

Sisters of Charity
Foundation



Annual Review
2020–2021

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we work on, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



“

In 2020–2021,
100% of your
donations went
to the people
or program of
your choice.

Thank you.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our supporters for your kindness and compassion. Every life that we can transform for the better is thanks to your generosity.

Your support is making a difference.

Thank you for helping us every step of the way.



“

The work of the Sisters of Charity Foundation is far reaching, touches many communities and involves so many stories... I give thanks for all that has been achieved.

From the Sisters

I am delighted to have the opportunity to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate the continuing and expanding work of the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

The past year has been particularly challenging for all of us, facing the negative impact of COVID-19. The needs of so many people have been highlighted and heightened throughout these days.

I am proud that the Sisters of Charity Foundation; under the guidance of its Board, CEO and staff; has continued to support many organisations through its Community Grants Program.

Let me focus on one specific outreach program.

There has been increased demand from groups tackling food insecurity across many communities. Grant funding allowed Community Action Services Australia to purchase

a van to collect fruit and vegetables from Foodbank and grocery stores; and then deliver hampers to the elderly and low-income earners, people suffering from ill health and those with no transport. That is just one example of the charism of the Sisters of Charity reaching the poor and underserved in today's world.

Another significant event was the welcome offered to a family of seven Syrian asylum seekers into what was once the Congregation's house at Berala. This was the latest development in our partnership with the Asylum Seekers Centre.

For many years we Sisters of Charity have had a presence in the area, ministering in St Joseph's Hospital and in the local primary and secondary schools at Auburn and South Auburn. In 1990 we moved from the hospital convent into two suburban houses in Auburn. In 1999, we took up residence in the house at Berala, where we remained until 2017. During these years it was home to up to six Sisters, each in

a different ministry. As well as being a home for those assigned to the community, for several years it was a gathering place for up to 20 Sisters who came together every two months or so to pray and reflect and share their faith.

We are so pleased that this suburban house, which was for us a physical and spiritual home, is now able to offer stability and assurance to those seeking refuge.

The work of the Sisters of Charity Foundation is far reaching, touches many communities and involves so many stories, some of which appear in this review.

I am very happy to recommend it as I give thanks for all that has been achieved for and on behalf of those who have been assisted in some way.

Laureen Dixon rsc
Congregational Leader

2020–2021 Impact



More than

\$9,400,000

given to

970+

COMMUNITY PROJECTS
SINCE 2000

How much did we invest? ↓

\$547,220

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



\$32,710

TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



\$50,243

ASYLUM SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM



\$50,148

MODERN SLAVERY HOUSING PROGRAM



\$606,339

INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
SINCE 2012

\$2,671,388

INVESTED IN THE ASYLUM
SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM
SINCE 2014

\$111,978

INVESTED IN THE MODERN
SLAVERY HOUSING PROGRAM
SINCE 2020 LAUNCH

4 students

GRADUATED WITH
A UNIVERSITY DEGREE
THIS YEAR

13 students

GRADUATED WITH A
UNIVERSITY DEGREE OR
TAFE DIPLOMA SINCE 2012

6 students

AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR UNIVERSITY AND
TAFE COURSES THIS YEAR

3 survivors

OF MODERN SLAVERY ASSISTED
INTO PRIVATE HOUSING

147 people

SEEKING ASYLUM HAVE RESIDED
AT PROVIDENCE HOUSE SINCE 2015

Who did we help? ➡



ASYLUM SEEKERS
HOUSING PROGRAM

14
ASYLUM SEEKERS

MODERN SLAVERY
HOUSING PROGRAM

3
MODERN SLAVERY
SURVIVORS

TERTIARY
SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM

16
STUDENTS

COMMUNITY
GRANTS
PROGRAM

50
ORGANISATIONS

Chair and CEO's Report

We are delighted to share with you the challenges we faced and overcame thanks to your generous support, and our positive impact on the people and communities of Australia.

The past year has been extremely difficult for the organisations and people who rely on us.

Our Community Grants Program is practical, compassionate assistance in action. In the 2020–21 financial year we were able to channel \$547,220 to grassroots organisations and charities, and help many people devastated by the pandemic and lockdowns.

We have made improvements to the grant application process to lessen the burden on small charities run on a shoestring. The time between applying and receiving a grant was significantly shortened in September 2020. From July 2021 onwards, a two-step Expression of Interest approach will make it faster and easier for organisations with limited staff and time to apply.

Our scholarship students experienced economic hardship and isolation that impacted their studies, however, we were so pleased to see Renee and Shantell graduate with degrees in nursing, Nathan with a Bachelor of Engineering and Vickie with her Bachelor of Science.

We awarded four new university and two TAFE scholarships, and have inaugurated a new scholarship to be awarded in 2022 – as an example of the flexibility of our program, it will be available at any of the three Notre Dame university campuses: Broome, Fremantle or Sydney.

It is our hope these new students will benefit from our recent program review and upcoming improvements, which centre around how we can provide them with more intensive, personalised support. Our thanks to the review advisory committee of Anne Cahill OAM and Mary Reemst for their valuable insights.

After 12 years we bid a fond farewell to Sr Anthea Groves, who is stepping down from our Board. Her sought-after guidance has been instrumental in ensuring our Foundation's alignment with the teachings of Mary Aikenhead and charism of her Sisters. We will deeply miss her practical, no-nonsense approach and wonderful sense of humour.

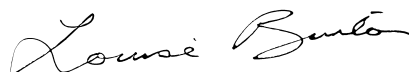
The Board welcomes Sr Suzette Clark, who has worked tirelessly for social justice and the abolition of modern slavery. Her considerable experience campaigning against slavery and human trafficking will prove invaluable to the future development of our newest initiative, the Modern Slavery Housing Program.

Finally, we are so pleased to see our team expand once more, with the addition of Foundation Assistant Brigid Phelan. Her professionalism and accomplishments to date are much appreciated.

We are deeply grateful for your continued support, which makes possible everything we do. Thank you for your trust in us.



Juliet Dunworth
Chair



Louise M Burton
CEO





Quinn is Finding his Purpose

An on-the-job hospitality training program is helping people with intellectual disability plan a career and become independent. 19-year-old Quinn shares his story.

"A hotel is the exact kind of place I want to be, a place where you can work with your colleagues, a proper social environment. The reason I joined Hotel Etico is because I didn't have any goals, and I feel like this is the perfect place to find those goals.

So far I have enjoyed meeting the community, going to different businesses, introducing ourselves and networking. I have enjoyed all the training we have done. The cooking appealed to me most. My mother used to be an assistant chef, my father worked at so many restaurants, my brother loves cooking but he's terrible. I'm always learning a lot about cooking at home.

Living at the Academy of Independence is my first time moving away from home alone. To be honest I don't really like sharing my space with others! But I do like the environment, and the idea of having people to talk to and playing games, I enjoy that part.

In the end the reason I do all this is to get a well-paying job... I don't yet know what type of job I want. After graduation I might go do some courses at TAFE, go to more kitchens and get more experience, see where that leads me.

It is hard for me to explain my life as I have always had my disability. I guess you could say that due to my disability there are some places that wouldn't accept me... there is some discrimination. There's also time taken out of my life to take medication – I have to constantly take my medication, and it's not easy, it's not a simple pill – in other words it's a pain! In the end I don't feel different, I don't judge myself differently. You think you're exactly the same as anyone else is."

Where holidays create opportunities

Hotel Etico is Australia's first social enterprise hotel. Based in Sydney's Blue Mountains area, the hotel delivers a fantastic holiday experience to guests that powers an employment and independent living program for people living with intellectual disability.

There are two sides to the program. The six Trainees undergo on-the-job training in all aspects of the hotel – from housekeeping and front-of-house to working in the restaurant kitchen.

Then there is the Academy of Independence, which gives Trainees an opportunity to live independently and develop life skills during a three-day working week.



GRANT DETAILS

\$15,000

in the September 2020 grant round to purchase furniture and equipment for the Academy of Independence, plus uniforms for the Trainees, support workers and volunteers.

\$15,000

in the March 2021 grant round to run three project-based learning opportunities for Trainees around business, health and wellbeing, and community.

Providing grants of up to \$15,000 to innovative community projects that break down social isolation and alleviate the impact of poverty on individuals and families.



Community Grants Program

This year was extraordinarily difficult for families across the country. Countless people out of work, a recession, isolation and disconnection negatively impacting mental health, soaring rates of domestic violence, refugees and asylum seekers locked out of federal support payments, ordinary people unable to pay their bills or buy groceries... the need was overwhelming.

For the first time in our 20-year history, the September 2020 grant application period and decision-making process was streamlined, in order to get funds to community groups in desperate need in as short a time frame as possible.

The events of this year also inspired our first search for a corporate partner to fund two extra grants. We're so grateful to EISS Super, a not-for-profit industry fund run to benefit members, for coming on board with extra funding.

A significant number of grants in the September 2020 and March 2021 rounds were earmarked for organisations tackling food insecurity or helping families negatively affected by the pandemic, with a total of \$210,816 given to COVID-19 relief.

Feeding a community

COVID-19 led to unprecedented demand for emergency food relief. Geelong Food Relief Centre Inc spent its \$8,000 Community Grant on fresh fruit and vegetables to stock its food bank.

The volunteer-run charity runs a food voucher redemption program, allowing locals on low incomes to access nutritious food with dignity.

Denise is one of the regulars. She has recently taken in her five grandchildren but wouldn't change her situation for anything. There is a lot of stress – one grandchild needs to attend the Royal Children's Hospital regularly. But Denise doesn't have to worry about buying food after all her bills are paid.

Denise says she loves coming in, she can get any grocery item she requires. She's so appreciative of the team, who always ask how her family is getting on. She'll have a chat while shopping and always leaves with a smile on her face.



Program Highlights ▼

187

ORGANISATIONS
APPLIED FOR
FUNDING

104 in September 2020
83 in March 2021

50

ORGANISATIONS
RECEIVED A
COMMUNITY GRANT

24 in September 2020
26 in March 2021

\$547,220

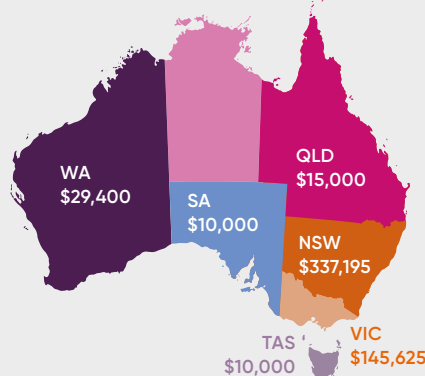
GIVEN IN GRANT FUNDING

\$235,239 in September 2020
\$311,981 in March 2021

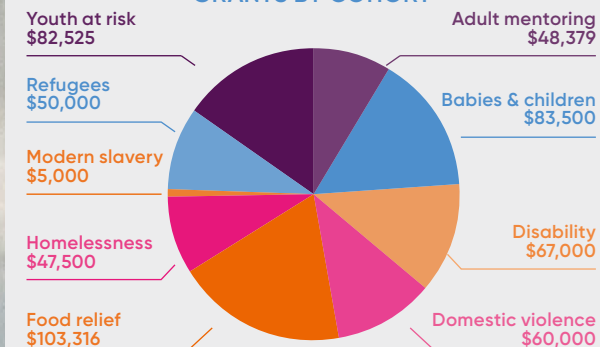
\$210,816

GIVEN TO COMMUNITY PROJECTS
PROVIDING COVID-19 RELIEF

GRANTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



GRANTS BY COHORT



\$9,400,000 +

GIVEN TO

970 +

COMMUNITY
PROJECTS
SINCE 2000

A big hug for parents

Big Group Hug used its Community Grant to assist 100 families in north Melbourne with desperately needed baby supplies.

The volunteer-driven community organisation put the \$10,000 grant to good use, purchasing 7 double prams, 9 strollers, 10 cots and mattresses, 15 bassinets and \$2,500 worth of formula.

The volunteers were over the moon to have the grant money to spend, saying: "It is wonderful to be able to provide new items to desperate families along with pre-loved items" and, "It made us so happy not to have to turn away families in need because we didn't have cots available."

The case workers who distribute items to struggling parents were also relieved, saying: "It is wonderful to be able to deliver a brand-new cot to my client. The look on their faces when they receive something new is priceless" and, "Formula is so hard to come by for our clients, knowing we could request it from Big Group Hug was invaluable."



A Life Without Fear

Mum-of-three Stephanie* was constantly looking over her shoulder, terrified of an attack from her abusive ex-partner. A piece of technology on her wrist has changed things for the better.

"We were in a relationship for nine years but the domestic violence didn't really start until the last four years, and had never been physical the whole way through – it was always verbal and emotional. And then one day he literally snapped and tried to kill me. It's only because there was another person there who pulled him off me that I'm here now.

He was given nine months good behaviour and a \$500 fine.

There has recently been an escalation in his behaviour – he's delivered things to my workplace, stalked me, and his associates have also been hanging around my workplace.

It's been a horrible process but I've done everything within my power to keep myself safe and wearing the watch is one of those things. It very much provides me a level of assurance that if I do have an encounter I'm not on my own.

There's a couple of different functions on the watch. If I tap one button three times it sends a live video feed to Hearts of Purple and the police monitoring service. I can talk to them through it. I can also tap twice to send my exact GPS location, then someone contacts me to ask what sort of help I need.

I used to avoid going out, wouldn't go places by myself. But having the watch makes me feel like I can. I can go to the shopping centre, go and do things. It changes my view on how I function in a day.

I've been able to get to a point where I'm no longer on anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication. I can get back into normal life and the community with my kids, and not live my life in fear."

*Name has been changed for safety reasons.

Operation Family Protect

Hearts of Purple is a volunteer-run charity in Queensland that assists survivors of domestic violence.

Perpetrators often break or disable their victim's phone, leaving them unable to call for help. To combat this, the charity provides a Tek Safe Wearable Duress Alarm watch to clients at high risk of being killed. The watch is supported by a 24/7 monitoring centre that tracks incoming alerts and responds with sensitivity.

The Hearts of Purple Operation Family Protect project is quite literally saving lives.

GRANT DETAILS

\$5,000

in the September 2020 grant round to purchase Tek Safe Wearable Duress Alarm watches.



Celebrating our Students

Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Mrs Linda Hurley hosted an event at Admiralty House in February to celebrate the Tertiary Scholarship Program. Our Patron, His Excellency David Hurley, gave the following speech.

"In the course of our work, Linda and I meet many people and hear about many issues affecting Australians' lives.

Education – specifically, ensuring that all Australians have access to educational opportunities – is one issue I'm particularly passionate about.

According to the latest figures, 46,500 young people are in out-of-home care in Australia. Less than 3% of young people who live in foster care, group homes or out-of-home care arrangements have the opportunity to attend university, compared to approximately 40% of young people in the general population.

But there's an added dimension to this imbalance.

For care leavers – and we know about 11,600 leave care each year, many on their 18th birthday – gaining entry into university can be difficult. It's difficult because many care leavers need to overcome significant social and economic barriers to transition to university. Barriers such as frequent school changes, unstable housing or homelessness, involvement in the youth criminal justice system, and early parenthood. There are others.

One of the things I like about the Sisters of Charity Foundation is that it's an organisation comprised of doers.

The Sisters of Charity Congregation identified the gap in access to education between the out-of-home care cohort and the general population and the Foundation responded.

The Tertiary Scholarship Program has been going for nearly 10 years, empowering dedicated students from out-of-home care backgrounds to transform their lives through education.

The Foundation, through the program, helps with students' study expenses such as course fees and textbooks. This financial support enables students to focus on their studies and not be burdened with the pressure of simultaneously having to hold down multiple jobs.

The benefits of education are well known to us all. I've said on many occasions over the years – and I will keep saying it – education is transformative.

Linda, as many of you might know, used to be a teacher. I am passionate about education. Between us, we cannot tell you how proud we are to be associated with this Foundation."

His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)
Governor-General
of the Commonwealth of Australia



Governor-General David Hurley and Mrs Linda Hurley with students (L to R) Jasmine, Faraz, Andre and Bridgette at Admiralty House.



Tertiary Scholarship Program

Helping disadvantaged young people from out-of-home care backgrounds transform their lives through tertiary education.

COVID-19 restrictions and the state of the economy posed significant challenges to our students. University and TAFE campuses closed, with lectures and study requirements moving online. Students had to deal with a lack of resources, including reliable technology and wifi. There were instances of students losing part-time jobs. And they had to face all this without the security and comfort of parental support.

Despite all this we were so proud to see four students graduate: Renee, Shantell, Nathan and Vickie. They will shape the future of our country as they pursue their chosen careers in engineering, nursing and science.

This year we embarked on an extensive review of the scholarship program, the first since its launch in 2012. In that time we have come to appreciate the level of support required by young people from an out-of-home care background. Improvements have already been implemented, including better communications with students and tertiary institutions and increased tracking of payments. We hope to further enhance our offering in the next financial year.

Program Highlights ▼

4 STUDENTS GRADUATED with a university degree

6 STUDENTS AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS for university and TAFE courses

4 SCHOLARSHIPS WERE ADVERTISED and will be awarded in next financial year

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S GRADUATES!

Renee Baca
Bachelor of Nursing
Western Sydney University

Shantell Bennett
Bachelor of Nursing
Australian Catholic University

Nathan Stevens
Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)
University of Queensland

Vickie Winstanley
Bachelor of Science (Forensic Science)
Western Sydney University

\$32,710

INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

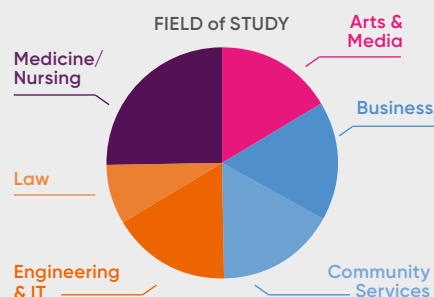
Total impact ▼

\$606,339

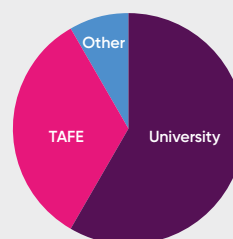
INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SINCE 2012

13 STUDENTS GRADUATED with a university degree or TAFE diploma since 2012

OUR **12** ENROLLED STUDENTS



INSTITUTION



Andre

Andre is in his second year of a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) at Western Sydney University.

"By far, one of my favourite subjects this year has been last semester's 'Mechanics of Materials' or MoM as my friends and I call it. In this unit we looked at how and why structural bodies, such as bars or beams, deform and break. What I loved was it showed that problems big or small could always be broken down and worked through.

We used myriad daunting equations to help us find stress, strain, and internal forces of components. Sometimes I'd be scratching my head – and only after drawing up a quick diagram to illustrate the problem, I'd have a light bulb moment! Having a great lecturer

who explained the concepts clearly also went a long way. These concepts are built upon in this semester's aptly named 'Advanced Mechanics of Materials'.

I thoroughly enjoyed MoM in the way that it related practical and mathematical skills to visualise and find a solution to problems."



Tenayah

Tenayah is in her first year of a Diploma of Community Services at TAFE Wollongong.

"I've always wanted to make a difference and support people to improve their quality of life. I am very passionate about this industry because it is full of people who helped me navigate through some very tough times growing up, and even now. My ideal job would be in child protection as I have experienced what it's like to be a child in the system. I would like to make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people experiencing abuse and neglect.

The scholarship has made a massive difference in my life and has made studying more accessible for me. It has helped me buy a laptop and a printer, which have been extremely helpful given that all classes recently moved online due to lockdown! I was able to buy a desk so that I now have a place to study and do my assessments. I have also been able to put some of it toward childcare, minimising the financial stress in our household and giving me the ability to focus more on studying."

Jasmine

Jasmine is in her first year of a Master of Social Work at the University of Sydney.

"I start my three-month university placement soon working in community mental health. I will be working two days a fortnight while doing university subjects. It's going to be a busy few months but I am happy for a change of scenery and to keep busy.

I am excited to get started at my placement and see how I like working in mental health. Certainly, my mental health has been at a low due to COVID-19 restrictions, it's hard being a young person and trying to manage living alone, family, friends, uni and work/life balance! Like many others, I have been trying to stay positive and am very grateful for the life and home I have.

I am hoping to become a social worker working in the hospital emergency department, as I very much like the hustle and bustle. I am also keen to keep working in homelessness, as I feel like my experiences are very useful and meaningful to others I come across and help. I always somehow keep getting drawn back to the homelessness sector, but I am open to see where opportunities take me."



Providing transitional housing assistance for survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking in Australia.

Modern Slavery Housing Program

In February 2020 we launched a six-month pilot program in partnership with The Salvation Army. Unfortunately, COVID-19 meant the Salvos clients slated to enter the program – survivors of modern slavery in assisted living ready to transition to private accommodation – were negatively impacted.

"We had people with their first jobs in hospitality lined up, about to start, and then the industry collapsed," explains Claudia Cummins, Program Manager at the Salvos Trafficking and Slavery Safe House. "Others were supposed to finish childcare traineeships but couldn't go on their placements. COVID-19 has been a setback for everyone."

Without a steady income most survivors had to wait. Only three have been in the position to enter the program since its launch: Karim*, Amara* and Dalia*. "Finding a job and becoming financially independent in Australia is difficult," says Claudia. "It is a really huge step when people get to that point, a huge achievement."

The pilot was extended to October 2021 and will be fully evaluated thereafter.

*Names have been changed for safety reasons.



Invested

\$50,148

Modern Slavery
Housing Program

\$111,978

total since 2020
program launch

How does the program work?

01/

The survivor has secured employment and a steady income, and is ready to live independently



02/

The Salvation Army helps the survivor find suitable accommodation



03/

The Sisters of Charity Foundation covers the survivor's **rental bond**

+

a one-off payment for furniture

+

75% of each rental payment for 6 months

04/

The survivor is supported through ongoing case management from The Salvation Army, funded by the Sisters of Charity Foundation



Survivor updates

Karim: program participant since January 2020

Karim and his wife recently welcomed their second baby. The family's first apartment wasn't quite suitable for two little ones so Karim used his exemplary rental history to apply for a bigger place closer to friends, and relocated in July 2021. Karim worked as a cleaner during lockdown, which meant more time at home with the family. Although he is still being supported by case workers, it is expected he will achieve complete independence in the next financial year.

Amara: program participant since July 2020

Amara is working in aged care. When the lease for her current apartment ends in the next financial year she will end her tenancy to move to a new place with a friend. She will then be ready to exit the program and become completely independent. Amara has learned a lot about navigating the rental market and is looking forward to having more company.

Dalia: program participant since January 2021

Dalia is also busy with a job in aged care. She's very happy with her apartment, which is close to public transport, and a good friend nearby. Dalia has been able to cover the market rent rate herself since she first moved in. She is ready to transfer the lease into her name after the current one set up by The Salvation Army ends, and will also become independent in the next financial year.

05/

When the survivor is ready they take over the lease – and now have a proven rental and employment history in Australia



“

This program supports clients to take the leap into more independent housing while learning about their tenancy rights and responsibilities along the way. They end up with a better idea of what they want depending on their circumstances, and understand how to navigate the private rental market independently to find it.

Providing safe accommodation and welfare services to displaced people at risk of homelessness, in partnership with the Asylum Seekers Centre.

Asylum Seekers Housing Program

COVID-19 heavily impacted the regular function of Providence House as a refuge providing emergency and short/medium-term accommodation to people seeking asylum. The unstable job market and state health guidelines meant there were fewer residents in the house, as well as fewer transitions out of the house, over the past year.

Almost all 10 adult residents had previously been helped to find jobs in aged care, childcare, disability care, cleaning, contract delivery and driving, and hospitality – however, only two adults were able to work, save and establish independent housing. The others had long-term stays in the house because of the challenges of retaining stable work in a pandemic.

COVID-19 health advice also meant the number of people living together had to

be reduced. Contact between ASC staff and residents was kept to a minimum. Instead of selecting groceries in-person from the ASC food bank, residents received home deliveries, then hampers from a nearby community pantry. Hand sanitiser, masks and toiletries were also provided to ensure safety.

Extra digital devices were obtained so four adult residents could continue their TAFE studies and job searches at home. Three school-age children and those adults enrolled in ASC English classes also made use of devices for home-schooling purposes.

2022 is expected to be a brighter year, with multiple residents having completed their qualifications. We look forward to hearing more stories of independence and success.



Program Highlights ↴

147

PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM HAVE RESIDED AT PROVIDENCE HOUSE SINCE 2015

14

INDIVIDUALS found safe and stable accommodation at Providence House

2

PEOPLE successfully transitioned out of Providence House into the private rental market

\$50,243

INVESTED IN THE ASYLUM SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM

\$35,057
In Providence House

\$15,186
In Berala

Total impact ↴

\$2,671,388

INVESTED IN THE ASYLUM SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM SINCE 2014

\$30,529 Berala Upgrades & Maintenance



\$2,360,000
Providence House Purchase

\$280,859
Providence House Upgrades & Maintenance

1



Two Parent Families

2



Single Parent Families

4



Children under 18

6

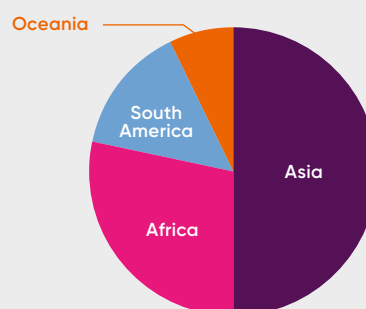


Single Adult Women

=14

TOTAL

WHERE DID PEOPLE COME FROM?





Finding peace at Berala

We offer our deepest thanks and gratitude to the Sisters for their gift of an ex-Congregational house in Berala, which will now be used to accommodate people seeking asylum.

"We recognise Berala has held a special place in the hearts of the Sisters over many years. It is such a beautiful home and garden – a sanctuary," says Foundation CEO Louise M Burton. Sisters resided at the property from 1999 to 2017.

Various upgrades and maintenance were undertaken this year, with the property welcoming a family of seven Syrian asylum seekers in early July 2021. The next financial year will see the family enjoy a much-needed break from financial stress, and focus on improving their future outlook with help from ASC caseworkers.



Our Partnership

The Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Asylum Seekers Centre united in 2014 to provide asylum seekers at risk of homelessness with emergency and transitional housing. Thanks to the Foundation's resources and the ASC's expertise, since then 147 people – many who have fled persecution and trauma in their home countries – have resided at Providence House, a four-unit apartment building in Sydney's Inner West. We are delighted with the recent expansion of the program to include the Berala property.

Our partnership has allowed an extremely vulnerable cohort the chance to start anew, to focus on creating a happy and secure future in Australia. We welcome them. And we thank you for supporting us.

Louise M Burton
Sisters of Charity Foundation CEO

Frances Rush OAM
Asylum Seekers Centre CEO

A Place to Heal

Suravi* is a single 49-year-old woman from South Asia who came to Australia seeking asylum in 2019. She has lived at Providence House for a year and a half.

"At first when I moved here I was totally alone. It was a difficult time, I had not enough money. Everything was new to me, I had no job, I had no study. I was tense, disappointed, wondering how can I pay rent, how can I survive by myself?

I talked to my caseworker at the Asylum Seekers Centre and told her my problems, she found a place for me at Providence House which was a great, great support. If I didn't come here I don't know what would have happened.

Now I have a room to myself. In Providence House there are four units – three families, three single women in one unit, and one pet!

It was a different experience to me, a different journey sharing one unit with others. I meet with new people, meet with their culture and traditions, see how we can communicate with each other, I have learnt a lot from them.

I'm always happy with them, we share some food, experiences, our stories. It's a great friendship. Sometimes my flatmates and I cook special things to eat. One of my hobbies is cooking. Especially I like to cook our traditional foods: biryani, fish curry, I always love fish curry. In our country one of the most popular local foods is roti with beef curry.

I am always enjoying my little garden. When I feel really stressed, or in trauma, I go to my garden and I feel happy. At the moment I have coriander and mint and I have planted chilli and some greens. Some vegetables are already coming up, sunflowers also, aloe vera. It's giving me a lot of pleasure.

I have finished studying a certificate in disability support. I have already found a job, now I am quite busy. It's a great achievement. Working with disabled clients I think is a great and honourable part of my life, because I love my clients. If I had the chance I want to do more work for the disabled sector. I also want to start a little cooking business, like a restaurant.

One day I have to leave Providence House because new residents will need to come in. I want to work with the new people – who are just like me – to assist them.

Living in this house I think is giving us empowerment, inner peace."

*Name has been changed for safety reasons.



We are forever grateful for your support

"It's a different state to survive by yourself compared to having others' support. When you try to build up your skills, in this moment if you find support like Providence House – I have no words to explain. It's a big, big support to us.

The ones who have left, the ones who come in next and the ones who are living here now – every resident will never forget this house and the chance to live here. Our heartfelt gratitude to the Sisters of Charity Foundation, the Asylum Seekers Centre, to every person who helped us."



Our History

**“May we never act
contrary to justice
and truth – and
may we be guided
by charity in all our
actions and words.”**

– Mary Aikenhead

Moved by the plight of the needy in Ireland, in 1815 Mary Aikenhead founded the Sisters of Charity to serve those living in poverty.

The order was unenclosed, to allow the Sisters to walk with the poor and marginalised, offering practical relief and spiritual nourishment.

When Bishop Polding sent a request to Mary Aikenhead asking her to send Sisters to the most neglected portion of the Catholic world, she responded by appointing five volunteer Sisters to Australia. Mother Mary John Cahill, Sister Mary John Baptist De Lacy, Sister Mary Xavier Williams, Sister Mary Lawrence Cater and Sister Mary Francis de Sales O'Brien arrived in Sydney on the last day of 1838.

These heroic and courageous women began their ministry in Australia by assisting the convict women in the female factory at Parramatta. There were few good roads then and so the Sisters walked everywhere, from hospitals and orphanages to schools and gaols.

From these humble beginnings the Sisters of Charity have continued to answer the call to ministry across a wide range of social welfare activities.

In order to promote in perpetuity the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, specifically to the service of the poor, the Congregational Leader and Council established the Sisters of Charity Foundation in 2000.

The Foundation continues to take the history and values of the Sisters forward through our social justice programs.



Compassion. Hope. Practical Assistance.

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