

ST MARY'S

HOUSE OF WELCOME

ANNUAL REPORT

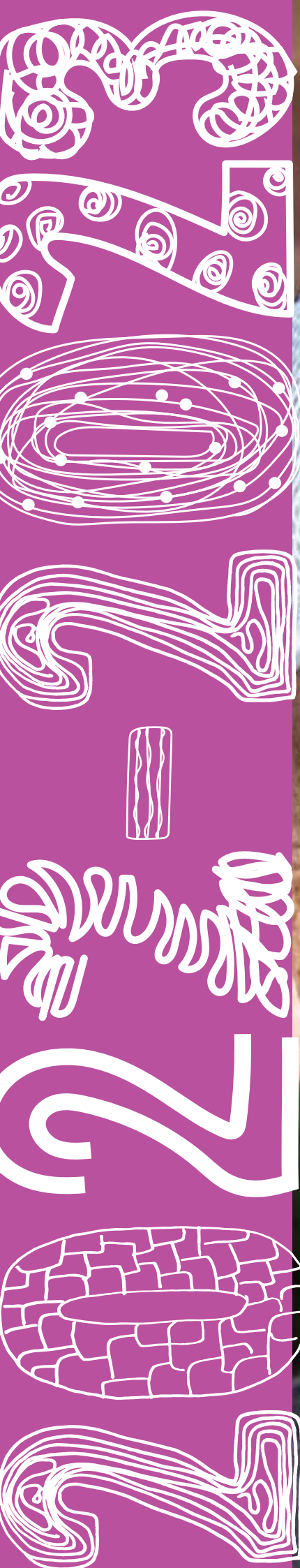




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OUR MISSION

Inspired by the spirit of the Daughters of Charity, St Mary's House of Welcome seeks to further social justice by standing with disadvantaged people offering support, solutions and hope.

Click [here](#) for more information.

OUR PURPOSE

Our fundamental purpose is to provide a safe place of welcome where people are nourished, experience belonging and are supported to achieve their potential.

OUR VALUES

- » Respect
- » Relationships
- » Welcoming
- » Hopefulness
- » Responsiveness



TRUSTEE REFLECTION

At the heart of St Mary's House of Welcome is "welcome". From the first days of the Daughters of Charity in Paris in 1633, was the idea that there was a need to reach out to so many who were excluded from supports and services. St Louise de Marillac and St Vincent de Paul wanted the early Daughters to go to and stand with everyone who was in need. The very beginning of St Mary's House of Welcome in Fitzroy continued this vision providing not only a meal, shower, support and referrals but – equally as importantly – a place of welcome and community.

This continues today. All are welcomed regardless of their story, their needs, their hopes and daily joys and sorrows. St Mary's House of Welcome is a place of openness, listening, supportiveness and empowerment. It is a venue for learning new life skills, of finding the right supports and services where each and every person is valued and respected. This vision of inclusion is based on the value and dignity of each and all of us.

This welcome and warmth is true for all who cross the threshold – not only service users, but also staff, volunteers, visitors and donors. The community of the House of Welcome invites us to be present and open to each other. In opening our hearts in genuine deep listening we encounter the face of God, the goodness of humanity and the call to grow and change. May all at St Mary's House of Welcome be blessed as we celebrate all the gifts of the past year.

Debra McCarthy DC



CHAIR REFLECTION

This year, St Mary's House of Welcome has again proven itself to be a tireless and unstoppable provider-advocate for members of our community who are experiencing homelessness, disadvantage and isolation. In the aftermath of the pandemic, shifting approaches to homelessness, the cost of living, and lasting impacts on mental health, have been felt by many in our community and by us as an organisation. However, despite this, St Mary's House of Welcome, continues to be a pillar of strength in the face of adversity.

For over 60 years, since its creation by the Daughters of Charity, the doors have been open and the staff welcoming. This year we continued this work providing a large range of supports, including nutritious meals to our community, a comprehensive NDIS service, and providing space and support for our community to access sessions with various health and other support services.



“St Mary's House of Welcome provides multiple services for people who are disadvantaged and disabled and a friendly place to learn hobbies and skills like singing, painting, pool, gardening.”

– Service User

But the essence of St Mary's House of Welcome remains not just in the delivery of services but in how our passionate and unflappable staff, volunteers and Executive Team go about that task. I cannot thank them, and our CEO, Robina Bradley, enough, for the work they have done this past year and their approach and regard for the community we serve. People are not just fed at St Mary's House of Welcome, they are invited to join us in the dining room, to sit together at the table, to share in the food. They are engaged as valued members of our community with individual and unique contributions to make.

Every day, the team at St Mary's House of Welcome has valued their humour, their stories, their expertise, their resilience, and their inherent dignity as human beings. Likewise, this work cannot continue without the ongoing support and generosity of our donors and community supporters. This year marked the first time in three years that we could welcome back the Taste for Change as an in-person event – a fantastic evening sharing the ethos of our work with our valued donors, volunteers and the broader community, and thanking them for their ongoing support and contributions.

This year, it has been my great honour to be the Chair of the Board of Directors at St Mary's House of Welcome, a board which continues to guide the present and future of St Mary's House of Welcome with diligence and discernment.

St Mary's House of Welcome is without a doubt, an amazing organisation - in the words of our daily grace, striving to be a place of nourishment when so many walk in hunger, a place of faith where many walk in fear and a place of friends in a world where many walk alone.

It has been my great pleasure to serve our community and contribute to this mission over the past year, and I look forward to seeing the ongoing contribution St Mary's House of Welcome makes to the lives of our community into the future.

Dr Jennifer Davidson

Board Chair



CEO REFLECTION

This past year has been one of measured focus here at St Mary's House of Welcome as we have been working to impact homelessness and disadvantage, make community connections, and set the strategic path for the organisation for the next three years.

We have a rich and proud history of over 65 years working on this site under the care of the Daughters of Charity. From the day we opened, decades ago, the organisation has been supporting people experiencing homelessness and chronic disadvantage who are in real need.

Our new Strategic Plan 2023 - 2025, set with the Board and Executive, is a representation of our purpose "to be a safe place of welcome, where people are nourished, experience belonging and are supported to achieve their potential". We have aligned this three-year strategy with our risk management plan to help assure business continuity.

Over the past financial year, we worked hard to make clear our mission and values as part of a post-Covid team reflection. What was interesting to witness was how our refreshed values began to form from the different opinions and priorities of each team member. This was a clear reflection of the fact that, although we all come from diverse backgrounds, we are aligned to our mission and aiming for a mutual goal - to do the very best for those we serve.

Our teams worked on a refreshed service model focused on our service user priorities and the unique role of St Mary's House of Welcome in the service sector. Eighty-six service users responded to our 2023 'Voice of the Customer' survey, with 84 per cent responding they felt respected and connected to our staff and service. "The way I get treated all the time - they care for me." Similarly, our staff and volunteer survey results were strong. The feedback has provided us with important insights into our strengths and areas for improvement and we remain committed to enhancing our staff, volunteer and service user experiences.

In May, we were very grateful to learn our social inclusion mental health funding will be continued for another four years by the Victorian Government, assuring we will be able to continue to provide core supports

to the most vulnerable in our community. Mary's House of Welcome also welcomed the opportunity to join the Yarra Zero Project, with myself elected as Chair of the executive governance group. We look forward to working collaboratively with our Yarra Zero partners to permanently house those from our sleeping rough community. Our aim is to be Australia's first municipality to end street homelessness.

I am very proud to work together with our very committed team at St Mary's House of Welcome. As part of the Daughters of Charity's Province of Rosalie Rendu, our mission at SMHOW is alive and strong, and we continue to advocate for our service users and strengthen connections with our service partners in the interests of those with which we work. We are grateful to our many engagement partners who help make this work possible by connecting our service users to essential supports.

We maintain full Quality Accreditation against both NDIS and Human Services Standards, and have worked hard making improvements in facilities, policy, wellbeing and safety. Our partnerships with external agencies and stakeholders grow stronger. We continue to support and welcome the opportunity to imagine new ways of creating even more meaningful, lasting and effective impact, especially as the need in the community increases.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow Executive Leadership team members, our operational managers, and each and every staff member and volunteer for their care and commitment over the past 12 months. St Mary's House of Welcome is made stronger for having a committed team and for the Trustees and Board supporting our governance during the year. Thank you.

Robina Bradley

Chief Executive Officer/Company Secretary



OUR WORK – At a Glance

Provided **40,272*** meals/meal packs

*Restricted in first quarter of 22/23 to reduced take-away meal service due to Covid-19



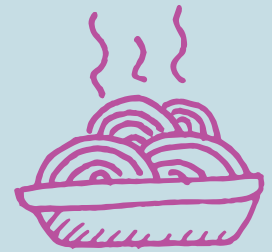
\$316,952.75 worth of volunteer hours



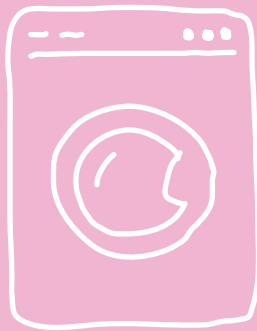
Provided rough sleepers with **2,600** showers and personal hygiene packs



Gave out **750** Emergency Food Hampers to those in need



Distributed over **360** sleeping bags, swags, tents and sleeping mats



Had **2,633** volunteer shifts with us



Benefitted from **7,325** volunteer hours



GARRY'S STORY

A good news story from 2022/2023 featuring Garry*, one of our long-term service users who after building a relationship of trust - sought assistance from our Community Support workers. Garry requested help with legal and numerous significant mental health challenges. These mental health challenges had long limited Garry's capacity to maintain his personal hygiene, social skills, and housing.



One of our Community Support Worker's worked with Garry to get him a doctor's appointment, which had previously proven very difficult as most services currently had limited capacity post-Covid.

After a few weeks of working with the St Mary's House of Welcome team, Garry agreed to engaging with the open access point for housing to organise accommodation through a referral. Additionally, Garry had developed enough trust in his support worker and St Mary's House of Welcome to utilise our material aid and change into a new outfit and accept and use personal hygiene products, which he had not felt comfortable to do previously. He even agreed to get a haircut from our volunteer hairdresser.

After accepting our support, Garry's demeanor and sense of self improved. Soon after, we were able to get him longer term support for his mental health challenges through referrals to specialist services.

As a final support, Garry was housed in a suitable rooming house where he is still living, very happily.

* Names and identifying features have been changed to protect our service users' identity

HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

We are a small team committed to our work as a specialist homelessness agency providing open access services to assist people who are experiencing - or are at risk of - homelessness.

Our data indicates that our service users rely heavily on us for services including homelessness and housing support, crisis response, referrals and social programs. For many of our service users we are a 'one-stop shop' for their service needs, as far as is possible. This is less a choice of convenience and more one of necessity, for reasons of trauma, mental health and substance misuse, poverty and feeling "unwelcome" in mainstream society.

Expressing our Mission by providing vital supports including showers, meals and personal items, is, in the words of Sr Rosalie Rendu, to "welcome everyone, speaking to the poor with both kindness and dignity, do not make them wait."

We remain grateful to our external engagement partners who work with us to ensure the best outcomes for our service users:
- Services Australia, St Vincent's Health, Victorian Optometry Service, Fitzroy Legal Service, Society of St Vincent de Paul, Fitzroy Library, Biba Hairdressers, our Atherton Garden's community group and Australian Dental Foundation.

We are seeing a lift in the number of service users attending to over 160 per day.

It is important to note, the number of service users supported by our service the number of people registered on our Homelessness database and is not a reflection of the actual number of people who access our service on a daily/weekly basis.



The characteristics of service users, the main reasons for seeking assistance, and the services that had been supplied to service users, have remained relatively consistent, with demand growing. Key insights include:

- » **The number of service users with a current significant mental health issue has increased;**
- » **The number of older service users has increased;**
- » **A growing representation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander service users attending and engaging in services;**
- » **The number of females presenting homeless has grown to be approximately 30% of attendance; and,**
- » **Increasing attendance for emergency relief arising from food poverty.**

We have been the beneficiary of philanthropy grants to support our Connecting Community and Look-Good, Feel-Good programs. We have been able to co-design programs including assessment of psychological distress scale (pre and post program), taking service users on outings to the Aquarium, providing restful mind sessions, cooking, art and dental hygiene and oral health assessments. A similar program has been co-designed with our indigenous mob. Our Mood Swingers choir continued to share the joy of song and dance every Friday afternoon and provide local performances.

It has been a tremendous privilege to lead the Homeless Program team and see their skills and knowledge of the sector and resources available grow. We are looking forward to the return of Jodie Douglas from Maternity Leave from November. Jodie will be returning part time and co-managing the team with me.

Mark Donchi

Manager Homelessness Program

Click [here](#) for more information.



Around the Centre

St Mary's House of Welcome was very pleased to offer a wide range of support services and social inclusion activities for our community of service users and participants.

Look Good Feel Good

Many of us enjoy the luxury of waking up in the morning with a warm shower – but for people experiencing homelessness, access to hot water and hygiene products can be very difficult. Showers have a powerful effect on physical and mental health, including a boosted immune system, reduced risk of diseases, increased hygiene and self esteem, increased concentration and the ability to sleep well, improved breathing ability, and decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety.

The St Mary's House of Welcome 'Look Good, Feel Good' program offered hot showers and hygiene products, including towels, toiletries, feminine hygiene products, and clean clothes to our service users. This included people who were sleeping rough, experiencing homelessness and poverty, and who were extremely vulnerable. Not only did the program help improve people's physical and mental well-being, but it also helped provide an important community by acting as a soft entry point into the other specialist services offered at St Mary's House of Welcome.

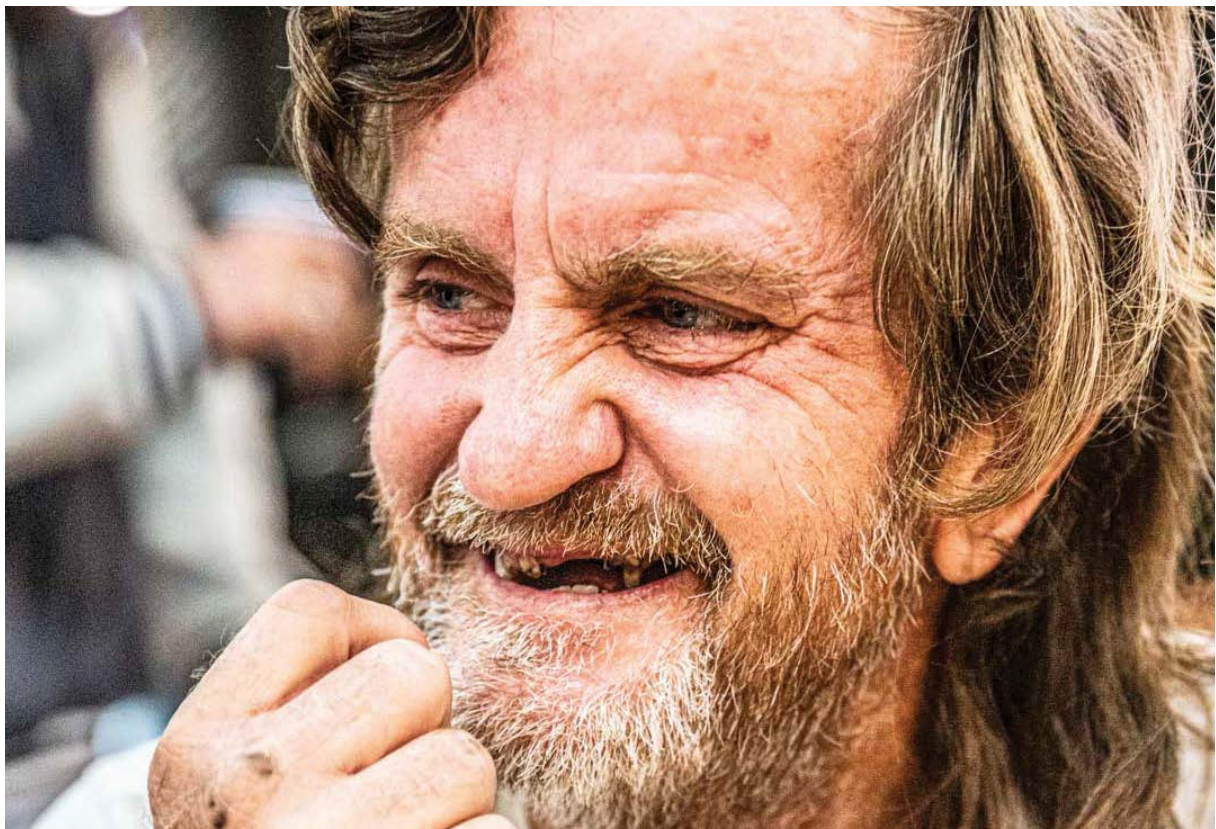
Sadly, people who experience homelessness are at a much greater risk of severe physical health issues, including infectious diseases such as Covid-19, Hepatitis, skin infections, and many others. This could be due to weakened immune systems, poor nutrition and hygiene, and barriers in accessing healthcare.

That's why in financial year 2022/23, we were glad to partner with St Vincent's Melbourne to provide free health support for our service users – many of whom were experiencing severe and persistent health issues exacerbated by circumstances. Together, St Vincent's Melbourne and St Mary's House of Welcome collaborated to provide a safe, secure, and dignified space for people experiencing chronic homelessness to meet with health practitioners and get the help they needed.

Specialist Support

Services Australia (Centrelink) and St Mary's House of Welcome partnered to provide an enhanced support program aimed at assisting people in crisis that required specialist help with accessing income support services.

For many of our service users and people who are vulnerably housed or homeless, challenges such as illiteracy, mistrust, and difficulty accessing past records sometimes can make obtaining support quite difficult.



“The staff were caring, kind and looked after me, offering me a food parcel and coffee...” – Service user

To alleviate some of these hurdles, St Mary's House of Welcome participated in a new government initiative. The program included staff education and the implementation of an enhanced communication channel for service users in crisis. The program helped those who were struggling using the typical channels for seeking Centrelink services, and also extended support to our most vulnerable service users and in need of urgent financial support.

'Mood Swingers' Choir

Did you know that music not only lower stress levels and symptoms of depression and anxiety but can help improve memory, enhance sleep quality, and even help people manage pain more effectively?

Whether they were practicing an old favourite or learning something new, the St Mary's House of Welcome choir – held each Friday afternoon – was a great mood enhancer for our service users over the past year. Many of the people who attended were extremely isolated, and having an opportunity to build social connections through music was a vital way to welcome them into our community.



“I’ve contacted St Mary’s House of Welcome many times with various enquiries. The response I get is always WONDERFUL! They are aware of services in the area for housing, free vet clinics such as pets in the park for people in tough times, helpful websites all of this in addition to the services they provide such as meals, showers, fresh clothing as well packaged food for pets. I cannot thank them enough for the work that they do and all the help they have provided me with.” – Service User



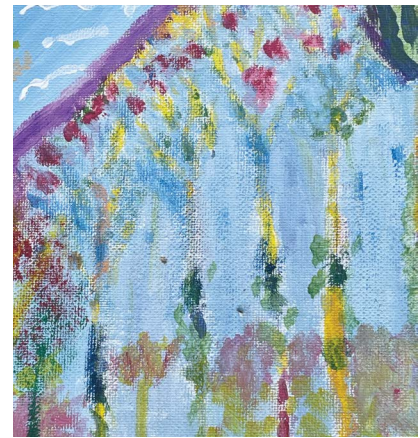
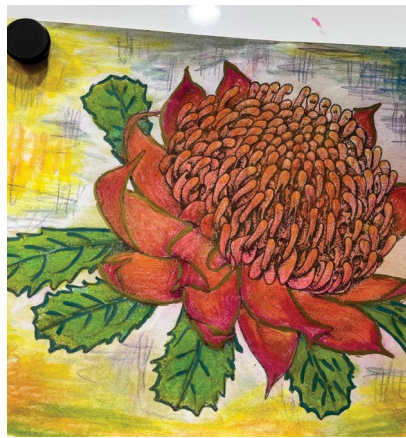
Gardening Program

Our gardening group met on a weekly basis during the warmer months, enjoying the sunshine and dedicating time to tending to our thriving vegetables, which included healthy additions like fresh tomatoes and zucchini. Gardening, recognised as an exceptional mood enhancer, serves as a powerful way to enhance one's wellbeing. This holds particular significance for our service users who may be grappling with complex emotional challenges. Engaging in a purposeful activity like gardening offers them the opportunity to not only enjoy the tangible rewards of their efforts but also to experience a sense of relaxation and tranquillity.

Restful Mind Program

Our Restful Mind program took place in our centre on Monday mornings from 10-11 am and offered participants an opportunity to take a break from the stresses of their lives and build a practice of meditation and yoga.

Meditation and yoga have been used for thousands of years to support physical and mental well-being. The skills developed in this program could be used in one's everyday modern life to cope with stress, process difficult emotions, and bring a sense of calm. This was particularly important for our chronically homeless and disadvantaged service users who often experience additional challenges, making the program valuable for their wellbeing.



Art and Craft

Our Art and Craft programs – running on Mondays and Thursdays – are particularly popular with service users. Creating art is beneficial for mental health as it reduces symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Our service users also appreciate the social aspect to art classes, where we can gather together to create something unique and special. We are constantly amazed by the creativity and dedication of the group.

Cooking Program

St Mary's House of Welcome service users have been busily cooking up a storm in our Community Cooks training kitchen over the past 12 months. The cooking program – run in partnership with William Angliss Institute – supports clients who are interested in food preparation, meal planning and kitchen and food safety. Service users have made an assortment of delicious dishes over the months, filling the corridors with the amazing aromas of delicious meals!



FRANK'S STORY

Frank*, has been one of our regular service users for a few years now. He has previously come to us for support in a number of areas, including meals, showers, advice and dental care.

As is the case with many of our clients who are homeless, Frank was struggling with isolation and had no way to connect back into the community.

In late 2022, our Homelessness team was able to provide him with a basic mobile phone and recharge card so that he could get ongoing support and start to rebuild connections with his family and friends. One of the things that Frank did early on was to use social media and was able to speak to a former partner with whom he'd lost touch several years previously. During the course of their conversation, Frank found out that he had a young child. While obviously this news came as a great surprise to Frank, he couldn't be more delighted!

Having connected with his child, Frank immediately determined he would do his utmost to be a positive and consistent father figure. He sought specialist advice from our community support workers so that he could gradually – and appropriately – play a central role in his child's life.

Frank and his child ended up spending Christmas Day 2022 together, and thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Frank received a Christmas hamper – and a few presents – he could share with his little girl!

The difference in Frank has been amazing! He is happier, healthier, and more connected with our services so that he can start to build a permanent route out of homelessness.



* Names and identifying features have been changed to protect our service users' identity

NDIS Program

The NDIS program at St Mary's House of Welcome is intrinsic to how we support our community and connect to people with psychosocial and other disabilities that access our services.

Taking the strong foundations set long before COVID 19 and the subsequent lockdowns, we have been able to develop and build upon the program as required by Participants.

Over the past financial year, we have offered onsite Group programs providing both community and individual skill development supports daily. Each program is designed to be responsive, tailored to meet individual goals and provide supports in a recovery-orientated manner.

Our Art and Craft groups, for instance, deliver Participants the opportunity to explore a range of art styles, incorporating mindfulness and a form of meditation.

In response to this year's Client Survey, and the findings published in the recent ACU/SMHOW joint research "*Optimising Engagement in Psychosocial Care*", the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities has increased. Activities now include local history walking groups, visits to gardens of interest, trips to local attractions for social connection (eg. MCG Museum). Evening and weekend social activities are now arranged as part of NDIS Participant packages, including trips to the footy or theatre.

Groups in the centre remain very busy and have also expanded to meet Participant need. The William Angliss Community Cooks program is still running and this year we have added a program for Participants to expand their life and living skills by assisting in setting up and helping purchase ingredients for the sessions. This gives the chance to source the ingredients, keep track of the costs and monitor the stock in the pantry; all valuable skills.



The kitchen training facilities are not only extraordinary unique and important for group cooking, as the opportunity arises for people that prefer to learn on their own, we have offered 1:1 cooking sessions, tailored to their palates and desired learning outcomes. A young Participant really wanted to learn to make a chicken parmigiana to impress his friends, and with 1:1 support he not only learnt how to cook that particular classic, but also lasagne, chilli con carne and baked potatoes.

The newly introduced sewing program has expanded to include a “Mending and Repair” program, which is not only exciting for Participants, but helps extend the life of clothing and other items that otherwise might have ended up in landfill.

Our direct supports (1:1) are growing, and tailored to individual needs, delivered in the centre or community. These tailored supports dare us to explore, and ensure that together we engage to meet goals, one step at a time.

Our Support Co-ordination team has grown as well. The impact of helping Participants understand their respective NDIS plans, explore choice and create strategies to put in place is still happening, however with the introduction of Specialist Support Co-ordination (level 3) we are also able to delve into more complex plans and needs, drawing us into the opportunity to partner with local Allied Health providers.

Added to this, we are also offering Psychosocial Recovery mentoring when it is needed. This is particularly important as it affords Participants the chance to discuss and engage in recovery planning, increasing social capacity and support collaboration by working with peer groups, and mental health professionals.

Caroline Wogan

Manager NDIS Operations & Development



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

At St Mary's House of Welcome, many of our services are supported by people who generously donate their time to help us be there for some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

These volunteers - whether they be individuals, corporate groups, school groups or community volunteers - are integral to the daily operations of St Mary's House of Welcome and are central to our ability to continue to deliver high quality services. They assist with running programs and outings, preparing and serving meals, running reception, helping with fundraising events and ensuring that St Mary's House of Welcome continues to be a warm and welcoming space for the people who rely on us for help.

Our volunteers enhance everything we do - with their sunny smiles and willingness to help with any task, we can truly say that St Mary's House of Welcome would not be the same without them.

One of the key roles that our lovely volunteers undertake at St Mary's House of Welcome is helping prepare, serve and clear away breakfast and lunch for over 200 service users every day.



“The volunteers are very kind and welcome me each day. I enjoy their conversation. I can’t thank them enough.” – Service user

Volunteers create a dignified, safe and welcoming community for our service users, many of whom are experiencing extreme social isolation and insecurity. Having a strong network of kind and friendly people around people struggling with isolation not only helps provide immediate relief, but also helps us build relationships that engage our service users into our longer-term supports.

In financial year 22/23, a total of 2,633 shifts were completed by volunteers at St Mary's House of Welcome. This equated to 7,325 hours of time spent helping improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

The total nominal value of volunteer engagement for the year was \$316,952.75

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication, commitment and skill our wonderful volunteers bring to the House of Welcome.





Welcome Relief Meals Program

For people experiencing homelessness, having regular, easy access to warm and balanced meals in a safe environment makes a significant improvement to health through factors such as decreased risk of disease, better stress management, better mental and physical wellbeing, and increased security.

The St Mary's House of Welcome "Welcome Relief" meals program is not only incredibly valuable to the people who use it, but also acts as a soft-entry point to our longer-term specialist supports that can provide help through case management and referral, social inclusion and mental health support.

The program provides important nutrition and sustenance to our service users, who are some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our community through homelessness, rough sleeping, social isolation and poor mental and physical health. Further to this, it gives them a welcoming and secure environment to meet new people and create valuable new social connections. Not only is this vital for mental health and social inclusion, but it offers a safe place and sense of community; something that is vital for preserving people's dignity and self-worth.

Providing a space that is comforting, warm and secure can make St Mary's House of Welcome feel like home for many of our service users, which also helps them build connections with our staff members. This helps develop the relationships that can provide insight into how best to support people with long-term solutions and support.

Every weekday, we provide two sittings each of cooked breakfast and lunch, as well as morning and afternoon tea and food relief through emergency food hampers.

The food used to prepare meals is a mixture of donated and purchased. It is prepared by our kitchen team and served by volunteers, who also clear away and clean after each sitting.

A key feature of the program is that at each meal sitting we have two support workers in the dining room during the meal, who liaise with and build relationships with the service users. This acts not only as a means of supporting people's immediate needs, but also as a vital point of contact for engaging people into our longer term supports such as specialist advice, psychosocial support, and social inclusion activities.

This relationship also enables our support workers to develop targeted and specialised connections with caseworkers and other support programs such as substance abuse, mental health support, and housing.

In financial year 2022/2023, we provided 40,272 meals through the Welcome Relief Meals Program.



“Staff go out of their way above and beyond and so friendly and helpful. It’s a safe place. Great food and toilets and shower facilities excellent. God bless them.” – Service user

FUNDRAISING EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

St Mary's House of Welcome only receives around 55 per cent of its funding from federal, state, and local government. Instead, we rely on the generosity of individuals, schools, corporate and community groups, along with public and philanthropic grants and donations to fund around 45 per cent of our other vital programs such as the meal service, amenities, and social support activities.

Taste for Change

After a two-year switch to online hosting, the Taste for Change gala fundraiser was once again held in person on Friday 28 April at the Collingwood Town Hall, with over 200 people in attendance. Once again, we were joined by Max Allen, the award-winning Melbourne-based wine expert and journalist, who hosted the event. Max matched an amazing selection of local wines to a six-course menu, before sharing his in-depth knowledge and expertise of all things wine-related in a Masterclass for guests on the night. All proceeds from the evening went towards supporting our Welcome Relief Meals Program, providing essential sustenance to people sleeping rough and experiencing chronic homelessness.



'Wheels for Meals' Bike Ride

The annual 'Wheels for Meals' fundraising bike ride was held on Monday 27 February – Friday 3 March with 25 sponsored riders riding covering over 500 kilometres along some of Victoria's most beautiful countryside along the Great Ocean Road.

The ride began in Port Fairy, finished in Sorrento and stopped at Port Campbell, Apollo Bay and Torquay. It was a highly enjoyable week with a group of great blokes for a great few days of cycling while raising over \$100,000 for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

Gingerbread Houses of Welcome

St Mary's House of Welcome launched our first Gingerbread House of Welcome campaign last year, partnering with the local Melbourne baker Sweet Caroline to create delectable gingerbread products and sweet treats to sell to supporters. The campaign aimed to raise funds for our Welcome Relief Meals Program and to elevate our profile, fostering new relationships within the wider community.

The delicious products included pre-assembled, beautifully designed gingerbread houses and kits with everything included for people to create their own unique gingerbread houses. The community's response was heartwarming, with supporters of St Mary's House of Welcome sending us photos of the gingerbread houses they created with their families. A delightful moment occurred when the Sunrise morning television show visited our centre, giving our gingerbread a special shout-out that helped sales immensely and introduced a whole new national audience to St Mary's House of Welcome. The Gingerbread House of Welcome campaign not only achieved its fundraising goals but also brought joy to our community. Our service users also enjoyed creating and eating their own gingerbread houses. We look forward to building upon this success in the coming years, continuing to make a meaningful impact on the lives of Melbourne's most vulnerable people.

Community BBQs

This year saw us welcome many corporate supporters into St Mary's House of Welcome to hold community BBQs for our service users. From providing nutritious and delicious food to offering a chance for our service users to enjoy spending time with the St Mary's House of Welcome community, these BBQs are a key feature of our social inclusion program.

But that's not all. When corporate teams join us, they:

- » Serve up to 150 homeless individuals a nutritious meal.
- » Gain insights into the reality of homelessness in Melbourne
- » Engage in informal conversations with service users, foster social inclusion for marginalized individuals.
- » Forge lasting team bonds through a powerful team-building exercise.

Hosting a Community BBQ for St Mary's House of Welcome's service users is a powerful, socially responsible immersion experience guaranteed to get participants thinking about the way they view homelessness and the people it affects.

Movin for Meals

Movin' for Meals returned in April, with 105 fundraisers hitting the streets so others can eat.

Participants walked, ran, cycled, or swam a distance of 1,459km to raise funds through sponsorship for our Welcome Relief Meals Program. Participants raised almost \$5,000 in what was a stellar effort!

For more information about our fundraising programs email fundraising@smhow.org.au

Fiona Dickson

Fundraising Manager

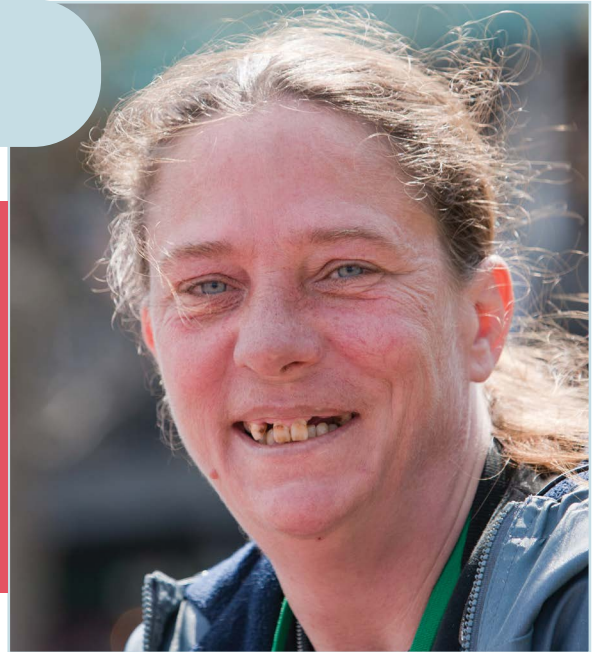




JOANNE'S STORY

"I'm just so grateful for the care that I get from everyone at St Mary's... they really are a House of Welcome."

– Joanne*, service user



Joanne* is 43 years old, a mother of two children who is a long-term service user at St Mary's House of Welcome. She comes into the centre every day for meals and finds immense comfort in the friendships she has formed here over the years. Joanne says, St Mary's House of Welcome is like her family, her reason for getting up each day.

Recently, Joanne decided that she wanted to find her own place to live. She had never had a place of her own and has predominately lived rough since she was a teenager. She has always felt vulnerable because of the immense insecurity of this position.

With help from her support worker at St Mary's House of Welcome, Joanne secured a room in a women-only rooming house.

Since moving into stable accommodation, Joanne is making better decisions in her personal life and is putting herself first. As a result of her increased independence, she is motivated to improve her health and wellbeing and getting involved in a lot more social inclusion activities around the centre.

Joanne is enjoying living independently and is very happy with her current living arrangements.

* Names and identifying features have been changed to protect our service users' identity



ABOUT US

Board, Management and Team Members

St Mary's House of Welcome is governed by a Board of Directors who are committed to preserving the spirit of the Daughters of Charity in their work with people experiencing disadvantage.

Board Directors bring extensive experience and diverse skills to support the governance of St Mary's House of Welcome, including financial, communications, human resources, social work, legal, health and infrastructure.

2022-2023 Board Directors:

- » Ralph Hampson – Board Chair (until Nov 2022)
- » Sister Debra McCarthy DC – Trustee
- » Jennifer Davidson (from Nov 2022)
- » Bridget Organ
- » Tony Hollamby
- » Rebecca Derrington (until May 2023)
- » Loretta Crowe
- » Daniel Bullock
- » Rueben Langkamp (from Feb 2023)
- » Leanne Lewis (from Feb 2023)
- » Deborah Fewster (from Feb 2023)

Staff

St Mary's House of Welcome comprises a team of passionate and dedicated staff who work to support people who are sleeping rough and experiencing chronic homelessness and disadvantage.

Executive Team

In 2022-2023, the Executive Team comprised:

- » **Robina Bradley**
Chief Executive Officer, Company Secretary
- » **Christine Arthur**
Executive Manager, Finance and Corporate Services
- » **Kristine Robertson**
Executive Manager, Fundraising and Communications





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

St Mary's House of Welcome gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Victorian Government, the City of Yarra, community members, donors, volunteers, schools, businesses, and church and community groups which has enabled us to deliver much needed, quality services to people sleeping rough or experiencing chronic homelessness.

We would like to extend our thanks to all of those who have contributed - either financially or in-kind - in 2022/2023. We would particularly like to acknowledge the following for their generous support:

The Victorian Government	Adaptalift	Services Australia
Department of Premier and Cabinet	Nandos	Fitzroy Legal Service
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	St David Dairy	Pinchapoo
Department of Health	Tom's Paddock	St Vincent's Private Hospital
City of Yarra	Bright Sparqe	Escala Partners
NDIA	Ronald McDonald House	Bequest of Ron Westlake
Mental Health Victoria	Greater Western Water	St Vincent de Paul Society of Victoria
Angel Foundation	Bendigo Bank	PY Timber Warehouse
Lochtenberg Foundation	Community Bank Clifton Hill - North Fitzroy	Collier Charitable Fund
Second Bite	Nelson Alexander Charitable Foundation	Coles
Archbishop's Charitable Fund	Minter Ellison Charitable Gifts Committee	Woolworths
Danks Trust	Magistrates' Court of Victoria	GIVIT
Junola Foundation	Father Kevin Broderick Memorial Trust Fund	St Mary's House of Welcome Volunteers
Merwe Laws Foundation	St Vincent de Paul Society Eastern Central Council	St Mary's House of Welcome Staff
StreetSmart Australia	Catholic Church Insurance Foundation	St Mary's House of Welcome service users and participants
Bagot Gjergja Foundation	Inner North Community Foundation	St Mary's House of Welcome partner agencies
Xavier Social Justice Network	The Life Centre Trust	
Isaacson Davis Foundation	Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem - Vic Commandery	
Australian Communities Foundation	Calibre Nine	
GDM Family Trust		
Abode Restoration		
J & L Levy		

ST MARY'S

HOUSE OF WELCOME

What is the House of Welcome?

For over 60 years, St Mary's House of Welcome has worked to ensure community members who are chronically homeless, disadvantaged, and socially isolated to be nourished and safe, to have practical support and to find hope, experience belongingness and achieve to their full potential.

With your help, we provide:

- » Hot nutritious meals with table service, twice daily
- » Free showers, with towels and toiletries
- » Crisis response, referrals and advocacy
- » Emergency relief (such as food hampers, clothing)
- » Case management and psycho-social support
- » Comprehensive social inclusion program
- » Access to free or low-cost optometry, podiatry and other personal care supports
- » Computer access and phone charging
- » Health and wellbeing
- » Community gardening
- » NDIS Program
- » Mail collection
- » Access to Centrelink and Fitzroy Legal Service

smhow.org.au

A work of the Daughters of Charity
ABN: 54 050 278 754

St Mary's House of Welcome

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