

ST MARY'S

HOUSE OF WELCOME

ANNUAL
REPORT



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OUR WELCOME

For 65 years, St Mary's House of Welcome has helped bring warmth into the lives of community members who are chronically homeless, disadvantaged and isolated. 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 PURPOSE

In the heart of Fitzroy, we stand with Melbourne's most vulnerable—listening deeply, welcoming with dignity, and creating connections that transform lives.

OUR MISSION

Inspired by the spirit of the Daughters of Charity and underpinned by the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching we welcome the most vulnerable members of our community, respect them, treat them with dignity, listen, and support them to appreciate their worth and achieve their full potential.

OUR VALUES

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



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

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 everyone'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.

TRUSTEE REFLECTION

When we watch the news or scroll through social media, we can feel a sense of powerlessness or sadness.

But St Mary's House of Welcome offers a new perspective. Here on Brunswick Street, we find a place of hope, of light, of welcome and of community.

This energy touches everyone who enters. The clients know that this is a place where they are known, called by name and offered the support they need. They meet their friends and share the stories. They are not alone.

Hope and light is here in the care, support and skill of staff; the dignity and nourishment provided in the dining room; the corporate and school teams engaging clients in the courtyard as they prepare a BBQ or morning tea; the generosity of volunteers and the amazing donors who offer in kind donations or financial assistance.

May the hope, goodness and kindness of St Mary's House of Welcome remain a small light in the pain we see in the world.

The Daughters of Charity wish to continue to stand with all who are part of the life of SMHOW. For 65 years the legacy of the founders, St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac continues providing the best of support, care and community. We thank all those who are part of this beacon of hope and light.

Debra McCarthy DC



CHAIR REFLECTION

As Chair of the St Mary's House of Welcome Board can I firstly recognise the tremendous support of the members of the Board, during a year which has challenged but also nourished as a group. The Board is cohesive and very committed to the ongoing role of SMHOW, in growing its Mission in continually supporting people who are homeless and at risk.

The year has seen a number of significant changes at SMHOW with John Fogarty joining us in the role of CEO. John brings significant experience, expertise and commitment to the Mission and Values of SMHOW. The Board has been very supportive of John and his commitment to a culture of openness and support of staff, volunteers and other significant stakeholders.



"I went into the House of Welcome hungry, scratchy, suspicious, and overly critical. I was fed at a table with real people. Volunteers there are brilliant. Deeply appreciative. Thank you. I left feeling a lot more myself and friendlier."

– Service User

Over the past 12 months, I have been a frequent visitor to SMHOW, and it has been very uplifting to see how staff and volunteers have been supporting and interacting with our service users. You do get the sense that SMHOW is a very special place for the people who visit each day.

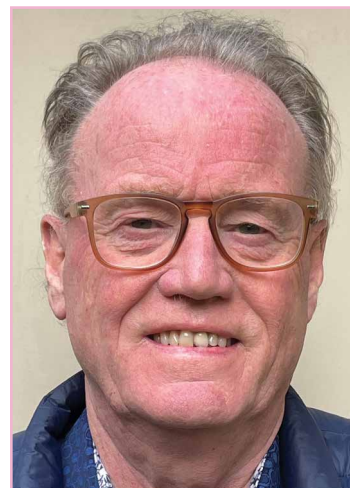
The last Financial Year saw SMHOW deliver 45,664 meals, an increase of 7,937 on the previous year which again shows the importance of SMHOW in its role of supporting people at risk. The Board was also very pleased to see a strong financial performance again this year. In a challenging fiscal environment, the necessity for SMHOW to remain financially viable gives us the chance to continue delivering and growing our service.

SMHOW's financial performance was greatly assisted by our Fundraising and Communications team, which exceeded its budget target for the last finance year. Fundraising contributes to 48 per cent of our overall revenue and is vital to SMHOW's ongoing viability. On behalf of the Board, I would like to recognise the significant contribution from our donors and benefactors, which enables SMHOW to deliver much needed services.

Finally, the Board would very much like to recognise the role of our committed, compassionate and at times very patient staff and volunteers, who turn up every day with a smile.

Tony Hollamby

Board Chair



CEO REFLECTION

Joining St Mary's House of Welcome as CEO has not only been a great privilege, it has also opened my eyes to the incredible importance of the role the service plays supporting the most vulnerable members of our community.

Following in the tradition and spirit of St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac and the rich history of the Daughters of Charity who founded the service in 1960, St Mary's House of Welcome is a place where people can come to be seen and heard in a society where they are often judged and marginalised.

Whether they come for a meal, a shower, to use the laundry or simply for some respite from the weather, our service users are always warmly welcomed by our highly committed team of staff and volunteers.

The demand in the community for services such as ours continues to grow. The impact of limited housing availability and the cost of living is evident each and every day. But rather than filling us with dread, it fuels our purpose.

On a daily basis I am inspired by the work the team at St Mary's House of Welcome does. They are singularly focused on connecting with people, listening to their story, supporting their needs and, hopefully improving their lives.

This report showcases just two of the many stories that could be told about how our service users have been supported back to independence and, often, into housing.

Of course, none of this could be achieved without the support we receive from so many dedicated partners. The funding from State and Local Government, the generosity of our loyal donor base, the trusts and foundations who have seen fit to respond to our requests, the local businesses who continue to find ways to support us, our many food donors and our wonderful volunteers – all of these make what we achieve possible.

I am extremely grateful to our Board and Trustees for the unwavering support shown towards myself and all the staff during a challenging year. I would also like to thank and recognise each of our staff members for their commitment and contribution to our Mission. I know that they give wholeheartedly of themselves every day.

St Mary's House of Welcome is strong and vibrant will continue to grow its important service to the community for many years to come.

John Fogarty

Chief Executive Officer



CELEBRATING 65 YEARS OF SERVICE

On May 30, 2025, we celebrated the 65th anniversary of the official opening of St Mary's House of Welcome.

For many years prior to 1960, men who were homeless and disadvantaged lined up outside St Vincent's Hall in Fitzroy to receive a sandwich from the Daughters of Charity at lunch time. The Sisters were never satisfied with this make-shift service and longed to have a Centre to which these men could be invited to be served a meal with dignity.

As a result, St Mary's House of Welcome was opened by the Daughters of Charity on the 30th May 1960 to assist homeless and disadvantaged men in Fitzroy.

The initial building at 167 Brunswick Street, provided a kitchen and dining room, clothing storage, office space, shower facilities for men and bathing and clinic facilities. On the first day of operation over 90 men were served a lunch of soup, sandwiches and tea. Within a year, more than 250 people were arriving each day for lunch.



Today – 65 years later – St Mary’s House of Welcome provides essential basic services and vital psycho-social and program supports to hundreds of men and women who are homeless and experiencing poverty, severe and persistent mental health issues, and those who are extremely isolated and socially marginalised.

Over the years, thousands and thousands of men and women have been welcomed through our doors, and have been supported to find hope, experience belongingness and achieve to their full potential.



Thank you to all of our community members and supporters who share our mission to stand with people who are disadvantaged and marginalised to provide support, solutions and hope. With your help, we will continue to be there for all of those who need us for years to come.



OUR IMPACT 2024-25: At a Glance

Our kitchen served a total of

47,684

filling, tasty, and nutritious meals

to vulnerable members of our community through our Welcome Relief Meals Program



We provided

1,440

emergency food hampers

to our rough sleeping community



We've been able to provide

6,000

warm showers

along with essential toiletries and fresh clothing, to those facing the challenges of homelessness

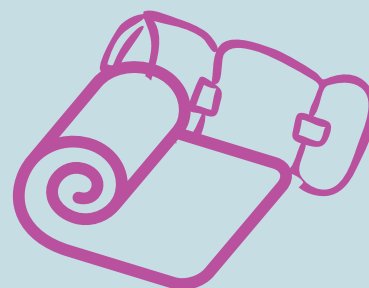


We distributed

375 essential

items such as sleeping bags, swags, tents, and sleeping mats

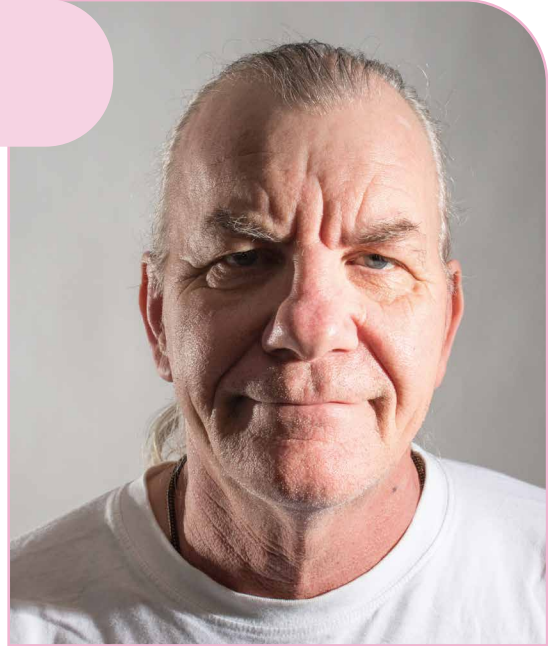
contributing to our vulnerable community members' comfort and safety





TOM'S STORY

Tom*, originally from New Zealand, had been homeless in Australia for 14 years, and suffered from long-term alcohol misuse. Prior to becoming homeless, Tom had moved to Australia with his girlfriend in 2006, where they lived in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne for two years, and ran a successful house cleaning business together. Unfortunately, the relationship broke down, and after attempting to build a new life in



Adelaide, Tom returned to Melbourne and not only became homeless but developed an alcohol misuse disorder. His trade as a screen printer had become obsolete due to technological advances in the sector, and he was unemployed, he had no income, he had lost all forms of his identification and was sleeping rough. This furthered his alcohol problem, and he felt unmotivated to make changes to his life.

Tom first came to St Mary's House of Welcome in 2013, after being told about us by a fellow rough sleeper. It was then that he slowly began to turn his life around.

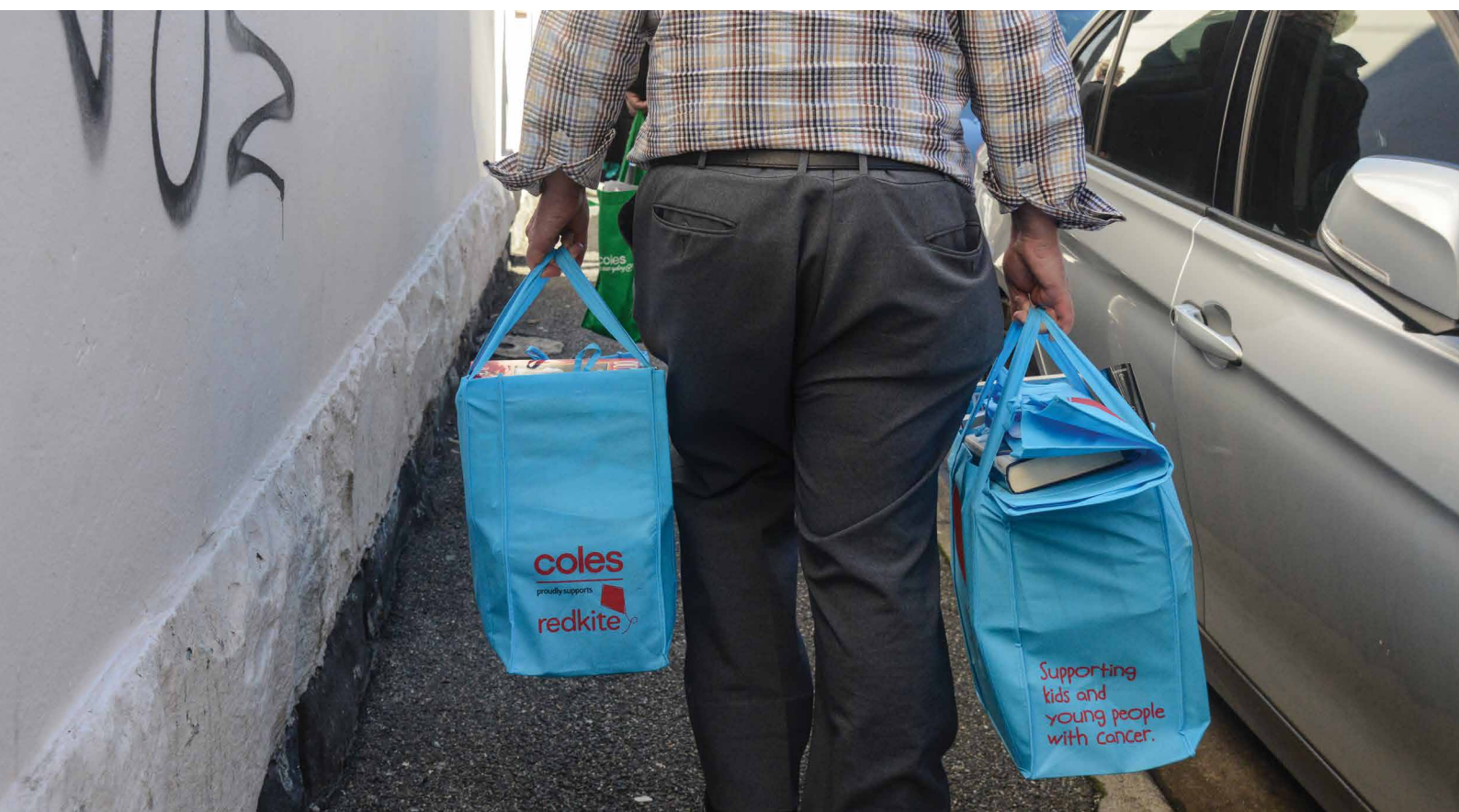
"As soon as I walked into St Mary's House of Welcome for the first time, I immediately felt welcomed. The staff are wonderful, and I stopped feeling lonely and regained a sense of companionship."

Tom joined the pool team, and for the first time in a long time, felt he was part of a community. After one of his friends and a fellow service user abstained from alcohol, Tom became inspired to give up drinking and seek help. He began engaging with our Community Support Workers and started getting his physical and mental health back on track. Our team helped him get his birth certificate from New Zealand and are continuing to work with legal services to help him become a permanent Australian resident. Tom went on to re-gain his driver's licence, get a health check and in March 2025, he stopped drinking alcohol.

Today, we are thrilled to report that this year, Tom became housed! He is share-housing with his friend and fellow service user Sam*, who was also able to find a secure pathway off the street, thanks to our dedicated Community Support Workers. Sam, who had previously been homeless, drug affected and suffered serious mental health issues, invited Tom to move into the spare room in his 2-bedroom home, as he was feeling quite lonely. Both Tom and Sam are enjoying being roommates and have both signed up for the social inclusion programs here at St Mary's House of Welcome, including fishing!

"Sam is an awesome roommate – we respect each other's space and do our own thing, and then we can sit down together and enjoy watching sport or a movie – we're both James Bond fans, so it's fun. We can both relax around each other.

St Mary's House of Welcome will always be a home away from home for me. It's the little things they offer like the socialising opportunities, food, showers and haircuts that have made me feel like myself again. I'm so grateful for the fresh start they've given me."



HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

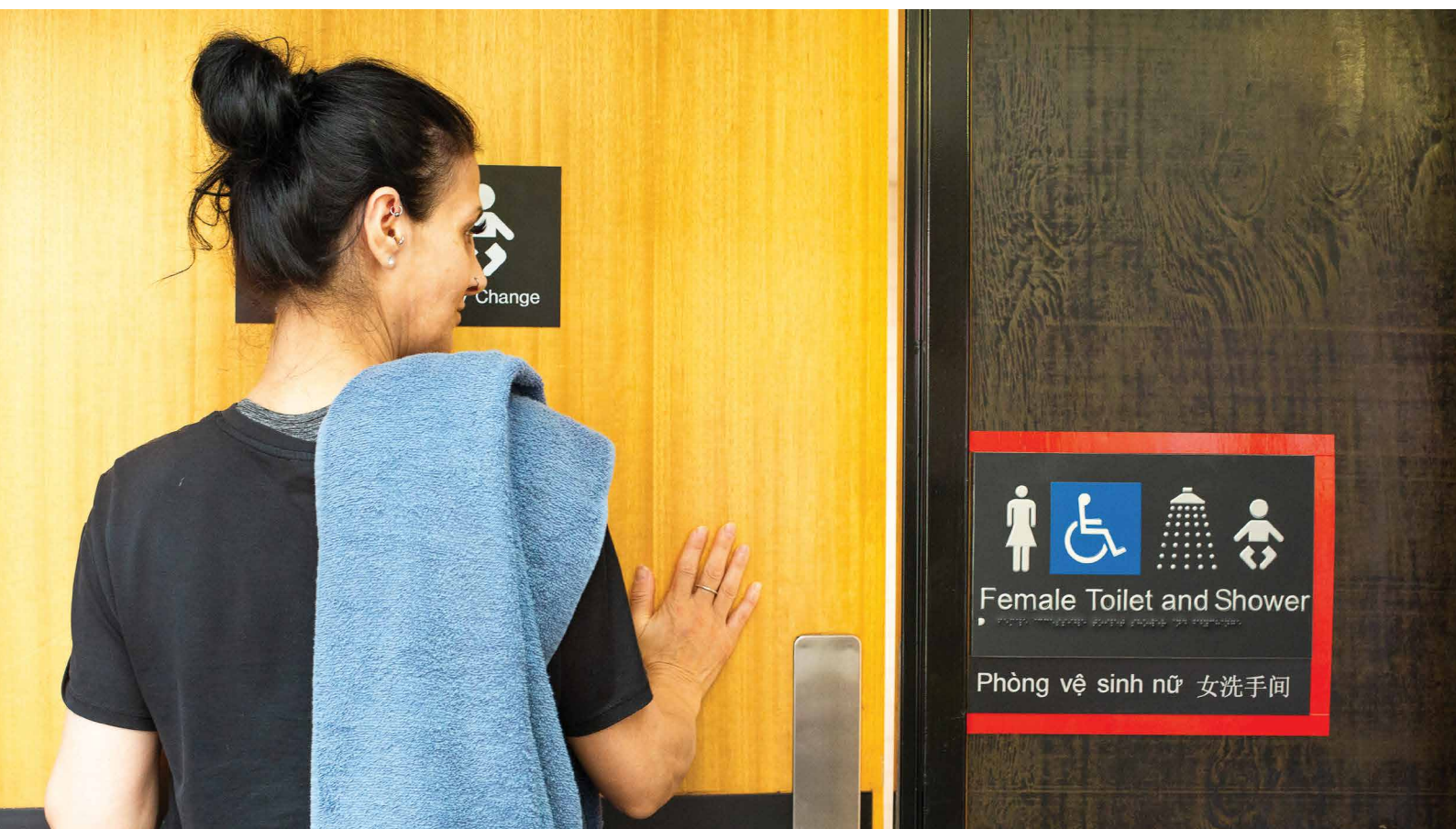
The past 12 months have seen an increase in service user numbers in the St Mary's House of Welcome Homelessness Program.

We are fortunate to have a skilled and stable team who continue to grow in their capability, applying case management principles, to support the chronically homeless, and those at risk of homelessness. The team advocates for, and supports, service users to access emergency and crisis accommodation, as well as long-term housing in a sector where shortage of stock is an ongoing challenge.

Many service users are living with ongoing issues with substance use and/or significant mental health challenges that lead to isolation and reduced social capacity.

Guided by a service user's goals, the team advocates to provide them with a range of critical services such as mental health and AOD treatment programs, domestic violence services, and legal and financial services.

Those who are chronically homeless, couch surfers and locals living in boarding houses and social housing come to St Mary's House of Welcome to enjoy a hot breakfast or lunch, or a BBQ lunch prepared by volunteers from local corporates. In winter, service users attend to get warm, have a shower or simply find a spot to sleep because they did not sleep overnight. They can also do their washing, sit, chill and talk in a safe space and engage in a range of social inclusion programs. Those who have limited means can pick up an emergency food hamper, get a clean pair of socks and jocks and some warm clothing and a sleeping bag or tent, if available.



Thirty per cent of our service users are women, occasionally with children and/or fleeing domestic violence. Service users range in age from 18yo to 85yo – the majority aged between 25yo and 65yo. They may be locally born in Australia or someone who has come from overseas with no income or access to government support. Eleven per cent of our service users are Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander, 12 per cent are from African nations, six per cent are from New Zealand.

The St Mary's House of Welcome's Homelessness Program is part of a network of person-centred government and community services and agencies operating in the inner north and CBD, all dedicated to the wellbeing of the homeless and supporting them to achieve their goals. These include: DFFH¹, Launch Housing, Unison, various St Vincent's Hospital community programs, Ngwala², VAHS³, CoHealth, Yarra Council and 'Yarra Zero', Fitzroy Legal Service and Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Salvation Army, and VincentCare Ozanam House and other accommodation services.

James O'Farrell

Team Leader

1 Department of Fairness, Families and Housing

2 Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation (Ngwala) is a State-wide Community Controlled Organisation serving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria.

3 Victorian Aboriginal Health Service





Extending the Welcome – Saturdays at St Mary's House of Welcome

On 26 October, 2024, for the first time since before the Covid-19 pandemic, St Mary's House of Welcome once again opened its doors on a Saturday. It was a wonderful day, full of the spirit of service and welcome – a day long anticipated by everyone in our community. Our amazing staff and volunteers were excited to open the doors just after 8am and provided a very warm greeting to all of those who were waiting to come inside for some hearty food, warmth, and respite. Throughout the morning we saw about 28 rough sleepers attend the House for a meal, showers, and other supports. As the months progressed, and word spread that we were open, numbers began to grow. Now, every Saturday, we open our doors to around 70 community members, offering morning tea, brunch, showers, laundry facilities, and information and referral support. We anticipate numbers of people who present to the Saturday service will continue to grow.

It has been heartening to see a large number of people accessing our services for the first time on Saturdays. With few other support services available on weekends, our Saturday opening has created a vital opportunity to connect with individuals who may not have previously engaged with St Mary's House of Welcome. Often, these new faces return during the week to continue building relationships with staff and access the support they need.





The rough sleeper community has expressed profound appreciation for having a space to enjoy a hot meal, a shower, and some respite on Saturdays, when most other services are unavailable. Most people who present at the service access both the meals and the showers, with a few also utilising the laundry facilities. As one service user shared, “There’s not many places for people to go on the weekend, so it’s been great having somewhere to go on Saturdays... and it’s been getting busier, so the need is obviously there.”

We have also had a steady flow of interest from people in the local community who have wanted to volunteer on Saturdays. This is particularly heartening as we have been able to recruit people who were previously unable to volunteer on weekdays due to work commitments.

Homelessness doesn’t end on the weekends, and our Saturday opening has strengthened St Mary’s House of Welcome’s commitment to being a place of support, solutions, and hope.

“If you weren’t open on a Saturday, I wouldn’t know what to do. It means I can come here, have a shower, wash my clothes and have a hot meal. Otherwise, I’d have to wait the whole weekend on the streets.”

ADVOCACY AND IMPACT

HOMELESSNESS WEEK: August 5–11

Each Homelessness Week, we invite local, state and federal politicians, of all political persuasions, to visit St Mary's House of Welcome to serve a meal to our service users.

In financial year 24/25, we were honoured to welcome the Minister for Housing Harriet Shing MP, Sheena Watt MP, the Shadow Minister for Housing Richard Riordan MP, Member for Richmond Gabrielle de Vietri. Tim Read MP, City of Yarra Councillor Edward Crossland, Amanda Stone, Nicholls Ward Councillor, Simon Newport CEO of Homes Victoria, Sherri Bruinhout Executive Director Homes Victoria and Chris Christoforou CEO of VAADA. It was wonderful to be able to share more about the work we do and advocate on behalf of our service users. The opportunity to have a meal and talk with politicians was very much appreciated by our homeless community. The week also showcased the scope and breadth of the work we do here as a specialist access point for homelessness.





PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING

St Mary's House of Welcome recognises the importance of working in partnership with others in the sector to advocate for systemic change and improve the lives of the people we help. We work collaboratively with other organisations to undertake our advocacy efforts, and we seek opportunities to amplify voices of our community members.

- » 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 Network – gardening, library, cooking, choir
- » Bolton Clark nursing services
- » BSL Aged Care supports
- » cohealth
- » Ngwala.

YARRA ZERO

St Mary's House of Welcome is proud to be part of Yarra Zero, a collaborative initiative dedicated to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in the City of Yarra. The goal of Yarra Zero is to achieve Functional Zero homelessness for people sleeping rough in our municipality.

As stated on the Yarra Zero website:

"Functional Zero homelessness will be reached when the number of people entering and experiencing rough sleeping homelessness within a month is less than the average monthly placement rate into long-term housing. Once achieved it must be sustained and any future experiences of rough sleeping homelessness in the City of Yarra are brief, rare and non-recurring. This will be because the housing and support resources required to end rough sleeping homelessness are efficiently coordinated and sufficient to meet the needs of all people who sleep and live in this local Government area."

St Mary's House of Welcome takes great pride in being a leading agency 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.



“After an incredibly frustrating battle to find housing, my husband and I are finally housed... thanks to the incredibly helpful staff at St Mary’s House of Welcome.

Upon walking in for lunch one day, we got talking to one of the staff. I explained that my husband and I were sleeping in the car due to exhausting the funding available through emergency housing, and the difficulty we were experiencing finding other options. Our car was also out of registration and had two broken windscreens, so it was extremely cold and attracting police attention, causing us more trouble.

In the month of waiting, SMHOW was instrumental in gaining an additional two weeks funded accommodation, which we had otherwise been unable to access and significantly reduced the number of nights we were forced to sleep in the car in the cold. Showers, food and genuine care and compassion from SMHOW got us through the toughest of our last few weeks of homelessness, and we are more than thankful for everything the SMHOW staff have done to help.”

– Service User

CONSUMER CONSULTING GROUP

SMHOW is committed to ensuring our service users are at the forefront of everything we do. That’s why we launched the Consumer Consulting Group (CCG) – to provide us with the important perspective of the people we help, which, in turn, helps to further guide program planning and meet people’s needs to the best of our ability.

The group – which meets quarterly – is open to any service users who wish to provide feedback and advice on both what we are doing right, and how we can improve.

The group also helps us, as an organisation, report back to our service users, sharing information, building trust and supporting positive, healthy relationships.

WELCOME RELIEF MEALS PROGRAM

St Mary's House of Welcome provides services to people who are sleeping rough, homeless, drug and alcohol dependent, have psycho-social disabilities, and/or severe mental health issues or are otherwise deeply disadvantaged. Many either do not have the means to feed themselves (no kitchen facilities, money for food) or lack the living skills to be able to prepare nutritious meals.

**In 2024/2025,
we provided
47,684
filling, tasty and
nutritious meals
through our Welcome
Relief Meals Program**

The "Welcome Relief Meals Program" works to counter this by providing breakfast, lunch, and morning tea to around 150 of our service users each day. Meals are served at a table by staff and volunteers, to provide a sense of dignity.

For people experiencing homelessness, having regular easy access to warm, nutritious meals in a safe environment makes a significant improvement to mental and physical health through

factors such as decreased risk of disease, better stress management, increased concentration and sleep quality, better mental and physical wellbeing, and increased security. The Welcome Relief Meals program provides meals and emergency food hampers to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community. The hampers ensure that our service users have access to food outside of our service hours, and that every experience is personalised and centred around each service user's individual needs. Not only does the meals program improve mental and physical wellbeing of our service users, but it also creates a community and support network to remind them that they are valued and cared for.

Our Welcome Relief program is not only incredibly valuable to the people who use it, but it also acts as a soft-entry point to our longer-term specialist supports.

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 service users.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many local businesses and organisations whose generous donations help make our meals program possible. We'd also like to acknowledge the wonderful community members who bring in beautiful produce from their gardens – your kindness and care truly nourish both body and spirit.

Looking ahead, the team of myself, Glenn Sloggett, and Dan Tonra, are excited to continue offering nutritious and delicious meals that celebrate homestyle favourites from the past and other comfort foods – food that feels familiar, generous, and full of heart.

Ryan Stewart

Chef



AROUND THE HOUSE

Everyone deserves a place where they feel safe and can find a little joy.

Inside our centre, we have a pool table, comfy chairs, books, games, and more. It's a place where people can escape the cold, enjoy a meal, and simply be themselves.

Life can be tough, especially for those experiencing homelessness. That's why we're committed to providing a place where people in need can find respite and a moment of peace. Our goal is to make their lives a bit easier, one small act of kindness at a time.

Social Inclusion Programs

At the heart of St Mary's House of Welcome is our commitment to providing essential care – from referrals and crisis intervention to food, showers, and healthcare support. Alongside these vital services, we also recognise the importance of fostering joy and connection through social inclusion activities. That's why we offer a range of wellbeing activities and programs aimed at reducing isolation, fostering community connections, building skills and creating a sense of belonging.

In partnership with Fitzroy Learning Network, we run a weekly **Cooking Program**, where service users learn how to prepare and cook healthy, delicious meals and snacks. Our service users have loved learning to cook in a fun, friendly environment!

We also introduced **Movie Morning** sessions this year, where our service users unwind over a relaxing and immersive movie experience, complete with cozy seating, tasty popcorn, and refreshing soft drinks. The feedback has been extremely positive, with many saying it felt just like a "Gold Class experience". It's safe to say our movie mornings are a blockbuster hit!



Our **Coffee and Chat Program** aims to create a warm, welcoming space for social interaction, reduce isolation, and foster community connections. This program provides service users with the opportunity to gather, share stories, build relationships, and participate in arts and craft.

One of our most popular social inclusion programs at SMHOW is our **Plant, Grow & Eat Program**, where individuals experiencing homelessness learn how to plant and nurture fresh produce at Atherton Gardens in Fitzroy. The program aims to provide a therapeutic and skill-building experience while contributing to the supply of nutritious food for the SMHOW meals program. By integrating gardening into their routines, our service users gain practical skills, foster community connections, and contribute meaningfully to their wellbeing and that of others.



Every Friday, our service users are invited to join in the fun and camaraderie of our **Mood Swingers Choir** – a lively singing session that brings people together through music. Throughout the year, our staff have loved hearing the harmonies fill the space and have felt the warmth and happiness radiating from everyone involved.

Look Good, Feel Good

For many of us, starting the day with a warm shower is a simple comfort we take for granted. But for people experiencing homelessness, access to hot water and basic hygiene products is often out of reach.

A shower can do more than just clean the body; it can significantly improve both physical and mental health. Regular access to hygiene facilities supports a stronger immune system, lowers the risk of illness, enhances self-esteem, improves focus, helps with sleep, supports better breathing, and can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

At St Mary's House of Welcome, the Look Good, Feel Good program provides hot showers and essential hygiene items – including towels, toiletries, feminine hygiene products, and clean clothing – to people sleeping rough, living in poverty, or experiencing extreme vulnerability.

Beyond the immediate health benefits, the program also played a vital role in building community and trust. It served as a gentle, welcoming entry point to the broader range of support services available at St Mary's House of Welcome, helping individuals begin their journey toward stability and recovery.

Big Smiles All Round

Accessing dental treatment can be a significant challenge for many—especially for people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. Thanks to the support of a philanthropic grant, we were able to establish a dedicated dental clinic day with the Australian Dental Foundation, offering essential oral healthcare to our homeless service users.

This initiative stands as a testament to our ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for all, regardless of circumstance. A special thank-you to the dedicated dentists whose generosity and expertise helped us deliver vital support to those most in need.

Laundry Service

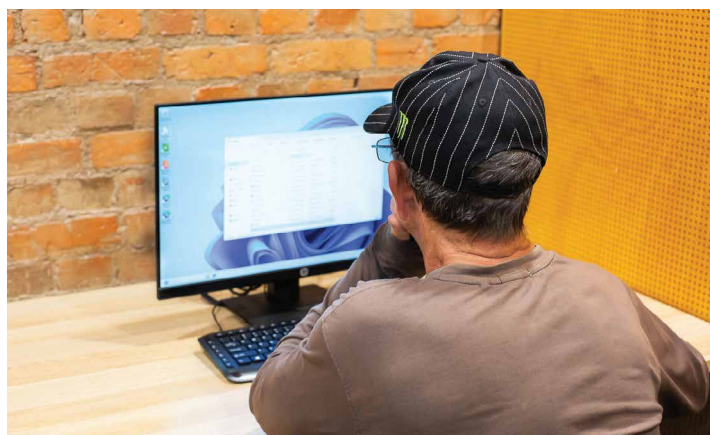
Our industrial washing machine and dryer provide a vital resource for people facing housing instability. Service users have the opportunity to wash their clothes and bedding while enjoying a meal or taking part in activities around the centre. Having access to clean clothing is vital for maintaining both hygiene and personal dignity, and we're proud to provide this essential support to those who need it most.

Mail Collection

For community members without a fixed address, St Mary's House of Welcome offers a secure and confidential mail collection service.

Computer Access & Phone Charging

Service users can access our computer room for a safe browsing experience with free internet and available resources. We also have phone charging stations available for use.



"So these guys are amazing and are responsible for getting people from her lowest of lows back up to where they feel valuable enough to continue their journey!"

I used to be a client of the house when I was at my lowest... With the support, care and guidance from 'all of the staff and, believe it or not the support from the clients, I'm now housed, studying and moving forward nicely....I may not have seen it at the time but these guys are going to save Melbourne's most vulnerable!"

– Service User



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

At St Mary's House of Welcome, our volunteers are the lifeblood of our service. Each day, they generously commit their time, skills, and compassion to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Our volunteering program consistently engages around 150 dedicated volunteers across a wide range of roles. This year, we placed a strong focus on inclusivity, ensuring that volunteering at St Mary's House of Welcome can be adapted to meet individual needs, interests, and skills.

One significant development has been the introduction of a Maintenance Volunteer Team, where qualified professionals contribute their expertise to the upkeep of our building. Their projects have included refurbishing the courtyard, painting and carrying out small repairs– all of which have greatly enhanced our welcoming environment.

Volunteers continue to play a vital role in supporting our core services, including the breakfast program (3–5 volunteers daily), the lunch program (3–5 volunteers daily), reception support, drivers and ad-hoc drivers, maintenance, and service user programs.



We have also seen exciting growth in our partnerships with schools. In financial year 24/25, 15 schools from across Victoria engaged with St Mary's House of Welcome, providing students with hands-on learning experiences in community service while fostering a sense of compassion and social responsibility in the next generation. On average, we had four different school visit each week, with schools such as St Kevin's College, Melbourne Grammar School, the College of Mary Immaculate and Xavier College visiting multiple times each term.

Another milestone has been the launch of our Saturday Meals Program. Being able to offer opportunities for volunteers who might otherwise be unable to contribute during the week. The program has flourished, with a strong and committed volunteer team supporting the service every Saturday since its inception. Over the past year, the Saturday volunteer team has grown from 15 to 24 members, often with more people eager to help than shifts available.

The commitment of our volunteers remains unwavering. As we look ahead, St Mary's House of Welcome is dedicated to further strengthening our volunteering program – ensuring that it continues to be inclusive, supportive, and impactful for both our volunteers and the people we serve.

Holly Pabian

Volunteers Coordinator

FINANCIAL YEAR 2024-25:

\$428,000

The total nominal value of volunteering at SMHOW

3,094

shifts were
filled by
volunteer
support

98

Average
number of
volunteers
retained on a
rotating roster

9,500

Estimated
total of hours
worked by
volunteers



SARAH'S STORY

Sarah* led a very normal life until she became homeless three years ago. She was a single mum and was working in a job she loved at the Salvation Army when she met a man she thought would become her life partner. The relationship unfortunately became abusive, not only in the physical sense, but mentally and emotionally as well. Sarah had to go into hiding and lost everything she had, including her job and her house. She realised she wouldn't be safe in the suburban area that she was living in, the area that she loved and that she grew up in, and made her way into Melbourne CBD, where she began sleeping rough.

"It was something I never ever thought would happen to me, having to sleep outside train stations and bus stops – I couldn't even find a toilet to use, because all the public toilets close at a certain time of night. It was horrible. And having people pretend they didn't see me when they walked past me just made the whole experience even more degrading."

Sarah happened to be at the tram stop across the road from St Mary's House of Welcome when another service user pointed us out to her. She'd never heard of us, and for the first time in a long time, felt hopeful as she made her way across the road. She started coming in for lunch and using the showers every day and was given a sleeping bag by our community support workers, which made sleeping rough "so much more bearable". She started meeting regularly with one of our community support workers, and after struggling to get anywhere with other support services, began to see movement on her journey to get housed. Within a few weeks of coming to St Mary's House of Welcome, our team were able to secure housing for Sarah.

"I didn't think I would be housed for months, I just can't believe it – St Mary's House of Welcome has done so much more for me than any other organisation I've tried to get help from, and in such a short timeframe too. The community support workers are so genuine and caring and have given me the strength to get my life back on track.

If I could give anyone in my situation any advice, it would be to never give up – don't lose hope or determination, because there are people like the St Mary's House of Welcome staff who can get you the help you need. I am now looking for a job where I can give back to the community – I want to help victims of domestic violence, or people who are homeless. I will be forever grateful to St Mary's House of Welcome for changing my life for the better, and inspiring me to help others."

These stories remind us why we do what we do – housing is more than a roof; it's a foundation for hope and new beginnings.

* Names have been changed to protect our service users' identities

FUNDRAISING EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

St Mary's House of Welcome receives approximately 52 per cent of its funding from state, and local government. 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 to help change the lives of our service users in 24/25.

Wheels for Meals

In February, a team of 20 avid bike riders took to the Great Ocean Road for our annual five-day Wheels for Meals fundraising ride along the beautiful Victorian coastline. The 300km ride began in Port Fairy, stopping in Port Campbell, Apollo Bay, Torquay and finishing in Sorrento. In addition to helping raise awareness of homelessness, the riders raised over \$120,000 to support our Welcome Relief Meals Program.



Corporate 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. Our Corporate Community BBQs are massively popular and give corporate groups a chance to not only engage in a powerful team-bonding experience, but to meet members of the homeless and rough sleeping community and learn about the impact of homelessness.

Hosting a BBQ lunch is guaranteed to get people thinking about the way they view homelessness and the people it effects. It gives participants the opportunity to chat to service users about their stories and experiences in an informal environment, as well as providing an opportunity for social inclusion for people who usually feel isolated and marginalised.



A Christmas Treat so Others Can Eat

This year, we were very excited to be partnering with two iconic Melbourne institutions, Brunetti and Chocolatier Australia to bring delicious gingerbread houses and kits - as well as scrumptious Christmas-themed chocolates - to our community this Christmas season via our Gingerbread House of Welcome campaign. A highlight of the campaign was the incredible generosity of our supporters, who donated pay-it-forward gingerbread kits for our service users. These kits gave everyone the chance to experience the joy of decorating - and, of course, eating - their own gingerbread house creations, spreading holiday cheer and a sense of togetherness throughout our community. All proceeds went to the St Mary's House of Welcome Welcome Relief Meals Program.



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.

2024-2025 Board of Directors:

- » Anthony Hollamby – Board Chair
- » Sister Debra McCarthy DC – Trustee
- » Loretta Crowe
- » Reuben Langkamp
- » Leanne Lewis
- » Deborah Fewster
- » Silvana Gugliandolo
- » Bridget Organ (until November 2024)
- » Daniel Bullock (until November 2024)

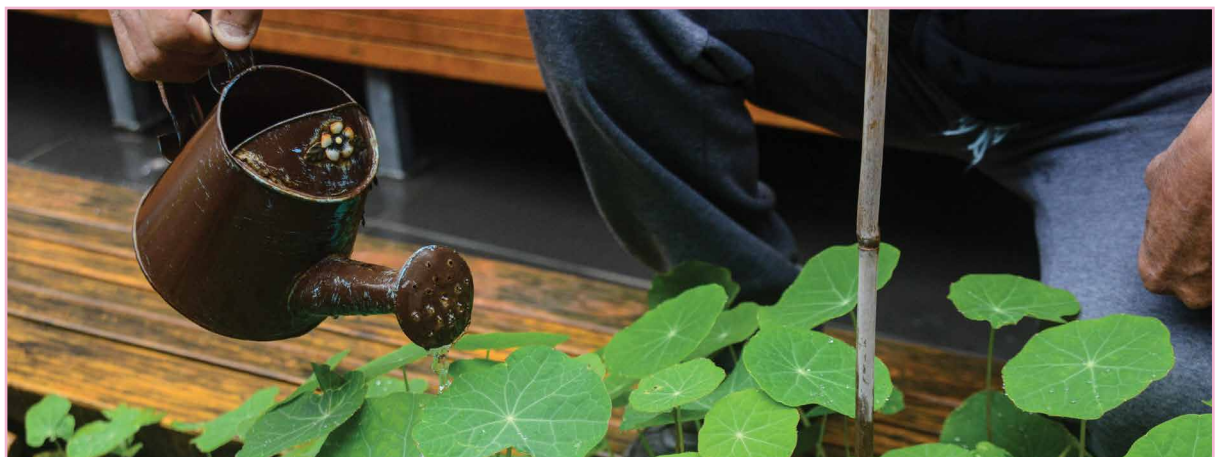
Staff

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

In 2024-2025, the Management Team comprised:

- » John Fogarty: Chief Executive Officer
- » Kristine Robertson: Executive Manager Fundraising and Communications
- » Mark Donchi: Manager Homelessness Program
- » Fiona Dickson: Fundraising Manager
- » Jodie Douglas: Manager Policies and Programs
- » Ryan Steward: Chef
- » Angela Hartin: Senior Accountant/Finance Lead
- » Holly Pabian: Volunteers Coordinator



FINANCIALS

Summary of Statement of Comprehensive Income	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Total income	2,866,562	3,150,490
Expenditure	2,653,007	3,018,216
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year	223,555	195,776
Summary Balance Sheet	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
Current Assets	2,070,110	1,795,414
Non-Current Assets	7,573,892	7,531,689
Total Assets	9,644,002	9,327,103
Current Liabilities	397,979	311,969
Non-Current Liabilities	46,236	37,211
Total Liabilities	444,215	349,180
Net Assets	9,199,789	8,977,923
Equity	9,199,789	8,977,923

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 Opinion

We have audited the financial report of St Mary's House of Welcome which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in funds and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information and the Directors' Declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of St Mary's House of Welcome is in accordance with 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 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2022.

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 Responsibility 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 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (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 confirm that the independence declaration required by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, which has been given to the Directors of the company, would be in the same terms if given to the Directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

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 the 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 and the website address is <http://www.auasb.gov.au/Home.aspx>

We communicate with the Directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



Stewart Brown
Chartered Accountants



David Gallery
Partner

25 September 2025



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 2024/2025. We would particularly like to acknowledge the following for their generous support:

The Victorian Government	Father Kevin Broderick	Bikeriders
Department of Premier	Memorial Trust Fund	Rotary Melbourne Central
and Cabinet	St Vincent de Paul Society	Real Estate Institute of
Department of Families,	Eastern Central Council	Victoria
Fairness and Housing	The Life Centre Trust	Archbishop's Charitable
Department of Health	Order of Saint Lazarus	Fund
City of Yarra	of Jerusalem – Vic	Fitzroy Learning Network
Peter and Lyndy White	Commandery	Australian Gas Network
Foundation	Calibre Nine	Good Company
Angel Foundation	Biba	Endeavour Group
Second Bite	Services Australia	Labour in Vain
Danks Trust	Fitzroy Legal Service	Catholic Development
Ainsworth Property Group	St Vincent's Private	Fund
Junola Foundation	Hospital	Naylor Stewart Foundation
Merwe Laws Foundation	Escala Partners	Trounson Family
StreetSmart Australia	St Vincent de Paul Society	Foundation
Bagot Gjergja Foundation	of Victoria	Gailey Lazarus Foundation
Xavier Social Justice	Woolworths	Freemasons Charitable
Network	Coles	Foundation
Isaacson Davis Foundation	Food Filled	Wurth Australia
Australian Communities	GIVIT	James Bryan Trust
Foundation	Australia Post	Estate of Lawrence
GDM Family Trust	Bunnings Collingwood	Larmer
J & L Levy	Ethical Jobs	Manoranjna and
Adaptalift	Grill'd Local Matters	Chengaleth Sivasankar
Nando's	Royal College of	Endowment
St David Dairy	Optometry	Myriad USA
Bright Sparqe	CommBank Community	St Mary's House of
Ronald McDonald House	Donations Programs	Welcome Volunteers
Bendigo Bank Community	Vinomofo	St Mary's House of
Bank Clifton Hill – North	Albert and Barbara Tucker	Welcome Staff
Fitzroy	Foundation	St Mary's House of
Nelson Alexander	Lord Mayor's Charitable	Welcome service users
Charitable Foundation	Foundation	and participants
Magistrates' Court of	Monique Richardson	St Mary's House of
Victoria	Alex Makes Meals	Welcome partner agencies
	Wheels for Meals	



What is the House of Welcome?

For 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, to have practical support and to find hope, experience belongingness and achieve to their full potential.

With the help of our generous supporters, we provide:

- » Hot nutritious meals with table service, twice daily – Mon – Fri
- » Saturday service with brunch 8.15am-12pm
- » Free showers, with towels and toiletries
- » Emergency relief (such as food hampers, clothing and sleep kits)
- » Laundry facilities for rough sleepers
- » Short-term case management and psycho-social supports
- » Comprehensive social inclusion programs
- » Access to free or low-cost optometry, haircuts 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 programs
- » Community gardening, cooking classes, choir
- » 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

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