

from the ceo

Another giant month at the Mercy Foundation! That said, it has also been a successful month. The Mercy Foundation managed and co-ordinated the 'Registry week' project in the inner city – with the help of all staff as well as approximately 80 volunteers. Volunteers came from the community, service organizations, students and homelessness sector workers. I think it clearly showed the power of partnership and collaboration. Without the individual volunteers, without the amazing support by Street Level – Salvation Army and Missionbeat, the project could not have been done.

Registry Week is a really important project. It is based on a successful methodology developed in the States and has now been done in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. It involves directly surveying people who are homeless on the streets. It has to be done very early in the morning, because many rough sleepers tend to move elsewhere as soon as the city gets light. The survey is a validated instrument developed by a homeless health practitioner and researcher.

The results were very concerning. 262 people agreed to complete surveys during the week (that is an 80% response rate). Of that number 53% can be classified as 'vulnerable'. The average length of time the vulnerable people had been homeless was 11 years. The average for all others was 6 years. More analysis will be done and further summary results made available. I don't know about you, but I find these summary re-

sults quite disturbing. Some of our most vulnerable citizens are spending over a decade homeless.

Because this was not an anonymous survey – it included information about each rough sleeper – our partner organization, the outreach team Way2Home (NEAMI) have already begun to follow up directly with people. The Woolloomooloo project group are also working on identifying and trying to develop additional housing options.

Also, I have held several briefings with State Ministerial policy advisers as well as senior executives from Housing NSW and the Department of Community Services. We also had a briefing with the Federal Minister for Housing, Mark Arbib and his policy advisor. They were all very interested in the results and have seen it as a new opportunity to methodically approach the difficult task of finding housing and support for chronically homeless people.

It is our hope that this marks the beginning of..... one by one.....finding suitable housing and support options for the people who so generously spoke with us about their lives. The same project, done in Brisbane in June this year has already resulted in 30 people accessing housing and support.

For up-dates on this, as well as up-dates on our other major projects go to www.mercyfoundation.com.au

Felicity Reynolds

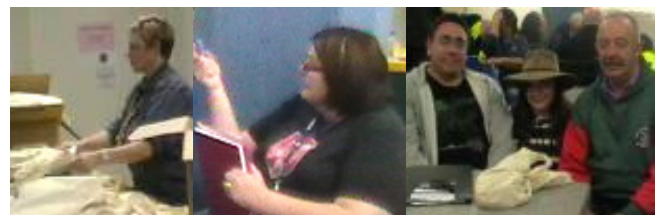
a salute to our registry week volunteers

We take our hats off to the 80 or so volunteers that made Registry Week possible. Their commitment was incredible, sacrificing their Sunday afternoon for training and turning up at 4.30am (sometimes 4am) over three days to venture out onto the streets of inner Sydney and survey homeless people. The weather was not always kind. On Tuesday morning, our volunteers were tested by wet and cold conditions. Not to be put off, our dedicated volunteers turned up again on Wednesday morning to complete their tasks.

We are also incredibly grateful to Robbin Moulds of StreetLevel. Robbin went out of her way to make the volunteers welcome and comfortable, providing a delicious breakfast each morning, preparing bags including a muffin, drink and voucher to give to each person surveyed and so willingly helping out as needed. Thank you Robbin, you are truly one in a million.

Thanks also to the crew that turned up each morning at the Mercy Foundation to enter data into the system. Their willingness to help out, sense of humour and enthusiasm helped those of us who had started in the wee hours of the morning get through the day!

What motivated these generous people to go to such lengths was clearly evident from their feedback - a willingness to help end homelessness for the most vulnerable of our community.



a salute to our registry week volunteers (continued)



Feedback from our volunteers:

It was great to build further connections with people tackling homelessness from a variety of angles. And to be reminded once again of the personal nature of homelessness.

The worst thing about Registry Week was realising how many people were sleeping rough. The best thing was being assured that something will be done to help these people.

The worst thing was realising how vulnerable we all really are.

The arrangements to ensure our safety felt like overkill at times but were also very reassuring.

I ♥ Registry Week! (Kara Mergl, Common Ground USA)

What did you get out of registry week?

An insight into the range of stories and individual personalities.

An eye opening experience into the lives of the homeless.

The opportunity to survey rough sleepers gave me an invaluable first hand insight into the plight of Sydney's homeless.

My personal encounters with the people I talked to who opened my eyes and broke down stereotypes that I wasn't even aware I had – until they were challenged.

Compassion, understanding, humbleness.

A sense of being needed and an appreciation of what can be done in the future.

Grants to End Homelessness Update

The Mercy Foundation has received 94 EOIs for our Grants to End Homelessness program. EOIs were received from all over Australia, from many communities working hard to solve the issue of homelessness for many people living in their region. We plan to respond to all EOIs by mid December. Successful organisations submitting EOIs will be invited to submit a full application in January. Pending Board approval, applicants will then be advised of the outcome of their project in February.

common ground sydney takes a big step forward

Our CEO Felicity Reynolds joined Federal and NSW Ministers for Housing, Mark Arbib and Frank Terenzini in the commencement of the structural concrete pour at the new site for the Camperdown Common Ground building. Donning a hard hat and vest, Felicity enthusiastically joined in the activity to assist in laying the foundations.

The six storey residential building is being partly funded through a joint Commonwealth-State initiative that will move homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, directly into long-term supported housing.

The project is on track for completion in October 2011. It will provide 104 self contained studio, one and two-bedroom apartments, plus space for on-site support services on the ground floor.

The project follows the successful model of Common

Ground permanent supportive housing developed in the US. The community housing provider, MA Housing, will be the property and tenancy manager for the project.

Project builders, Grocon Constructors (NSW), have also been working closely with Housing NSW, architect Hassell, structural engineer Meinhardt, services engineer NDY and heritage consultant Godden Mackay Logan on the design of the building. Grocon will employ two formerly homeless people on the project and retain them as part of its full time workforce beyond the completion of the project and encourage the subcontractors to do the same.

“The Camperdown Project is a long term and lasting initiative in assisting chronically homeless people get back on their feet,” Mr Terenzini said.



Felicity joins Federal Minister Mark Arbib and NSW Minister Terenzini at the Common Ground Camperdown site.

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.

small grants update - from emerald pcy, queensland

Emerald PCYC approached the Mercy Foundation in late 2009 asking for assistance by way of a small grant to purchase a Sports Ability Kit. With this kit, and the assistance of volunteers, the Emerald PCYC has made it possible for people with disabilities to participate in regular sporting activity.

The Sports Kit was purchased in April this year and after initial training and workshops, the Sports Ability Games was held for Disability Action Week. Around 40 people participated in the games and they certainly had a lot of fun!

There has been much positive feedback about the games and the additional benefits brought about such as increased social interaction and improved fitness.



update on projects to end homelessness

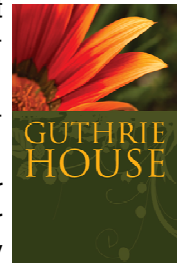
Guthrie House - focusing on women

Last year, a grant was awarded to Guthrie House. Guthrie House is a much needed service that works with and accommodates women who have been involved in the NSW criminal justice system.

Guthrie House helps women re-enter the community, providing them with individual case management and helping them find long term accommodation.

The grant was awarded to ensure that Guthrie House was able to continue contact with their clients once they had left the service. They identified an immediate post-residential need for some clients who have difficulty in transitioning back into the community, risking loss of tenancy and homelessness.

The 12 month program includes assistance with managing debt and finance, general living skills, advocacy and referral, and reconnecting with family and other relationships. So far, 14 women have been assisted by Guthrie House under this program.



NYAS - targeting youth homelessness

The Nepean Youth Accommodation Service requested assistance in an initiative that would prevent young people from entering homelessness, provide early intervention to help build resilience in at risk youth and transition young people into permanent housing where appropriate.

The NEIPP project (Nepean Early Intervention and Prevention Program) will start assisting youth in February, under a new service model being developed NYAS.

Project 40 - assisting individuals and families

Project 40 is a joint project involving the Blue Mountains Youth Accommodation Support Service, Wentworth Community Housing, and over 40 other support services and government agencies in the Blue Mountains. This collaborative project follows a Housing First model, with the aim of providing permanent housing to individuals or families in the Blue Mountains LGA, with wrap-around services to help people maintain their tenancy.

CONGRATULATIONS to Project 40 on being awarded the Excellence in Partnerships Award at the Community Housing Conference in Newcastle earlier this month. A truly well deserved award!

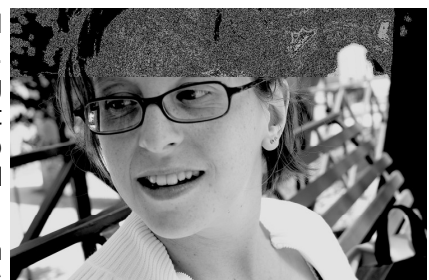
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small grants update—unitingcare east adelaide

A small grant was awarded to UnitingCare East Adelaide to run a Financial Literacy Course aimed at women who had experienced domestic violence. UnitingCare recognised that many of these women were either living alone, struggling to survive on a single pension or living with children at home, creating extra financial burden. The aim of the course is not only to improve money management skills, but also to focus on self esteem and self confidence in a supportive and nurturing environment.

The course started on the 4th November with 9 participants. The women are aged between 25 and 45 years. The course will run for a period of 6 weeks. During this time, participants will learn skills to enable them to gain new money management skills and improve their financial literacy, learn and practice goal setting; organisational and budgeting skills; gain awareness of community networks, volunteering opportunities, future study and work opportunities. Child care is provided to the participants, who between them have 20 children.



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: _____

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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.