



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

2018/19
ANNUAL REPORT



OUR VISION: **ALL HOME SAFELY**

At McAuley Community Services for Women, women and children are safe, supported and empowered to achieve their highest potential: All Home Safely.

OUR VALUES

Community

Women and children coming to McAuley feel that they belong and have the confidence to join other communities.

Hospitality

Everyone is met at McAuley as an equal and made to feel at home when they are there.

Compassion

McAuley will respect where women and children come from, and they will be heard and listened to with dignity.

Justice

Women and children have the right to live at home safely and free of fear.

OUR MISSION

Creating a world that enables women and children to participate in society on their own terms through innovative services, advocacy and a caring community ... so violence and homelessness can be eradicated.

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CELEBRATING OUR PAST, LOOKING TO OUR FUTURE

In August 2018 we celebrated the milestone of 10 years since McAuley Community Services for Women was formed, with the merging of Mercy Care and Regina Coeli.

We held a morning tea at McAuley House, hosting 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 had been made.

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

We also held an event to celebrate the contribution of our partners, donors and supporters. Sr Eileen-Ann Daffy described how the original 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 determination of Sr Sheila Heywood.

After overcoming obstacle after obstacle, Sr Sheila and her colleague Sr Wilma Geary 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 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. The then Minister for Housing and Mental Health Martin Foley spoke at the event, and acknowledged that the teachings of the Mercy Sisters had a profound effect over his own early development of a ‘moral compass’. He fondly remembered the influence of none other than that same Sr Sheila, who was principal at his primary school St Macartan’s Parish Primary School, at the time.

Minister Foley 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, McAuley’s family violence crisis doors have been kept open by the fundraising efforts of a dedicated committee who have devoted time to raising 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.



Image: (L to R) Chair of McAuley Board, Sonja Hood, Minister for Housing and Mental Health, Martin Foley, and McAuley CEO Jocelyn Bignold.



FROM THE CHAIR SONJA HOOD

When McAuley set out our agenda for 2018-2023, we chose three simple words 'All Home Safely' to describe our vision: of a community in which all women and children could lead safe and fulfilled lives.

Yet delving deeper into the meaning of each of those three words, and whether there has been real progress in 2018/2019, sometimes it can feel that McAuley is swimming against a tide that is overwhelmingly taking us in unwelcome directions.

If we look at the 'all' in 'All Home Safely', we see rising inequality, and low-income Australians excluded from the housing market. With house prices spiralling, more people are struggling, day-to-day, in expensive, insecure rentals. Anglicare's recent affordability snapshot found that throughout Australia, there were only TWO rental properties deemed 'affordable' for those on the pitifully low Newstart allowance.

This scarcity of affordable housing has significant consequences for women, whose wages are on average lower, and who are more likely to be caring for children. Many are living their lives on the brink of homelessness. It only takes one unforeseen event - an illness, a job loss, even just a car breakdown - for that precarious line to be crossed.

This, and family violence, are the reasons women are now more likely to be homeless than men — 61 per cent of those seeking assistance. Older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness, and McAuley has seen a significant increase in women aged over 45 seeking our support.

If we look at the 'home' in 'All Home Safely': our response to growing rates of homelessness is just not good enough. Social housing units available in Victoria have actually declined by 200 since 2014. Almost 20,000 Victorians, including those facing family violence, are stuck — with little hope of ever moving ahead in the 'queue' — on the 'priority' access list for social housing.

There are only 423 government-funded crisis bed for people who are homeless. When these are full, many others are instead placed by crisis services into low

end motels and private rooming houses. These are often dirty and unsafe: rooms where doors don't lock, without sheets or bedding, and a general air of squalor and neglect: contributing, in the powerful words of Jessica on the back of this report, to a sense of punishment and worthlessness.

As for the concept of 'safely': distressingly, less than four per cent of women who come to our family violence crisis service then return home 'safely'. The perpetrator usually remains in the house, while the onus falls on women and children to 'flee' their home, leaving behind friendships, a school, neighbours and family. 'Fleeing' often entails the loss of a job; it can set off an inexorable slide into poverty and debt. The ramifications of this disruption and dislocation are huge, and compound, over many years and sometimes into the next generation, the impact of the violence itself.

This backdrop may be bleak —but McAuley, with our passionate staff and volunteers, continues to seek innovative solutions to these issues. This year we introduced new women-only homelessness accommodation in regional Victoria, and developed a tutoring program to address children's educational gaps when family violence disrupts their schooling.

Our Court Support 4 Kids service will be expanding, and amazing outcomes continue to flow from our partnership with western suburbs legal centre WEstjustice. So far, their team has negotiated the waiver of almost \$450,000 of family violence-related debt which was causing acute stress and hampering women from building new lives.

We saw many more individual outcomes where lives have been turned around, and transformative effects whenever our McAuley Works program helped women with serious job-readiness challenges find work.

These are all examples of our 'All Home Safely' approach, where women and children are empowered to achieve their highest potential. We want them to flourish, not just survive. It sounds utopian. It shouldn't be.



FROM THE CEO JOCELYN BIGNOLD

McAuley Community Services for Women has a vibrant team of committed individuals, working for the good of women and children 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This year we have been operating under the cloud of an expected loss of resources to support women who have been homeless. There has been a systematic loss of community-based mental health support services since the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and McAuley will soon lose \$334,032 in operational funding. This loss is very disappointing as it will undermine our ability to provide women who are unwell the full range of support they need.

It's even more dismaying, coming at a time when we all well know that we cannot afford to lose more precious resources for those who are battling a mental illness, especially alongside other issues like homelessness and family violence.

Public recognition that as a community, we are not doing enough in the mental health space, has led to a Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. McAuley made a comprehensive submission to this Commission, cautioning against viewing the system in isolation from these other contributing factors, and against whittling down the professional capability of our frontline staff.

Throughout our submission are the words of women who wanted to have their say. They told us they valued the connections with others, the sense of belonging, the chance to gain new skills, and the availability of supports all within one place.

Over the past few years, in partnership with Deloitte Access Economics, we have been solidly building an evidence base to track real, verifiable, outcomes of McAuley's value to women and children and to the community in general.

Our data shows, year upon year, that the issues women are dealing with are intertwined, and need resolving simultaneously.

While our team have given direct support this year to over 1100 women and children, we have also systemically updated and improved our processes

and organisational capability.

We launched a new client management system, quickly followed by risk and compliance data bases for enhanced safety and good governance.

This year we extended our services by opening McAuley House Ballarat, where we are now testing an intergenerational neighbourhood concept with Mercy Health Aged Care. Our access to housing is growing through the Sisters of Mercy and other crucial friends.

So much of what we do is in partnership with others, too many to name here. We are forever grateful for the enormous community support that we receive and pass onto women and children.

We appreciate Government support for innovation and testing new models such as Ballarat, as well as backing well-developed and proven ideas such as Court Support 4 Kids.

Trusts and Foundations have provided critical support for vital projects such as children's tutoring and an evaluation of Ballarat, or for bridging service gaps until we can get on a more sustainable footing.

We couldn't do what we do without fundraising committees with astounding energy, excitement and resources. A multitude of truly generous individuals give because they want to make a difference and make the lives of women and children better as — indeed — they have.

Collectively, we continue to push for more even distribution of our community wealth. We need to see more women and children going home safely, more children at school, and more women engaged and able to participate in employment where they can. We want them to be well, physically and mentally, and socially connected.

That's where our outcomes measures are pointing us to – that's what we'll keep working for.

Thanks to our highly experienced and effective Board; our talented and vital team of staff, volunteers and students; our amazing and committed donors and supporters, and of course, thanks to the women and children, who demonstrate their courage and resilience every day.

ABOUT MCAULEY'S APPROACH: ALL HOME SAFELY

McAuley Community Services for Women helps women and children who have experienced family violence and homelessness to take control of their lives.

We support women and their children who are seeking safety from family violence by providing 24/7 crisis support and temporary accommodation.

The women needing our support have experienced, or are at immediate risk, of serious harm: through physical and emotional violence, threats, sexual assault, and stalking. We work alongside them to plan the steps they need to move towards a new life free from violence and homelessness.

McAuley House, Victoria's first purpose-built accommodation for women who are homeless, many of whom have also experienced family violence, is a place for rest, recovery and reconnection, as well as a welcoming community hub.

FAMILY VIOLENCE, WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

Because we work at the intersection of family violence and homelessness, we know the experiences of the women we support are complex and multi-layered. They include mental and physical ill health, isolation, poverty and unemployment. These issues overlap and co-exist, meaning one-size-fits-all models — or efforts to tackle one issue at a time — are bound to fail.

OUR RESPONSE: SERVICES THAT FIT TOGETHER

Our approach puts each woman at the centre of support regardless of when she first accesses our services, the complexity of her need, or recovery time. We bring together health, legal, employment and recreational responses into one place, our purpose-built facility, McAuley House, which offers a safe and nurturing haven for women to access this support at their own pace. We recognise the strengths of the women who come to us and foster their resilience in creating a new future.

THE RIGHT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

Our approach addresses all the factors that keep women trapped in cycles of homelessness, family violence and mental illness. We know that help with those underlying problems is essential for our work to have a lasting impact.

We help women and children navigate from a place of trauma to safety, healing, confidence and hope.

ADVOCACY

We advocate for the removal of systemic barriers, such as a lack of affordable housing, that inhibit women's ability to live safely and securely.



SECTION ONE
**OUR YEAR
IN REVIEW:
2018/19**



THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN WE SUPPORT



1184

women and children supported this year



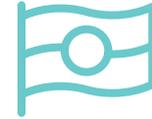
31

Women we support speak more than 31 different languages



77

The number of women over 45 needing support increased from 43 last year to 77



8%

8% of women supported are Indigenous



Experiencing violence made our whole family scared of everyone and everything. Even a bird suddenly flying past can trigger an anxiety reaction.

- Megan

(from McAuley's submission to the Royal Commission into Mental Health)

IN OUR FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES (CRISIS AND REFUGE)



57%

57% of children supported were aged under five

ICE

34%

34% of women needing crisis support because of family violence said their abuser used the drug ice



20%

20% of women had no income



60%

60% of women had a former diagnosis, or recognised indicator, of mental illness



72%

72% of women experienced episodes of homelessness in the month before presenting



3.4%

Only 3.4% of women supported in crisis care ended up 'safe at home'

MCAULEY HOUSE FOOTSCRAY SUPPORTED 39 WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN HOMELESS



79%

79% had a former diagnosis, or recognised indicator, of mental illness



59%

59% had also experienced family violence



13%

13% had no income



51%

51% were from a culturally diverse background

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2018/19



MORE WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE SAFE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

With an additional three crisis beds, we supported 265 women and children, up 16% from last year.



WE ARE REDUCING THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER CRISIS, AND SUPPORTING WOMEN IN THEIR COMMUNITY

226 women were supported through outreach, with a further 18 who have moved to their own accommodation continuing their connection with us.



WE ARE SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE WOMEN IN VICTORIA

There was an increase in the number of women supported who had no income and overall, 46% of women supported were from culturally diverse backgrounds, compared to 31% last year.



WE ARE REDUCING THE INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACTS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

We added onsite tutoring and educational support, school holiday program activities, and after-hours children’s support.



WE HAVE INCREASED OUR REACH ACROSS MORE LOCATIONS

We have opened eight new beds in Ballarat for women experiencing homelessness, and have secured funding to expand Court Support 4 Kids to two more locations.



WE ARE GIVING WOMEN THE SKILLS TO AVOID RETURNING TO UNSAFE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

All women supported can now access an onsite mental health practitioner, assistance to reduce financial problems, and opportunities for social connectedness.

WE INCREASED COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS, FAMILY VIOLENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

We made a submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and presented to more than 40 schools and community groups on family violence and homelessness.



WE INCREASED WOMEN'S FINANCIAL SECURITY, REDUCING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THEY WOULD RETURN TO UNSAFE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

32 women facing significant disadvantages in seeking work were supported to get jobs, and debts of \$309,187, owed by 52 women because of family violence, were waived through our partnership with the WEstjustice legal centre.



SECTION TWO

OUR PROGRESS: TRACKING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES



OBJECTIVE ONE: TO EXPAND ACCOMMODATION SERVICES, REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY

Our model of integrated support addresses the issues that women and children need to overcome to build new and safer futures. Because of our partnerships with the wider Mercy network, we have opportunities to bring that model to other locations.

THE FIRST STEP: MCAULEY HOUSE BALLARAT OPENS ITS DOORS

In January 2019 we opened new support and accommodation services for single women facing homelessness in Ballarat. We were able to do this by converting a property, previously used by the Sisters of Mercy, into medium-term housing.

The building was 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.

McAuley House Ballarat is adjacent to a new aged care facility operated by another member of the Mercy network, Mercy Health. This development, Mercy Place Ballarat, 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.

This aged care model – with its emphasis on relationships, personal choice, and reducing loneliness and isolation – is very much in harmony with McAuley’s approach to supporting women who have been homeless. Being neighbours is a natural fit and is leading to some exciting new ways of doing things.

Our employment program McAuley Works also now has a new employment worker operating from McAuley House Ballarat, and working with Mercy Place to explore volunteer and employment opportunities.



Eight new beds for women who are homeless are now available at **McAuley House Ballarat**



Images: McAuley House Ballarat.



OBJECTIVE TWO: TO BUILD THE CAPABILITIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATION, HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Family violence and homelessness disrupt access to education, training and employment. We support women and children to develop or regain these skills, as well as addressing the physical and mental health consequences of trauma, abuse and housing instability.

NEW EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE

Many children miss weeks of schooling when their mothers leave a violent partner. As well as the turmoil of abruptly leaving home, school and friends, they miss crucial educational milestones. This can have longer-term consequences for their wellbeing and employment prospects.

This year we have introduced an education program, to make sure children's schooling doesn't suffer just because they need to be kept safe from family violence.

We have developed educational resources as well as carefully selecting and training a group of volunteer tutors. They are working with children in our safe house and refuges, where we now have study nooks with computers and other educational materials.

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

SPECIALIST MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT ON-SITE

This year the availability of a psychologist based at McAuley House, through funding provided via the North Western Primary Health Network, has boosted our capacity to address the significant mental health concerns of women and children across all our services.

Her location within the House is proving to have multiple advantages. She is a familiar presence, making her approachable to women who may otherwise be reluctant to seek formal help or who would shy away from seeing a 'mental health' service. For our staff, it has simplified the process of referring and helping women access mental health care.

The psychologist's ability to streamline access to services has led to a formal diagnosis of mental illness for some women. That diagnosis is essential for women to get the appropriate medication and course of treatment they need. As well it means they access support services that are only available with a formal diagnosis, such as priority for housing, financial support through a disability support pension, or funding via the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Our employment support program McAuley Works provides intensive help to obtain meaningful, paid employment for women facing multiple disadvantages in getting work— family violence, homelessness, mental and physical illness. They frequently have very limited work histories because of these challenges.

To our knowledge there is no other Australian family violence organisation offering an employment service as part of a suite of supports to get women's lives back on track.

Economic independence and the financial security associated with employment can be a springboard for leaving a violent relationship. While women remain financially dependent on men who are violent they are less likely to leave them. Women can find themselves in a vicious cycle where their financial independence may be the path to freedom from violence but the violence may prevent them from becoming financially independent.

The likelihood of other consequences that women typically face when they leave violence – poverty, homelessness, health issues, and effects on children – is also lessened if they can join or re-enter the workforce.

In 2018/2019, 129 women registered with the program, bringing the total since the program commenced in early 2017 to 280. This year 32 women were placed in work, bringing the number of placements over the lifetime of the program to 80.

Some of these placements were finding women their second job. Roughly six per cent of placements so far are second placements, sometimes due to women being found by a perpetrator and having to leave their job to be safe.

One woman was placed a second time when the company she was working for was declared bankrupt; two other women left jobs due to sexual harassment in the workplace.

There were 20 'outcomes'. (Outcomes are measured by McAuley Work's funder, Jobs Victoria, when a woman completes six months of continuous employment).

The rollout of the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework has enabled women living with family violence to also benefit from the infrastructure boom in Victoria. Job opportunities were made available to our participants by John Holland and West Gate Tunnel.

Two McAuley Works employment workers were awarded Fellowships from the International Specialised Skills Institute, and travelled overseas to learn from best practice programs working with disadvantaged job seekers.

McAuley Works is funded by Jobs Victoria.

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES: THE MOST DISADVANTAGED FARE BEST IN GETTING JOBS

In 2018, we took a snapshot of McAuley Works' effectiveness, analysing the challenges the women we were supporting at that point of time were facing. Eighty-six per cent of women were still at moderate, major or critical risk of violence while McAuley Works supported them.

There was a similar picture in exploring their 'job readiness'; 82 per cent had not held a job in more than 18 months, were unskilled, not fluent in English, and also faced other disadvantages such as a mental illness or learning disability.

A remarkable finding was that 85% of the women who obtained employment following support from the program were those living with the most serious forms of violence.

These somewhat unexpected outcomes highlighted women's high degree of motivation and drive, and their determination to find work as a way out of their circumstances.

Catherine: When volunteering is a 'no brainer'

When Catherine Noonan was asked whether she'd be interested in being part of McAuley's new tutoring program for children, she leapt at the opportunity.

As a teacher, she has seen the impact on children when they move schools and how hard it can be to adjust and fit in. And as a long-term volunteer in McAuley's playroom, she could match that knowledge, and her teaching expertise, with an insight into how family violence affects young children.

'In the playroom, though, my role as a volunteer has not been about education; it was just about it being a happy place, where children could feel safe,' Catherine says. 'So when the tutoring program was being established, I was very keen to get involved.'

Catherine, and another volunteer tutor, now make weekly visits to three primary-school aged children. Tutoring began when this family were staying in our family violence support services. They have moved now into a rental property – and the challenges of settling into a new school.

Catherine's teaching skills are invaluable when it comes to tailoring the approach to each of the three children, and their different learning styles and needs. For one of the children who is struggling a little more with schooling, the tutors take a different tack, finding what will interest her, and making learning fun and relaxed.

The sessions start very informally, and are a chance for a social catch-up and check-in on everyone's wellbeing. The children write or draw a story about their week, before moving onto more structured activities.

The children's mum, born overseas, also appreciates the social nature of the visit, as she settles into an unfamiliar neighbourhood where she is sometimes lonely. She also learns new things to follow through with the children's schooling over the following week.

Catherine's care and generosity to others in the community isn't just confined to McAuley; she also volunteers at The Haven which provides housing to people with mental illness, and with Vinnies' soup van.

As to why Catherine is making this commitment of her time and energy, her answer is: 'Well, why wouldn't you? It's a no-brainer really!'

'The tutoring role is not just about academic support. I see it as more about building up trusting relationships with people in the community through consistency of human contact and care.'

'I started volunteering as a way of leading by example for my children who have grown up in relative comfort and been able to make choices in life.'

'I've been lucky in my life and grateful for everything that's gone well for me and my own children. I always feel great after my volunteering. I love the personal connections I make, and I get back more than I give.'



OBJECTIVE THREE: TO ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN, IN PLACES WHERE THEY DO NOT HAVE A VOICE

We are in a unique situation, as an organisation that sees the inter-connecting issues facing women and children who are experiencing family violence, in being able to advocate on these issues. We are also committed to supporting women and children to speak, in their own words, about their experiences.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO MENTAL HEALTH: OUR SUBMISSION

An important piece of advocacy this year was our submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. A focus on mental wellbeing is at the core of everything McAuley does.

In our submission we urged the Royal Commission to incorporate a broad view of all the factors that impact on mental health, and the range of comprehensive community supports that are needed, rather than narrowly focusing on clinical mental health service provision.

We emphasised that the experience of family violence brings significant mental health consequences. Through our knowledge of the impact of violence and homelessness on children we also offered a perspective on how future mental health consequences could be minimised if the right support is available early in life.

Inadequate and fragmented responses when a woman and her children leave their home can magnify mental health consequences, especially if they lead to poverty, homelessness, isolation and loss of employment and family connections. Our submission highlighted that these impacts are often seen later down the track in women who come to us because of longer-term homelessness.

We also drew attention to the ways overall system failings in the family violence and homelessness policy sectors – not just gaps in the direct provision of mental health services – contribute to, or exacerbate, the mental health issues for women and children.



Image: Our submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Hearing from women supported by McAuley

Across all our services, the majority of women have either a recognised indicator, or a diagnosis, of mental illness. These are some of the things they wanted us to highlight in our submission about what works, and doesn't work, in achieving mental wellbeing.

THE NEED FOR MORE 'MCAULEY HOUSES'

Women tell us that housing options should not be motels, tents, unsafe rooming house or caravans. There should be more McAuley Houses. They want to see safe places, longer stays and more direct access to supports such as ours.

Women value daily support which they felt helped them to make better decisions, and enabled them to 'stay the course' when they were unwell.

For those who have experienced homelessness, they appreciate that the McAuley House model was a stepping stone into independent housing. None felt ready to go straight into their own housing because they felt they would not be able to manage. They are concerned that it would be isolating, and harder to get help with all the other issues they were dealing with such as loss of their children, health, relationships and employment. They also value the idea that after they move to independent housing, McAuley House could continue to offer respite if they felt themselves slipping, or struggling to cope.

WRONG DOORS - DIFFICULTY GETTING THE RIGHT HELP

Many women only 'found' McAuley after a long period of struggle. Poverty and homelessness can mean lack of access to phones and internet, making connection to services extremely challenging.

Women tell us of inadequate responses in emergency services – long waits, being sent home though clearly unwell, or made to feel ashamed. After hours services are seen as particularly poor. Women say there are simply not enough services. Continuity of care is an issue; one woman found her supports did not 'carry over' even when she moved from one part of Melbourne to another, and this disrupted her recovery.

'MORE THAN A ROOF OVER OUR HEADS'

Simply providing accommodation is not the answer. Women tell us they are only OK as long as there is support as well.

One woman had spent 11 years in a homeless service but with no assistance in any other area of her life. The actual living environment which was frequently unsafe and volatile was in itself a mental health stressor. This has only been ameliorated since her move to McAuley House, which she describes as a place of 'nurturing'.

Women value the connections with others, the sense of belonging, the chance to gain new skills, and the availability of supports all within the one place.

INADEQUATE FAMILY VIOLENCE RESPONSES CAUSE DISTRESS

Women tell us of isolation and loneliness after leaving violence. This is particularly so in unsuitable motel accommodation which is often provided after leaving violent relationships. The inadequacy of this form of housing sends damaging messages about the community's willingness to support them, and the lack of face-to-face contact at a time of immense distress is traumatic.

The mental health impact on children from family violence has frequently not been recognised or addressed until connection with McAuley. This link is valued by mothers and helps them reconnect with their children.

Navigating the legal system is a stressor and is experienced as unresponsive, expensive and lengthy, with the process itself causing distress. Women say that support to alleviate debt and financial problems through McAuley's partnership with WEStjustice has had enormous benefits in relieving them of continued anxiety about the debts, which also hinder them from rebuilding their lives.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS PUBLICATION 'PARITY'

McAuley contributed to the March 2019 edition of Parity, the journal of the Council to Homeless Persons. The edition focused on the future of crisis accommodation.

We detailed how time in crisis accommodation can be a critical turning point in the life of a woman who is choosing to leave family violence. We outlined how McAuley's approach helps them to become safe: 24/7 support giving time and space to come to terms with their experiences, and connections to a broad range of support.

Our article also highlighted, however, that the bleak reality is that most women and children, before getting into McAuley's crisis service, have lived for weeks or sometimes months in motels. There is still a lack of appropriate accommodation options to meet the demand, and women are instead forced to stay in accommodation which is sub-standard, frequently with unsettled and restless children in tow, and without the human face-to-face interactions they need at this time of distress and disruption.

RAISING AWARENESS OF OUR SERVICES AND THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Other steps we took to advocate for greater awareness included:

- > participating in a Ministerial Roundtable on Mental Health
- > holding a 'think-tank' of communications and marketing professionals to brainstorm ways we could convey the issues we are addressing and get greater community support and engagement
- > supporting the launch of WEstjustice's 'Restoring Financial Safety' report of our partnership.

We met with, or welcomed to our services, many politicians with interest in our work: the Minister for Family Violence, Gabrielle Williams; Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley; Attorney-General Jill Hennessy; Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health, Harriet Shing; Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Women, and Family Violence Emma Kealey; Members of the Legislative Assembly, Katie Hall (Footscray), Suzanna Sheed (Shepparton), Julianna Addison (Wendouree), Michaela Settle (Buninyong); Member of the Legislation Council Fiona Patten. We thank them all for their interest in our work.

JESSICA: 'PUNISHED, CONTROLLED AND JAILED BY THE SYSTEM'

In our article in Parity, we quoted Jessica (not her real name). She painted a powerful image of her experience, before she came to our crisis accommodation, of being placed in motels when she sought help after leaving a violent relationship. She felt it conveyed an underlying, insulting message about the community's willingness to support her.

Families such as Jessica's are frequently confined to one claustrophobic room, with children who are bewildered, angry, confused and simply bored. Their routines and daily rhythms are completely upended.

'Having three young children (aged two, four and six) that all struggle with change, being shuffled around from hotel to hotel, no school or family, living on top of each other...

'I honestly felt like it was us still being punished for someone else's actions. From being controlled and walking on eggshells at home, to now feeling like I was the one being controlled and jailed by the system.'

OBJECTIVE FOUR: TO DEVELOP AND TEST SOLUTIONS TO EMPOWER WOMEN TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

We often see service gaps or areas of unmet need that are hampering women's ability to move towards safer futures. We look for innovative solutions to respond to these needs.

JOINING FORCES WITH WESTJUSTICE COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

Economic abuse is overwhelmingly prevalent in violent relationships. Women are frequently denied access to money, embroiled in frauds committed by their partners, or coerced into signing agreements for contracts or loans they don't want or don't understand. Many women trying to leave violent relationships discover they are deeply in debt, and had no idea that they owed large sums of money. These debts often make it impossible for women to move on.

WEstjustice community legal centre had been working with industries such as banks and utility companies to improve their response to situations where family violence had caused the debt. They had developed protocols and improved understandings from these organisations. However WEstjustice realised that many women were not able to benefit from these steps forward.

Women didn't realise the debts may be able to be waived, were unaware of how to get the right help, or, overwhelmed by all they were dealing with, left it too late to seek help.

To meet this need, WEstjustice and McAuley established a weekly outreach service based at McAuley House, with impressive outcomes for women involved.

The partnership has even broader community benefit. It means that time in court is largely averted – reducing strain on already clogged courts, and avoiding extra cost and stress which can occur when people are unrepresented. There have been only ten occasions where court action has been needed.

We contributed to a video produced by WEstjustice to launch their report on the program's outcomes: 'Restoring financial safety.' It was launched by The Hon. Gavin Jennings, Special Minister of State.

In 2019, McAuley also began offering a service based at the WEstjustice legal clinic at Werribee, so that women who attend with family violence-related legal problems can also get information and connections to support services.

IN 2018/2019 WESTJUSTICE ASSISTED



52 women
(with 62 children)



\$309,187 debts
were waived



\$16,295 gained for
clients (in compensation
or money recovered)



Since its beginnings in
early 2018, WEstjustice
has negotiated the **waiver
of \$449,969** of debt,
accrued by 91 women
supported by McAuley.

Sally: 'I was just like a slave'

After separating from her abusive husband, Sally* (not her real name) discovered she owed more than \$86,000. Within days of telling her story to WEstjustice, much of this huge debt was erased after they advocated on her behalf.

Born overseas, Sally came here on a temporary visa after her husband deceived her into leaving her infant son behind. She then became what WEstjustice terms a 'human line of credit.' Sally was forced to work in the family business for no salary, and her husband watched her on camera to ensure she couldn't 'steal' anything she was earning.

'I was just like a slave,' says Sally, who holds professional qualifications.

But Sally was afraid to disclose what was really happening, knowing the consequences for her safety if she did. Her fear that she would never again see her son, only five months old at the time she had to leave him, was used to control her and prevent her from taking steps to leave.

'I felt totally helpless. The stress affects your whole body,' she says.

Meanwhile her signature was being used on a whole variety of schemes ranging from mobile phone contracts and utility bills to credit card applications and home loans. Her husband's family all took part in the fraudulent behavior so Sally had nowhere to turn. When her son finally came to live in Australia, he was sent away to a rural area, to ensure Sally remained compliant with their schemes.

After finally being able to leave, Sally made contact with our McAuley Works program, which supports women who have experienced family violence into employment. Her case manager Lorraine quickly realised that there was no way Sally could focus on getting a job while the debts were hanging over her head. 'We see that women in that situation can barely hold a conversation or think about their future with that massive worry taking up all their energies,' she says.

WEstjustice Lawyer Dacia Abel and financial counsellor Skye Hawkins say that banks are now growing in understanding of financial abuse issues. 'They are realizing that their products can be weaponised and used against women,' says Dacia.

'In Sally's case it was quite clear there had been fraudulent behavior. At one point a bank officer had actually been concerned that she appeared reluctant when she was brought in to sign paperwork.'

After what she calls 'the luckiest and most precious day of her life' – when she heard the debts had been waived – Sally is now studying, and has her son back in her care. She talks about the 'shame' of feeling somehow responsible for her predicament. She is still sometimes at risk from her ex-partner and recently drove straight to a police station when she was being followed, only to have her concerns dismissed.

'You feel sometimes as though they will only take it seriously if you get killed,' Sally says.

“

I felt totally helpless.
The stress affects
your whole body.



Image: WEstjustice financial counsellor Skye Hawkins, lawyer Dacia Abela, and McAuley Works case manager Lorraine collaborated to assist Sally.

SUPPORT AT COURT SO THAT MOTHERS GET LEGAL PROTECTIONS

After hearing from women that they sometimes abandoned efforts to get intervention orders because of a lack of childcare options, we developed Court Support 4 Kids, to fill that need. A trained children's worker is based at court, providing support, play and distraction for children, while their mothers focus on getting legal protections in place.

At Sunshine Magistrates' Court the service was available at 131 court sessions, supporting 492 children and 352 women attending because of family violence.

In Children's Week 2018 we launched an evaluation of the program by RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice, welcoming Children's Commissioner Liana Buchanan and Deputy Chief Magistrate Felicity Broughton as speakers. The evaluation found that: 'Court Support 4 Kids is very responsive to children's needs and fills a clear gap in court services, by providing child friendly, child focused support for women and children and by meeting some basic needs of women and children while at court.'

This evaluation provided a strong platform for advocacy for government funding of the program, and we have secured 12 months funding from Court Services Victoria. This allows us to continue our work in Sunshine, and expand the program to Ballarat Magistrates' Court and Melbourne Children's Court. The funding also enables the continuation of the program in Geelong Magistrates' Court by our partner Bethany Community Support.



Image: (L to R) McAuley CEO Jocelyn Bignold, Commissioner for Children and Young People Liana Buchanan, and the Supervising Magistrate for Family Violence and Family Law at the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Deputy Chief Magistrate Felicity Broughton.

OBJECTIVE FIVE: TO BUILD OUR CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY TO DELIVER INTEGRATED SERVICES AND ADVOCACY

To deliver on McAuley's five-year plan, we need greater organisational capacity. We are building our staff capabilities in areas such as innovation, partnership, advocacy and operations.

MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DATA SYSTEMS

For the community, donors, and government agencies to appreciate and understand the issues facing women and children we support, we need reliable, accurate and consistent information. Meaningful data helps us advocate where resources are best deployed, and highlight service gaps or deficiencies.

In partnership with InfoXchange, we developed a new custom-built data management system which was trialled, and went live, in 2018. For the first time, we will have one central entry point for capturing information about women and children we support. This will be more efficient, saving the administrative burden of entering data multiple times into different systems -and means our frontline staff can spend more time directly supporting women and children, and less time filling out forms.

The development of standardised measures across all programs also gives us a 'single source of the truth', so if, for example, we want to measure mental health issues among women, we can be confident that we are talking about the same thing, whether a woman is receiving support because she is homeless or to be safe from family violence.

EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

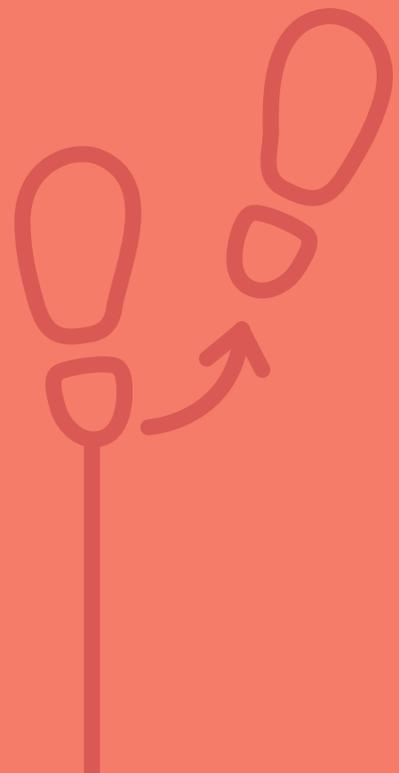
We have been working with Deloitte Access Economics to measure the impact of our services. This is helping us develop practical tools to measure our progress against our objectives. It is giving us insights into the effectiveness of our approaches and will support continual improvement over time.

Last year we took our first 'baseline evaluation' - a snapshot at a given point of time of the situations of those who use our services. Year-by-year the data will grow in depth. What we learn will help us fine-tune our ways of working, and recognise gaps or emerging trends and problems.

Together with Deloitte we are also analysing 30 case studies. We know that help in resolving health issues, supporting women into employment and teaching them independent living skills represents a saving to government across many other measures such as the justice system, hospital admissions and mental health support services. These case studies will provide further evidence of our direct impact on outcomes for women and children.



SECTION THREE
**OUR WORK
IN ACTION
2018/19**



MCAULEY CARE: KEEPING WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

A SAFE HOUSE FOR WOMEN FACING AN IMMEDIATE THREAT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

We operate crisis accommodation for women and children who need to immediately escape family violence. The crisis service is accessible 24/7, and provides secure and immediate accommodation, typically for seven to ten days.

New Victorian government funding has enabled us to boost our capacity to respond to women and children needing crisis accommodation. We have expanded our specialist children's work, which is now available seven days a week, and our outreach services are available in the evenings.



142 women and **124 children** supported this year



61% of women had a former diagnosis or recognised indicator of mental illness



74% had experienced episodes of homelessness in the month before coming to us



20% had no income

OUR REFUGES

Refuges provide longer-term safe accommodation for families escaping violence who are still at risk and have nowhere else safe to go.

Typically women and children stay for around 13 weeks.



37 women and **41 children** supported this year



51% were from a culturally diverse background

OUTREACH WORK

We are also able to support women who are living in refuges, transitional housing or home.



114 women and **112 children** supported this year



46% were from a culturally diverse background

GIVING CHILDREN A VOICE

We provide direct support to children who have experienced and witnessed family violence. Their own pain and trauma is unique and different in nature from that of their mothers and requires a specialist response.

We have a playroom with a specialist children's worker. Through art, play and conversation, a child's feelings about what has happened in their family can be explored.

We focus attention on improving the bond between mothers and their children, which has often been damaged by the violence. To rebuild the mother-child bond, we encourage mothers to attend the playroom alongside their children. Our children's workers also liaise with child care centres and schools.



Our work supported **251 children** whose mothers were escaping family violence



77% were under 10 years old

WHAT CHILDREN TELL US ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

A three-year-old was in the playroom, playing happily but very attentive to every sound ... Is it a bird calling ... or a scream?

He was listening out for his mother screaming.

A six-year-old didn't want to leave in case his father ran them over with their car...

An attempt had been made before, so he couldn't be sure it wouldn't happen again.

We were helping a nine-year-old to develop a safety plan ...

His first plan was to shoot his step-father with a nerf gun.

Otherwise to have a bag packed under his bed and to get out the window.

MCAULEY HOUSE: REST, RECOVERY AND RECONNECTION FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN HOMELESS

McAuley House in Footscray provides safe and stable longer-term accommodation for women only, unique in a service system which often favours 'rough sleepers' and is geared towards male homelessness.

As well as homelessness, women living in the House have almost all had long histories of trauma, family violence and mental illness. For this reason, the McAuley House approach provides more than just a place to stay: we also offer all the elements that we know are essential for a woman who has been homeless to rebuild her life.

McAuley House also has a respite bed, which was used eight times for women who were either unwell or facing a challenge which might otherwise have led to the loss of their permanent accommodation.

Through the Skills For Life program, we also provide personalised programs, training and skills development to rebuild a woman's self-confidence.

Women supported by all our services, as well as residents of McAuley House, have the opportunity to learn skills and connect with others. The program promotes independence as well as encouraging women to take care of themselves and their health and wellbeing.

Some of the activities offered include pampering sessions, discussion groups, art activities and financial literacy classes.

The Food For Life program, a hands-on cooking program designed to educate women about the joys of cooking, nutrition and connecting with others over a shared meal, also runs from McAuley House Footscray. Women learn to cook healthy meals, using vegetables and herbs from the McAuley House garden. Other skills acquired include hospitality, meal planning, food preparation, budgeting, and education in the area of food safety, and commercial kitchen introductory training.

This year we added an extra eight beds by opening McAuley House Ballarat. (Data is not yet included for this cohort as the House only opened in January 2019).

MCAULEY HOUSE FOOTSCRAY



39 women lived in McAuley House this year



17 were mothers



16 nationalities were represented and **51%** were from a culturally diverse background



Five were on temporary visas



13% had no income

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

GARDENING AUSTRALIA AND OUR ROOFTOP GARDEN TRANSFORMATION

In April 2019 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 us revamp the space, which enjoys enviable views of the city - but with its sunny, exposed position, can also present gardening challenges.

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.

Herbs and small plants had previously been planted there. Our Food For Life program had 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 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 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.'

The segment aired on June 28. And we're happy to report the garden is still flourishing!



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

TINA REPRESENTS AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD CUP

Women who have lived at McAuley House frequently remain strongly connected to us after they move on to live in the community. Tina is a former resident at McAuley House in North Melbourne, the forerunner to our present-day McAuley House in Footscray, and while she has now lived in community housing for several years, she is still a familiar face at our lunches, celebrations and activities.

This year Tina was proud to share with us the good news that she had been chosen to represent Australia at the Homelessness World Cup to be held in Wales.

Tina first took up soccer while she was living at McAuley House. At that point of her life: 'I was crying and feeling unwell,' she recalls. 'I was very depressed and unmotivated.'

But she made a life-changing decision to go along to Street Soccer, an initiative of The Big Issue.

While she had low expectations about whether it would really help, she 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. '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.

In February, 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 she had made the team - the only woman selected. With hundreds of other soccer players around the world she will be travelling to Cardiff for the week-long tournament.

'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.'



“ When you're playing, you forget things. It's social, and it's fun.



SECTION FOUR
**OUR SUPPORTERS
AND PARTNERS**



WHAT DO HOMELESS WOMEN NEED? HOW ABOUT ... A HOUSE!

At McAuley we regularly receive phone calls offering clothing, children's bikes, televisions and furniture ... but recently we were stunned — and of course delighted — when we were contacted with the offer of a house.

Kerry James says the decision to bequeath her house for the use of women in need of shelter came to her, quite suddenly, in the middle of the night. It was during a period when she herself had gone through a rough few years with illness, and caring for her husband before he passed away.

'I decided it in the flash of a second. I realised how lucky I was to have a roof over my head, now that I'm nearing the end of my life,' Kerry says.

She wanted her house to become a haven for women who were facing homelessness. She had been struck by stories in the media about a growing crisis in older women, who were quietly and invisibly drifting into homelessness.

Kerry knows about the issue of family violence, having worked for many years as an anthropologist in Tonga. While she lived there she helped set up a safe house for women escaping family violence.

This knowledge, about the connection between family violence and homelessness, was in the forefront of her mind when she began looking out for an organisation which would match her vision.

'There are many brave souls, sometimes professional women, who are getting to their 50s, and are on the verge of living on the streets,' Kerry says.

Her vision for how her house would be used was that women could avoid that fate and 'rebuild their self-worth and self-respect. I want it to be a place of healing, a peaceful place for women to begin a new life. It will be a place for women with gumption to get themselves back together.'

As soon as she learnt what McAuley was all about, she knew we would be an excellent fit for what she hoped her house would be able to achieve. 'I wasn't going to do it unless it was done right, and everything I read about McAuley convinced me that this was the right match. It will be a transitional place, for women to find their feet again, and get support to be back in the workplace.'

Image: Kerry James.



The house is, as Kerry describes it 'a gorgeous and embracing place. It has a glow, and I think of it as very much a woman's kind of house.'

As to why Kerry is making this exceptional act of generosity, she hopes more will adopt her approach. 'People are now often passing their houses onto adult children who don't really need them.

'If you want to help people who are homeless...give them a house!'

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are absolutely essential to McAuley's work, contributing their time, and making a real difference to the lives of women and children supported by McAuley.



Throughout the year **100 volunteers** helped us across all our programs

The program has grown substantially this year, from 43 active at 30 June 2018 to 69 active at the same date in 2019. We received and responded to 184 expressions of interest compared to 120 last year.

With the start of our Education Program, there were new opportunities for volunteers with teaching or tutoring experience. New and existing volunteers were selected to provide tutoring support for children and young people to ensure their schooling doesn't slip back because of changes of schools and the upheavals in their families' lives.

During the year we also recruited volunteers to special projects including a consultancy to guide ongoing improvement to our occupational health and wellbeing systems, and work towards meeting the standards to achieve the LGBTIQ Rainbow Tick.

Program development also focuses on complying with the National Standards for Volunteers.

In April 2019 we carried out our annual survey for employees and volunteers, to measure our performance against the National Standards and identify quality improvement opportunities.

The survey results were excellent, finding that among volunteers who responded:

- > 90% agreed or strongly agreed that there is a positive culture towards volunteer involvement at McAuley.
- > 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their wellbeing and safety were protected.
- > 92% agreed that they are well supported in their role.
- > 96% agreed that they were recognised and appreciated.
- > 96% agreed that there was always somebody to assist when guidance was needed.
- > Overall, 94% of volunteer respondents were satisfied with their volunteer role.

Volunteers also said that they are gaining personally and/or professionally from their volunteer involvement.

Several volunteers were recruited to paid roles during the year — evidence of the calibre of volunteers we've attracted. Several others were able to use the experience they gained to support their applications for employment in other organisations.

Whether our volunteers are seeking a career in the sector or not, their involvement enriches the experiences of women and children and strengthens our community.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

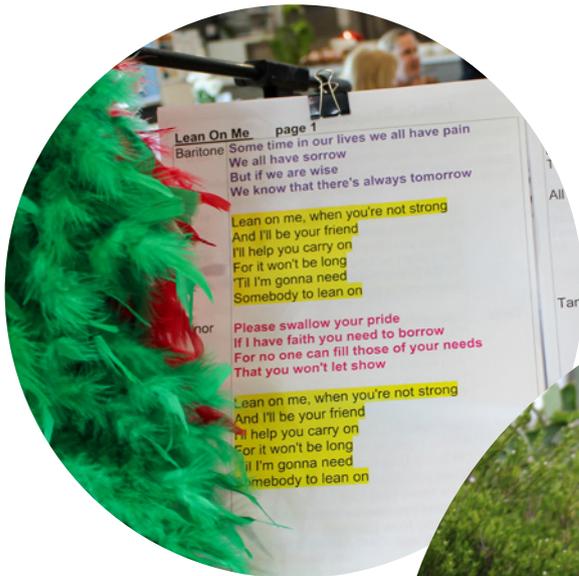
To celebrate the contribution of our volunteers, we hosted two events. An afternoon tea in December celebrated International Volunteers' Day, and a lunch in May focused on the National Volunteer Week theme of 'Making a world of difference.' A McAuley choir serenaded our volunteers to re-worked versions of Queen's 'We will (*thank, not rock!*) you' and Bill Withers: 'Lean on me.'

NATIONAL AWARD FOR OUR VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR

Our Volunteer Co-ordinator Kathriye Strassnick came up trumps in the Australasian Association for Managers of Volunteers Award of Excellence 2018.

Kathriye's passion and dedication saw her win the individual award which recognised that: 'Her ability to adapt to changing environments, service needs, and volunteer goals means that those engaged in her programs feel truly valued, heard and supported.'

'Kathriye has always worked to improve the experience of volunteers while they donate their time and skills to support others in the community.'



Images: (Left) 'Lean on me' lyrics were used to serenade volunteers at our celebratory lunch. (Right) Kathriye Strassnick and her award.



“

Kathriye has always worked to improve the experience of volunteers.

CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT

This year we continued to develop our partnerships with business organisations.

JB HI FI COMES ON BOARD

We have been selected as a new charity partner for JB Hi-Fi as part of a special category in Helping Hands, its Workplace Giving Program. A new category, Helping Out, was created to start or scale an ambitious idea for a charity that it would otherwise not be in a position to pursue. The team at JB Hi-Fi identified family violence as the cause and McAuley as the charity it wished to support.

Rachel Riordan, JB's Group Workplace Giving Manager said: 'McAuley was chosen for the incredible work it undertakes by providing crisis support and temporary accommodation for women and children experiencing family violence. JB Hi-Fi is proud to partner with McAuley to develop a strategy to take its model of housing, support and employment pathways to new locations across and outside of Victoria.'

NOTABLE CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2018/2019

Our holiday house in Rye gives low-income families a chance to have a holiday. Essendon Rotary, Asahi, Bunnings Mornington, Bunnings Rosebud and Point Nepean Men's Shed helped spruce the property up with fresh coats of paint, new blinds, furniture and updated bedding. A new play area was developed and a barbeque installed.

Nufarm staff raised funds for a new cubby house at one of our refuges. They also fitted it out with activities and toys for children to use. The cubby was built by staff from Corrections Victoria.

National Australia Bank invited us to hold a display at their city premises, during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. This enabled us to promote our work and draw attention to the issues faced by women and children we support.

ENGAGE TO CHANGE: WORKPLACE EDUCATION

McAuley also offers an innovative workplace education program that aims to change attitudes and responses to family violence.

The program originated a number of years ago from our initial employment support program where women reported that they were losing their jobs because their performance was affected by their experience of family violence and workplaces lacked capacity to support them.

Engage to Change sessions are conducted in the workplace and delivered by our training partners, CC Management Consulting.



Images: (Top) Students at Northern College of Arts and Technology held an exhibition of their photography, with proceeds donated to McAuley. (Bottom) This cubby house was put together by volunteer staff from Victoria's Department of Corrections.

UHG: 'A FORCE FOR GOOD'

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

Over the past year they were energetic and hands-on supporters, building cubby houses, putting together Christmas toys and Easter egg hampers for children, or literally getting their hands dirty by blitzing our rooftop garden.

UHG is a company which provides digital solutions for healthcare providers. They also supported us creatively when they provided two four-week placements for women involved in our McAuley Works program who are seeking employment.

This opportunity gave women the chance to acquire skills, confidence and 'just getting used to the world of work again,' says UHG's People and Culture Manager Monique Rajch.

'The women involved were 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.'

'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.'



Image: The team from Unified Health Group with the beautifully packaged Easter donations.

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our deep appreciation and thanks to all of those who have supported us throughout the year.



ANNUAL HIGH TEA AN ELEGANT OCCASION

Our Lady of Mercy College in Heidelberg's annual event in support of our services, an elegant high tea, was again a resounding success, raising \$6000 for our services. More than 160 guests enjoyed a beautiful afternoon with high quality food prepared by staff, parents and students.



MAN WITH A VAN REALLY DELIVER FOR WOMEN IN NEED

Our ongoing partnership with removalists Man With A Van alleviates some of the stress of moving house for women leaving violent partners. 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. Having to come up with the funds to leave behind a violent relationship would make it virtually impossible for some women to leave.

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.



FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

Last year, our Board member Matt Tilley came up with a simple but brilliant idea - people voting in the Victorian election were asked to drop a dollar coin donation to support homelessness services. We were one of seven organisations to benefit. All political parties got on board and pledged to match the donations, and after the election, the money raised by Aussie Dollar Drop for homelessness services was matched by the Victorian Government. We received an amazing \$48,142.85.

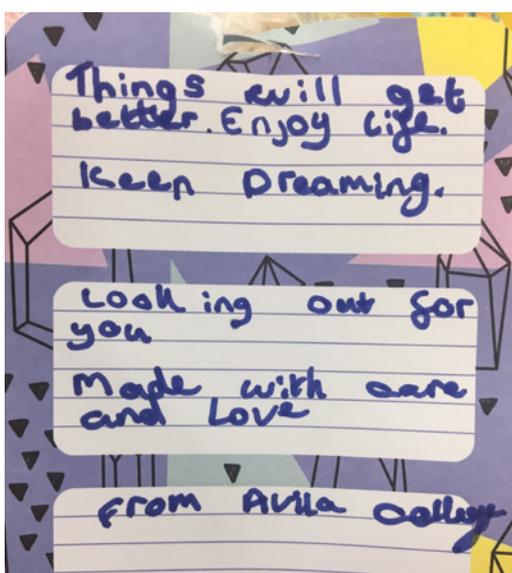
Image: Matt Tilley with CEO Jocelyn Bignold.



OTHER FABULOUS CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDED:

- > St Brigid's Parish through their giving trees donated over \$5000 in gift vouchers, including clothing, food, family activities and movie tickets.
- > Christmas brings out the best in our donors. Melbourne Christmas Trees donated trees for each of our sites. Individuals rallied family and friends to collect gifts to donate, and residents at two apartment complexes, one in East Melbourne and one on St Kilda Road, used the Christmas tree in the foyer of their buildings to leave a gift which was donated to McAuley.
- > We were invited to the Australian Nursing and Midwives Federation's annual Victorian delegates conference and \$2785 was raised at this event.
- > The Mercy Education Workplace Giving program continues to grow, and we thank the teachers and staff who generously donate each month as well as Mercy Education staff.
- > Students of Northern College of Arts and Technology raised \$1932 in an exhibition of their own artwork.
- > Australian Super continued their incredible support of McAuley with their annual High Tea, where over \$2700 was raised. They also chose us as their nominated charity for Christmas giving, raising over \$11,000.

Image: At Christmas time we were overwhelmed by the community's generosity.



Our Community and School Engagement program involves fundraising and education. In the past year, we have engaged with more than 40 organisations and groups across Victoria, to explore family violence and homelessness, and many of them have responded with practical support.

In the past year, community groups curated creative fundraising events, and thousands of high school students participated in educational workshops and presentations. Collectively, schools raised over \$30,000 for our programs.

Image: Students from Avila College, Mount Waverley, added personal notes to their donations.



SECTION FIVE

OUR ORGANISATION AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



OUR ORGANISATION AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

A CHILD-SAFE ORGANISATION

Under Victorian law, all organisations providing services for children are required to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm. We have taken steps to implement these standards, and ensure that we respond appropriately to situations where a child may be at risk.

We have adopted the standards and are keen to go over and beyond the minimum requirements so that children are not just 'safe' but can flourish. Some additional steps we have taken are:

- > trialling new children's feedback mechanisms
- > promoting more publicly our commitment to child safety
- > adding the issue of how we keep Aboriginal children culturally safe onto our Risk Register so that we know we are adopting the right practice
- > aligning our new children's education program with the standards
- > continuing to ask ourselves how to promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children.

PLEDGING INCLUSIVE SERVICES

The Royal Commission heard that family violence is an issue among LGBTIQ couples and families but they hesitate to reach out to faith-based organisations, fearing they will be rejected. Making sure this perception does not create a barrier to those who need our support has been a priority for us in 2018/2019.

While 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 has taken proactive steps to ensure our services are welcoming and inclusive to all.

It is also a condition of Victorian Government funding that family violence services are rainbow-accredited. In readiness we have developed a new inclusion policy, conducted training for staff and established an internal working and advisory group.

In 2018/2019 we joined with other faith-based organisations Anglicare Victoria, Sacred Heart Mission, Good Samaritan Inn, Uniting Church of Australia, the Salvation Army, VincentCare, McKillop Family Services, Jewish Care and Good Shepherd to pledge that our services would be inclusive.

CHARITY STATUS

McAuley Community Services for Women is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ABN 85696671223).



Image: The pledge made by McAuley and other faith-based organisations about inclusive services.

GOVERNANCE: OUR BOARD



**DR SONJA HOOD,
CHAIR**

Sonja Hood is CEO of Community Hubs

Australia, an organisation working across Australia to help to integrate migrants and refugees—particularly women—into the community. Her background is in health policy, where she has a PhD and over 20 years experience in research and implementation in Australia, the US and the UK. Her particular interest is programs that drive change and make a tangible difference to people's lives, and this is the reason she joined the Board.



**MARK BIRRELL,
TREASURER**

Mark is the Chief Financial Officer of

Partners Wealth Group, and has had extensive experience as a financial services executive and consultant in the development and management of distribution, financial planning, retail investment product, superannuation and master trust businesses with major Australian Organizations and Industry Bodies. His background includes leadership experience with profit centre and strategic development responsibilities. Mark's strong leadership skills and experiences are an asset to our organisation.



**SR JOAN DOYLE,
RSM**

Joan brings a great commitment to

pastoral care, education and social welfare. After gaining qualifications in music and teaching she entered the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy. She then completed a social work degree and worked in Child Protection and in the Women and Girls in Custody advocacy group. Joan has worked in Chile and Peru for 18 years where she was involved with the community to establish three centres for women, two childcare centres and a medical clinic. Joan is the current Director of Initial Formation for the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.



BRIDGID CONNORS

Bridgid Connors is Chief Human Resources Officer with

Monash University, an organisation committed to social justice and human rights. Bridgid has always worked in areas that serve to positively impact community wellbeing and improve social justice for all. This includes Melbourne Health and the Department of Justice and Regulation in Victoria and WorkCover and the Department of Premier and Cabinet in South Australia. Bridgid holds a Executive Master of Public Administration and a Master of Applied Positive Psychology. Bridgid believes that everyone must play a role in the generational change necessary to remove family violence from our communities.



DR MICHELLE COTTER

Dr Michelle Cotter is Principal at Avila College in Mount

Waverley, having previously been Principal of Mercy College, Coburg where she worked for 13 years. Michelle recently completed an Executive MBA, Doctorate of Education, Master in Leadership and Master in Religious Education. Leading in a Catholic school community for global citizenship in the twenty first century resonates powerfully with the story of Catherine McAuley and for Catholic girls' Education. Michelle sees her stewardship of gospel values and Catherine's story being realised in her work as a teacher and leader in Catholic education, but also as a contributor to our Board.



**SR CHRISTINE
COUGHLAN, RSM**

Christine Coughlan is a Sister of Mercy, and

trained as a teacher at the Teacher Training at Aquinas College (now ACU). Once qualified, Christine moved to country Victoria to commence her teaching career. Following that time, she moved to Melbourne working in Supportive Accommodation for HIV+ men for 12 years; during this time, she also volunteered at Mercy Care (now McAuley Care) and the Royal Children's Hospital. Since returning to Ballarat she has studied Pastoral Counselling. She is a member of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea Initial Formation team. Her ministry at present is supporting the aged Sisters of Mercy.



DR ANITA MORRIS

Dr Anita Morris is Family Violence Principal Practitioner

at the Department of Health and Human Services. She has a social work background and has worked across health, education, government and the community sector. Anita completed her PhD in 2015 on the safety and resilience of children who experience family violence. She was an expert witness at the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and she brings her knowledge of honouring children’s voices into our organisation to continue to support initiatives that keep women and children safe.



ANGELA SCAFFIDI

Angela Scaffidi is SenateSHJ’s head of change, and she

designs, implements and measures change programs for clients in the public and private sector. She is an accredited user of the Four Rooms of Change™ and she specialises in change in the health and education sectors. She has worked in professional services for more than 20 year. Prior to establishing Scaffidi Hugh-Jones (now SenateSHJ), she worked at McKinsey & Company and Turnbull Porter Novelli. She has won a range of state, national and international awards for her work in communication. She is a Fellow of the Public Relations Institute of Australia.



ROB SCENNA

Rob Scenna is Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Church

Insurance. He has more than 25 years’ experience in financial services, management consulting and aviation, previously holding positions of Managing Director ANZ Private Wealth, Managing Director ANZ Trustees and Managing Director Super Concepts, as well executive director roles on the Boards of ANZ financial advice companies. Rob has a passion for developing strong relationships with customers, building energised and engaged workplaces and developing solutions to enable businesses to directly benefit communities. He is a graduate of the 2013 Leadership Victoria – Williamson Community Leadership Program.



MATT TILLEY

Matt Tilley has been a Melbourne radio broadcaster for over

25 years, and was introduced to our organisation through his MC’ing the Fed Up lunches, before joining the Board in 2016. McAuley Community Services for Women offers Matt a chance to work for the elimination of family violence, and also to continue his long association with ministries of the Sisters of Mercy, an order of women religious that he admires for the work they have done over many decades. He believes his involvement is paramount if men as a collective are to begin to take responsibility for the violence perpetrated against women.



LOUISE MCNAMARA
(to December 2018)

Louise McNamara is Community

Engagement Officer at Loreto Mandeville Hall in Toorak. Louise joined the Board after having spent four years on the Special Events Committee working closely with other people passionate about preventing family violence. While assisting the McAuley Care Safe House and the women and children who arrived there was always a focal point, advocacy also became important to the committee and inspired Louise to move into governance.

OUR FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT

INCOME	2019	2018	EXPENSES	2019	2018
State Govt Funding	3,787,154	2,966,387	Employee Benefit Expenses	4,134,080	3,462,516
Donations/Bequests	1,471,958	1,585,914	Depreciation	139,452	79,889
Rent Received	215,068	201,546	Program Resources	371,449	296,105
Interest Received	99,804	84,679	Occupancy Expenses	455,750	338,402
Miscellaneous	74,427	137,840	Administration Expenses	403,076	382,909
TOTAL INCOME	5,648,411	4,976,366	TOTAL EXPENSES	5,503,807	4,559,821
			ENTITY PROFIT (LOSS)	144,604	416,545

STATEMENT OF EQUITY

	2019	2018
Retained Earnings at beginning of Financial Year	3,639,159	3,222,614
Entity Profit /(Loss)	144,604	416,545
Retained Earnings at the end of the Financial Year	3,783,763	3,639,159

BALANCE SHEET

	2019	2018
Current Assets		
Cash & Equivalents	4,665,512	4,167,428
Receivables	247	42,124
Other Current Assets	220,582	108,227
Non-Current Assets		
Investments	1,640	1,116
Property Plant & Equipment	587,971	383,459
TOTAL ASSETS	5,475,952	4,702,354
Current Liabilities		
Payables	1,316,576	744,551
Provisions	375,613	318,644
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,692,189	1,063,195
NET ASSETS	3,783,763	3,639,159
EQUITY	2019	2018
Retained Earnings	3,783,763	3,639,159
TOTAL EQUITY	3,783,763	3,639,159

THANK YOU

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The past year has seen incredible generosity and support from the community, businesses and philanthropic organisations.

Some of our individual supporters have elected not to have their name published in the annual report and we respect their request for privacy and thank them for their support of the women and children we work with.

We could not provide a number of our services without the support of philanthropic organisations. We would like to say thank you for your support of work directly with women and children, work behind the front line, and pilots that enable us to try something new.

We would like to thank the many people who contribute on a regular basis either through monthly donations directly to McAuley or through their workplace giving program.

SISTERS OF MERCY

We acknowledge and thank every Sister and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea for their generosity and unfailing support of our work. We thank those who not only financially support the work of McAuley, but to those who donate their time in our various programs. We are honoured to be able to continue the work of Catherine McAuley and are grateful for your dedication and support.

PROGRAM SUPPORTERS AND COLLABORATIONS

Australian African Foundation for Retention and Opportunity (AAFRO)
Ballarat Magistrates' Court
Baptcare
Berry Street Family Violence Crisis Service
Berry Street Women's Housing Ballarat
Bethany Community Support
Bolton Clarke
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Caraniche
CC Management Consulting
CoRE Grampians (communities of respect and equality)
Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)
Fare Share
Federation Uni
Fitted for Work
Foodbank Victoria
Housing Choices Australia
Infoxchange
ISSI International Specialist Skills Institute
Lort Smith Animal Therapy Program
Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre
Mercy Health

Mercy Place Ballarat
Moonee Valley Family Violence Network
North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network
Peak bodies
Rec West
Reclink
Reconnect
Safe Steps
Second Bite
St Kilda Mums
St Vincent de Paul Ballarat
Sunshine Magistrates' Court
Unison Housing
WestCasa (Western Region Centre against Sexual Assault)
Western Emergency Relief Network
Western Family Violence Case Management
WEstjustice
WIRE (Women's Information and Referral Exchange)
WRISC Ballarat
Yarraville Community Centre
Yogahood
Young Mercy Links

INDIVIDUALS

Celia Booth
Michelle Cotter
Tony Dynon
Ghislaine & Paul Entwisle
Denis Fitzgerald
Jenny Glare
Marlene Hansford
Leonie and David Koadlow
Joe Konynenburg
Laurie Larmer
Eugene Lynch
Peter & Marianne Margin
John Ralph AC & Barbara Ralph

PHILANTHROPIC

Aussie Dollar Drop
The Australian Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta
Victorian Charitable Works Trust
CARI Foundation
FareShare
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Jack (JST) Moody Charitable Foundation
JB Were
Jenkins Foundation
Ken & Carol Klooger Family Foundation
Leo Halpin Trust
Nelson Alexander Charitable Fund
Perpetual Trustees (Percy Baxter Charitable Foundation)
Scanlon Foundation
The Humanity Foundation
VCF - George Perry Fund
- Catholic Welfare

BEQUESTS

Estate of Barbara Joan Nielsen

SCHOOLS

Academy of Mary Immaculate
Catholic Regional College Melton
Loyola College
Mazenod College
Melbourne Grammar School
Mount Lilydale Mercy College
Our Lady of Mercy College
St Aloysius College
St Anne's Primary School
St Columba's College
St Joseph's College
Xavier College

ORGANISATIONS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

150 Clarendon Apartments
ABC Gardening Australia
All Souls Opportunity Shop
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Foundation (Victorian branch)
Asahi Beverages
Australian Super
Bakers Delight Bakery Hill
Ballarat Aquatic and Lifestyle Centre
Balancea
Betty Cares Foundation
Botany Essentials Pty Ltd
Central Highlands Water
Deloitte Access Economics
Dulux
Family Care Sisters (Grey Sisters) Inc
Goddess Cleaning
Impact for Women
Infoxchange
JB Hi-Fi
John Holland
Magistrates' Court of Victoria
Man With A Van
Melbourne Christmas Trees
Mercy Education
Mercy Health
NAB
Next Steps
Northern College of Arts and Technology
Nufarm Limited
Rotary Club of Essendon
Share the Dignity
Sisters of St John of God Ministries
St Brigid's Parish
Toorak Opportunity Shop
Twelve Thirteen Program

Unified Healthcare Group
Werribee Mercy Hospital
Williamstown Soccer Club
Wyndham Patchworkers
Yve Apartments
Zokky ID Pty Ltd

PRO BONO AND EXPERT ADVICE

The support of Patricia Edwards Consulting and PwC Australia is greatly appreciated.

GOVERNMENT

McAuley Community Services for Women is supported by funding from the Victorian Government.



GREAT WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways you can get involved and make a difference.

With your compassion and generosity, we can continue to brighten the lives of the women and children we work with.

MAKE A DONATION

Your donation, no matter how large or small, will help vulnerable women and children set up new lives.

Donate online at mcauleycsw.org.au/donate.

DONATE THROUGH WORKPLACE GIVING

You can help change lives every payday. Workplace giving is an easy and tax-effective way to support our vital work. It also provides us with a steady, regular source of income, enabling us to plan for the future.

Speak to your payroll team about how you can get started. We are registered with Good2Give and Good Company.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

Sign up to monthly giving and make a lasting difference. It's simple and convenient. Your regular donations also help us plan for the future, as well as save on administration costs, which enables us to spend more on the vital programs we run.

BECOME A CORPORATE PARTNER

Corporate partnerships are crucial to our work. There are many ways to get involved in McAuley such as funding programs, sponsoring events, undertaking volunteering or signing up for workplace giving. Your contributions will go directly towards supporting women and their children escaping family violence and experiencing homelessness.

ENGAGE 2 CHANGE

Sessions are conducted in the workplace and co-facilitated by a female and a male facilitator. The two-step program begins with a two-hour awareness raising program which enables participants to recognise and respond to family violence in their workplace, and builds capacity and confidence to support colleagues experiencing family violence.

LEAVE A BEQUEST

Leaving a bequest is a special way of leaving a gift for generations to come. It also allows us to plan for the long-term future with a greater degree of certainty.

INVITE US TO SPEAK

We offer various presentations to suit schools and community groups. Invite us to speak and learn more about the vital work of McAuley, and the pressing issues of homelessness and family violence.

CREATE YOUR OWN

Get creative, have fun and make a difference! Set up an account on Give Now, Everyday Hero or Go Fundraise and raise money via fun runs, hold a girls' night in or request donations instead of gifts for celebrations. As a café or restaurant, you could select a day, week or month where tips are donated to us. For businesses of various sizes, maybe donate a percentage of sales from a specific day, week or month.

For further information about how you can support our work, please call 03 9362 8900, email fundraising@mcauleycsw.org.au or visit www.mcauleycsw.org.au.

OUR FOUNDATIONS

Catherine McAuley opened the doors of the 'House of Mercy' in Dublin, Ireland, in 1827. Her dream of providing disadvantaged women and children with housing, education and religious and social services – enabling them to find a brighter future – had become a reality.

Catherine founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. Led by Mother Ursula Frayne, the Sisters of Mercy first arrived in Australia in 1846. Thirty years ago, the Sisters of Mercy established Regina Coeli (now McAuley House) followed by Mercy Care (now McAuley Care) in 1988.

In 2008 Regina Coeli and Mercy Care services were combined to form McAuley Community Services for Women and expand the Sisters of Mercy's commitment to women and children and social justice.

Today, Catherine's founding spirit and ethos continue to live on at McAuley Community Services for Women.

THE MERCY NETWORK

We work closely with, and are supported by other Mercy ministries.

THESE ARE:

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea

Institute Property Association Ltd

McAuley Property Ltd

The Sisters of Mercy Papua New Guinea Inc

Ministry Companies

HEALTH AND AGED CARE

Mercy Health and Aged Care Inc

Mercy Services Ltd

EDUCATION

Mercy Education Ltd

Mercy Co-sponsored Schools

Mercy Affiliated Schools

COMMUNICATIONS

Fraynetwork Ltd

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mercy Works Ltd

COMMUNITY SERVICES

McAuley Community Services for Women

MacKillop Family Services Ltd

Mercy Connect Lavington Ltd

Mercy Services

St Joseph's Cowper Ltd

ECOLOGY

Rahamim Ltd

OTHER SPIRITUAL AND CORPORAL

McAuley Ministries Ltd

“Having three young children (aged two, four and six) that all struggle with change, being **shuffled around from hotel to hotel**, no school or family, living on top of each other...

I honestly felt like it was us **still being punished** for someone else’s actions.

From being controlled and **walking on eggshells at home**, to now feeling like I was the one being **controlled and jailed by the system.**”

- Jessica

Each night at least 60 women - and their children - are placed in unsuitable and inadequate motels when they are seeking help because of family violence.

McAuley Community Services for Women
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