated.'

Encouraged by another resident, her close friend Suzy, she made a life-changing decision to go along to Street Soccer, an initiative of The Big Issue.

She had low expectations about whether this could really help, but thought she 'might as well have a go. It was a way to meet people, get outside, and do something physical.'

Tina hadn't played soccer before, apart from occasionally kicking the ball around at a park when her three sons were young.

'I didn't really know the rules or even how to kick the ball well, but gradually I got better and learnt new skills,' she says. 'I got fitter and I made new friends.'

'When you're playing, you forget things. It's social, and it's fun, and something I look forward to each week.'

Her soccer friendships and support network were crucial when Tina was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. She kept up her connections even when she was undergoing treatment and too unwell to play. Keen to have her back in the team, as soon as Tina went into remission, her coach rang Tina's doctor to confirm that she was 'in the clear' and ready to take the field again.

Recently Tina headed to Canberra to take part in the annual round robin tournament against a team of Parliamentarians. She noticed the standard really went up a notch, but she must have adapted well as in only five minutes on the pitch, she scored a goal - and some high-fives from her team-mates and opponents.

After the tournament, the national team to represent Australia in the Homeless World Cup was announced. Tina was thrilled to hear that she had made the team. The World Cup will be held in Wales in July this year, and hundreds of other soccer players around the world will converge on Cardiff for the week-long tournament, the 17th that has been held so far.

'I couldn't believe I was chosen. It's so exciting, and I'm looking forward to

meeting new people', says Tina. 'Soccer has really changed my life. If I hadn't given it a go, maybe I would still have been depressed.'

Tina has lived in community housing for the past five years, and her life, she says, is good. She remains strongly connected to our McAuley community and comes to our weekly lunch celebrations, and we will all be cheering for her and the Australian team when July comes around.



Image: (Top) Tina receiving her Australian team shirt from the Hon Senator Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Sport at the time of presentation. (Bottom) Tina in action.

**"Soccer has really changed my life.
If I hadn't given it a go, maybe I
would still have been depressed."**

From little things big things grow

Last year, radio personality and McAuley Board member Matt Tilley came up with a simple but brilliant idea - people voting in the Victorian election were asked to drop into a bucket a dollar coin donation to support homelessness services.

McAuley was one of the seven organisations to benefit from this charity, Aussie Dollar Drop, and we know it will make a huge difference.

The money raised by Aussie Dollar Drop for homelessness services has been matched by the Victorian Government. McAuley received an amazing \$48,142.85!

On behalf of the women that will benefit from this donation, we thank the community who donated on election day, the amazing crew of volunteers who collected the donations and Matt for his incredible work to get this up and off the ground in a short time.



Image: Matt Tilley and Jocelyn Bignold at the cheque presentation.

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

McAuley’s first tutoring session

Many children who accompany their mothers to our safe houses and refuges because of family violence have missed weeks of schooling. As well as the turmoil of abruptly leaving home, school and friends they have missed crucial educational milestones.

To make sure their schooling doesn’t suffer just because they need to be kept safe from family violence, we have piloted the McAuley Education program. Tuesday May 7 was a landmark day as the first family to be involved – three primary-school age children and their mum – arrived to meet their tutors.

For months we have been setting up the McAuley refuges with furniture, computers and internet access, developing resources that will meet the particular needs of the children

and young people at McAuley, as well as carefully selecting and training a group of volunteer tutors to work with children in our safe house and refuges.

This particular afternoon saw an excited family of three primary-school age children and their mum arrive to meet their tutors.

We settled in to the first routine of introducing ourselves and stating how we were feeling and why. This was something learnt at the Berry Street Educational Model training, a trauma-informed model regarded as best practice in the sector.

The boys worked with their tutor on a Literacy Activity involving writing information about themselves and illustrating it. They also read an old favourite Dr Seuss book that had lots of rhyming words and a fun story. The older sibling spent time with her tutor investigating a great online Literacy Program “Sunshine Online” which will

target each student’s reading needs and can be accessed at their refuge. The tutor also discussed the upcoming NAPLAN testing and they both worked on a sample reading test, focusing on what was being asked in each question. Finally, the Home Reading book provided by the school was read to the tutor who signed the child’s Reading Diary and provided some great feedback for the child’s teacher.

The session ended up with the three children joining together and sharing what they had learned with each other. A great learning session was enjoyed by everyone. Their mum also enjoyed the session and learnt different strategies to use with her children at home.

We’re all now very excited about our future times together!

This program was only possible due to the generous support of The CARL Foundation.

A Good Lunch...doing good things

This will be a fantastic opportunity to network, chat, enjoy good food, great company and know that you’re doing something good at the same time. Proceeds from the lunch will go towards McAuley’s work with women experiencing homelessness.

The fabulous Van Badham will be MC. Van is a Melbourne-based theatre-maker, journalist, critic, academic, activist, novelist and occasional broadcaster. She is currently employed as a weekly political columnist and culture critic for The Guardian Australia, while as a theatre-maker she’s had more than 100 international productions of her work.

Joining us as special guest is the wonderful and talented Matt Tilley, host of the NOVA 100 morning show. Matt is one of the most successful radio announcers of the past two decades. He is no stranger to Melburnians having spent over 20 years in breakfast radio on Fox FM including 14 years at number one. For six years the radio announcer and comedian was co-host of Tracy & Matt in the Morning before joining Jo Stanley on The Matt and Jo Show for 10 years. Matt is also a member of McAuley’s Board.

Tickets are just \$140 each, or gather a group of nine friends or colleagues and book a table of 10 for just \$1,400! There will be a glass of bubbles on arrival and then a fabulous two course meal. To book go to mcauleycsw.org.au/a-good-lunch or call 03 9362 8900 during business hours.

It’s being held at ZINC in Federation Square so it’s easy to get to. Arrive at 12 pm for a 12.30 pm start. The event will finish around 2.30 pm.

Over the past five years, the number of women experiencing homelessness in Victoria has increased by 8.3%. That is 10,432 women in Victoria on any given night that do not have safe and secure accommodation. Women over 55 are the fast growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness. (ABS Census 2016).

Attend ‘A Good Lunch...doing good things’ and you can help make a difference in a woman’s life!



Join us for ‘A Good Lunch...doing good things’

Thursday 29 August

ZINC, Federation Square, Melbourne

mcauleycsw.org.au/a-good-lunch

‘A force for good’: real connections through our UHG partnership

Our partnership with Unified Health Group (UHG) is reaping great rewards for the women and children we support – and they tell us they’re enjoying the connection as much as we are.

They’ve been energetic and hands-on supporters, whether it’s putting together Christmas or Easter egg hampers for children, running a cake bake sale, or donating some of their onsite coffee cart proceeds to us.

They have also literally got their hands dirty by blitzing our rooftop garden in readiness for a visit from the ABC’s Gardening Australia program.

And they have been willing and eager to assist us in ways that are even more innovative and far-reaching. UHG, a company which provides digital solutions for healthcare providers, is now providing two four-week placements for women involved in our McAuley Works program.

McAuley Works supports women who have faced challenges such as family violence, mental health issues and homelessness to find employment. These women have often had a very disrupted work history and have lost skills, and confidence, through their life experiences. While McAuley Works gives them intensive support to become job-ready, the hardest step is often that first one of getting an employer to give them a chance.

The four-week placements at UHG will be invaluable in acquiring skills, confidence and ‘just getting used to the world of work again,’ says UHG’s People and Culture Manager Monique Rajch.

‘The women involved will be paired with a buddy to help them learn their roles – as well as other important things like where to get a good coffee! We know that people just need that first chance, and who knows... it may lead to other opportunities.’

UHG is a certified BCorp company – meaning it has committed itself to be a business which is a ‘force for good in the world’. McAuley is fortunate to be one of four not-for-profit organisations that UHG has chosen to support, after popular vote by its employees.

Monique says they were very keen that their involvement with us is more than token and not just fundraising. ‘We want it to be meaningful, make a real difference, and to grow over time. We’re in it for the long haul.’

‘In our organisation, volunteering is part of worklife. The employees who came to the garden blitz were nominated for this as a reward for doing well in their jobs.’

‘Being involved with McAuley has also had a ripple effect, making us more aware of family violence in general but to also recognise that it may be an issue for our employees, and to think about how we respond.’

‘This partnership is giving us a whole new perspective. We are really keen for the connection to keep growing, and to continue exploring ways we can help.’

“We know that people just need that first chance, and who knows... it may lead to other opportunities.”






Images: (L to R) UHG team helping blitz the roof top garden; the Easter egg hampers; Clare Baldwin, McAuley’s Corporate Engagement Manager with the UHG team who made up the hampers.



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

McAuley Community Services for Women
Level 1, 81-83 Paisley Street, Footscray, VIC 3011
T 03 9362 8900
E mcsww@mcauleycsw.org.au
W www.mcauleycsw.org.au
ABN 85696671223

You can like and follow us

 Facebook: [mcauleycsw](https://www.facebook.com/mcauleycsw)
 Twitter: [@mcauleycsw](https://twitter.com/mcauleycsw)
 Instagram: [@mcauleycsw](https://www.instagram.com/mcauleycsw)