

## From the CEO

In recent months it has been gratifying to see that the ideas around ending chronic homelessness and using new and effective models, such as 'Housing First' and 'Permanent Supportive Housing', has grown some significant momentum in Australia.

Whilst the Mercy Foundation has not been alone in its advocacy for these types of programs, it has certainly been working with other like-minded organisations to provide leadership on this issue.

The Mercy Foundation owes a large debt of gratitude to the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy for having the foresight to decide that they wanted their Foundation to fully focus its attention on one key social justice issue. The fact that we have been able to influence and promote systemic changes to the way in which chronic homelessness in Australia is addressed is testament to the commitment of the Sisters. I personally thank them for their unwavering support to the Foundation.

### Working together to solve homelessness

We were pleased to co-host the official launch of the Parity edition 'Philanthropic, Corporate and Private Sector Responses to Homelessness' on the 26 July at UBS in the Sydney CBD. Our special guest, the Hon. Brendan O'Connor, Federal Minister for Housing and Homelessness, spoke on the government's ongoing commitment to make a real difference to homelessness. Philip Coleman, Vice Chairman of UBS Australia, stated his commitment to working in concert with government, non-government organisations and others in the private sector to address chronic homelessness. Mr Coleman has, for the past few years, been Chair of the 90 Lives 90 Homes project that is addressing homelessness in inner Sydney.

I spoke about the need for all citizens and organisations to direct their efforts into evidence based programs that are effective in ending homelessness for chronically homeless people.

### EOI open for Grants to End Homelessness

My comments at the Parity launch were relevant and timely, given the Foundation is now seeking expressions of interest for its next round of 'Grants to End Homelessness'. If any organisation is interested in making an EOI, I invite you to visit our website and review the criteria and download the EOI form. We actively encourage the development of projects which are based in evidence and effectiveness and which can have a measurable impact on preventing and/or ending homelessness.

### Felicity Reynolds

*Felicity Reynolds, The Hon. Brendan O'Connor, Philip Coleman, Vice Chairman UBS and Jenny Smith, CEO Council to Homeless Persons at the Parity Launch in July.*



*"It is unacceptable in any country, particularly in a wealthy nation like ours, that a mother and child or children should have to sleep in a car indefinitely, or that a teenager sleeps rough on the streets, possibly fleeing from family or domestic violence or other concerns at home. Therefore we need to do more".* The Hon. Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Housing and Homelessness.

## In this issue



### Home in a Box

We have been working on ways to help formerly homeless people settle in and sustain their housing.

### Ending homelessness in the Northern Rivers

Terrific results have been achieved by our partners in Murwillumbah to help address homelessness in that region.

### Helping to end chronic homelessness

One of our grants has helped identify the underlying causes that have persisted for decades for people who have been long term homeless. The results have been outstanding.

### Helping local communities

Read about the small grants program, providing local community organisations with funds to help them address the challenges faced by their community.

If you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please sign up at our website: [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)

## HELPING TO SUSTAIN HOUSING



**We have been working on ways to help formerly homeless people settle into their new home, lay down roots and start afresh.**

Home In A Box was designed to do just that. After a successful pilot study in Western Sydney, Home in a Box will be rolled out to over 75 men, women and families over the next 12 months.

This idea was first put to us by a young woman who had spent time living on the streets. She spoke to us about the difficulties of carrying possessions around when you are moving from one place to another, and the difficulties she faced settling into a new home when she didn't have anything to help make it her home.

Home in a Box provides basics such as crockery, cutlery, cookware, a toaster and kettle, sheets, towels, pillow and doonas, to help make a house a home.

A pilot of this project was run in conjunction with Wentworth Community Housing. The responses were terrific, summed up in the comments by Sue from Wentworth Community Housing:

*"Both tenants were overwhelmed by the contents and L\* was actually speechless when unpacking the box, he appeared almost to be in tears and is so thankful to receive this he said he couldn't express it properly. G\* was equally excited and stated it was Christmas except better than any Christmas he's ever had and L\* commented that he didn't get anything, not even a card for his birthday and this makes up for that.*

*Again it is a really great feeling to be part of this and thanks to you and the Mercy Foundation for giving me and the rest of the team a chance to really see joy in tenants faces, to pass on to them something they can use and appreciate.*

*PS Just quickly, L\* was most impressed with the egg flip, he hasn't been able to turn them properly with a spoon. Things we take so much for granted!*

Home In A Box is generously supported by Kennards Self Storage, My House, Headline, Holmans Commercial and the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney. We also thank Siobhan Moroney of Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College for her assistance with graphics.

We are still looking for suppliers to help us with cookware and bakeware. If you can help here, please contact Sue on 02 9911 7390.

We look forward to rolling out Home in a Box over the next 12 months.

In Brief..

### The Housing Squeeze Continues...

The **COAG Reform Council** released its third report in June assessing progress under the National Affordable Housing Agreement. The Council found that nationally, there is no indication that housing affordability has improved. Further, rental affordability has worsened in capital cities and for those on lowest incomes.

**Homes for All**, a report by the McKell Institute released in April, highlighted the enormous housing stress in Sydney, where it now takes nine times the median salary to buy house, compared to twenty years ago when it was three times the median salary. This ration is higher than New York or London. The report listed 40 things to do to improve housing supply and affordability. To read more, go to [mckellinstitute.org.au](http://mckellinstitute.org.au) and download the Homes For All article.

**"It's like Christmas except it's better than any Christmas I have ever had."**

*Comments from one of the first recipients of our Home in a Box.*



### HOW TO HELP

We would greatly appreciate your help in rolling out more of these kits.

Please donate to the Mercy Foundation using the enclosed envelope, through our secure website:

[www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)

or call the office on 02 9911 7390.

All donations above \$2 are tax deductible. **Thank You!**



# Thank you for supporting the Mercy Foundation's Home for Good Gala Dinner!

On June 22, the Mercy Foundation hosted the Home for Good Gala Dinner to raise funds for our latest project, Home in a Box.

We were privileged to have the Hon Justice Virginia Bell AC as our guest speaker for the evening. Justice Bell recalled her early days working as a young lawyer at the Redfern Legal Clinic. She reminded the audience about the continuing work of the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney to address social injustice, from the early days in Redfern to the work of the Mercy Foundation today.

Our MC for the evening was the comedian Keith Scott. Keith is a talented mimic and entertained the audience with his quick wit and master impressions.

There was some interesting moving and shaking on the dance floor as people jostled for space thanks to the high energy and contagious enthusiasm of the fabulous John Field Band.

With enormous thanks to our sponsors, auction and raffle contributors, our donors and our guests, the evening successfully raised enough funds to roll out another 75 'Home in a Box' kits over the next 12 months.

Our heartfelt thanks to our major sponsors:

- Carroll and O'Dea Lawyers**
- Commonwealth Bank**
- North Sydney Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Centre**
- PhysioEvolution**
- St John of God Health Care**

Special thanks to the Westin Hotel and to Susie Sinclair of Burgeon Design.

**Thank You to our Auction and Raffle Contributors for your incredible generosity:**

- Legends Under Glass*
- Serena Sanderson Catering*
- Westin Hotel and Resorts*



The John Field Band in action!

- 4Fourteen Restaurant Surry Hills*
- Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts*
- Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney*
- Leona Edmiston Clinique*
- Keith McGrath Austins Wines*
- Cogito Wines*
- Aqua Dining*
- Avanti Jewellers*
- The Style Above Hair Salon*
- McIntosh Medical*
- Epitome Cafe Lane Cove*
- Northbridge Golf Club*
- Intimo Lingerie*

## At work in our community

### Helping women with MS

A small grant was awarded to the Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House in Victoria. This initiative brought together 6 women, whose lives are restricted due to MS, and their carers. The group met fortnightly for lunch and to work with an Arts Therapist.

The women created beautiful pieces of art, and through the process, were able to open up and share their concerns and feelings. It provided an outlet by which they focused on a common interest. The women enjoyed the meetings immensely and developed valuable connections and a new supportive network.





# With your help, we are helping to END homelessness

Some great work has been achieved by the organisations we have partnered with through our Grants to End Homelessness programs.

## Brokerage for Neuropsychological Assessments

### Haymarket Foundation

This project funded comprehensive, professional Neuropsychological Assessments for selected persons who had experienced long term homelessness. The assessments were hoped to provide better informed decisions about optimal housing solutions based on an improved understanding of the clients' needs for support around basic living and coping skills.

Fourteen neuropsychological assessments have been completed. The results have been extremely useful in providing the best outcome for the clients. Various neurological and psychological diagnoses were made or confirmed, including



This project identified underlying causes that were significant in leading to long term homelessness.

traumatic brain injury, stroke, hypoxic brain injury, seizure disorder. On many occasions, these diagnoses had been suspected but never confirmed.

Making and confirming diagnoses were instrumental in providing realistic prognosis and making relevant recommendations for the clients.

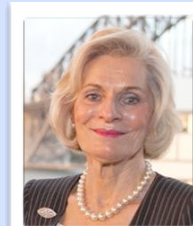
This worthwhile project meant that finally, where problems had persisted for decades in some cases, underlying causes were finally identified, and appropriately addressed, resulting in stable accommodation and tailored support for these clients.

## Farewell to our Chair

At our Gala dinner, we took the opportunity to say farewell to our Chair, Prof. The Hon Jennifer Boland AC.

Jenny's enthusiasm, support, guidance and commitment will be greatly missed by us all.

Thank you Jenny for your enormous contribution to the Mercy Foundation.



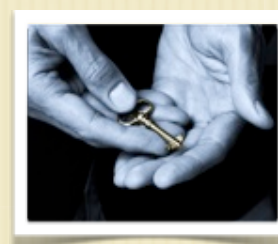
The Mercy Foundation is committed to social justice and structural changes, resulting in greater social equity and inclusion in our community. At the heart of all projects and activities is the service of human dignity. Our focus is on **ending chronic homelessness** for individuals in extreme need, and returning dignity to their lives.

## Grants to END Homelessness OPEN

The Mercy Foundation's Grants to End Homelessness are now open. Please refer to our website [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au) for the Expression of Interest form. EOIs are due in by September 30 2012.

Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application by January 31, 2013.

Grants will be announced mid March. Please note the criteria as set out on our website. Applicants are encouraged to call Felicity Reynolds on 02 9911 7390 to discuss their project prior to submitting an EOI.





## Safe and sustainable housing for Asylum Seekers

This project is a joint initiative of the House of Welcome and the Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW. The project provides crisis support, transitional accommodation and long term, sustainable housing solutions.

The project came about as a result of the increasing risk of homelessness facing asylum seekers in Sydney.

This year, 26 people have been supported by this grant, by providing safe housing for women, men and families and by educating tenants in tenancy management and sustainment. In terms of financial support, 12 microfinance loans have been provided for housing, medical, employment or education purposes.

## Improving financial literacy for women

Through our Small Grants program, the Mercy Foundation supported an initiative by Uniting Communities Adelaide East to run a financial literacy course aimed at women who had experienced domestic violence. The course focused on developing the women's budgeting and financial skills.

Many of these women are living alone, struggling to bring up children on a single pension.

The course helped build the women's confidence in planning for their financial futures.

During the process, the women also improved their self-esteem and there were positive flow on effects to other areas of their lives.



## SMALL GRANTS AWARDED

We look forward to working with the following organisations in providing much needed assistance to their local communities that will truly help change the lives of the people involved.

**Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation** will run a program with aboriginal males from 12 to 25 years and their elders to learn about their culture, art, hear stories of the dreaming time, and provide mentors for the younger men.

**Endeavour Ministries** will provide Rental Rescue Loans for families in crisis, to provide urgent assistance to families that have fallen behind in their rent and face imminent eviction. The loans are run using a NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme), providing a replenishing pool of funds to help out other families as loans are paid back.

**Chain Reaction Foundation** will help families and caregivers improve their parenting skills and family relationships through workshops and a mentoring program.

**The River Nile Learning Centre** will help young African refugees to attend school and work with them to improve their employment prospects.

**The Christian Family Centre** will host Kid's Days and extended child visits to prisons in Risdon Tasmania. This will provide children with time

to relax with their parent, to get to know them again and enjoy normal parent-child activities, so they leave with some positive memories of shared experiences.

**Solutions 4 Learning** will help disadvantaged women on low incomes develop money management skills.

**Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation** will run groups with young Aboriginal mothers and elders.

**Art2Healing** will provide art therapy training on reproductive health to teenage boys and girls in remote communities around Alice Springs.

**The Boambee East Community Centre** will provide a safe place for African women to come together and develop friendships, networks and to reduce their isolation.

**The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre** will provide English tutoring to asylum seeker women at home. Many women cannot attend classes for family, economic, or health reasons.

**NATSI Catholic Council** will help indigenous communities make baby safe goods and alert the community about SIDS, which is more than double the rate for indigenous babies, through an education campaign.

**The Anne McDonald Centre** will be purchasing a Vantage Lite Liberator to give young people with little or no speech the ability to communicate.

## Thank You to the Sisters of Mercy

We are very grateful for the continuing generosity of the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy. We now have 3 wonderful volunteers, Sr Pat Barton, Sr Bernadette Mansour and Sr Maria Gidley, who give so much of their time and effort to help run the Foundation smoothly.

With much thanks to the efforts of Sr Maria and Sr Norma, over \$700 was raised by the Sisters who ran the Mercy Foundation Easter raffle.



*Srs Maria and Norma raising funds through our the Easter Raffle.*

## HOW OUR GRANTS ARE HELPING TO END HOMELESSNESS

We are delighted to announce that two of our grant recipients, the Murwillumbah Accommodation Support Project and Guthrie House have both secured funding to ensure their valuable work continues. With your support, we are privileged to have helped these two organisations start their valuable work.

### Ending homelessness in Murwillumbah

The team at the Murwillumbah Accommodation Support Project has been working hard for the last 3 years to help house those facing or at risk of homelessness in their community. The great news is



*There is a 16 year wait list for public housing in Northern Rivers.*

that the position funded by the Mercy Foundation during this time has now attracted funding from Clubs NSW to carry on the great work being achieved by the team.

Over the past

financial year, the Murwillumbah Accommodation Support Project has housed 23 homeless clients. There is currently an unbelievable 16 year wait to access public housing on the northern rivers.

The MASP works with supporting homeless people and families into private rentals, and provides support to help them sustain their tenancy. They also offer financial counseling, provide brokerage funds where needed, organise referrals and assist with utilities connections etc.

**Congratulations to Wendy Constantine and her team at the Murwillumbah Community Centre for their continued hard work and efforts in helping to end homelessness in the community.**

### Helping end homelessness for vulnerable women

The workers at Guthrie House AfterCare Team have been addressing the problem of homelessness for our society's most vulnerable women.

With confirmation of additional funding from the Department of Health and Ageing, the Guthrie House AfterCare Team can continue addressing the problem of homelessness that often challenges women who have been involved with the criminal justice system.

Most women who come to Guthrie House are homeless. The workers not only help them to find housing (through Housing NSW, community housing providers or supported accommodation), but continue to provide outreach services to women once they leave Guthrie House.

In the last 6 months, the service has accepted 8 new clients into the program. All 8 are now housed securely and living stably in the community. The AfterCare team provides specific plans for each client tailored to their specific needs and self-determined goals. Through counseling, weekly support groups,

home visits, assistance in liaising with Family and Community Services, TAFE and mental health services, the progress of the women has been terrific.

The Mercy Foundation funded the first After Care worker in 2010. An additional 6

months funding was granted in 2011 to ensure that AfterCare continued. This position has now been successfully funded through the Department of Health and Ageing for the next 3 years.

We congratulate the team at Guthrie House for their fantastic work.



If you would like to help bring about an end to homelessness, please donate using the enclosed envelope, call the office on 02 9911 7390 with your credit card details or donate online through our website [www.mercyfoundation.com.au](http://www.mercyfoundation.com.au)

**Thank you for your generosity.**