

Sisters of Charity
Foundation



Annual Review
2022–2023

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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.



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In 2022–2023, every life transformed for the better was because of your generosity.

Thank you.

To everyone who has stood with us and shared our vision: our deepest thanks for your kindness and compassion. Because of you, families and individuals without enough to eat have been fed. Those without shelter have found a safe place to call home. And those without prospects have been helped to pursue education.

Your support is changing lives.

Chair and CEO's Report

Our 2022–2023 Annual Review showcases the impact you are having on some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in Australia. The work undertaken across our five programs has transformed many thousands of lives for the better – we couldn't do it without your generous assistance.

We have distributed \$583,249 in funding to 45 nonprofit organisations through the Community Grants Program this year. The cost-of-living crisis and rental shortages have placed enormous stress on the most vulnerable families and individuals; for this reason, \$376,691 went to programs that help those experiencing housing insecurity.

These pressures also affected our Tertiary Scholarship Program recipients and we have been offering extra support where we can. This year, five students graduated with a university degree or TAFE diploma; our warmest congratulations to Dylan, Kylln, Lillian, Gabriela and Jasmine for their sustained focus, ambition and hard work.

We are also pleased to witness the program's growth. A December 2023 concert featuring the Ku-ring-gai Philharmonic Orchestra and esteemed pianist Roger Woodward helped raise our profile, as well as awareness about the challenges that young people from out-of-home care backgrounds face. In February 2023 we awarded 11 new scholarships to students, the largest number of scholarships we have ever awarded at one time.

Over the past year our two properties in Petersham and Berala housed six families seeking asylum – 24 adults and children in all. Despite rental costs in the private market rapidly increasing, seven people were able to transition out of supported accommodation

to live independently. We are grateful for the wraparound services offered by our collaborator, the Asylum Seekers Centre, that are helping to establish these families, find the parents steady employment, and ensure the health and wellbeing of all residents.

We launched our Raise the Roof campaign to increase community awareness about modern slavery and human trafficking, while raising funds for our Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program. Twelve survivors have been supported this year, while four have now graduated the program to live independently.

Sister Anne Mayberry in New South Wales and Sister Christine Henry in Queensland have been doing remarkable work ministering to regional, remote and rural communities badly affected by floods and bushfires. We are glad to offer administrative and governance support so the Sisters may better concentrate on their mission. The exceptional care and understanding the Sisters have for country people and their dedication to easing their burdens is admirable.

Lastly, we'd like to express our gratitude to our supporters and Changemakers for your generosity and commitment to our vision. Your support allows us to carry on the mission and traditions of the Sisters of Charity, who first landed on our shores 185 years ago.

Juliet Dunworth

Juliet Dunworth
Chair



Louise Burton

Louise M Burton
CEO



2022–2023 Impact



Community Grants Program



\$583,249

given in grants to
45 nonprofits

\$10,490,000+

given to 1,045+
community projects
since 2000

Tertiary Scholarship Program



21

scholarship students have graduated with a
university degree or TAFE diploma since 2012

25

scholarship students are currently enrolled
at institutions around the country

Asylum Seekers Housing Program



175

people seeking asylum
have resided at Providence
House and Berala since 2014

\$2,686,049

invested in the
program since 2014

Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program



12

modern slavery survivors assisted with
intensive casework support this year

4

survivors completed the program to
achieve independence since launch

Community Care: Remote and Rural



Sister Anne Mayberry
travelled 6,502 kilometres
through country NSW to
assist 15 schools

\$17,185

provided in grocery/petrol
vouchers and cheques to families
experiencing disadvantage

Community Care: Downs & West Community Support



Sister Christine Henry and her
team organised 20 Wellness
Days, Mental Health Days,
Fun Days and Family Days
to support families in rural
southern Queensland

\$149,144

provided in community
support payments to families
experiencing disadvantage in
Queensland



The Sisters of Charity of Australia Congregational Council. From left: Sr Adele Cottrell-Dormer rsc, Sr Tess Marcelo rsc, Congregational Leader Sr Laureen Dixon rsc, Sr Libbey Byrne rsc and Sr Margaret Guy rsc.

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“An initiative of which we are very proud is the Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program, which supports survivors in their search for secure and safe housing, so that they can become independent and able to live a life of freedom.”

From the Sisters

Dear friends, I'm not sure about you, but it seems hardly possible that another year has passed! So many good things have happened as the Sisters of Charity Foundation continues to respond to the needs of the poor and underserved in our community.

Some years ago, our Congregation, along with religious worldwide, were encouraged to look at ways of responding to the issue of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Pope Francis said, "Human trafficking disfigures dignity. Exploitation and subjugation limit freedom and turn people into objects to use and discard... to oblige millions of people to live in conditions of vulnerability."

We have several Sisters who are actively engaged in this ministry principally through two agencies

of the Church. Talitha Kum is the International Network of Consecrated Life against trafficking in persons. One Sister is actively involved in this international network. A staggering statistic recently published is that, globally, 50 million people live in slavery!

ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) was established in 2005, and advocates for those trafficked and in modern slavery situations in Australia. We have several Sisters involved in ACRATH at varying levels of the organisation.

An initiative of the Sisters of Charity Foundation of which we are very proud is the Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program. This partnership between the Sisters of Charity Foundation and The Salvation Army supports survivors in their search for secure and safe housing, so that they can become independent and able to live a life of freedom.

The Global Slavery Index 2023

estimates that there are around 41,000 people trapped in conditions of modern slavery in Australia. Even after they escape, survivors are left in a very difficult position. If they are Australian citizens they may have no family or support network, no money or education, and nowhere to live. The challenges are even greater for foreign nationals, who must now navigate unfamiliar customs and bureaucracy and may not speak English.

After securing a job and being supported by specialist caseworkers, our program participants are able to take a lease on an affordable property, ensuring their independence and self-respect.

Housing and freedom are universal rights. It is such partnerships as these which effect real change and bring hope to all.

Laureen Dixon rsc

Laureen Dixon rsc
Congregational Leader

The Power of Song

The Sydney Street Choir is a supportive musical community that aims to inspire and empower those who have experienced homelessness or disadvantage. Its Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre Choir Program is positively impacting inmates – Choir Director Rachel Harding tells us how.

"There are many studies that prove singing is good for your mental wellbeing. Some women take a long time to open up, they come and watch rehearsal and won't do anything. It's wonderful to see them, over time, get more comfortable and start participating.

Group singing has multiple benefits for people struggling with social issues; they have to work together, listen to each other and cooperate, sometimes with people they don't like.

The women have a big love for old songs. 'The Horses' by Daryl Braithwaite, 'Bring It on Home to Me' by Sam Cooke; we've done a bit of everything – Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Bob Marley.

There have been times when we've had people in tears

because a song has reminded them of a loved one or someone that's passed away or a bad association. A few times now someone has said 'that's the song from my baby's funeral' or 'that's the song I used to sing to my little girl'. Your heart goes out to them. There's a lot of deep trauma that hasn't been dealt with and music can be a way in. It can really help them process emotions.

We get a lot of people that have never been able to speak for themselves and singing helps them find their voice. Hopefully that empowers them to use their voices in other ways as well. We give them something constructive to do, especially in maximum security where there's so much fighting. If they're able to sing together that's the beginning of a path where they can learn there's other ways to express their feelings."



Many choir members have experienced periods of homelessness or other social difficulties. The choir provides friendship, focus and family when they most need it.

Community in a choir

"We're thrilled to bring the Dillwynia Women's prison program to life thanks to your generous support," says Sydney Street Choir Director James Paul. "This is a pilot program anchored in the values of our choir, bringing hope, joy and community to those most in need.

"In time, we hope to continue linking the Dillwynia program to our core programs in Redfern and Western Sydney, where our members access unique social welfare support and a trusted community that truly does transform lives through the power of song."

GRANT DETAILS

\$10,000
in the July 2022 grant round to fund the Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre Choir Program.



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 cost-of-living and rental crises have resulted in widespread disadvantage, and meant people who've never had to ask for help before need it now. We've heard dozens of reports, from our grantee organisations and the people they support, about the difficulties families are facing as they struggle to stay on top of groceries, rent, utilities and other bills. In the past financial year we've provided \$376,691 in funding to projects that help people experiencing housing insecurity.

Another area of concern is mental health. In September 2022, Suicide Prevention Australia warned cost-of-living pressures would increase the risk of suicide over the next

12 months. In May 2023, Lifeline stated that up to 80% of its calls now relate to cost-of-living pressures. The stress brought on by long-term financial insecurity has led to increased incidences of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. That's why we have given out \$92,996 to programs that support positive mental health or provide mentoring.

The Community Grants Program is the cornerstone of our Foundation; through it we will continue to support vulnerable people across Australia.

Minimising waste, maximising impact

A \$15,000 Community Grant is helping Foodfilled rescue surplus food from landfill and direct it to charities serving people in need.

"I did a delivery from Aldi St Kilda to both The Living Room Youth Project and then Frontyard Youth Services," says Foodfilled volunteer Chloe. "Aldi donated two trolleys absolutely packed with good quality food. When I arrived at The Living Room, a group of young men in need were sitting, waiting. As soon as I put down the crates of food on the table, these six young men jumped up, grabbed the food and literally sat down on the side of the road eating together. I think that right there is a prime display of the direct impact we are having on people in need. It was amazing to see."

"Afterwards, when I went to Frontyard Youth Services, they said they'd gone days without adequate food, with quite a few young people coming in asking for more. Safe to say they were so incredibly appreciative for the delivery and our support."

Every week an army of volunteers rescue 1,860 kilograms of food and redistribute it to feed 3,720 people experiencing food insecurity. Foodfilled is currently operating in every suburb of metropolitan Melbourne, and has plans to expand Victoria-wide by the end of 2024.



Program Highlights

178

ORGANISATIONS
APPLIED FOR
FUNDING

101 in July 2022
77 in February 2023

45

ORGANISATIONS
RECEIVED A
COMMUNITY GRANT

24 in July 2022
21 in February 2023

\$583,249

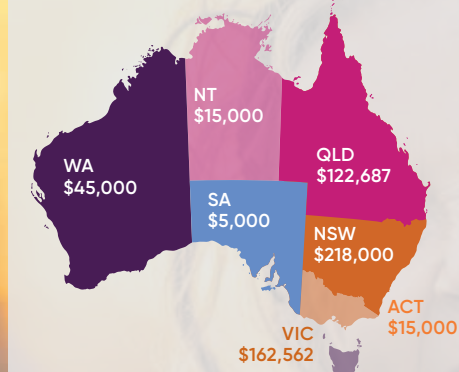
GIVEN IN GRANT FUNDING

\$299,687 in July 2022
\$283,562 in February 2023

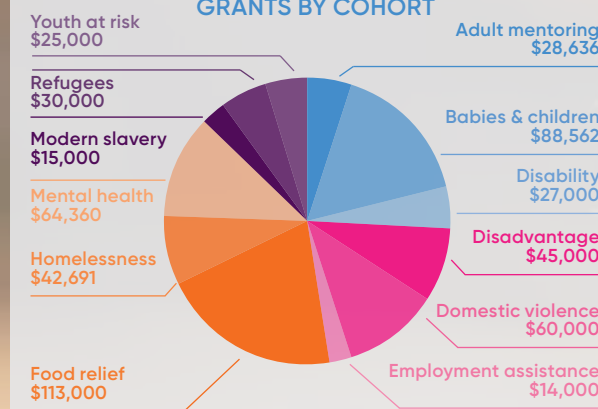
\$376,691

GIVEN TO PROJECTS THAT HELP
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOUSING
INSECURITY

GRANTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



GRANTS BY COHORT



\$10,490,000 +

GIVEN TO

1,045+

COMMUNITY
PROJECTS
SINCE 2000

Kindness at a dark time

ProjectKindness used its \$15,000 Community Grant to help distribute hampers of groceries and household items to vulnerable members of the community.

Sixty-five-year-old Barbara and her grandson Dylan had faced multiple tragedies. Dylan's mum – Barbara's daughter – passed away from meningococcal when he was only nine. Dylan's father struggled with addiction and was absent.

Barbara gained custody of her grandson but their home was not a safe haven. Barbara's son was addicted to ice and, over several months, assaulted his mother badly. Leaving everything they knew behind, Barbara and Dylan fled their home in Western Australia and relocated to New South Wales.

After they spent seven months in a refuge, a spot opened up for them in social housing. ProjectKindness stepped in to fit out their new home with essential household items and provided weekly grocery hampers to put food on the table. Barbara and Dylan finally found peace.

"The people we support show so much strength and resilience," says ProjectKindness Founder Clementine Hartson. "It is a privilege to be part of their lives."



Tertiary Scholarship Program

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

The launch of our standalone scholarship fund with its own DGR-1 status in the previous financial year has resulted in the program's growth. In February 2023 we awarded 11 new scholarships, five university and six TAFE; the largest number of scholarships awarded at one time.

We continue to manage the majority of scholarships in-house, giving us better oversight of our students and a firsthand glimpse into the challenges they are facing. Chief among these is the rising cost of living. Students, new scholarship applicants, caseworkers and out-of-home care providers tell us that bills, groceries and transport costs are having a severe impact on already tight budgets. Soaring rents and rental shortages are another factor causing great stress.

The Foundation joined a coalition of community organisations and children's welfare groups to lend its voice to Home Stretch, a national campaign to extend the age of young people leaving state care from 18 to 21. In November 2022 the NSW government announced it would extend support to 21 years of age, coming in line with other Australian states and territories.

We will continue to support campaigns aimed at ensuring the reforms are giving the best support to young people in foster, kinship and residential care.

Program Highlights ↴



5 STUDENTS GRADUATED in 2022–2023



14 STUDENTS AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS for university and TAFE courses this year

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S GRADUATES!

Dylan
Cert IV Community Services
TasTAFE

Kylln
Diploma in Conservation and Land Management
TAFE Urrbrae, SA

Lillian
Bachelor of Midwifery
University of Technology Sydney

Gabriela
Diploma of Nursing
TAFE St George, NSW

Jasmine
Master of Social Work
University of Sydney

\$127,265

INVESTED IN SCHOLARSHIPS THIS YEAR

Total impact ↴

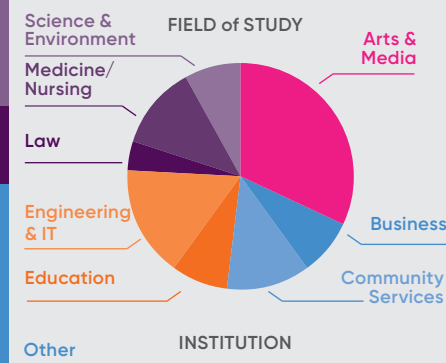
\$788,334

INVESTED IN THE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SINCE 2012

21 STUDENTS HAVE GRADUATED WITH a university degree or TAFE diploma since 2012



OUR 25 ENROLLED STUDENTS



Ty

Ty is in his third year of a Certificate III in Light Vehicle Mechanics at TAFE Ultimo, and is doing his apprenticeship with BMW.

"I blame *The Fast and the Furious* movies, I saw them working on cars and fixing them up to make them run faster and better. That started my passion for cars and I thought I could actually fix cars – that would be fun – oh wait I could actually design cars – that would be even better!



My favourite task would be the post-repair process, so what that involves is a simple test drive. You have to drive the car under harsh conditions. We smack the hell out of it, find some back streets and send it. It's so much fun.

I'm a very hands-on visual learner. I can touch the car as opposed to writing notes down in a classroom and staring at a board for eight hours. And I retain it 20 times better. Since I'm interested in it, it comes naturally to me.

I have no words that explain how grateful I am for this scholarship. Like honestly thank you so so so much, the amount of help you've given me has not only improved my financial situation (which was very, very bad before) but my mental state – things can get better."

Joel

Joel is in his first year of a Bachelor of Ancient History at Macquarie University.



"I want a career as an historian, writing books and making documentaries. My interest in history came from way back. I remember being little and watching a lot of Roman and Egyptian documentaries on SBS. I remember sitting there with my nan and my brother and just being infatuated with it. I think it's the mystery that grabs me. The videogame *Total War: Rome II* also put me fully into the world of ancient Rome and on the pathway to get interested in other history as well.

My nana told me about the scholarship, she stumbled across it and said I should apply. She was really happy when I got it – I wouldn't say jumping up and down but if she was younger she would have! I felt relieved. Because I won't be in so much debt it's impossible to get out of. Coming from my background, my financial situation wasn't the best. Without it I would be in debt, and I wouldn't be able to go as far in my career.

Besides paying off some of the debt straightaway, I'll probably use it for opportunities that further my study. I want to do a study exchange in Germany because I'm learning German. I started in high school and can hold a basic conversation. I'd like to stay in the place my ancestors come from, Baden-Württemberg in southern Germany. My nan would like that."



Vivian

Vivian is in her first year of a Bachelor of Medical Science at Western Sydney University.

"I want to be a doctor so I can specialise in forensic pathology. A forensic pathologist is a doctor who determines the cause of death when people die in suspicious circumstances. They help the coroner figure out what happened. As a kid I grew up around really morbid and grotesque things. When I heard about that career I thought, 'oh that sounds like fun!'

My favourite subject is human anatomy and physiology. It's very interesting to learn about the human body. On our campus we have practicals which involve looking at dead bodies, examining them, looking at what the structures are. Fellow students have had to leave the room, but I don't mind it. I really like it.

It takes me two hours to get to uni because it's all the way in Campbelltown. I usually get there around 8am and I don't get back home until 12am. Sometimes I study on the train.

I was really surprised when I learnt I'd won the scholarship, I don't know why. I tend to not have high hopes for this kind of stuff. When I got the news I was very happy. I told my caseworkers and they were very happy for me. I'll probably use it for textbooks, repairs my laptop may need, other stuff. One textbook costs around \$150 and you need around four each semester. Not fun. During semester one I bought lab coats and safety goggles for my practicals."



The Value of a Scholarship

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.

"A very warm welcome. You know this Foundation well; I would say there are many reasons for its success but I think foremost it is built on compassion, kindness and generosity – and those three things come together to change lives.

When I was young I did my sums when I finished high school and realised I didn't really have the means to put myself through university. Many people ask me, why did I join the army when I was 18? I went to get a tertiary education. That was my means to be the first in my family to get a tertiary education.

Having that background, you appreciate the value of scholarships and how they help people move forward. But this is not about you opening doors to these young people, they'll open all the doors they want themselves. What you are saying to them is: this is the range, the number of doors out there you can go through – and here's the pathway. Here's a little help on the way. You choose and off you go.

46,000 Australian young people are in out-of-home care, of that only 1% go to university. And that compares to 40% in the general population. It's just staggering

that should be the case. That is why the work of this Foundation is so important.

The program helps with study expenses, fees, textbooks, technology requirements, laptops, Wi-Fi and so on, and being able to study without the burden of having multiple jobs. So thank you for helping these youngsters build their own pathways to success. It gives young people hope. And that is so important. It's a bit of a dark world out there at the moment, with inflation, the cost of living – so to be able to say we're playing our part is heartwarming. So to all of you who assisted with this program, thank you for what you do."

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) Nga Kim, Baneen, Nathan, Andre, Cleo; and Foundation CEO Louise M Burton.

Siti's Story

In 2017, Siti, her husband, and their four children arrived in Australia seeking asylum. The family moved into the Foundation's property at Berala in early 2023, which allowed them a safe place to heal, grow, and reclaim a sense of normalcy.

The family's arrival in Australia was marked by uncertainty and limited community connections, and the challenges were amplified by the intricacies of providing daily care for two of their children who carry a rare genetic condition called epidermolysis bullosa (EB) that demands extensive medical care. Siti* says:

"My daughter is 11, my son is nine, my other son is three. And my last one, my daughter, she's two. Two of my kids are disabled. They were born with a rare genetic condition. We enjoy being together. But our routine is very tight. We do dressings every day and they can last for four hours, but in the limited time that we have, we like to cook together, watch TV together.

It was the Sydney Children's Hospital that connected us to the Asylum Seekers Centre, towards the end of our lease. We were in urgent need of accommodation. We had the lease for two years but the owner was coming back from China. He wanted to stay in the unit, so we had to vacate it for him. We spent two and a half months trying to transition to a new rental, but our employment was not that great. At the time we were just doing small jobs and stuff like that, and the housing market was really tough.

Jumana, our caseworker, encouraged us to move into the Berala house. It was so that we could get back on our feet and get things sorted. Because at the time when we first moved in, my daughter was really sick, so she was in the hospital. We are grateful for the opportunity. We are humbled by the accommodation that we've been given.

I am currently starting a new job. And now we are trying to figure out how my husband fits into employment since he's the carer at the moment. Our goal is, of course, sorting my husband's employment so that we could slowly transition into more independence. Our goal is to get our financial and economic situation sorted. The employment team at the ASC was very helpful and giving ideas and helping us through it. So I think we are progressing, we are getting there.

I don't think that words can do justice. We are really grateful. We are humble and we hope that we are not a nuisance to stay in this accommodation. But we aspire to pay it forward in the future, if we are able to. I don't think 'thank you' is enough to express how we feel."

*Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

Space to heal, time to grow

Siti's journey underscores that stable, secure housing is not merely a physical necessity but a catalyst for holistic growth. By addressing the immediate need for shelter, housing assistance enabled Siti's family to focus on their challenges. Siti seized an employment opportunity, while her children are thriving in a supportive school environment.

The house in Berala ignited a renewed sense of hope and determination within the family.



Asylum Seekers Housing Program

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

In a tough housing market with high demand for each rental property, and the cost of rent rapidly rising, single mothers and unemployed adults are most likely to miss out. The role of stable and reliable housing in this environment is extremely important.

Over the past year, six family groups found safe haven in housing provided by the Foundation: Providence House, the four-apartment building in Petersham; and the large family home at Berala. The ASC team supports each family to face their challenges – accessing visas and legal advice, maintaining health and wellbeing, making community connections, learning English, enrolling in education, finding work, etc – and make plans to move on.

Providence House

With no partner to share parenting duties, single mothers rely heavily on childcare to return to work. Unfortunately, this year both single-parent families at Providence House faced barriers accessing financial support for childcare and were consequently unable to secure employment, despite being keen, ready and able to find work. This has impacted their ability to save for a bond and upfront rental payments.

The rental crisis has significantly increased the cost of secure independent housing, making it unreachable for most families in the program. All will need to move to a new area of Sydney to be able to afford rent, negatively impacting children enrolled at local schools.

These factors have prevented any families from transitioning out of the units in Providence House this year, though plans are in place for two or three to move in the next financial year.

Berala

Thirteen people lived in the house in Berala over the past year: one family of seven (two adults and five children), followed by a second family of six (two adults and four children).

At the end of 2022, the first ASC family to live in the Berala home moved out after almost 18 months' occupancy.

In early 2023 a new family of six moved in. Two of the children have significant medical challenges.



“I don’t think ‘thank you’ is enough to express how we feel.”

Stability and a brighter future

When Manar*, her husband, and five children first moved into the Berala house, they were in an extremely challenging situation. It was during the July 2021 Sydney COVID-19 lockdown, and they were relying on one income – when Manar’s husband lost his job.

During their time in the house, they were able to rest, make plans, and find stability. Manar’s husband found work in transport and her eldest son enrolled in a TAFE course and will shortly begin a trades apprenticeship.

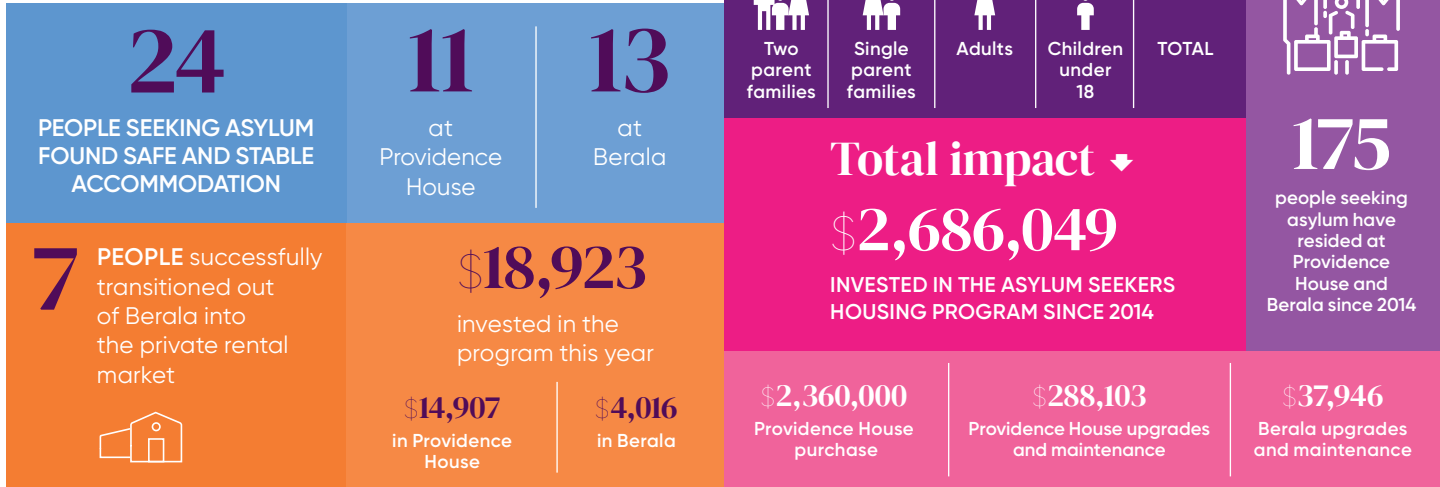
The family transitioned from the Berala house into a private rental home at the end of 2022 where they are now able to cover the rent on their own.

When Manar reflects on the opportunity the house gave her, she is very thankful for the time and space it allowed her family to get back on their feet. As it was local to the children’s schools it enabled them to stay within a supportive educational community.

The children loved the space in the house to stretch out and recuperate. She says that the home came at a time when they really needed help and they were so grateful that they didn’t need to compromise on their children’s happiness.

*Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

Program Highlights



Where did people come from?

Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program

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

This year the cost-of-living crisis has impacted the rental market, meaning participants are spending much longer on their property search. "With the rent being higher there are less properties available," explains Program Manager Melina Matthia. "In New South Wales if you want to rent a place under \$400 there are sometimes only two properties available. We are relying more than ever on our relationships with real estate agents because it's so competitive. They know us, trust us and consider our application."

Previously the property search would take on average two to three months, whereas now it is closer to six to seven, depending on the suburb. Participants are spending longer in the program, which increases administrative costs. These factors demand flexibility in the program's management.

"It's a really important program," says Melina. "It's not about putting these survivors in front of everyone else affected by the housing crisis – it's giving them tools so they're on the same starting line as anyone else."

\$
Total Impact
\$274,819
invested in the
Modern Slavery
Transitional
Housing Program
since 2020 launch

4
survivors
completed
the program
to achieve
independence
since launch



Q&A with MSTHP Case Manager Brinda Moktan

What do you discuss during your first meeting with a participant?

I explain what the program provides and how we should work together. We do a budget to find out what's affordable. Then find out more about the type of property they want; we discuss the market rent (they are all shocked by the cost of renting in Sydney), how to look for a property (we look at Domain and similar apps), what to expect when going to an inspection, what to check for, what's required when applying for a property, and how to apply.

What do participants look for when choosing a property?

A major requirement is easy access to public transport because most don't drive. Other than that it depends on the individual – someone prefers a one-bedroom over a studio, one has to have gas, one wants good water pressure in the shower. One participant was concerned about security, she closely examined the main door, the locks and everything.

We encourage them to go and inspect in person. One participant asked, 'Can I just do a video call or can you go on my behalf?' We explained pictures can be deceiving, we can support you during the inspection but you have to go there, you will be the one living there!

How does the program work?

The Foundation provides funding to program participants to set up their new homes and cover a portion of their rent for six to 12 months, and to The Salvation Army to employ dedicated caseworker Brinda Moktan. Brinda works one-on-one with survivors to help them secure an independent living situation, educate them on their rights and responsibilities as a tenant, ensure their general health and wellbeing, and guide them toward independence.

This year

\$110,000	12	3
invested in transitional housing	modern slavery survivors assisted	survivors completed the program to achieve independence



Tell us about a challenge you helped a participant overcome.

One participant told me she didn't feel safe, she didn't think her neighbours were good people. They were making a lot of noise late at night, there were random people coming to the house. We talked about her options: making a complaint to the property manager, calling the police anonymously. Finally she said, 'The main door to the apartment building is always open, maybe I can lock it so anyone who doesn't have keys can't come in?' So she did that, which helped.

What changes do you notice in people when they're ready to leave the program?

They are more confident, they have more power, they feel like their own person, and it builds their independent living skills as well. Toward the end they have fair knowledge of their rights as a tenant. I do holistic casework with them, we are focused on every area that can help them be more independent – legal, employment, education, health, social relationships etc.

During our final meeting I might ask, 'If your landlord comes knocking what will you do?' I test their knowledge and understanding to make sure they are prepared and can advocate for themselves.

Remote and Rural

Part of Community Care, the Remote and Rural ministry is led by Sister Anne Mayberry rsc, and provides support to families in remote, rural and regional New South Wales who have been badly affected by droughts, bushfires, floods and general economic downturn.

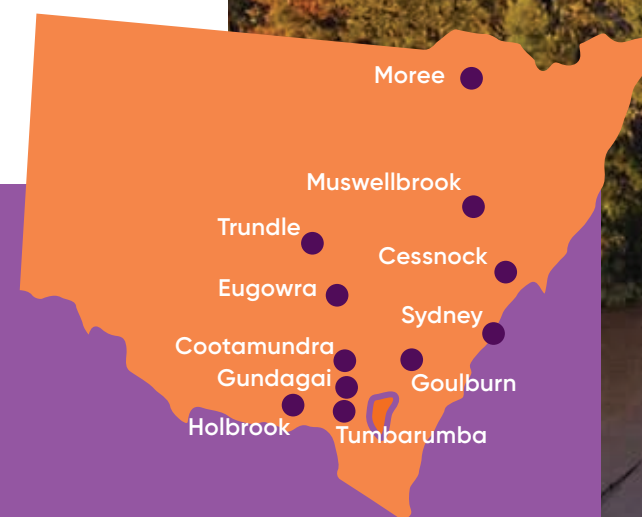
Sister Anne travels hundreds of kilometres on each of her trips through the country, taking cheques, grocery and petrol vouchers, donated goods, clothing, toys and school supplies to primary schools, where the principal then directs them to families experiencing disadvantage.

"I sit down with the principal and they tell me what's going on, they know which families need help, and how I can help," says Sr Anne. "They ask for things, for example money so kids whose families are doing it tough can go on excursion. Children in the country should be able to experience the same joys and educational experiences as kids in the city, it's important for their education."

She also visits aged care facilities; taking the residents beanies, scarves, and crochet rugs; charities like the Salvos in Goulburn and The Farm in Galong; and parishes where Sisters from other orders are based.

In April 2023 Sr Anne visited Eugowra, which had been devastated by the November 2022 flood. "St. Joseph's school was totally destroyed by a two-metre high wall of water, which demolished everything in its path," she says. "That little school with just 35 children lost everything – furniture, equipment, laptops."

She took them boxes of toys, puzzles, games, kits, dolls and books, and grocery vouchers valued at \$1,500. In June she returned with more toys, stationery and vouchers. Sr Anne has always written reflections after she returns from the country to Sydney – the scene at Eugowra inspired 'Eugowra: where the sand washes down the hill'.



Eugowra: where the sand washes down the hill

Sand is displaced by torrents of rain from above, Engulfing everything in its path. Roads become canals. Homes become floating objects. Water gushing, twirling dance-like, cascading, Consuming all in its wake.

Grasses and debris cling to fence lines as though hung out to dry. A concrete bridge dislodged by the Mandadgery Creek forcing vehicles to now detour through the dry river bed, Earlier swollen with water.

A 'pod' now becomes a lodging, while folks' family homes stand empty, forsaken, With doors and windows wide open to resist rot and decay. Some homes abandoned... possessions litter sodden verandahs.

Home owners, children, clamber onto rooftops awaiting rescue. Feelings of terror, abandonment and trauma are overwhelming. Shops, eateries, now begin the task of cleaning and restoration.

Children's place of learning, totally demolished. A two metre wall of water sweeping everything in its path. School enrolments drop drastically – by half. Hospitality is found in a room, in the government school.

... Half a year on and after much support and guidance, The children are happy! Lots of new books, games, toys, Lego and 'cuddlies' are donated to assist in drowning out awful experiences and memories. Staff are overwhelmed with kindness and generosity extended to them. Plans are scheduled and decisions made, afoot as they carry bag after bag into the 'temporary' office.

The Escort Way now welcomes friends and supporters.

Written by Sister Anne Mayberry

This year's highlights



6,502

kilometres travelled through country NSW

15

schools assisted

\$17,185

provided in grocery/petrol vouchers and cheques to families experiencing disadvantage

Downs & West Community Support

A ministry of Community Care, DWCS is led by Sister Christine Henry rsc and offers encouragement, discreet and personalised assistance to farming families and their communities in rural southern Queensland who are severely affected by climatic conditions or family matters beyond their control.

"The aftermath of widespread massive flooding created huge challenges as people returned to their homes, often after a year living in caravans or with relatives," says DWCS Advisory Committee Chair Chris Muir. "Many had no insurance and had lost beds, bedding, furniture, clothes, and kitchenware on top of animals, fences, machinery, buildings, crops, and topsoil. Fortunately we received very generous donations of a multitude of household goods, furniture, and clothing which were distributed to the many in need by the tirelessly industrious Sister Christine."

Along with the redistribution of in-kind donations, DWCS gave out \$149,144 in community support payments over the past financial year. Of this, \$58,000 in cash payments were deposited in the bank accounts of people in need of significant financial relief, giving them immediate practical support and helping relieve overwhelming stress. \$4,462 went to schools in Murgon, Tara, Allora, and Helidon to purchase basic resources and allow children to attend essential educational programs.

20 Wellness Days, Mental Health Days, Fun Days and Family Bush Christmas Days were organised to give people a welcome break from their daily duties, and allow them to connect with their communities.



This year

\$49,342
given to flood relief
and other financial
support

\$149,144
provided in
community support
payments

4,022

hours of work
valued at \$80,440
provided by
volunteers



Practical support in action

Here are some of the many items DWCS provided to families doing it tough this year:

Families received groceries, petrol and grocery vouchers, hampers at Christmas and Easter, and clothing; had their overdue bills including medical, chemist, hospital, electrical, and insurance paid; and were given financial support that allowed them to live elsewhere after floods and fires destroyed the family home, and pay for car repairs. Essential household items like clothes dryers, kitchenware, dishwashers and air-conditioners were also provided.

Farmers had their flood-damaged water pumps repaired; tanks destroyed by bushfires replaced; outstanding vet and stock feed bills paid, along with other bills like council rates and vehicle registration; and were supplied with tools and petrol vouchers.

What is pastoral care?

In addition to the practical, hands-on help provided by DWCS, pastoral care is offered in the form of emotional, social and spiritual support.

"Hearing your voice on the phone makes a difference to my day, changes my mood, and shifts the course of my thinking. Many times, it has alleviated my loneliness and the feeling of being isolated in some stressful situations. Thank you for taking the time to phone. It's special."

"Pastoral care is an integral part of our ministry, a role that lies at the heart of an integrated approach to healing and to life," says Sister Christine. "While accompanying individuals and families as they articulate their fear, pain, worries and hope, we aim to respond in the present moment and assist them to find strength and to draw upon their own resources."

Over the past financial year, 356 phone calls were made, 180 face-to-face conversations were held, 150 personalised letters of support were written, 27 people were visited in hospitals and aged care facilities, and four Zoom meetings were arranged.



This year's highlights

314

children
sponsored to
participate in
vital education
programs



2

Family Bush
Christmas
Days held for
235 adults and
children



2

Fun Days
organised for
45 kids and 39
adults



2

Mental Health
Days co-
hosted for 64
men



14

Wellness through
Learning and
Creativity Days
hosted for 309
women



Everything is Gone

Fifteen minutes is all it took for Alison to lose everything she had worked for her whole life. Her little piece of rural paradise and generations of family history and photos were destroyed when a roaring bushfire tore through her Western Downs home.

"February 12, 2023," sighs Alison*. "I'll never forget that date. It was a typical, sweltering Queensland summer day. I wasn't feeling well so I went to have a lie down."

Suddenly the house was surrounded by smoke as a fire surged through the bush. With just minutes to spare Alison managed to bundle her elderly father, six cats and five dogs into the car to escape the impending inferno. The bushfire closed in quickly, the wind shifted and suddenly the house was gone.

"The fire was roaring around us," Alison recalls. "We got out with our lives, and for that I'm so grateful. But everything else was gone."

Alison's heartbreak turned to rage when police announced they were treating the bushfire as suspicious, possibly deliberately lit. "How could someone even think to do that? The lives it destroyed, I can't get my head around it," Alison says.

To add insult to injury, unable to afford the ongoing rise in insurance premiums, Alison had been forced to cancel her home insurance policy just months before. "I have nothing but the clothes on my back," she says.

Alison is now trying to rebuild her life. "I will always worry," she says. "I loved having the bush around me, for privacy, but I don't want that now. I want it all gone. I just need to be able to breathe."

Immediately after the fire, Downs & West Community Support was able to provide initial pastoral care, financial support, and petrol and grocery vouchers to help Alison through those first traumatic days. Later, DWCS purchased an air-conditioner, linen and kitchen utensils to bring some comfort to the family.

"I don't know how I would have coped without that support," Alison says. "Knowing they are there, and really care about us, gets me through each day."

*Name has been changed for privacy reasons.

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 the mission and traditions 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.

In the tradition of the Sisters of Charity

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