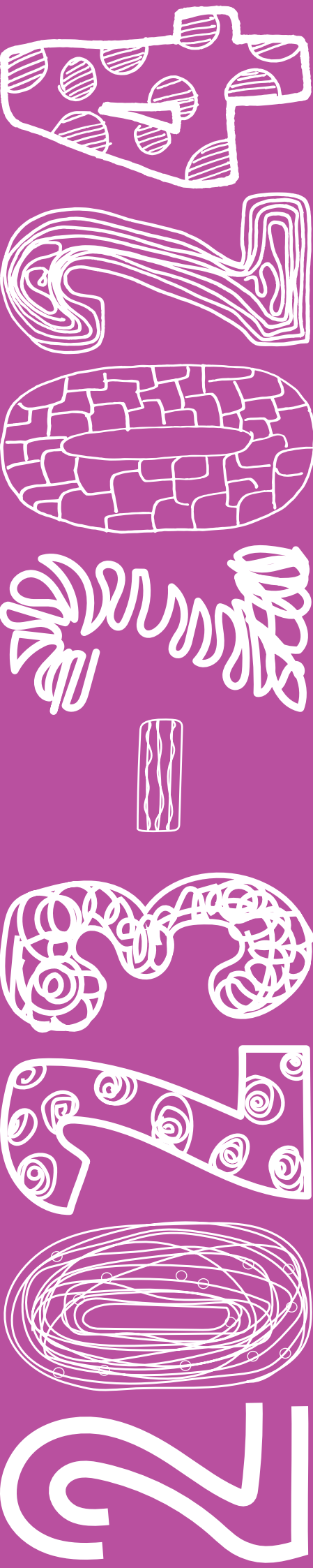


ST MARY'S

HOUSE OF WELCOME



ANNUAL REPORT



Table of Contents

Our Welcome	4
Trustee Reflection	5
Chair Reflection	6
CEO Reflection	8
Ben's Story	10
Our Impact - At a Glance	12
Our Services	14
Homelessness Program	16
Advocacy and Impact	18
Service Model Framework	21
Around the Centre	23
Volunteer Program.....	29
Fundraising and Campaigns	31
A Welcome Win From Homeless to Housed	34
Our People	35
Financials	36
Thank You	38

Our Welcome

St. Mary's House of Welcome (SMHOW) was founded in 1960 as a mission response by the Daughters of Charity for people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. While a lot has changed in the past 65 years, one thing has stayed the same – the generous financial and other support we receive from community volunteers, donors, corporate partners and State Government, and our core service ethos and steadfast commitment to our mission to bring support, hope and practical solutions to those we have the privilege to serve. Sadly, the need has never been greater.

OUR MISSION

Inspired by the spirit of the Daughters of Charity, SMHOW seeks to further social justice by standing with disadvantaged people offering **support, solutions and hope.**

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

Each person is a unique creation of God. Respect is a building block authentic relationships and engendering of hope.

Relationships

Relationships are essential for building trust and are a basis for wellbeing and spiritual fulfillment.

Welcoming

Welcoming brings to life the acknowledgment and celebration of the dignity and worth of each person.

Hopefulness

Hope gifts us the vision to realise the potential in our lives, encourages us to achieve, and sustains us in difficult and challenging times.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is a Gospel imperative which pursues positive social change and challenges us to reflect on and evaluate what we do.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

St Mary's House of Welcome is an organisation that is committed to helping people of all religions, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. We value inclusivity, diversity and intersectionality, and will always use our best efforts to provide services which are appropriate and sensitive to each individual's particular needs.

Our commitment to inclusiveness will be evident in our organisational responses, culture, policies and procedures, as part of our Strategic Plan and within our organisational goals. We aim to create and implement programs using our awareness of cultural and social differences and treat all who come to us for help with the utmost respect, integrity and honesty.

Everyone is welcome at our table.



St Mary's House of Welcome respectfully acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Victoria and pays its respects to their Elders, children and young people of past, current and future generations.

Trustee Reflection

The world moves quickly, constantly changing. As we reflect on the past twelve months, it seems that while much has changed at St May's House of Welcome, so much remains the same.

Our core vision of seeing God, seeing the good, in each and every person – and being the presence of a loving God for all those we meet remains.

We are grounded in the vision, model of service and community plans of St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac – a unique call in founding the Daughters of Charity in 1633 in Paris. This is the heritage of St Mary's House of Welcome and all Works of the Daughters of Charity.

Staff, management, volunteers are always searching out those most on the margins, the disadvantaged, those living in poverty, the fragile and the vulnerable. We meet their basic needs for food, clothing, support services but more importantly – a kind word, recognition, calling them by name, welcome, acceptance, compassion. In this we also learn from each encounter – we give and receive in service.

While always open to growth and change as different needs emerge, we commit to giving the best quality, best practice support.

In some ways it all seems so different now from when the early Sisters opened the door over 60 Years ago, but is it really? If we hold firm to the heritage, vision, mission and values of our founding, does anything really change? Today St Mary's House of Welcome remains a place of welcome and support, where people experiencing homelessness or vulnerable housing are empowered to rebuild their lives.

The Daughters are proud of St Mary's House of Welcome, proud of how it has adapted to the changing needs of the homeless. Well done! Let us celebrate this year of caring service.



Debra McCarthy DC
Trustee

Chair Reflection

As the Chair of the Board of St Mary's House of Welcome (SMHOW), it is with a great feeling of satisfaction to look back and see the organisation having continued to stay true to its values and mission over the past 12 months. I know my fellow Board Directors share with me a sense of comfort knowing that the missional legacy of our trustees, The Daughters of Charity, is alive and well as it underpins the daily operations of the centre with staff 'seek(ing) to further social justice by standing by people who are disadvantaged offering support, solutions and hope'.

Certainly, the year has not been without its challenges as the current difficult economic climate in which the organisation operates, has impacted operations in a number of ways including increased demand on services and rising costs. The economic downturn has been particularly difficult for the people who rely on St Mary's House of Welcome for support.

That's why, in part, it is so gratifying when reviewing the impact of the work of St Mary's House of Welcome over the past year, it is really pleasing to see SMHOW was able to provide over 37,000 meals to the people who rely on us for support, and further worked to support housing for 28 people into long term housing. We continue to be a safe place of support and connection.

As the year progressed, St Mary's House of Welcome made the difficult decision to discontinue its NDIS service from June 30 2024. In the eight years, SMHOW provided its NDIS service, we assisted hundreds of Participants improve their quality of life, help them to understand and manage their mental health and build their level of independence in the community. For that, we are immensely proud. The decision to cease the service was not taken lightly. As a Board, we are committed to being good financial stewards. We recognise it is incumbent upon us to ensure our limited resources are directed appropriately in accordance with our mission to get the best outcomes for the people we support. With the closure of the NDIS service, the organisation will be able to focus our advocacy and support to the core of people it has supported for the past 65 years.

I am proud to say, that once again, St Mary's House of Welcome has had an incredibly successful year in advocating for our constituents. Not only did our Homelessness team work tirelessly and productively to obtain housing for over a dozen people - many of whom had been homeless for years - but we were also very effective in future-proofing the service through lobbying government to lock-in ongoing funding to provide vital supports for the homeless cohort who access our services.

There are many people I would like to recognise and thank for the part they played in the tremendous outcomes St Mary's House of Welcome had over the past 12 months. The Board, the ongoing support of the Daughters of Charity, the CEO and Executive Team, the staff and, most importantly, our volunteers. All of these people collectively ensure we continue to support the most vulnerable and needy people in our community. For that, I can't thank them enough.

I look forward positively to the next 12 months.



Anthony Hollamby

Board Chair

CEO Reflection

Our partnerships are a reflection of the value we place on the generosity and support from the community.

It is a privilege to continue to lead this remarkable organisation. Our values of hopefulness, responsiveness, welcome, respect and relationships continue to shape our responses to individually designed and practical solutions that realise immediate and lasting change.



With the challenges of the past year, our mission and work has never been more relevant. We see the impact daily of pressures of cost of living, and material hardship, and the psychosocial impacts of homelessness on physical and mental health.

This year has seen a very considered focus on supporting a community meals program daily for those experiencing food poverty, at-risk of/or homeless and those who have been newly housed after long-term homelessness, people over 65 years and social housing renters including those living in high-rise public housing towers. This practical expression of mission supports over 150 people each day for breakfast and lunch.

Through the very generous support of the Peter & Lyndy White Foundation, soon we will be able to extend our welcome and open our doors on Saturdays for those who so desperately need it. For the first time since 2020, we are thrilled to be reopening our doors on Saturdays from October 2024 for the next three years!

This means we can provide inner-Melbourne's rough sleeping community a nutritious meal, free access to hot showers (including towels and toiletries), emergency relief, food hampers and referrals for specialised supports. These vital services are not available anywhere else in inner northern Melbourne

over the weekend. A place to feel connected, hopeful and a sense of belonging. These services keep our community stable, reduce the need for emergency mental health services and provide respite and emergency food relief.

This year was one of success for SMHOW – continued support through our regular donors, new and continuing corporate partnerships and additional funded programs and grants. These funds allowed us to reach more people in need across our community and invest in programs designed to support wellbeing and social connection, community engagement and housing readiness.

One of our strengths is our continued advocacy work and engagement with the sector with focus during World Homeless Day, World Mental Health Day and Anti-Poverty Week. Senior politicians, senior public servants and sector representatives have joined us to serve a meal, and talk with, our community. Thank you for making our community feel recognised and heard. We are incredibly proud to continue to host four school's social justice volunteering programs on site. These programs raise awareness about disadvantage and model to the students' action in response to injustice.

I have been proud to represent SMHOW as Chair of the Executive Governance Group for the Yarra Zero project, a collaborative project launched in July 2023 to support a system response to homelessness and systematic improvements. The project has achieved an additional 36 people being housed in this period, forged genuine partnerships with a shared vision and learning framework to measure outcomes.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the amazing and committed staff at SMHOW, to our Trustees, Board of Directors, our faithful volunteers, donors and our corporate and Government partners, who work tirelessly to make sure people in our homeless community receive the specialist support they desperately need. I hope that you will enjoy reading about our work in this report.

Robina Bradley
Chief Executive Officer/Company Secretary

Service User Story

Ben's Story

Ben*, in his 30s, led a typical life – working daily, married with two adolescent children. However, following the breakdown of his marriage and loss of employment, despite having no history of being homeless and never having accessed a homelessness service before, he unexpectedly found himself living on the streets.

Ben had no knowledge or understanding of how homelessness services operate, and he had no clue where to turn for help. Navigating through unhelpful job interviews and short-term accommodation, he struggled to find safety and stability. He felt isolated and was experiencing very poor mental health. This, in turn led to an incident which found him incarcerated – something he would never have dreamed would have happened to him. It was only for a month, but it was long enough for Ben to know, 'things have to change'. Ben was released from custody into homelessness. He was given no referrals or supports. Essentially, he was left to figure it out himself.

Ben began to navigate his way through the "system", trying to find the right place to help him – a place to sit, grab a meal, a place that's safe, that makes you feel welcome. Instead, to him, it felt like he was experiencing a "revolving door...a sea of people...places where you are just treated like a number". He resorted to sleeping in, and around, the Vic Market and sought safe spaces in Fitzroy.

"I would never ever have thought that I would be in a situation where I would be homeless. It was rock bottom – going through that period of not feeling safe, not having a place to reside, not feeling like I belong, losing your identity..."

Eventually, almost by accident, Ben stumbled across St Mary's House of Welcome. The revolving door was finally about to stop. He had finally found an ally to support him through his journey, someone to stand with him, advocate and help him find his voice to challenge the 'no's', a place to offer hope, and explore solutions. In supporting Ben, SMHOW workers explored all housing options; crisis, short term, transitional, social, and even private rentals, to find a long-term sustainable housing outcome – a place he could call home. In this case, it was identified Ben met the criteria for a three-bedroom property. This would allow for shared custody of his children, whom he hadn't been able to care for during his period of homelessness.

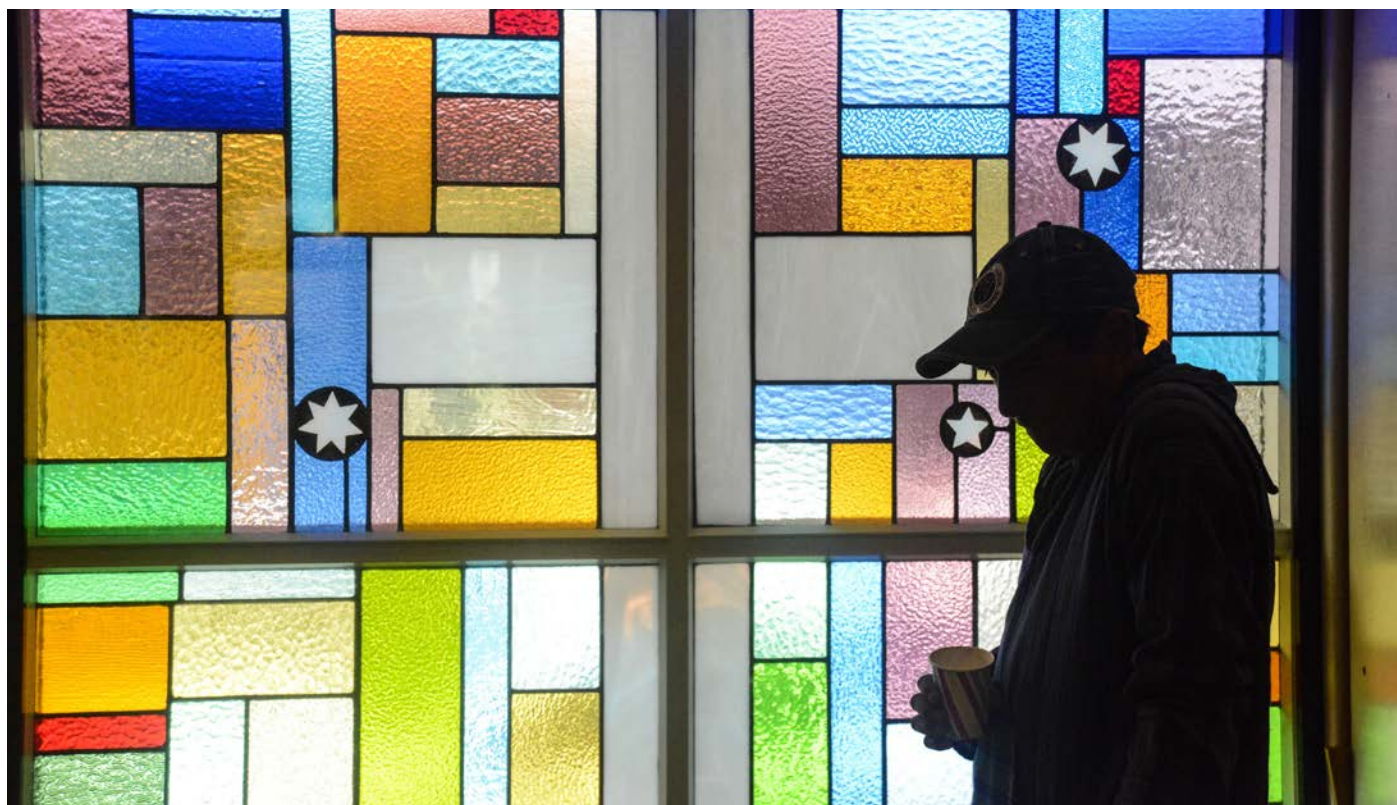
“St Mary’s House of Welcome is by definition the most welcoming place I’ve ever experienced. My whole life has transitioned thanks to the great help from this organisation.”

By directly leveraging local partnerships and government department relationships, we were able to help Ben into a newly renovated apartment – a place big enough so his children could stay with him.

Local services, working with the local community, to support greater housing outcomes is a win for everyone. A housing outcome achieved in a couple of months, not years – as it often takes.

More importantly, we were able to provide the opportunity to someone to rebuild their life. Ben could not be happier.

“If there was one word to describe St Mary’s House of Welcome, it would be *home*.”



***Names and identifying features have been changed to protect our service user’s identity.**

Our Impact - At a Glance

37,732

meals provided



1,440

meals and hampers
given out to those
in need



Provided rough
sleepers with

2,670

showers and
personal hygiene packs



Distributed over

1,200

sleeping bags, swags,
tents & sleeping mats



Over the past 12 months, we have had:



- **28** people housed into long term housing
- **3** people awaiting housing offers
- **19** males housed
- **9** females housed
- **4** couples housed
- Oldest person housed - **68**, Male
- Youngest person housed - **28**, Male



Our Services

People become homeless for many reasons; it's fair to say homelessness has many layers to unpack. Then there is the added challenge of navigating a complex service system.

On top of this, people face the added stress of having to ask themselves, each and every day, 'Where do I sleep tonight? Do I take Southern Cross Station because it is safer? Police and PSO's regularly patrol and there is CCTV there in case anything goes wrong. Or do I bed down at the Victoria Market? Not as safe but there are people around.

Or maybe, they are one of the "lucky ones" to find a room in a boarding house. More often than not, it's a room which fits a single bed and maybe a small table, a window which doesn't open and there's no ventilation or cooling. So, on a summer's day, when the temperature is in 30s, it's impossible to be in the room. You can't escape the heat. The four walls make you feel enclosed, trapped and your thoughts take you to a dark place.

I'd like to tell you this story is uncommon. But it's not. It's an experience echoed by so many of the people we see here at St Mary's House of Welcome each day.

That's why, when we work with people to successfully get them into accommodation, it is intensely gratifying. It takes work – lots of work- but, when it happens, it is a testament to the tireless efforts of SMHOW's support workers who are aligned with our mission, people focused and committed to making a real effort to end homelessness.

Top reasons people come to SMHOW:

- Homelessness support
- Assistance with mental health and substance use
- Support to stay at home
- Emergency relief

Our services include:

- Triage and homelessness assessment support
- Programs and connection
- Short term case support
- Support for our most vulnerable community members

Homelessness Program

The past 12 months has seen the homelessness team place a strong focus on the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly those who are experiencing long-term or recurring homelessness. Our goal is to not only find those community members housing, but to get them housing ready, ensure their housing is sustainable, and connect them with the necessary support services, including mental health and drug and alcohol services, housing providers, and legal services. We want to ensure that our service users are connected, supported and feel part of the local community.

Building strong relationships and networks is an integral part of this process, as we all play a role in ending homelessness. We have seen the highest number of people housed over the past 12 months compared to previous years, and have prevented people exiting into homelessness, through continual relationship building, connecting people to access points, referrals, and working with our Towards Zero Yarra Zero partners. We are also thrilled to have begun working with Ngwala access point, so we can better assist our First Nations community members.

By looking at housing as a wrap around service through our relationships and network building, we are ensuring that we get people connected to access points and other services to get better housing outcomes.

The team continue to put our most vulnerable people at the forefront of our work, and work towards getting them housed, supporting them once they're housed, and ensuring their housing is not placed at risk. Above all, we will make sure that they feel safe and valued.

Mark Donchi
Manager - Homelessness Program



Advocacy and Impact



Homelessness Week 2023

Homelessness Week 2023 ran from August 7th- 13th raising awareness around the fact that, in Australia, almost 123,000 people experience homelessness every night.

Importantly, the week highlights the impact of homelessness, potential solutions, and how individuals and communities can help.

We invited local, state and federal politicians to visit us and serve a meal to our service users. Over the course of the week, we were fortunate to have 10 community representatives meet with our homeless community, hear their stories and offer support.



Yarra Zero

St Mary's House of Welcome is proud to continue as part of Yarra Zero, a collaborative initiative dedicated to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in the City of Yarra.

The Yarra Zero project unites local partners from housing, health, and legal sectors to:

- Get to know each person sleeping rough in the municipality by name
- Understand their unique needs
- Support them in finding and maintaining stable housing

The ultimate goal is to achieve functional zero homelessness in our community, where more people transition into permanent housing than experience primary homelessness. The goal of Yarra Zero is to achieve Functional Zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in our municipality.

St Mary's House of Welcome is proud to be an active participant in Yarra Zero. Together with other organisations, we are dedicated to ending homelessness by placing individuals into permanent housing and providing crucial support through temporary accommodations. These achievements represent significant steps forward in our ongoing mission to support those sleeping rough and experiencing chronic homelessness. This project further augments our work.

Networking

We work to bring key supports on site to ensure soft referrals and uptake to services. We are proud to work closely with:

- DFFH Housing Offices – Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy
- St. Vincent's Clarendon Homeless Outreach Mental Health Program
- Fitzroy Legal Service
- Victorian College of Optometry
- Services Australia (on site weekly facilitating social services through the government programs – Centrelink, Medicare, PBS and Child Support Agency)
- Fitzroy Learning Centre – gardening, library, reading, choir and English
- Bolton Clark nursing services
- BSL Aged Care supports
- On site early voting centre
- CoHealth

“We have a ‘new way of doing business’. The rebuilding of relationships, greater stakeholder engagement and a shared sense of purpose has opened communication and made a very real impact on homelessness.”

School Social Justice Program

For over 20 years, St Mary's House of Welcome has partnered with schools whose students volunteer every week during school term to come and serve a meal and support our mission and work.

We proudly acknowledge the ongoing support and contribution of:



These schools all share a strong commitment to our mission and work with our homeless community and the programs work to support vulnerable people and teach the principles of human rights, participation, access and equity.

We are very grateful and fortunate to have a number of schools that support our pancake morning teas. Our service users really enjoy the gift of time, care and the delivery of fresh cooked pancakes in the courtyard with a coffee.

Not only do the students make and serve our service users pancakes, but they also take the opportunity to learn about food hygiene, get a glimpse of how the hospitality industry operates (e.g. helping with food preparation and setting the table), and serve our community members tea and coffee. Rather than being a form of work experience, the students utilise these opportunities to raise social awareness, as it allows them to be of service in the broader community as well as exposing them to vulnerable people and situations outside their normal everyday experiences; situations which help them to look beyond themselves and grow in compassion for others.

We are also incredibly grateful when we have former students return to the centre as volunteers, and that they want to continue to be a part of the SMHOW community.

Service Model Framework

SMHOW Service Model Framework is a strength based, trauma informed, evidence-based model based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We work to:

**Provide a safe and welcoming environment | Build relationships and connection
Support and coach in emotional regulation**



Our Homelessness Program

**Specialist Access Point for
Homelessness Information and Referral**

Our Community Support Workers provide:

- Time to connect and be in a place of Welcome
- Information
- Specialist referrals – mental health, alcohol, other
- Housing options – referrals to specialist housing agencies and emergency accommodation
- Assistance to complex service users

Engagement services provided on site:

- Mental Health – Clarendon Homeless Outreach Psychiatric Service
- Legal Advice – Fitzroy Legal Service
- Immunisation and health checks
- Services Australia – ID support and social security
- Optometry – Australian Optometry Services
- Primary Care Supports – Bolton Clarke and cohealth

We are proud to be
a QIP accredited
organisation



Our Community

People at risk and/or experiencing:

- Homelessness
- Complex Mental health
- Psychosocial disability
- Trauma
- Social isolation
- Substance misuse
- Chronic health conditions
- Long term unemployment
- Reintegrating from prison

Advocacy

Engaging Government and community
to work towards an end to homelessness

Our Programs

Housing Readiness

- Preparing people to maintain tenancies

Community Engagement

- BBQs
- Morning Tea
- Gardening
- Arts and Crafts

Social Skills and Connection

- Skills based and group activities
- Cooking Classes

Supporting social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations People and people sleeping rough

- Improving ATSI mental health and wellbeing
- Social inclusion and wellbeing
- Supporting substance abuse



Around the Centre

At St Mary's House of Welcome, we believe that small acts of kindness can change someone's day and make a world of difference.

Every individual who walks through our doors is met with genuine care and respect. We strive to create an environment where everyone feels valued, seen, and heard. It's about fostering connections and restoring dignity, one interaction at a time.



Our head chef Ryan Stewart

Welcome Relief Meals Program

The Welcome Relief Meals program provides emergency food relief and nutritious, culturally appropriate meals to those experiencing homelessness, rough sleeping, and poverty within our community.

Every weekday, the program offers morning tea and two sittings each of cooked breakfast and lunch, for around 150 service users, as well as emergency food hampers for those in need. For people experiencing homelessness, regular access to warm, balanced meals in a safe environment improves health by reducing disease risk, enhancing stress management, and boosting mental and physical well-being. Our meals program also serves as a gateway to longer-term specialist supports, offering short term case management, referrals (housing, drug and alcohol support), social inclusion, and mental health support.

This holistic approach fosters dignity, self-worth, and a sense of community within St Mary's House of Welcome. Further to this, it gives our service users a welcoming and secure environment to meet new people and create valuable new social connections.

At St Mary's House of Welcome, we believe that everyone deserves access to food in a warm and welcoming environment. We take immense pride and care in creating a dining room space where our service users can enjoy nutritious warm meals while feeling comfortable and embraced, and be served at the table by our volunteer team and kitchen staff.



Service with a Smile

Extending a heartfelt thanks to the Australian Dental Foundation for their recent visit to our centre, where they provided invaluable assistance to our community.

Accessing dental care can be a challenge for many, particularly for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. With the help of our new program grant, we successfully established a dental clinic, focusing on providing healthcare for our homeless service users.

This initiative is a testament to our unwavering commitment to ensuring opportunities for all, irrespective of their circumstances. A big shout-out to the dedicated dentists who enabled us to fulfill our mission of providing vital help to rough sleepers.

Helping People Be Seen - and See!

Access to optometry services is often challenging for people experiencing homelessness or disadvantage. Minor symptoms can lead to serious health issues down the line, making it crucial for our centre to offer these essential services. Thanks to incredible support from The Royal College of Optometry, this year we were able to operate a monthly optometry clinic offering free eye-testing and low-cost glasses for those in our community who needed them.

Canva – Design and Delight Days

This year we were thrilled to host several Canva 'Design and Delight days' as part of their Force for Good program. On a number of times throughout the year, our service users had the assistance of Canva staff to design their own free custom hoodies or T-shirts which then arrived a week or so later, personally addressed to the individual. Activities like this allow people to express their creativity, which can contribute to boosting morale and self-esteem among our service users, making it a truly enriching experience for everyone involved.

We're grateful for the generous philanthropic grants we receive to support our programs. Our programs work to build community engagement, social connection, living skills, wellbeing and preparing people for housing (after years of being homeless).

Look Good, Feel Good Program

The SMHOW Look Good, Feel Good program aims to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people experiencing chronic homelessness, rough sleeping and disadvantage by providing them with emergency relief through hot showers and hygiene products, including towels, toiletries, laundry facilities, dental clinics, feminine hygiene products, and clean clothes.



Many people experiencing homelessness have no access to their own running water or hygiene products. People who are rough sleeping or experiencing homelessness are also much more vulnerable to a range of mental and physical illnesses.

Lack of cleanliness and poor dental health can be a barrier to social inclusion, which is detrimental to mental health, and can prevent people engaging in other essential supports, while mental and physical ill health can cause issues with security, including working, applying for, or receiving assistance, and forming or maintaining a support network.

Our Look Good, Feel Good program tackles these and creates a strong community to help our service users with the support they need. Our facilities are open throughout the day, which gives people the flexibility to use our resources as suits them most. This allows us to offer the service in a way that meets the diverse needs of our service users, as well as helping it to act as a soft-entry point to our longer-term supports.



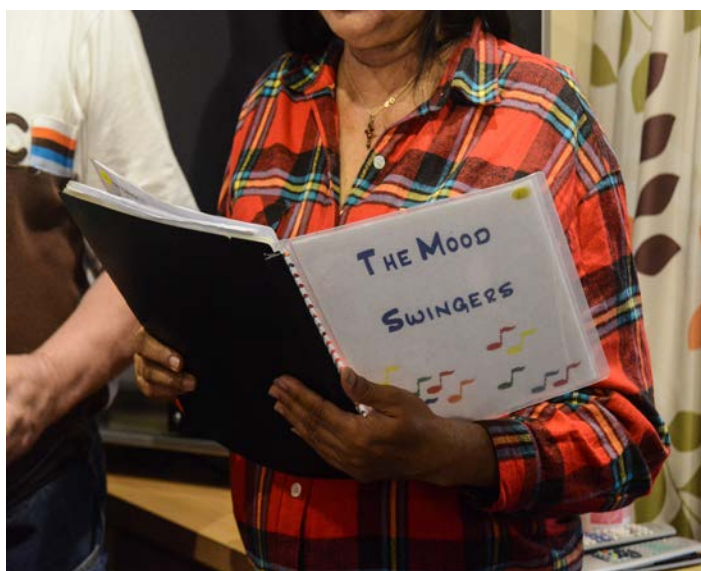
Keeping It Clean

This year saw us able to offer laundry services for members of our community who are sleeping rough. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of some of our volunteers, along with a generous philanthropic grant, we were able to purchase two washers and driers – one pair industrial, the other domestic. Service users are able to wash their clothes and bedding while they are eating meals or participating in other activities around the centre. Having clean clothes is essential for maintaining hygiene and dignity, and we're proud to offer this support to those in need.

Mood Swingers Choir

While the heart of St Mary's House of Welcome lies in providing essential care such as referrals, crisis intervention, food, showers, and healthcare support, we firmly believe in the importance of engaging in enjoyable social inclusion activities. Every Friday, our service users have the opportunity to participate in a fun and social singing session as part of our Mood Swingers Choir!

Our staff here have thoroughly enjoyed hearing the harmonies emanating from these sessions over the year and have felt the warmth and joy radiating from those involved. Nurturing creative outlets proves invaluable for individuals, providing them not only a chance to socialize but also an opportunity to engage in a bit of singing and dancing!



Christmas at Home

Christmas Day at St Mary's House of Welcome was a true celebration of warmth and generosity, all thanks to our wonderful staff and volunteers and incredible supporters. Everyone deserves a celebration at this time of year!

We opened our doors to a group of around 70 rough sleepers who, after having had the chance to shower and have a warm coffee in the courtyard in the morning sunshine, were treated to a delicious three-course traditional Christmas lunch. Everyone who attended was given a small gift and a food hamper full of essentials along with some festive treats.

Our Mood Swingers Choir also sang carols to welcome our community!





A Gift of Thanks

Clay, a valued member of our community who has been coming to St Mary's House of Welcome for many years, generously donated one of his beautiful paintings to us early in 2024 as a gesture of thanks for all of the support he has received. The stunning artwork depicts the Dreaming story of his family totem, the emu.

"I have painted this so that the orange fire stick in the middle of the painting is taken from the man, and the emu is chasing the man across the sky and leaves him in the sky to return to the lands with the fire stick, to teach the earth and everyone to love properly and create a good atmosphere and good world where everyone is on an even playing field with a clean slate."



Volunteer Program

We are honoured to have the support of many wonderful volunteers at St Mary's House of Welcome, and we appreciate their loyalty and commitment to providing such an important service. We share our days working alongside our talented volunteer team and I am reminded by the famous quote:

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give".

We could not provide the services offered by SMHOW without the support of our volunteer community.

This year has seen an expansion of our volunteer team, not only increasing team numbers but introducing a seasonal pool of volunteers, as well as a pool of volunteer drivers, together with our Christmas volunteer helpers.

We currently have approximately 200 committed volunteers who provide a variety of services with a range of commitments, including serving breakfast and lunch to our homeless community in our dining room, covering reception duties, and daily drivers who travel to collect donations of surplus food that feed our homeless community. We also have our casual volunteers who are willing to step in when needed, as well as our seasonal team who commit to multiple shifts per week assisting over the Christmas/New Year period when our regular volunteers commonly take a break. We are very grateful to our volunteers that join us in the lead up to Christmas to assist with sorting and packing in excess of 200 festive emergency relief hampers containing basic staples and festive treats for our community members.

We continue to encourage valuable relationships with our school communities whose students volunteer with us by way of their Social Justice programs. We see the impact of their support and work at our House as they serve meals on a weekly basis or cook pancakes for our service users for morning tea.

This year, we have introduced a volunteer stream of trainee chefs who have supported our SMHOW chef each day in the kitchen gaining invaluable experience. In May, we celebrated National Volunteer Week focusing our appreciation on our wonderful volunteers and their invaluable contributions to SMHOW. The highlight of the week was hosting an afternoon tea where it was our turn to serve them, along with an opportunity for us to say thank you for their dedication and commitment.



Our head chef Ryan Stewart with some of our fantastic volunteers!

“Volunteers are probably the lifeblood of this centre”
- Service User

Our volunteers make everyone welcome at our table!

In financial year 23/24:

1,274

Shifts were filled by volunteer support

3,184

Number of volunteers to fill the shifts including school social justice program

5,483

Hours were worked by volunteers to fill shifts

\$237,249

Was the total nominal value of volunteering to SMHOW

Fundraising and Campaigns

St Mary's House of Welcome receives approximately 52 per cent of its funding from federal, state, and local government sources. To continue offering vital programs like the meal service, amenities, and social support activities, the organisation relies heavily on the generosity of individuals, schools, corporate and community groups, as well as public and philanthropic grants and donations to cover the remaining 48 per cent of income needed. We are incredibly grateful for everyone who contributed much needed donations – both financial and material – to help change the lives of our service users in 23/24.

'Wheels for Meals' Bike Ride

Our annual Wheels for Meals bike ride along the Great Ocean Road was again a huge success, raising over \$127,000 to support the work of St Mary's House of Welcome – more specifically, the Welcome Relief Meals Program. This year, we were excited to welcome new faces to the dedicated group of almost 20 avid cyclists, many of whom have been taking part in the event for years. The ride, which starts in Port Fairy and travels through different coastal towns along the Great Ocean Road, concludes in Sorrento, covering over a whopping 300km. It's always an enjoyable event, raising crucial funds to support people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. As always, we were incredibly appreciative of determination and effort of these wonderful men in undertaking this huge feat!



Gingerbread House of Welcome

The St Mary's House of Welcome's Gingerbread House of Welcome campaign gained significant momentum in this, its second year. This allowed us to share our premium gingerbread houses and kits with both loyal supporters and a new audience of generous gingerbread lovers! This growth was helped along in part by our investment in a standalone Gingerbread House of Welcome website, which helped us successfully increase sales and reach.



With pro-bono SEO support and marketing efforts, including collaborations with social media influencers, our gingerbread reached the Christmas tables of more people than ever before. Our presence as a stallholder at various Christmas markets and events across Melbourne further boosted our brand awareness and community reach.



SMHOW annual gingerbread making

A highlight of the campaign was the generosity of our supporters, who provided pay-it-forward gingerbread kits for our service users. These kits allowed our service users to experience the joy of decorating – and eating – their own gingerbread house creations. In the week leading up to Christmas, we set up gingerbread creation stations, and our community members had a great time assembling, eating, and decorating these Christmas delights.

At St Mary's House of Welcome, we're all about providing hope and creating uplifting experiences for those who need it most. Seeing our community come together, having fun, and sharing these moments warmed our hearts.

Community BBQs

Community BBQs at St Mary's House of Welcome are a key feature of our social inclusion program, and have grown increasingly popular with our corporate supporters with over 20 BBQs being hosted through the year. Hosting a BBQ lunch offers each group a unique social immersion opportunity, allowing them to serve a nutritious meal to up to 150 members of our community while gaining valuable insights into the realities of homelessness in Melbourne.



Movin' for Meals

Movin' for Meals celebrated its fourth year, with three returning schools enthusiastically participating. Throughout May, dozens of students ran, walked, or cycled their chosen distances to raise funds for our Welcome Relief Meals Program. Not only did they increase their fitness levels, but their dedication and energy made a significant impact helping to provide much-needed support for those experiencing homelessness and disadvantage.

SMHOW Goes Greener - Cash for Cans

This year, St Mary's House of Welcome joined the "Cash for Cans" Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic) as a charity partner, earning 10 cents per recyclable container collected. We've been encouraging staff, service users and local residents to join in by dropping off their containers at our designated bin in the courtyard or at any refund point in Victoria, specifying SMHOW as the beneficiary. **The best way to do this is by downloading your local CDS Vic app and selecting St Mary's House of Welcome as the recipient.** This project aims to boost our fundraising income while promoting community engagement and environmental awareness.

A Welcome Win

From Homeless to Housed

Earlier this year, we were very happy to be able to support a service user with complex mental health issues into permanent community housing after he had spent six years living out of his car. The path to the service user's new home was paved with numerous challenges, but our team of community support workers advocated tirelessly for the man to ensure he had access to both mental health and housing supports, along with the basic needs like showers and laundry services, meals, and material aid throughout his journey. The team's dedication extended beyond just providing services; they built a relationship of trust and encouragement with the service user, guiding him through every step of the process. Today, he is thrilled to be settling into his new home and is looking forward to progressing with his goals.

Facing the reality of homelessness in Victoria:

- According to the latest Census, **30,660** Victorians lacked a home, including 6,800 children, constituting 27% of Australia's total (112,494).
- Rough sleepers make up less than 7% of Australia's homeless population.
- In Victoria, **146,000** new social houses are needed.
- Daily, Victorian homelessness services have to turn away **96 people**.
- During 2021-22, Victorian homelessness services aided **102,000 individuals**, accounting for 37% of clients nationwide. ***



Our People

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 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.

2023-2024 Board Directors

- Anthony Hollamby – Board Chair (fixed two-year term from November 2023)
- Sister Debra McCarthy DC – Trustee
- Jennifer Davidson (Board Chair until October 2023)
- Bridget Organ
- Loretta Crowe
- Daniel Bullock
- Rueben Langkamp
- Leanne Lewis
- Deborah Fewster
- Silvana Gugliandolo (from April 2024)

Staff

St Mary's House of Welcome is blessed to employ a team of passionate and dedicated staff who share in the organisation's mission to support people who are sleeping rough and experiencing chronic homelessness and disadvantage, engendering within them a sense of hope and belonging.

Management Team

In 2023-2024, the Management Team comprised:

- **Robina Bradley** – Chief Executive Officer, Company Secretary
- **Kristine Robertson** – Executive Manager Fundraising and Communications
- **Christine Arthur** – Executive Manager Finance and Corporate Service
- **Fiona Dickson** – Fundraising Manager
- **Mark Donchi** – Co-Homelessness Program Manager
- **Jodie Douglas** – Co-Homelessness Program Manager

Financials

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income

	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
Total Income	\$3,150,490	\$3,609,419
Expenditure		
Client Direct Support	\$1,624,351	\$1,580,580
Operating Costs	\$1,330,363	\$1,309,022
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year	\$195,776	\$719,828

Summary Balance Sheet

	2024 (\$)	2023 (\$)
Current Assets	\$1,795,414	\$1,721,425
Non-Current Assets	\$7,531,689	\$7,626,022
Total Assets	\$9,327,103	\$9,347,447
Current Liabilities	\$311,969	\$473,793
Non-Current Liabilities	\$37,211	\$32,862
Total Liabilities	\$349,180	\$506,655
Net Assets	\$8,977,923	\$8,840,792
Equity	\$8,977,923	\$8,840,792

The above Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income and Summary Balance Sheet does not contain all the disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards. Reading each of the above and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited Financial Report and the auditor's report thereon which is available at ACNC.

Independent auditor's report to the members of St Mary's House of Welcome (ABN: 54 050 278 754)

Report on the audit of the financial report

Our opinion on the financial report

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of St Mary's House of Welcome (the Company) has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- Giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- Complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022.

What was audited?

We have audited the financial report of the Company, which comprises

- the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024,
- the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year then ended,
- the statement of changes in equity for the year then ended,
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended,
- notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information, and
- the directors' declaration.

Basis for opinion

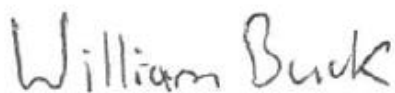
We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (ACNC Act) and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards) (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at:
https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf



William Buck Audit (Vic) Pty Ltd
ABN 59 116 151 136



R. P. Burt
Director
Melbourne, 24 October 2024

Thank You

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 2023/2024. We would particularly like to acknowledge the following for their generous support:

The Victorian Government	Bunnings Collingwood	Catholic Church Insurance Foundation
Department of Premier and Cabinet	Vinomofu	Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem – Vic Commandery
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Ethical Jobs	Father Kevin Broderick Memorial Trust Fund
Department of Health	Ronald McDonald House	Danks Trust
Department of Industry, Science and Resources	GIVIT	GDM Family Trust
The Australian Government	Street Smart Australia	J & L Levy
City of Yarra	Comm Bank Community Donations Programs	Bequest of Ron Westlake
Services Australia	Bendigo Bank Community Bank Clifton Hill – North Fitzroy	Escala Partners
Mental Health Victoria	Australian Communities Foundation	Pinchapoo
Magistrates' Court of Victoria	Inner North Community Foundation	Calibre 9
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation	Collier Charitable Fund	Bright Sparque
NDIA	Angel Foundation	Tom's Paddock
St Vincent's Private Hospital	Lochtenberg Foundation	St David Dairy
Royal College of Optometry	Junola Foundation	PY Timber Warehouse
Fitzroy Legal Service	Merwe Laws Foundation	Monique Richardson
St Vincent De Paul Society Eastern Central Council	Bagot Gjergja Foundation	Alex Makes Meals
St Vincent De Paul Society of Victoria	Isaacson Davis Foundation	Wheels for Meals Bikeriders
Second Bite	Tucker Foundation	Very Old Men in Tights
Coles	Nelson Alexander Charitable Foundation	Manoranjna and Chengaleth Sivasankar Endowment
Woolworths	Adaptalift	St Mary's House of Welcome Volunteers
Australia Post	Minter Ellison Charitable Gifts Committee	St Mary's House of Welcome Staff
Nandos	Xavier Social Justice Network	St Mary's House of Welcome service users and participants
Grill'd Local Matters	The Life Centre Trust	St Mary's House of Welcome partner agencies



ST MARY'S

HOUSE OF WELCOME

What is the House of Welcome?

For almost 65 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. We are a Specialist Access Point in inner Melbourne.

With your help, we provide:

- Hot nutritious meals with table service, twice daily
- Free showers, with towels and toiletries
- Emergency relief (such as food hampers, clothing and accommodation)
- Laundry facilities for rough sleepers
- Short-term case management and psycho-social supports
- Comprehensive social inclusion programs
- Access to free or low-cost optometry, podiatry and other personal care and allied health supports
- Housing readiness programs
- Referrals and support including housing, detox and mental health supports
- Computer access
- Phone charging
- Health and wellbeing
- Community gardening
- Mail collection service
- 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

Reply Paid 60, Fitzroy, 3065

Ph 03 9417 6497
operations@smhow.org.au