

From the CEO

In March I had the pleasure of being invited to a small international meeting of leaders in the field of homelessness research, policy and practice. The meeting was hosted by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in Washington DC. In attendance were people from the European Union, UK, Canada, the USA and Australia.

The 4 day meeting focused on collaboration and improved ways of sharing research as well as evidence based policy and practice. It is clear that in all the countries represented that much is currently going on to change the emphasis from servicing homelessness – to ending homelessness. Policies and programs that concentrate on permanent solutions, such as housing and support are gaining ground.

There is some great research happening internationally, from which Australia can be learning valuable lessons. Programs that work to solve homelessness and which now have a comprehensive evidence base should be adapted to our context and implemented. By sharing our findings, our successes as well as our lessons – we all have the opportunity to become a more robust and solutions based sector.

The group of 26 who attended the meeting agreed on a communiqué and an intention to build a solid international partnership. I was proud to represent the Mercy Foundation and present the views of Australians working to end homelessness. Many thanks to the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy, who have worked so hard to build such a strong base for greater social justice and equity. They sit side by side with their Foundation in carrying forward their vision for a more socially just Australia.

Felicity Reynolds

Grants to end homelessness 2011

Congratulations to the recipients of our Grants to End Homelessness for 2011.

The EOI process started in October last year, when we received over 100 applications. 10 applicants were invited to make a full application and proposal. After review by our Grants committee and Board, 5 applicants were offered a grant and another was offered a Partnership Grant.

Many applications were received from around Australia. We hope that through our fundraising, we are able to grant funds to additional worthwhile applications in the future.

Grant recipients from the latest round include:

- Hanover
- The Haymarket Foundation
- Wentworth Community Housing
- Regional Youth Support Service, Gosford
- Murwillumbah Community Centre.

A Partnership grant was awarded to the House of Welcome and the Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW.

The closing date for the next round of Grants to End Homelessness is October 31, 2011. Keep an eye on our website for the updated EOI form.

Thank you

to the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney

We are extremely grateful to the wonderful Sisters of Mercy North Sydney who raised in excess of \$1,700 for the Mercy Foundation with their Easter raffle.

Our special thanks to Sr Pat Barton and her colleagues, Sr Norma Treanor and Sr Maria Gidley, and all the Sisters who supported the raffle.

First prize was a hand crafted wheel barrow, made by Sr Maria Gidley, filled with goodies. Second prize was a dozen bottles of wine, and third prize was a basket of Easter eggs.

Our thanks to the Mater Hospital for allowing us to sell raffle tickets in the foyer, and to the many people who purchased raffle tickets.

Thanks to the efforts of Sr Pat Barton and the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy, they have raised over \$2,750 for the Foundation in the last 6 months. A fantastic effort!



The team hand over the cheque to Felicity. From left, Sr Norma (seated), Sr Pat, Felicity Reynolds, and Sr Maria.

The Mercy Foundation is focused on homelessness and its related causes and consequences. These include: affordable housing, poverty, family violence, social exclusion, mental illness, disability, addictions and brain injury. The Mercy Foundation pursues excellence in the field of understanding, preventing, responding to and ending homelessness.

How our grants are helping to END homelessness

The Mercy Foundation's Grants to End Homelessness program has been running since 2008. In that time, we have provided grants to 9 organisations to assist in our common goal of ending homelessness. Read about some of the terrific achievements of these organisations below:

Murwillumbah Community Centre

50 people housed

Since funding commenced in 2009, the Murwillumbah Accommodation Assistance Service has provided permanent housing to 50 individuals and families that were previously homeless or at risk of homelessness. Murwillumbah Community Centre also provides early intervention to people at risk of losing their tenancy, a living skills program and a number of other services aimed at reducing homelessness in the area.

Blue Mountains Youth Accommodation Support Service

16 homeless people housed

The Mercy Foundation helped to fund Project 40 Blue Mountains, a project that has now attained funding from State and Commonwealth governments and is being managed by Wentworth Community Housing.

Since the start of this project, 8 adults and 8 children have been housed in 6 properties in the Blue Mountains, and assistance has been provided to these residents to help them maintain their tenancies. They have now provided services to over 50 homeless people, providing assistance such as filling in housing application forms and assisting them in connecting them with support services.

Marist Youth Care

21 young people trained, employed and housed, 2 houses built.

The Mercy Foundation assisted in funding the Affordable Housing for Life project in western Sydney.

This is a social enterprise project developed by Marist Youth Care with a number of partners. This fantastic project involves the training of young people to help build homes that they will eventually live in. One house is now finished and another due for completion in two weeks.

According to William Rak, Business Manager of the Affordable Housing for Life project, 21 young people have participated in the program. Four have lived in the completed house. These young people have turned their lives around, having reconnected with families, found secure accommodation, working full time and living independently. Some have moved out of the area for employment or to join up with family in other parts of Australia, with their new skills and desire to remain employed.

Another two houses are currently under construction and another group of young people are now learning a new trade, gaining work experience, earning an income and gaining the support they need by Marist Youth Care.



Pictured above are the homes under construction by Marist Youth Care's Affordable Housing for Life project. One home has already been built, providing secure accommodation for 4 young people, another home is due in a few weeks, and 2 more are currently under construction.

COMMON GROUND SYDNEY UPDATE

Mercy Foundation CEO Felicity Reynolds and Business Manager Sue Mowbray visited the building site for the new Common Ground building in Camperdown this month. Grocon's Jane Wilson and Thanh Quach were on hand to guide us around the new building. The development is currently right on schedule and due

to open in November this year. The building, designed by Hassell Architects, will provide housing for people on low incomes and formerly homeless people.

The site looks fantastic and is a testament to the professionalism and commitment of Grocon to this project.



Grocon's Jane Wilson and Mercy Foundation's Sue Mowbray at the Common Ground Camperdown site.

Chronic homelessness is defined as an episode of homelessness lasting 6 months or longer or multiple episodes of homelessness over a 12 month period or more.

CONGRATULATIONS to an Outstanding Community Leader

Stephanie Brennan, Manager of Community Services at Wentworth Community Housing was awarded the Outstanding Community Leader award at the ZEST awards, recognizing achievers in the Western Sydney Community Sector.

Steph is passionate about ending

homelessness in the Nepean. She started the Nepean Campaign Against Homelessness and was responsible for the establishment of Project 40 in the Blue Mountains.

Congratulations Steph—an honour well deserved!



A SPORTING CHANCE

In March last year, Emerald PCYC purchased a Sports Ability Kit with funding from the Mercy Foundation's small grants program. Emerald PCYC liaised with Sporting Wheelies, Disabled Sport and Recreation Queensland and Sports Connect Disability Education through the Australian Government's Sports Commission to meet their requirements. A local steering

committee assisted the team in meeting the community's needs and expectations.

In July, 25 participants joined in an initial workshop to learn how to deliver the Sports Ability program. In



September, during Disability Action Week, students with special needs from the local High School and clients from a local service providing support to adults with a disability were invited to take part in sport using the Sports Ability Kit. This was a resounding success.

Since this event, Emerald PCYC has offered weekly sports sessions for young adults. The clients have enjoyed these sessions enormously, allowing them to enjoy fun, physical activity, make new friends, learn the value of teamwork and enjoy the rewards that participating in sports brings.

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.

Sydney's REGISTRY WEEK Update

In November last year, a number of generous volunteers gave up their early morning sleep over 3 days to help us with Registry Week. To recap what Registry Week is about, we interviewed over 260 people living on our streets to capture their housing, health, institutional history and other relevant data. Using a survey tool called the Vulnerability Index, the most vulnerable people sleeping on our streets can be prioritised for housing and support. Of the 262 people surveyed, 53% of the sample were found to be vulnerable—that is, vulnerable to an early death.

The information, with permission, was given to the Way 2 Home team

from NEAMI, an assertive outreach team whose primary objective is to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in the inner-city, helping them into independent housing with support to maintain their tenancy and re-engage with community.

NEAMI have used the information to prioritise. So far, NEAMI have housed and are supporting 10 previously chronically homeless people. They have assisted 93 people with housing applications, and have managed to secure 10 properties and support packages from DOCS which are in the process of being allocated.

We congratulate NEAMI on the results they have achieved so far.

People who experience chronic homelessness are likely to have 'complex needs', which usually means that they have one or more of the following: developmental disability, traumatic brain injury, serious physical health problems, history of abuse or trauma, mental illness, mental disorder, psychiatric disability, addictions.

THANK YOU St Mary's Primary School Erskineville

Thank you to the generous students and staff at St Mary's School in Erskineville, who took up our challenge to raise funds to help us in our drive to end homelessness.

Using our fundraising tool kit, the students worked hard to raise \$185 for the Foundation. We are very grateful for their efforts.

If you would like to help us, we'd love to hear from you. Please call Sue on 02 9911 7390 for more information about our fundraising tool kit.



Small Grants at Work - Rainbow Connection

Last year the Mercy Foundation funded the Chinese Parents Association to run a series of workshops for parents and children with disabilities. The Parents of the children had requested these workshops to assist them in educating their children about sex education.

The topics covered included developing friendships, skills to form good relationships, developing positive awareness of their sexuality and to provide information to parents in regard to behavior management of their children during puberty. The workshops were run by Ms Liz Dore, an experienced counselor with expertise in dealing with children with disabilities. The workshops were designed for families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Participants included people from China and Vietnam.

There were more than 15 young people with disabilities and their parents attending the workshops. Feedback was very positive from both parents and children. Parents appreciated the new skills they learnt to help them in discussing sexuality and its related issues with their children.



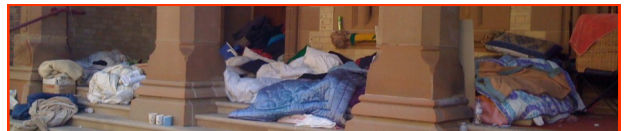
Upcoming Events at the Mercy Foundation

In July, the Mercy Foundation will be hosting the launch of the July edition of Parity. This issue will focus on homelessness and ageing, an important focus given that the proportion of people aged over 65 years is expected to increase from 13% in 2010 to 23% by 2050.* The edition is being sponsored by Catholic Community Services, a major provider of quality care services.

* Intergenerational Report 2010, Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

The colder nights are a chilling reminder of the constant hardship and discomfort chronically homeless people face when living on our streets.

Before the end of this financial year, please support the Mercy Foundation in its drive to end homelessness.



Yes, I would like to help the Mercy Foundation in its mission to end homelessness.

Please complete this form and send it to: Mercy Foundation, 40 Rocklands Road North Sydney NSW 2060

All donations above \$2 are tax deductible. If you would like to make a credit card donation, please visit our website to make a secure online donation at www.mercyfoundation.com.au. Alternatively, call 02 9911 7390 and our helpful staff will process your donation for you.

I would like to donate (please circle) \$200 \$150 \$100 \$50 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Postal Address: _____ Post code: _____

Enclosed is my cheque /money order (please make cheques payable to Mercy Foundation)

Please contact me about workplace giving (we are registered with www.cafaustralia.org.au), or helping with fundraising or making a bequest.

mercy foundation[®]

Thank you for your support.

 at the service of human dignity