

August Update 2010

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from the ceo

As many of you would already be aware we have recently finalised the small grants for the latest round of funding. We receive so many requests that it always creates very difficult decisions for our Grants sub-committee. Thank you to everyone who applied and we are sorry that we are not able to support more projects. Congratulations to all those groups who were successful and are doing such great work in their individual communities throughout Australia.

The Mercy Foundation really needs more funds to be able to increase its grant making with both the small grants program and the 'Grants to End Homelessness'. If you are involved with a school or local community group who you think may be interested in helping to raise funds – especially through our special 'key to ending homelessness' kit please contact Sue Mowbray at the Mercy Foundation for more details about how you may be able to help. Phone Sue on 02 9911 7390.



The Mercy Foundation is continuing to be active in supporting local responses to solving homelessness. In my capacity as Chair of the Nepean Regional Taskforce on Homelessness I recently had the pleasure of introducing special guests, Minister Plibersek (Federal Minister for Housing) and Minister Terrenzini (NSW Minister for Housing), at the launch of 'Project 40' at Penrith and Windsor. This project, now being supported through both State and Federal funds will be providing permanent housing and ongoing support to families and individuals who have been homeless.

Felicity Reynolds

small grants in action— women experiencing brain injury (WEB) program

Diverge Consulting approached the Mercy Foundation for a small grant to provide a specialist service to women who have a disability as a result of Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).

The WEB (Women Experiencing Brain injury) program is a 6 week program where women who have experienced brain injury can share their stories, find ways of coping, develop skills and enhance their health and well being.

The group will be facilitated by an experienced psychologist with expertise in ABI. The program will assist up to 10 women who have ABI as a result of traumatic brain injury, stroke, hypoxia, epilepsy and a number of other causes. It specifically focuses on women who have been victims of violence and aggression.

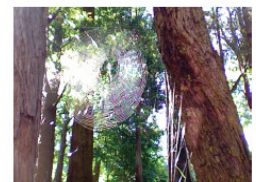
Diverge Consulting is working collaboratively with government and non-government organisations to ensure their program will provide these women with positive and valuable outcomes.

Traumatic Brain Injury has been identified as an impairment affecting a proportion of chronically homeless women. This program provides a valuable service to a very needy group.

WEB Program

Women's Experience of Brain injury (WEB)

WEB is a 6-week group program, where women who have experienced brain injury can share their stories, find ways of coping, develop skills, and enhance their health and well being.



The WEB Program will provide a weekly gathering place for women to discuss their needs, challenges, and achievements in a safe and supportive environment. The group will deal with issues common to female survivors of brain injury, and enable participants to learn from the experiences of their peers. Group members will have the opportunity to feel understood, at ease and accepted.

Starts: Thursday 28th October 2010
Time: 12:30 – 2:00 PM
Place: 123 Albion Street, Brunswick
(enter via door on Austin Terrace)
Register: Phone 9384 6260

The group will be facilitated by an experienced clinical neuropsychologist.

This is a free program. The group is being organised by Diverge Consulting thanks to a grant from the

mercy foundation[®]



Diverge is a not-for-profit community organisation. Our mission is to assist people with ABI, their carers and the wider community to better understand and manage behaviour change.

DIVERGE CONSULTING
PO Box 2088 Lygon St North LPO, Brunswick, East VIC 3057
T: 9384 6260 E: info@diverge.org.au W: www.diverge.org.au



at the service of human dignity

homelessness and female asylum seekers

A disturbing new segment of homeless women has been identified amongst asylum seekers. We recently visited the House of Welcome and the Asylum Seekers Centre in Sydney. Both these NGOs provide a valuable service, assisting asylum seekers in finding housing and support. We were concerned to hear of reports from both of these organisations about a relatively new segment of homelessness emerging amongst asylum seekers, that of homeless women and women with children.

Many asylum seeking women arrive without their partners. They have few possessions and little financial support. After arriving in Australia, asylum seekers apply for refugee status with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. If they are eligible, they may receive an allowance through the ASAS administered by the Red Cross. This allowance is available once the application for refugee status has been submitted. There may be a 6 week period from arriving to making this application. During this period, the women may be destitute, with no money, no accom-



modation provided and little support.

Some lucky women are taken in by their community. Many end up in emergency shelters, couch surfing or on the street. Some of these women are pregnant, escaping violence and torture

in their homeland, seeking safety. Both the House of Welcome and Asylum Seeker Centre are working to address this issue.

The Mercy Foundation gave a small grant to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to fund interpreters for women with complex cases. Often these women have experienced trauma and need assistance in overcoming cultural barriers that may prevent them from putting forward a successful claim for refugee status.

news from the Australian Common Ground Alliance (ACGA)

Jennie Churchill joined the Mercy Foundation in July as the inaugural Executive Officer of the Australian Common Ground Alliance (ACGA). Her role involves nurturing the development of Common Ground in Australia, facilitating communication between the various Common Ground initiatives in each state, and bringing together a national focus for solving chronic homelessness through Common Ground initiatives. The Mercy Foundation continues to be proud of its role in supporting the Alliance and through hosting this important new position.

Australian Common Ground initiatives are now underway in five capital cities – Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Hobart – and the ACT has an active committee working towards a Common Ground project in Canberra.

In South Australia, a second building is under construction in Adelaide with two developments now committed for Port Augusta. The latter will mark the first foray for Common Ground into regional Australia. The Melbourne project, Elizabeth Street Common Ground, is now completed and will celebrate its opening on 17 August, providing 131 units of high quality supported housing for both formerly homeless people and low income tenants.

Construction of the 104 unit Camperdown project in Sydney has just commenced, with an anticipated completion date of mid to late 2011.

All the Common Ground projects in Australia reflect the importance of partnerships. These include state, federal, corporate and private philanthropic funding agreements, a developer such as Grocon committed to delivering a building at cost, non-government partners delivering a range of support and tenancy management partners, and an extraordinary list of companies and individuals providing in kind materials and other support. For more information about Common Ground, please contact Jennie Churchill on (02) 9911 7392 or email

jennie.churchill@mercyfoundation.com.au.



Plan for Elizabeth Street Common Ground, Melbourne.

Project 40— ending homelessness in the Blue Mountains

In early August, NSW Housing Minister Frank TERNZINI launched the NSW regional homelessness action plans. The project, to be delivered in conjunction with the federal government, will deliver vital services to ten local regions over the next four years. \$40 million has been directly allocated to make sure 20 important projects are rolled out as part of the new 10-region homeless action plans.

Speaking at the launch, Housing Minister Tanya PLIBERSEK said the funding will fill service gaps across NSW and make a practical difference to people's lives. Ms Plibersek said the initiative will go some way towards reducing overall homelessness by half by 2020.

Some funding has already been released to allow important local projects to begin, including \$1.9 million for Project 40, a project in the Nepean area which will help more families to access long-term housing.

Project 40 is the first stage in the establishment of a Regional Supported Housing Service which will provide permanent housing to the most vulnerable and chronically homeless people in the Blue Mountains.

The Mercy Foundation proudly supports this project under our Grants to End Homelessness.

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.

congratulations to our small grant recipients



Congratulations to all organisations that were successful in their application for a Small Grant from the Mercy Foundation. We look forward to hearing about their progress and will keep you informed about the outcomes achieved.

We received many worthwhile applications making the selection process difficult. We thank all our applicants for taking the time to apply for a small grant and we are heartened by the many small groups working to make a positive contribution to their community and to social justice in Australia.

We wish all our applicants the very best for the future.

New projects we are supporting under our Small Grants program include:

- Financial Literacy Course designed specifically for women escaping domestic violence
- Holiday program for indigenous children in a remote area of the Northern Territory
- Social Support program for CALD disabled children
- Interpreters for asylum seeking women with complex cases.

new faces at the mercy foundation

Two wonderful volunteers have joined the Mercy Foundation. Sr Bernadette Mansour, RSM, works with us on Wednesdays and Sr Pat Barton, RSM, joins the team each Friday. We are extremely grateful for their contribution to the Foundation.

We have also taken on two final year Social Work students for a 6 month placement. Isabel and Maria bring much enthusiasm and youthfulness to our offices! They will be investigating various issues concerning homelessness during this time.

Find out the latest on addressing homelessness locally at our website www.mercyfoundation.com.au. Please send your comments or feedback to office@mercyfoundation.com.au. or call 02 9911 7390.



Yes, I would like to help the Mercy Foundation find the key to ending homelessness.

Please complete the form and post it to:
Mercy Foundation, 40 Rocklands Rd North Sydney NSW 2060

OR

make a *secure online donation* at our website, www.mercyfoundation.com.au

OR

if you would prefer to call the office for our staff to process your donation,
please call 02 9911 7390.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

I would like to donate: \$ _____

Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

- Enclosed is my cheque/money order. Please make cheques payable to Mercy Foundation.
- I cannot give now but would like to receive regular Updates from the Mercy Foundation
- I am interested in hearing about your events
- Tick here if you would like us to contact you about workplace giving, helping us with fundraising or making a gift in your will.

A receipt will be mailed to you. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. To learn more about the Mercy Foundation or solving homelessness, please visit our website www.mercyfoundation.com.au.

Thank you for your generosity.

