

**Annual Evaluation Report (Year Three FY20)**

McAuley Community Services for Women  
November 2020

# McAuley's commitment to evaluation

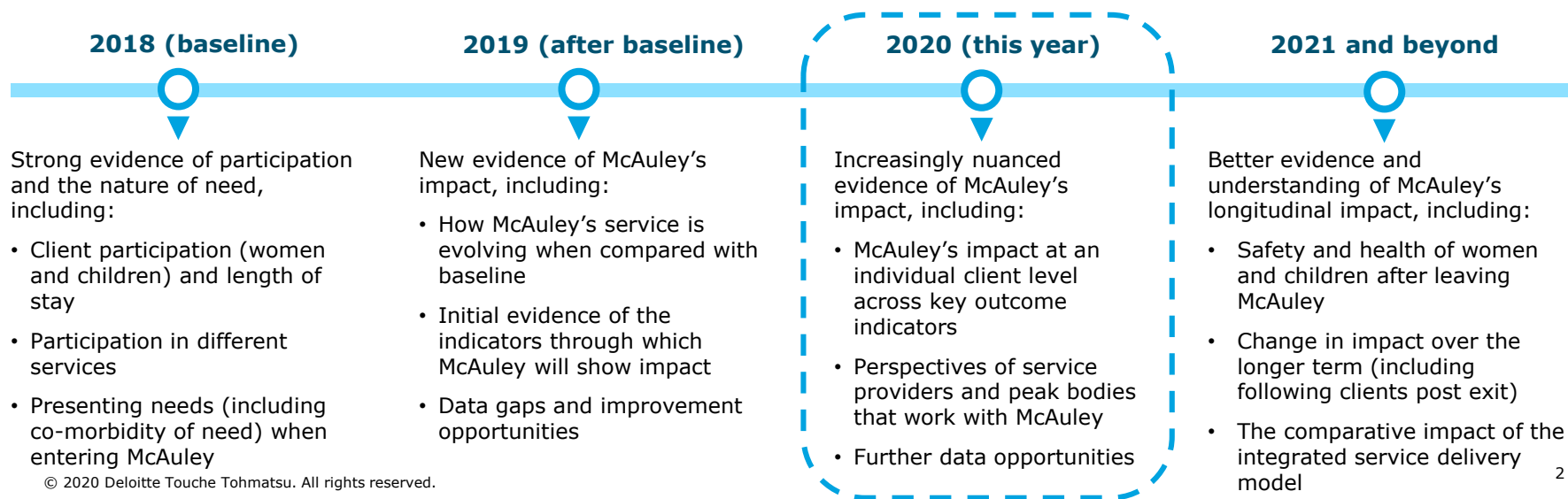
McAuley is investing in evaluation to understand and strengthen the impact they generate, for both their clients and our society.

McAuley Community Services for Women (McAuley) aims to permanently remove women and children from situations of family violence and/or homelessness. McAuley's services have been carefully designed to meet this overarching objective through (1) creating a safe environment for women and children in times of crisis; (2) enhancing women's wellbeing and social connections through a holistic service model; and (3) building enduring solutions through transitions to permanent, safe housing.

To measure their impact in line with these objectives, McAuley has committed to a long term monitoring and evaluation strategy. In 2018 McAuley implemented a new data platform (Infoxchange SRS), in line with the evaluation framework prepared with McAuley in 2017.

This year (FY20), provides the first year for which detailed client data was able to be matched from women's entry and exit across McAuley services. This has enabled an exploration of McAuley's impact – across a range of health, wellbeing, economic and social indicators, to be conducted at a client level.

The sample size of matched client records is still relatively low – given the targeted nature of McAuley's service provision and the length of time clients remain engaged with McAuley. However, as the sample grows over the coming years – so too will the evidence of impact, informing decision making within the organisation and contributing to the growing evidence base regarding best practice service delivery in family violence and homelessness.



# Overview of report

## Content

This document sets out the Year 3 (FY20) evaluation of McAuley).

McAuley was established in 2008 to enhance and expand service provision for women and children experiencing or at risk of experiencing family violence and/or homelessness, a service that had previously been provided by the Sisters of Mercy for over 25 years.

This evaluation builds from a baseline evaluation conducted in 2018 and the Year 2 evaluation in 2019, and focuses on measuring both the acuteness of the need of McAuley's clientele, as well as the outcomes generated by the services McAuley provides. This report includes, for the first time, detailed client entry and exit data to map shifts in client circumstances over time. It is expected that this evidence base will continue to grow in the coming years, continually supporting McAuley's understanding of their impact.

This report is structured as follows:

- 1. Overview:** Overview of the objectives and findings of the Year 3 evaluation.
- 2. Context and McAuley's role:** Introduction to McAuley's services and how it fits into the broader context of family violence and homelessness services
- 3. Evaluation commitment:** This section notes McAuley's commitment to evaluation, and changes over the years in both the programs offered and the data collected.
- 4. Service provision:** This section presents McAuley's service offering, as well as details about the clients using these services.
- 5. Evaluation themes:** This section outlines the ways in which McAuley is tracking its evaluation objectives, using both activity and outcomes data.
- 6. Surveys – detailed:** This section contains additional information about available surveys, and next steps for data collection.
- 7. Next steps:** This section includes detail on McAuley's implementation timeline and future data sources to collect.
- Appendix:** Includes reference material, such as methodology taken, McAuley's program logic, and evaluation framework

# Key findings

## McAuley builds enduring solutions to homelessness and family violence.



McAuley is ensuring **women and children are safe in times of crisis.**

McAuley supported 266 women and children in crisis accommodation in FY20. While 82% of women in Crisis experienced imminent risk on entry (such as stalking or threats), the number experiencing a high level of fear reduced 24% between intake and exit.



McAuley is continuing to serve the **most vulnerable women** in Victoria.

On entry to McAuley, 82% of women were experiencing isolation. On entry to McAuley House 69% of women had no permanent address in the previous month and 25% had been sleeping rough. On entry to McAuley Care, 90% of women had suffered from physical abuse and 98% had suffered from emotional abuse



McAuley is **reducing the intergenerational impacts of family violence.**

335 children were supported through Crisis, Refuge and Family Violence (FV) Outreach services, up from 286 in FY19. On entry, 72% of these children had experienced significant disruption to education and their relationships and 54% had been absent from schooling. On exit, parenting issues reported by women in McAuley Care had reduced from 43% to 20%.

Further, 2,416 children were supported through the Court Support 4 Kids program, and 17 children received tutoring in FY20.



McAuley is **supporting women's physical and mental wellbeing.**

There were 405 onsite psychologist visits and 614 nurse appointments. 69% of women across all McAuley programs had a mental health diagnosis or recognised mental health indicator at entry.



McAuley is increasing **women's financial security**, reducing the likelihood of returning to unsafe living arrangements.

36 women gained employment through McAuley Works, while a partnership with WEstJustice led to the waiver of \$218,204 in debt for McAuley clients. Additionally women experiencing financial issues reduced from 59% to 39% between entry and exit for women who engaged in McAuley services for longer than 3 months.



McAuley is **giving women the skills** to prevent returning to unsafe living arrangements.

There were 1,425 interactions with the Skills 4 Life program, including informational and social activities.



McAuley is **building strong connections between women and their community.**

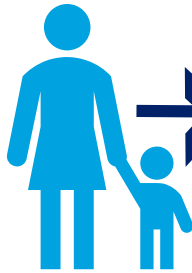
34 women participated in the Women in the Community program. Women across McAuley House, Refuge and Outreach reported a reduction in social connection issues (32% to 18%).

# Key findings

## The journey of women and children at McAuley


Women and children **enter** McAuley in states of **high vulnerability**.

- On entry, 82% of women experienced **imminent risks** e.g. stalking (Crisis)
- 67% of women experienced **high fear** (Crisis)
- 90% of women had experienced **physical harm** (Care)



McAuley responds to this complexity of need through **a variety of tailored and integrated service offerings**.

- 64% of children had been **harmed by the perpetrator**
- 72% of children experienced **disruption to education** and relationships



266 clients supported in short term accommodation through **crisis services**

423 clients received case management through **refuge and outreach services**

56 women received long term integrated care and support through **McAuley House**

40% of Crisis clients are referred to another organisation.

77% of Crisis clients exit into **emergency accommodation**.

Women and children at McAuley are supported to **address a multitude of barriers** that may prevent them from returning to **safe, independent living**

150 **debt-related issues** supported

1425 interactions with **Skills 4 Life**

140 **legal-related issues** supported

405 sessions with **psychologist**

36 women **gained employment** through McAuley Works

2416 interactions with **Court Support 4 Kids**

Male children over the age of 12 **permitted to stay with mother**

17 children accessed **tutoring**

Services seek to **minimise the disruptive impact on children's lives**.

Women and children are supported to **exit into safe and sustainable accommodation**.

Women and children are supported to **exit with the skills and support to remain living safely and independently**.

Women can remain connected to McAuley through Women in Community, or – in times of crisis – respite. **This minimizes the risk to women re-entering cycles of violence or social isolation.**



24% fewer women had a **high level of fear** (Crisis)

23% fewer women experienced **parenting issues**

18% fewer women reported **social connection issues**

# Interpreting the key findings

## Operational implications for McAuley going forward

The services provided by McAuley are necessarily differentiated to support women across various intensities and complexities of need. As such, **evaluation findings at the service or client level are more telling than aggregate data pooled across services.**<sup>1</sup>

- Analysis of service level data finds that McAuley's ability to **positively influence a women's outcomes is correlated with the length of time a women engages with McAuley**, noting that length of time spent at McAuley is often determined by the nature of the service.
- 77% of women exiting from crisis are going to other forms of emergency accommodation, and **remain at risk of homelessness**. This highlights the need for additional crisis capacity within the broader Victorian family violence response system.

The data pertaining to shifts in women's outcomes over the time they engage with McAuley services is still emerging, and should be interpreted with the following context:

- The analysis showing a matched sample of client outcomes from entry to exit is limited by the number of McAuley clients that had exited in FY20 but also entered McAuley following the introduction of the SRS in 2018. As clients often stay with McAuley for long time periods, and systematic completion of entry questionnaires was not embedded in the organisation until this FY, **the sample is small and biased towards shorter stay clients**. As the sample grows, data analysis **will link outcomes with client complexity**, creating a nuanced understanding of which services work, in which ways, for which clients.
- The **way that the outcomes questions are phrased, as well as when and how entry and exit questionnaires are administered, influences the data**. For instance, McAuley staff suggested that exit questionnaires conducted as a client is leaving McAuley after a period of stability and safety may result in exit surveys being biased towards negative emotions. Similarly, some self-reported outcomes – such as health outcomes, may appear at face-value to have worsened as McAuley clients are connected with health professionals and learn more about any presenting health issues. The evaluation will continue to work closely with McAuley to determine the most rigorous and robust methods of data collection.

While outcomes data is still emerging, the evaluation has identified several key themes – including **the potential to positively influence the experience of children** accompanying their mothers through homelessness and family violence services; **the impact of an integrated service model** on the timeliness, quality and impact of outcomes realised for women experiencing homeless and family violence (including the reduced likelihood of re-entering unsafe living environments); and current limitations of the sector in responding to women and children in crisis.

- These emerging themes present areas for deeper exploration over the coming years of the evaluation. **Gathering of longitudinal and comparative data to understand the journey of women and children after they leave McAuley** will be important in evidencing the long term impacts of McAuley's model, supporting continual refinement of the service offering and advocating for sector reform where system constraints present barriers to best practice delivery.

<sup>1</sup> The evaluation has disaggregated findings at the service level throughout the report, and ensured only to aggregate findings where it is appropriate to do so. Comparisons between services should be treated with caution.

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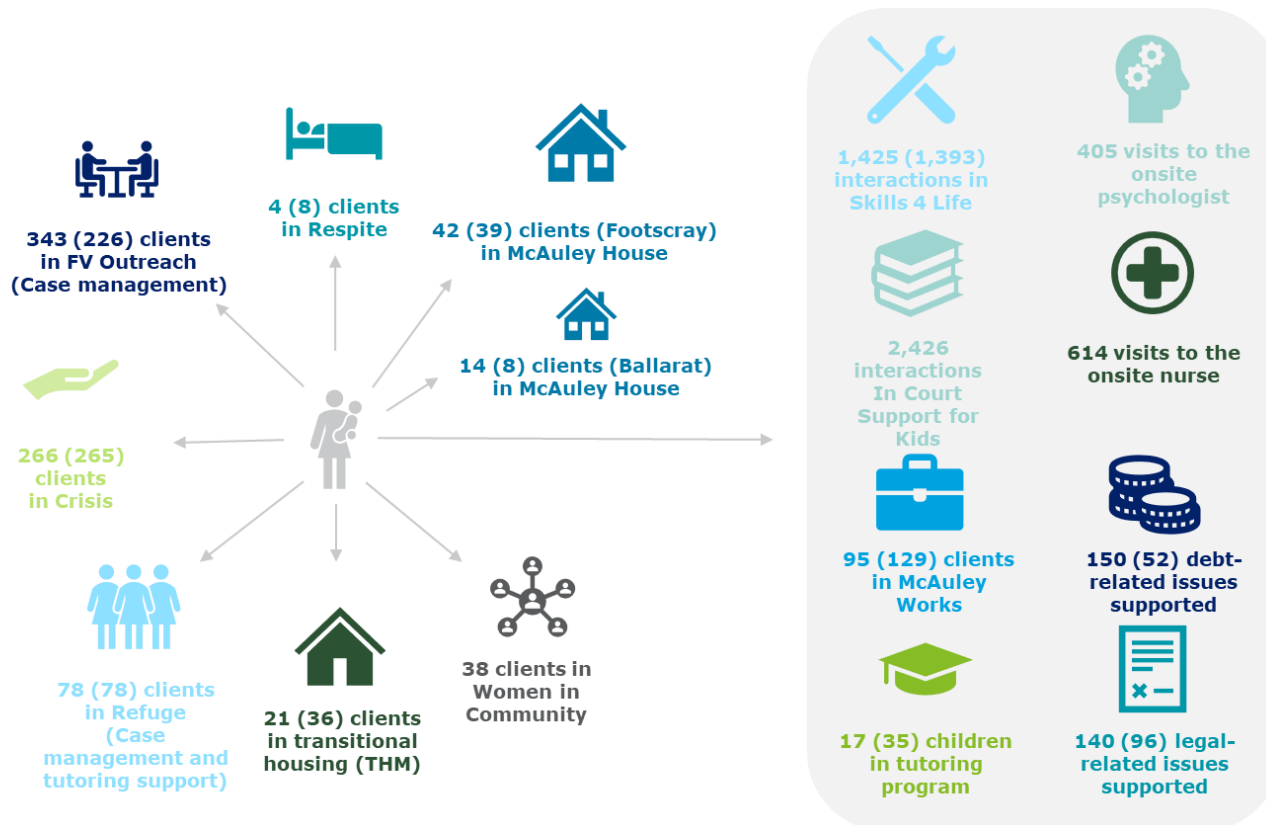
## Overview

# McAuley's service offering: FY20

McAuley's services are client-centred, comprehensive and connected

McAuley offers eight key service areas, as well as various other supports, which are designed to meet the needs of women along their journey to safe and permanent housing. McAuley provides women with multiple integrated services which are client-centred, comprehensive and connected, preventing women from needing to navigate complex systems across multiple organisations.

Figure 2: McAuley's integrated service offering





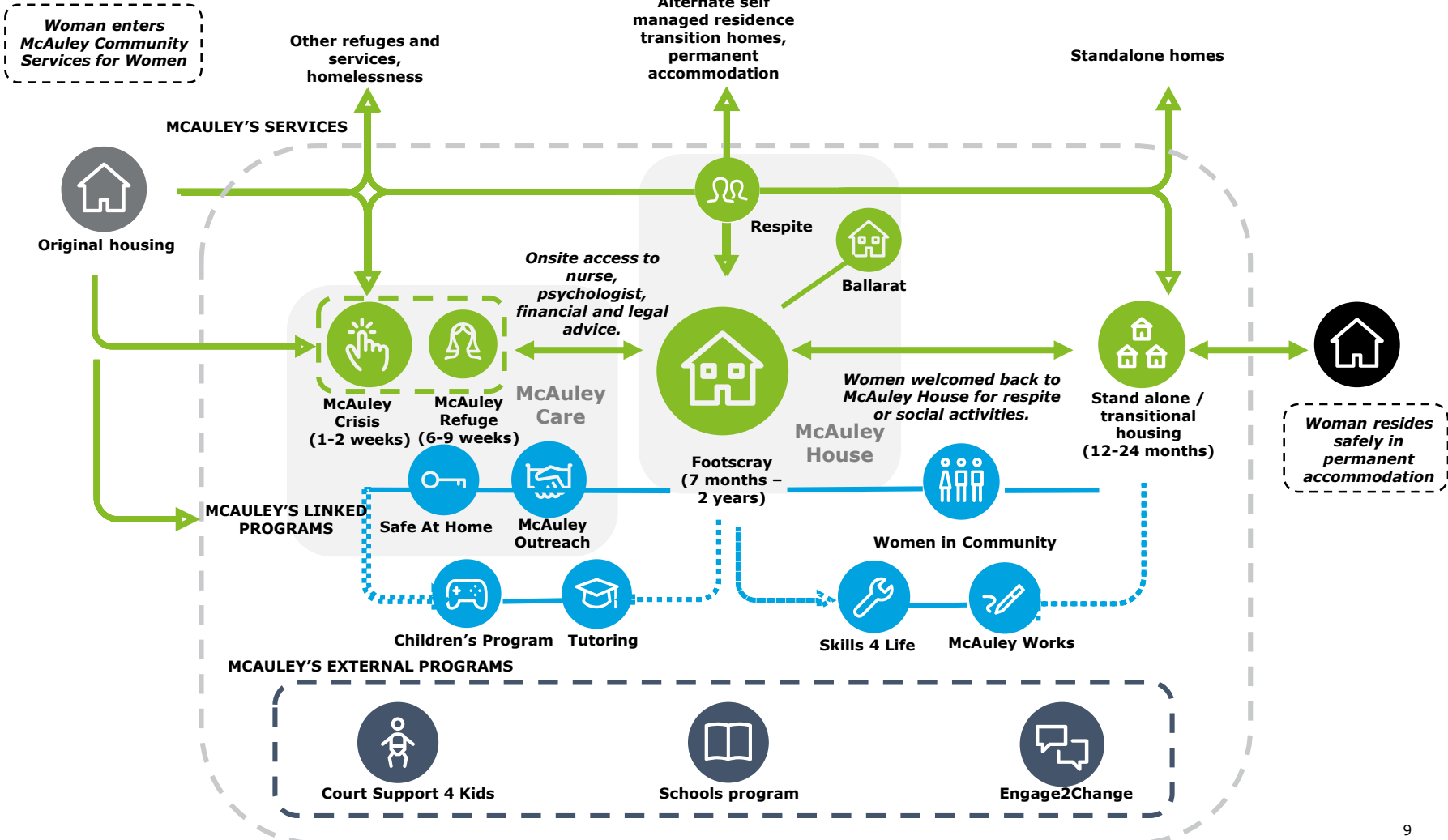
# McAuley's service offering: FY 20

McAuley's services are client-centred, comprehensive and connected

\$7.39 million income (\$4.98 FY18-19)

8 key service areas supporting 710 women and children

Figure 1: Overview of McAuley's service offering



Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2020, data provided by McAuley.

# McAuley's service offering: FY 20

## A service level overview



### McAuley House (Footscray and Ballarat)

- 56 women resided at McAuley House over FY20, for an average of 245 nights per person
- 61% of women presented due to family violence, while 54% presented due to housing crisis, 25% of women experienced rough sleeping in the month before presenting
- 71% of women had a mental health diagnosis or mental health indicator at entry

### McAuley Care (Crisis, Refuge and Outreach)



- 132 women and 134 children resided at McAuley Crisis and 33 women and 45 children resided at McAuley Refuge over FY20. 150 women and 192 children were supported through Family Violence Outreach <sup>1</sup>
- On entry to McAuley Care, 70% of mothers feared for the safety of their children, with 19% reporting their children were still in contact with perpetrators of family violence
- Women were more likely to be unemployed prior to entry in FY20 than FY19. 53% of women were unemployed prior to entry and 30% were not in the labour force
- 99% of women presented due to family violence and 38% due to lack of community or family support (multiple reasons can be cited)
- 48% of women were from CALD backgrounds



### Other McAuley programs and services

- 8 women (including 2 Crisis clients) used the Respite bed, 21 were supported in transitional housing (THM) and 38 were involved in Women in the Community
- There were 1,425 interactions with Skills 4 Life
- 36 women were placed in employment with McAuley Works
- There were 405 sessions with the onsite psychologist
- 2,416 children were supported through Court Support 4 Kids
- \$218,204 of debt waivers were secured for clients

<sup>1</sup> This may include duplicates across programs.

# What changed in FY20?

McAuley's service offering has grown, as has its data collection

## Change in program focus

- As McAuley House and Crisis typically operate at capacity, overall client numbers did not change significantly from FY19.
- However, relative to FY19, 116 additional women and children in Family Violence Outreach were supported, there were 32 additional interactions with Skills 4 Life and 4 more women were placed in employment with McAuley Works
- The cohort of women served by McAuley remained relatively consistent – with a slightly higher proportion of women presenting as unemployed, and a slightly lower proportion of CALD women.
- Availability of Napier Street accommodation helped to accelerate the objective of transitioning women into permanent housing.

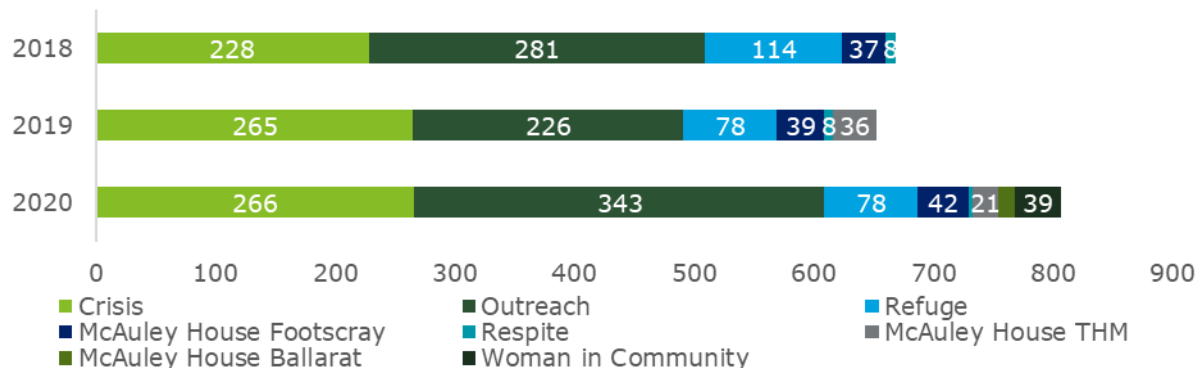
## Change in data availability

- This year, the data has allowed for analysis of Ballarat House and Women in Community clients, in addition to the other programs.
- Data in the Family Violence Risk assessment and McAuley Needs assessment has allowed for the comparison of women's experience at entry and exit, which helps to better understand McAuley's impact.
- Child Family Violence Risk assessments were also available for the first time.

## The impact of COVID-19

- The pandemic, the associated economic downturn and government responses have already impacted upon the experiences of family violence and homelessness among women.
- These circumstances are likely to influence the experiences of women at McAuley, and therefore the data that is observed in FY20. It is also likely to impact upon services that McAuley partner with, including Courts Victoria and other services or referral organisations.
- Court Support 4 Kids, the tutoring program and other McAuley services have reduced in capacity this year due to the lockdowns. However McAuley is working to ensure clients' needs are met in the online environment.

Chart 1: Total McAuley clients (including duplicates across programs) 2018-2020



Source: SRS Support period data 2020.

Note: Includes duplicate persons across programs but not within programs. The split between McAuley House Footscray, Women in Community, THM and Respite was not available in previous years. Clients include women and children.

# Consultation findings

## Stakeholders noted the benefits of McAuley's integrated service delivery model

To inform this year's evaluation, a series of targeted consultations were undertaken with key McAuley stakeholders. This included organisations that refer to McAuley, government departments that oversee McAuley's services and relevant peak bodies. Key insights included:

- McAuley's **integrated service delivery model is highly valued.**

*Stakeholders observed that by providing all services under one organisation, women benefit from not having to navigate complex systems across multiple organisations. Further, it was observed that McAuley provides women with flexibility along their path to housing and relationship stability, recognising women's need to move in all directions between services. Referral organisations highlighted that there is a greater opportunity for success when women were referred to McAuley as opposed to single-service organisations, as multiple barriers are addressed cohesively.*

- McAuley's **support for women and children is considered best practice**

*Stakeholders identified that McAuley staff provide dignity in their services, with genuine care and compassion for their clients. It was observed that the McAuley team go to extended lengths to ensure clients are well looked after even beyond the period in which direct service with McAuley ends, and strongly advocate on behalf of the clients. Further, the model supports women across a wide range of services including financial, legal, health and social. Combined, this model reduces the chance that clients are 'lost' within the service system, or return to unsafe living environments.*

- There is **opportunity for McAuley's model of service delivery to be more widely utilised**

*Stakeholders would like to see an expansion of McAuley's model across the state – citing increase access to McAuley services as a key growth opportunity. Stakeholders suggested that McAuley could draw on large areas of reform both in Victoria and nationally, including reforms following the Royal Commission into Family Violence, housing reforms during COVID-19, and the increased focus on community based service delivery in the mental health space and national reforms, to advocate for increased investment in integrated service delivery.*

"No other agency could deliver the same outcome" – referral agency when discussing a women with particularly complex needs.

McAuley was considered to provide best practice services, based on the integrated nature of their programs, and their ability to put the woman and child at the centre of service delivery

"McAuley staff provide dignity in their services, with genuine care and compassion for their clients. They go above and beyond to ensure clients are well looked after, and strongly advocate on behalf of the clients"

# Next steps

## How McAuley's evaluation framework continues to evolve

Over time, McAuley is working to improve their systems, data collections and sharing of success, allowing the impact of the evaluation framework to be fully realised.

While the introduction of SRS has represented a significant step forward in the consistency, comprehensiveness and accuracy of McAuley's data collection – there are opportunities for further development of the data capture and analysis systems as the SRS becomes embedded in every day practice. These opportunities are presented below.

