



Sisters of Charity
Foundation



Annual Review
2021–2022

Contents

02

From the Sisters

2021–2022 Impact

03

04

Chair and CEO’s Report

Feeding the Community

05

06

Community Grants Program

On the Right Track

08

09

Faraz in the Spotlight

Tertiary Scholarship Program

10

12

Modern Slavery Housing Program

Asylum Seekers Housing Program

14

16

A New Life for Maria

Our History

17

—

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and express gratitude that we can all share this land today. We share the sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and hope and believe that we can move together to a place of equity, justice, and partnership. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.



“

In 2021–2022,
100% of your
donations went
to the people
or program of
your choice.

Thank you.

We’re so grateful for your continued faithful support. Your generosity is helping to feed, house and educate some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in Australia.

The stories of impact shared in these pages were all made possible by your kindness.

Thank you for your compassion, for making a difference.



“

“The Foundation has been vigilant in responding to families experiencing hunger... I am proud of the work the Board and staff carry out in continuing to live the Sisters of Charity charism.”

From the Sisters

Historical events of 2022 have caused us to pause, reflect and perhaps refocus some of our hopes, dreams, involvements and commitments.

We have united in our stand for justice for the people of Ukraine, we continue our advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers.

One historical event which has recently taken place is the transfer of governance of Sisters of Charity Community Care Ltd from the Congregation to the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

Community Care was established by the Congregation in 2000. Its purpose and mission: “to provide direct relief to the isolation, suffering, distress, misfortune, destitution or helplessness by operating programs to serve the people of Victoria and elsewhere in Australia”.

Originally the ministries were all located in Victoria. Over time, this expanded to Tasmania and now Queensland and rural and remote New South Wales.

There are two Sisters currently engaged in this ministry. Sr Christine Henry supports people in southern Queensland through Downs and West Community Support – offering encouragement, discreet and personalised assistance to farming families and their communities – and Sr Anne Mayberry, who travels throughout rural NSW responding to schools, and people in need.

The Foundation is providing ministerial, financial and governance support for these ministries and the hope is that each will expand during the days and months ahead.

On a daily basis cost of living pressures are increasing for all. One in six adults did not have enough to eat and 1.2 million children went hungry in the past year. The

Foundation has been vigilant in responding to families experiencing hunger; providing funding to grassroots organisations that operate community pantries and foodbanks, deliver free meals, and organise breakfasts.

Given the current economic climate, these needs will continue to grow.

Once again, the Community Grants Program has successfully disbursed more than \$500,000, a wonderful achievement and response to needs within our Australian community.

I am proud of the work the Foundation’s Board and staff carry out in continuing to live the Sisters of Charity charism.

Laureen Dixon rsc

Laureen Dixon rsc
Congregational Leader

2021–2022 Impact



More than

\$9,900,000

given to

1,000+

COMMUNITY PROJECTS
SINCE 2000

How much did we invest? ↓

\$516,129

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



\$54,730

TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



\$68,828

MODERN SLAVERY HOUSING PROGRAM



\$12,083

ASYLUM SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM



\$661,069

INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
SINCE 2012

\$164,819

INVESTED IN THE MODERN
SLAVERY HOUSING PROGRAM
SINCE 2020 LAUNCH

\$2,667,126

INVESTED IN THE ASYLUM
SEEKERS HOUSING PROGRAM
SINCE 2014

2 students

GRADUATED WITH A
UNIVERSITY DEGREE OR TAFE
DIPLOMA THIS YEAR

16 students

GRADUATED WITH A
UNIVERSITY DEGREE OR
TAFE DIPLOMA SINCE 2012

8 students

AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR UNIVERSITY AND TAFE
COURSES THIS YEAR

1 survivor

OF MODERN SLAVERY
TRANSITIONED TO INDEPENDENT
LIVING

8 people

SEEKING ASYLUM TRANSITIONED
OUT OF PROVIDENCE HOUSE TO
LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

165 people

SEEKING ASYLUM HAVE RESIDED
AT PROVIDENCE HOUSE AND
BERALA SINCE 2014

Who did we help? ➡



**ASYLUM SEEKERS
HOUSING PROGRAM**

26
PEOPLE
SEEKING ASYLUM

**MODERN SLAVERY
HOUSING PROGRAM**

6
MODERN SLAVERY
SURVIVORS

**TERTIARY
SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM**

19
STUDENTS

**COMMUNITY
GRANTS
PROGRAM**

39
ORGANISATIONS

Chair and CEO's Report

We are pleased to present our 2021–2022 Annual Review which highlights how, with your help, we have fed, housed, educated and supported some of the most vulnerable people in Australia, transforming their lives for the better.

We are delighted to welcome Community Care Ltd to the Foundation family. Led by Sisters Anne Mayberry in NSW and Christine Henry in Queensland, Community Care provides support to people in remote, rural and regional communities who have been badly affected by droughts, bushfires, floods and general economic downturn. The Foundation will provide additional support and strengthen these services where we can.

Our cornerstone Community Grants Program assisted several new initiatives, including Confit Pathways' program to mentor young women in Reiby Youth Justice Centre, and Anika Legal, which is helping vulnerable Victorian renters maintain safe housing.

The Modern Slavery Housing Program pilot successfully concluded last September. We have now signed a three-year agreement with The Salvation Army to continue delivering the program, which will assist more survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking to live independently.

We are pleased to have awarded eight new scholarships to university and TAFE students from out-of-home care backgrounds over the past financial year. Five of these are being directly managed by the Foundation, leading to closer oversight and increased support for recipients.

Our congratulations to this year's graduates: Faraz, who received a Bachelor of Arts Screen: Production from the Australian Film Television and Radio School,

and Tenayah, who gained a Diploma of Community Services from TAFE Wollongong. We look forward to seeing them flourish in their careers and wish them all the best.

The family of seven asylum seekers living at our Berala property since July 2021 are progressing well. A year to regroup without the pressures of unstable, unaffordable housing has seen the two eldest children find employment and develop plans for future education and training, and the middle two settle into their schools. We expect they will transition to independent living in the next financial year.

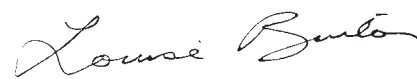
As part of our commitment to future growth and sustainability, we are pleased to welcome Fundraising Manager Beverley Brock to the Foundation team, bringing our staff to five. She has already introduced several exciting initiatives that will help spread awareness about the Foundation and its programs.

Several Directors' terms expired in the first half of 2022. We farewelled Sandie Boswell, Chris Rigby AM, Robert McCormack AM and Tom Boyce and will miss their valuable experience and wisdom. We appreciate their commitment to our mission over many years. We extend a warm welcome to new Board Members Frank Quinn and Stephanie Redmond.

None of what we do would be possible without your support and generosity – thank you for helping us make a difference.



Juliet Dunworth
Chair



Louise M Burton
CEO



Feeding the Community

People experiencing food insecurity and isolation in Fitzroy and its surrounds turn to Open Table for fresh, healthy food and social connection.

In the past year, more than 70% of food-insecure people went a whole day without eating at least once a week. Open Table is one community organisation working to make a difference via its community pantry and lunch events. General Manager Angela O'Toole sets the scene:

"Our volunteers welcome people as they arrive, offer them a delicious lunch, and everyone sits to enjoy the meal together. We often arrange seating outside when the weather is nice so everyone enjoys a meal and fresh air. The lunch is leisurely, some people choose to eat then leave, although many stick around for the conversation and to choose food to take home from our pantry.

We make sure to accommodate dietary requirements; we have things on the menu each week that are gluten free, nut free, vegan and halal. We see mostly familiar faces, who all enjoy a new menu to choose from every week. That is the nature of cooking with whatever is donated – it's always new and varied!

We do have quite a few elderly attendees that live alone and have lost the ability to cook for themselves. Our events provide them with a fresh healthy meal, some food to take home and, more importantly, social connection with others.

We have a group that comes every week from the nearby public housing estate, arriving early and bringing a shopping trolley to fill and take home. We have lots of students who appreciate a healthy meal to fuel their studies at the library. Often people who arrive alone but are interested in meeting new people will sit with our volunteers, which creates a bit of an icebreaker at the events.

What we look for as a sign of success is empty plates and smiling faces; so far we are achieving that which is great to see."



Sharing the surplus

Open Table is a not-for-profit community organisation with the dual purpose of reducing food insecurity and food waste.

Community pantry and lunch events are held weekly and run by volunteers. Local businesses donate their food surplus, with food rescue partner organisations contributing additional supplies. The program serves approximately 80 free meals, and distributes a further 200 kilograms of fresh food to 100 food-insecure people in inner north Melbourne, every week. Eggs, citrus fruits and garlic are the most popular items.



GRANT DETAILS

\$15,000
in the July 2021 grant round
to fund the Open Table
community pantry.



Community Grants Program

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.

The past year was challenging for people across Australia. Long lockdowns and border closures caused by the COVID-19 Delta and Omicron strains played havoc with people's mental health and left many without a stable income. Extreme weather events caused repeat flooding to communities in NSW and Queensland, leaving families homeless and farmers without their livelihoods.

Financial hardship led to increased demand for food relief: more than 70% of adults and 43% of children experiencing food insecurity went a whole day without eating once a week. To combat this we gave out \$115,000 to organisations that provided barbecue

breakfasts, grocery hampers, and fresh meals to people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage; school breakfast programs; and more.

This year we implemented a change to lessen the burden on grantees: the introduction of a two-step Expression of Interest (EOI) application process for the July 2021 grant round, which has now been made a permanent feature of the program. Applicants now invest considerably less time filling out the initial EOI form; only applicants with a high chance of success are invited to submit a full application. The improvement has already generated plenty of positive feedback.

Conversations in nature

An \$8,000 Community Grant allowed Cycling Without Age Australia to include elderly wheelchair users on its volunteer-powered trishaw bike rides.

"Today, I would say it was too cold and windy but you still come back. I'm happy to be one of your passengers. There is a magnet in the whole system somewhere. It keeps drawing me back," says Alan, who estimates he has been on 30 to 40 rides and rarely misses the opportunity.

The rides through nature help improve the mental health and wellbeing of less-mobile elderly people: boosting energy levels, vitamin D, and mental focus; and alleviating pain symptoms.

"I had a lovely conversation with Alan," recalls volunteer cyclist Shirley. "He was talking about the day-to-day changeable nature of the weather conditions, and he was reminiscing about a time, after work, when Expo '88 was on in Brisbane and he was standing on the Victoria Bridge and watched a massive storm roll in over the Kangaroo Point cliffs. He was amazed by the sight of the approaching storm clouds and said that he stood in awe – and got soaked!

"This is just one example of the stories and memories from their lifetimes that our passengers share while they are out on their rides. It is lovely to share connections."



Program Highlights ▾

190

ORGANISATIONS
APPLIED FOR
FUNDING

111 in July 2021
79 in February 2022

39

ORGANISATIONS
RECEIVED A
COMMUNITY GRANT

16 in July 2021
23 in February 2022

\$516,129

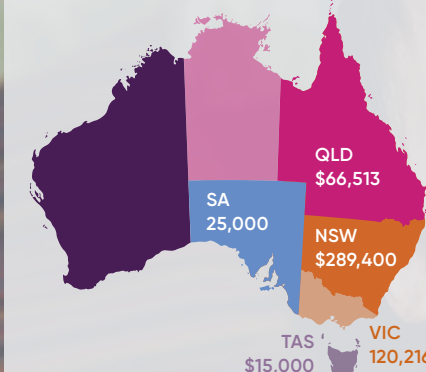
GIVEN IN GRANT FUNDING

\$219,929 IN JULY 2021
\$296,200 IN FEBRUARY 2022

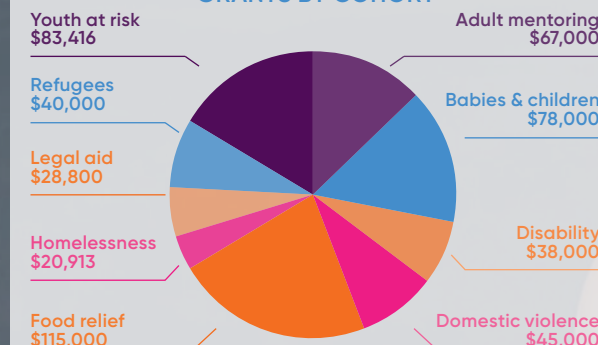
\$429,129

GIVEN TO PROJECTS THAT HELP
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING ECONOMIC
DISADVANTAGE

GRANTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



GRANTS BY COHORT



\$9,900,000 +

GIVEN TO

1,000+

COMMUNITY
PROJECTS
SINCE 2000

Healing after domestic violence

Open Haven used its \$15,000 Community Grant to open a new hub in Logan, Queensland, that provides personalised support, mentoring and community to women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Diana struggled for a month with depression and, at times, suicidal ideation, before she had the confidence to come to Open Haven for help. She had no other support and was isolated in her home, day after day.

At her first visit it was discovered she'd been starving herself – to have enough food for her 7-year-old son to eat, and enough money to pay the bills.

Open Haven started the process to help Diana access grants and child support, provided meals for her to take home, and paid for multiple sessions with a trauma-informed therapist. Committed to improving her mental health, Diana now attends the hub regularly to work through her plan and connect socially with other women.



On the Right Track

16-year-old Jeremy* was trapped in a dysfunctional cycle – until he found support that helped set him on a different path.

"Before I came to RuffTRACK I was misbehaving in and out of school. I had some family stuff going on which made things hard and I was regularly doing drugs as I was hanging around the wrong crowd. According to the police I was the seventh naughtiest kid in the Hawkesbury. This went on for about four years. I was constantly being suspended from school for misbehaving.

One day in Year 7, when I was 14, my teacher told me about RuffTRACK. I went to check it out and I loved the dogs – they made me want to come. I wanted to try something different.

The dogs have taught me to keep going, they just keep trying. My favourite activity is DockDogs (where dogs run and jump off a dock into water) because I love seeing how far the dog goes.

One of the things I love most is the support I get. When I was at school, I didn't feel that the students and teachers cared, but at RuffTRACK it's the opposite.

The main thing I've learnt is controlling my temper and not stressing out as much. I don't go off as much anymore because I know how to control my anger. What's helped me learn is seeing other people who have been where I have been and knowing how they deal with their anger. It's a very supportive group.

I wasn't listening to people before I came to RuffTRACK but now I'm better at it and I have a better friend group too. I am not in any trouble with the police any more and, because local police regularly visit RuffTRACK and we go to the PCYC, I have a better relationship with them."

*Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

Teaching skills, finding purpose

RuffTRACK takes on young people aged 13 to 17 who have disengaged from school and the community to give them skills, education, and a sense of self-worth. The kids learn dog training and sports, horticulture, welding, animal husbandry, woodwork, driving, mechanics, bushcraft, domestic skills, nutrition and physical education, conflict resolution, building healthy relationships... and lots more!

Each young person bonds with a dog in their first days. That partnership takes them on a journey of learning responsibility, caring for others and communicating without violence. They'll then travel the country demonstrating their new skills, finding purpose, new perspectives, and hope for their futures.

GRANT DETAILS

\$15,000

in the July 2021 grant round for the Round Yard: Keep Kids Alive 10-week program to help kids trapped in a dysfunctional cycle of violence.



Faraz in the Spotlight

We're so proud of our scholarship recipient Faraz, who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Screen: Production from the Australian Film Television and Radio School.

"Halfway through my degree something just sparked in me and I found more purpose and that was reflected in all my marks, I was getting distinctions and high distinctions. I was in my natural state, doing something I loved and putting the effort in. I'm really, really happy with all my results.

Graduation was in June. It's so strange because it's something that I never thought would happen. I never thought I would ever be able to choose to study. When I wore my gown I felt very powerful. Getting my transcript is when it actually felt real, it was like all the setbacks and hard times were worth it, it was a full circle moment. It hit me – I have a Bachelor's degree now, this is awesome!

After graduation I worked at Bunya Productions doing a bit of everything, mainly admin, helping on shoots, and event management.

Next I did a three-month development internship with Fremantle as part of the AFTRS graduate program. Every week I was with different people in different departments. I got to be in the writers' room, where writers discuss the script and how to make it better, brainstorming, plotting the story; I got to observe everything. It was good experience to see what happens in a high-end production company.

Through Fremantle I met a producer who offered me a contract job to help with casting the new *Australian Idol* reboot. I started as soon as I finished my internship in June.

Right now I'm freelancing. I've been helping out with music videos, doing extras work, helping out on the *Heartbreak High* premiere as a production assistant, event stage managing. The great thing about this industry is that you can do whatever you want, there are so many different jobs, it's so exciting. Through my degree I've gotten a lot of contacts and our AFTRS alumni network is also really good – there are a lot of opportunities.

At the moment I'm waiting to hear about a traineeship to do costume work on a new feature film by Universal. I have a very good feeling I might get it."

"Linda and I were delighted to learn that Faraz has recently graduated. We have met Faraz and join all involved in congratulating her on this outstanding achievement.

Faraz's success highlights how the work of the Foundation and its partners can make a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable people. Her story is inspiring and an example of the transformative power of education and the potential that exists in our young people.

I thank once again the Sisters of Charity Foundation and its partners and supporters for helping build a more compassionate and inclusive community."

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



Faraz with Governor-General David Hurley and Mrs Linda Hurley.



Tertiary Scholarship Program

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

Over the past year we enhanced our scholarship program to offer students additional support. Five students are now being managed in-house with closer oversight, and there is increased communication with all students to offer encouragement and extra assistance if required.

We have also been working closely with out-of-home care providers to identify potential applicants. Providers can then assist students with the application process and give them a positive reference.

Our new approach moves us beyond simply providing funds; now, we develop relationships with students to grow their support network. Plenty of support was needed this year: once again the pandemic resulted in disruptions to learning and social networking, impacting students' motivation and mental wellbeing.

We have also been working toward our goal of expanding the scholarship program to help more young people every year. Instead of handing out ad-hoc scholarships as gifts trickle in, we envision being able to award a significant number of scholarships twice every year. To help achieve this we launched a new scholarship fund with its own DGR-1 status, which will allow Private Ancillary Funds to make tax-deductible donations to the program.

Program Highlights

2 STUDENTS GRADUATED in 2021–2022

8 STUDENTS AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS for university and TAFE courses

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S GRADUATES!

Faraz

Bachelor of Arts Screen: Production
Australian Film Television and Radio School

Tenayah

Diploma of Community Services
TAFE Wollongong

\$54,730

INVESTED IN SCHOLARSHIPS THIS YEAR

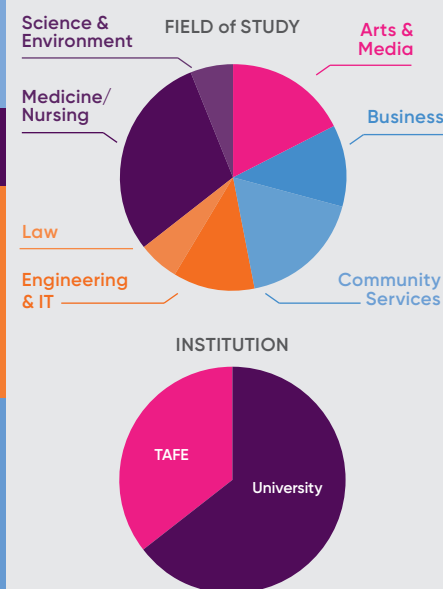
Total impact

\$661,069

INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SINCE 2012

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

OUR 17 ENROLLED STUDENTS



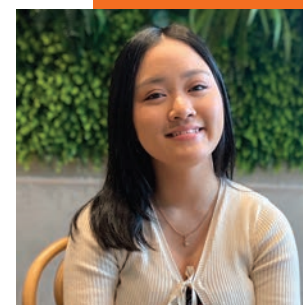
Nga Kim

Nga Kim is in her first year of a Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching) at Western Sydney University.

"I love going to in-person tutorials and learning with my peers that I have become friends with, and regularly like to see on days off. My favourite subjects are related to society and culture, where I get to learn through the interconnected lens of people, cultures, institutions and social issues. I have been doing well in my subjects and, because of the scholarship, have been able to focus more on university, rather than worrying only about paying for bills and living expenses.

I did find university a bit difficult to smoothly transition into, but without the support of the Foundation it would

have definitely been harder and more stressful. I've had a few bumps with mental health since starting but I am grateful that I have the scholarship, or I feel like I could have been in a more severe situation mentally, as I am now able to seek professional help and resources. I am working hard to balance everything in my life and am glad to be on this journey."



Tyrah

Tyrah is in her second year of a Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) at the University of NSW.

"I enjoy many of my core units, however my sociology courses are exciting and what I look forward to. During these classes my ideologies, beliefs and opinions are challenged and questioned. I always feel like I've learned a valuable lesson, which changes my perspective and forces me to learn and view the world differently.

My dream career involves supporting and assisting young people. I'm not sure yet in what capacity I'd like to do this, however, the wellbeing of First Nations people in the out-of-home care sector is a passion and focus point of mine. This is because of personal experiences in care, and the sickening overrepresentation of Aboriginal Australians in the OOH system.

When I found out I was lucky enough to receive a scholarship, I felt a sense of security and safety. University is incredibly expensive, so having the extra support made it easier. I've been saving my scholarship money. I'm hoping to use it to either clear my HECS debt or possibly save it to use it for a house deposit.

I'd love to say thank you to all the supporters and donors. This money will go a long way, and without all of you it wouldn't be possible."

Ky

Ky is in his final year of a Diploma in Conservation and Land Management at TAFE Urrbrae, South Australia.



"I think I've always been interested in conservation and ecology – I just didn't think I could make a career out of it. I was working at a travel agent and began to re-examine my life. I started volunteering in conservation and thought I'd definitely love to work in this. I started googling and found the TAFE course but I didn't want to give up full time money. Then COVID hit and I lost my job, about 80% of the company was stood down. So COVID made the decision for me. It's been the best journey of my life so far, it's been incredible.

The looming threat of climate change does affect your anxiety. I've always had that in the back of my mind and didn't know how to deal with it. Being in this field has taken that weight off my shoulders. There are so many solutions out there. There's a lot of awareness now and I think people are starting to make better decisions and that makes me excited for the future. Doing what I'm doing, I'm having a small impact on South Australia's nature."

Providing transitional housing and casework support to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, in collaboration with The Salvation Army.

Modern Slavery Housing Program

The Modern Slavery Housing Program pilot concluded in September 2021 and underwent a full evaluation. Results were positive, showing that participants were able to put their newly learnt financial skills into practice and demonstrate housing-related problem solving to support their tenancies. Participants also displayed increased confidence to be self-sufficient, although caseworkers continued to be a valuable source of practical and emotional support.

The evaluation also revealed that some participants didn't necessarily aim to take over the lease when they completed the program; rather they preferred to live with a roommate or move to a different area – signalling they were regaining a sense of independence and making choices to maximise their future wellbeing.

After a successful pilot we signed a three-year service agreement with The Salvation Army to continue delivering the program; in the longer term we aim to scale up to provide access to survivors across Australia.

\$

Invested

\$68,828

in transitional housing this year

\$164,819

in the Modern Slavery Housing Program since 2020 launch

6

MODERN SLAVERY SURVIVORS ASSISTED THIS YEAR

1

MODERN SLAVERY SURVIVOR COMPLETED THE PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE

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 heavily subsidises each rental payment for up to 12 months and provides a lump sum for furniture and whitegoods



04/

The survivor is supported through ongoing case management



05/

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



On the path to independence

Sara* was subjected to conditions of servitude that led her to feel scared, powerless and hopeless – setting up her own home helped her take back control.

When Sara moved to Australia to live with her husband, she did not know his personality would change and she would be subjected to severe violence and control. After she managed to escape, she was referred to The Salvation Army's Trafficking and Slavery Safe House for support and accommodation.

Sara lived at the Safe House for nine months while working toward her health, legal, education and employment goals. Slowly she began to focus on her future.

"I had to let go of the pain and leave it in my past. I had new motivation. I had to start to dream... I could focus on study and work, and I wanted to have my own home. I wanted to live in my own home. Now nobody could control me and my life like before. I would control my home, my future and my life, my new life."

Eventually, Sara became excited to live independently. With the help of the Modern Slavery Housing Program, she moved into a one-bedroom apartment with subsidised rent. She chose an apartment very close to the train station so she could easily commute to the city where she is working as a cleaner. The apartment is also close to a TAFE where Sara studies English two days a week, and local community centres she regularly visits. She loves hosting friends at her home.

"I love having my caseworker to help me. My caseworker supports me to look for the new house, gives me emotional support, explains things to me and helps me to save money."

Since entering the program Sara has found a new job, got her driver's license and is learning how to manage her finances. Her work hours have fluctuated – although she was expecting to work full time, she sometimes has shorter shifts. The program's rental subsidy has ensured she still has enough money for all her expenses.

"Without the support it would not have been easy. If I was working full time it would be ok, but right now it would be very difficult to pay all the rent. I want to work more so I have savings for emergencies and my future."

Sara is grateful to be in control, and in her own home.

"Now everything is changing. Now I can face everything more by myself. Sometimes I have some money, sometimes not enough, but I don't blame myself. I know I can manage it and I can be independent."

*Name has been changed for safety reasons.



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

Asylum Seekers Housing Program

The provision of stable medium-term housing for people seeking asylum has been especially essential over the past two years. Finding employment, the first step on the path to independent living, was almost impossible for Providence House residents during lockdown – fortunately the situation is gradually improving.

Eight people over five family groups transitioned out of Providence House into the private rental market and are covering their own rent. Two are working casually and still engaged with the Asylum Seekers Centre's Employment Service, while three have found permanent positions. One person has relocated to regional New South Wales; the others remain in Sydney and in contact with the ASC.

A major priority over the past financial year was offering more support to people as they transition into and out of the properties, as well as ensuring the quality of living conditions is maintained. A new WHS (work, health and safety) maintenance person was engaged to facilitate the practical aspects of moving and help alleviate stress.

In July 2021 the program was expanded by the addition of a new property in Berala, a gift to the Foundation from the Sisters of Charity Congregation. The house provided a unique accommodation opportunity for a large family group whose needs made them unsuitable for other housing assistance.



A year to regroup

In the first few weeks of the 2021 Sydney lockdown the Berala house welcomed a Syrian family of seven who are seeking asylum in Australia.

The visa status and work rights of the parents were preventing them from finding a stable home in the private rental market. Moving into Berala provided breathing space and helped them avoid the crisis they were facing. The timing was fortunate: the children had somewhere to do their remote schooling and the family were relieved from the stress of unstable housing during lockdown.

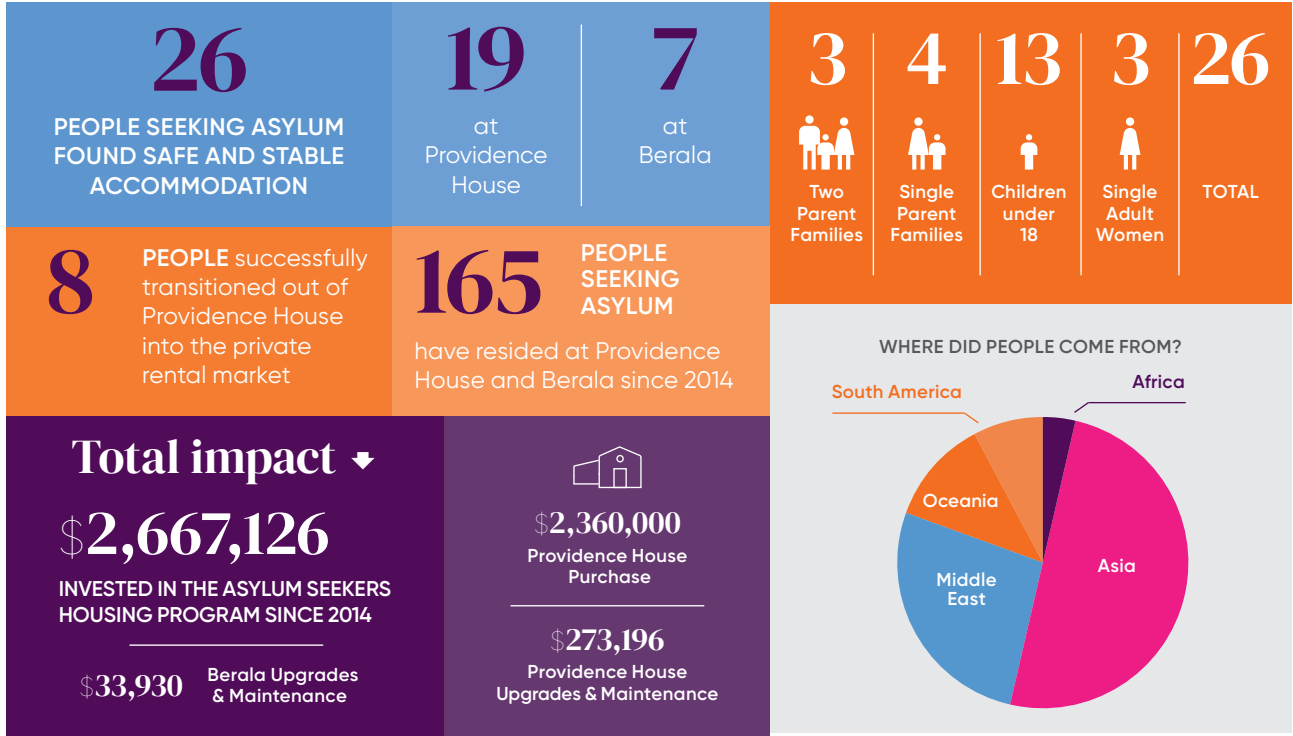
Since then, the eldest child has turned 18 and found a full-time job as a receptionist. The second eldest is working casually, and plans to enrol in a TAFE course soon. The middle children are both settled happily into their schools, one in primary and one in high school. The youngest is about to turn four and has been enrolled in an early learning centre with help from the ASC Family Support team.

The family are currently saving and planning to transition to independent rental accommodation in the coming months. They are being assisted by the ASC Intensive Support team to understand their rights and obligations in the private rental market and make plans for the future.



The Berala property housed Sisters of Charity from 1999 until 2017.

Program Highlights



A New Life for Maria

Maria* is seeking asylum in Australia. After being homeless for five months she was offered a place to stay at Providence House.

"I saw that in Australia, life here as a woman, it was totally different. I saw that there was peace. I saw there's no threats. There's not anything that will subject you to what I had to experience. I saw that there's respect. And these sort of things, I didn't experience them before.

When I arrived here, I had no fear. I was not scared. There was not anything that would make me feel the fear because when I was back in (my home country), when I woke up in the morning, it was always with fear. Especially as a woman, trying to go and do your business – do anything with your children, go to the market, whatever.

I arrived first to Melbourne. I spent about five months there, I did some farm work just to be able to keep me going. And then COVID struck... I wasn't able to do farm work because there was no work. It had just been enough to pay the rent, I wasn't making much. I was homeless. I was struggling and I was in a bad situation for five months in Melbourne until the borders opened. Then I went to NSW and went straight to the Asylum Seekers Centre.

They took me in wholeheartedly. They gave me love and hope and everything. I was provided a place to sleep, a warm bed, food, clothing. That's something that I haven't experienced before.

In those five months when I was struggling with no place to stay, there was a burden over me. And it was kind of like a bad dream. I was thinking 'What will happen next?' Then I was given this place to stay, in Providence House. It was like taking a whole load off me. I was relieved. I felt really free, very light, very happy. That's all I can say.

I had several friends at Providence House. There were two very good friends, one was a Bangladeshi lady, and the other one is African. One of them still always invites me to her place.

I stayed at Providence House for about one year and six months or so. They provided me with something that I've never experienced, they provided me with learning. They provided two teachers, very loving, kind teachers, who were able to get me started in communicating in English. I don't write, but my communication now is OK with basic, day-to-day things. I can find my way around, ask for directions. They also assisted me to be able to communicate with immigration. They were able to get me a visa that gave me work rights. I'm happy with the job that I picked up and life is looking all good for me."

*Name has been changed for safety reasons.

Transition to independence

While living at Providence House, Maria and her case worker looked at job opportunities in meat processing. Maria heard there were jobs available in Griffith and, with her confidence at a new high, made the decision to relocate and approach the employment agencies there. Three days after applying she was offered a job at a processing facility.

She's currently renting in a share house but on the lookout for something more private, and is in contact with local real estate agents.

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 continue in the tradition 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.

Sisters of Charity Foundation
Level 7 / 35 Grafton St Bondi Junction NSW 2022
(02) 9367 1211
info@sistersofcharityfoundation.org.au
sistersofcharityfoundation.org.au

 @SistersOfCharityFoundation

 @socfstories

 @sisters-of-charity-foundation

 @SOCFAustralia