



McAuley Community  
Services for Women  
A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

# A revolution in homeless services for women.

Making an Impact

# McAuley Community Services for Women

## Our Foundations

Catherine McAuley opened the doors of the 'House of Mercy' in Dublin, Ireland, in 1827. Her dream of providing disadvantaged women and children with housing, education, religious and social services – enabling them to find a brighter future – had become a reality.

Catherine founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. The Sisters arrived in Australia in 1846.

Thirty years ago, in 1986, they established a house for women who were homeless, now called McAuley House. In 1988, they established a safe house for women and their children who were experiencing family violence, now McAuley Care.

McAuley Community Services for Women was formed in 2008 by the Sisters to continue and enhance this work.

Today, Catherine's founding spirit and ethos lives on.

## Our Mission

- We provide accommodation, services, advocacy and support for women who are homeless and women and their children who are experiencing family violence.

## Our Vision

- Through our service, we advocate for a better, safer and more just society.

## Our Values

- Hospitality
- Compassion
- Justice
- Community

# A vision realised

A long held vision has been realised – a specially designed building to provide a space where women could create their own homes.

The building's intent is so much more. It has been designed to promote health and wellbeing and the inherent dignity of each person within it. It is a place of beauty which promotes harmony and inspiration. It is a place where new memories are forged, soothing troubled ones.

The new McAuley House draws on our knowledge and experience in the field, and is emboldened by our successful delivery of responsive and holistic programs that empower women and propel them permanently out of homelessness and violence.

We pay tribute to the Sisters of Mercy and to the Board of McAuley Community Services for Women under the leadership of Denis Moriarty, (Board Chair 2008 – 2017), for their vision, generosity, courage, originality and pure determination to see this project into fruition; all the while firm in their belief

that women who are homeless have a right to well-designed, quality housing, positioned in the midst of our community.

Sisters of Mercy founder, Catherine McAuley, is quoted in 1838 as saying: “In the present case, we have done all that belonged to us to do – and even more than the circumstances justified”.

In the case of McAuley House, these words could not be truer.



**Sonja Hood**  
Chair



**Jocelyn Bignold**  
CEO



*Premier Daniel Andrews talks with our CEO Jocelyn Bignold at McAuley House.*



# Invest in a housing revolution for women and their children

Crisis is temporary: every woman can be supported and empowered to create her own positive vision for her future and regain her place in the life of the community.

With over 30 years experience of working directly with women who have been propelled into homelessness and economic disempowerment through their experiences of violence, abuse and isolation, McAuley Community Services for Women has been a trailblazer in ending women's homelessness in Victoria..

Our positive track record is based on our unique approach which is more than 'housing first.' It embraces all the elements that we know are essential to starting afresh successfully. These are:



**Safety** – providing safe and stable women's only accommodation in a funding environment which often favours 'rough sleepers' and thus biased towards male homelessness.



**Participation** – providing a range of personalised programs aimed at increasing a woman's self-confidence, improving family relationships, reducing isolation, and taking part in social activities.



**Better health** – partnering with community and mental health providers, we assist women recover from both physical and mental health.



**Skills development** – offering skills and training program which is co-designed with women to meet their immediate and long-term needs. It includes life skills, social skills, and self-advocacy.

These features distinguish us from other agencies working with women who are homeless.

The new McAuley House, designed with input from women, is one of a kind in Victoria. It is central to our approach of providing the right housing option at the time that it is needed: from 24-hour crisis accommodation through to a respite stay that will help preserve permanent housing.

McAuley House and the surrounding model, is the blueprint for the future and is already revolutionary in its achievement.

---

McAuley Community Services for Women is looking for partners to invest in our ambitious plan for more housing to give women and their families a crucial lifeline beyond homelessness.

“ McAuley House is an overnight success. By its design, the building has contributed to women’s wellbeing and independence – exactly as it was intended to do. ”





# McAuley House – a place to flourish

We Change Lives.

Our support, sensitive to women's specific needs, includes employment and health support, access to social and recreational opportunities, and skill based learning. McAuley House is staffed 24 hours a day, allowing for after hours and weekend contact and support.

Each year, typically around:



50% of women come from different countries and cultures;



60% of women have mental health conditions;



50% of women are mothers, however all were alone when they came to McAuley House;



All were homeless or at risk of homelessness before coming to McAuley House;



8% have no income at all; and



39% are between the ages of 45 -54 years old.



## Funding

The Victorian Labor Government invested \$4 million towards the building of McAuley House. This funding, together with the generous \$7 million from the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, ensured that Victoria's first purpose built accommodation and support hub for women was opened in late 2016.

## The Design

Hede Architects designed the 25-bed McAuley House to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment;
- Facilitate harmony and interaction between people with shared and different needs and aspirations;
- Promote wellbeing and empowerment;
- Embed sustainability principles.

“ I really think McAuley House is about giving the women the opportunity to flourish and to have a place where they can feel supported and safe and where they have hope for a brighter future. ”

- Jessica

## Disabilities in mind

Women with disabilities are all too often ignored in housing design. McAuley House has two disability bedrooms, a lift for easy access to all floors; and there are no steps on any floor enabling a person in a wheelchair, on a frame or with a walking stick, to manoeuvre easily.

## Safety and Security

Safety and security measures are carefully balanced with freedom of movement. The building itself is designed with features that soothe and help women create a vision for their future. Ensuite bathrooms mean that women no longer experience the frustration and the conflict issues resulting from communal bathrooms. They can face the world on their own terms more peacefully.

## Sustainability

The design embodies environmentally sustainable design principles to minimise impact on the environment and provides a comfortable environment for people who live and work in the building.



## A room of my own

McAuley House has 25 beautifully designed and decorated bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms. Most rooms have access to their own balcony, bringing fresh air and sunshine into the bedrooms.

There are two disability bedrooms and ensuite bathrooms, with easy door access for women in wheelchairs.

One bedroom has been set aside for respite care for women who are currently living independently in the community but may need extra support from time to time.





“ I am so grateful for being here – my room is a haven. ”



# Green space and cooking

The use of gardens throughout the building, and access to cityscape views is a design highlight. It brings the outside in, allowing women to connect with nature, encouraging stress reduction, elevating positive feelings, reducing negative emotions and gives some distraction from daily pain, distress and anxiety.

## There are three green spaces in McAuley House

**Roof Garden** - adjacent to the main kitchen and dining room space. This is used for growing herbs and small plants and offers an opportunity for residents to congregate nearby the main communal area.

**Balconies** – provide opportunities for women to extend their private space and to grow their own mini gardens, cultivating the skills to making a new place their own.

**Ground floor garden** – tucked away and peaceful, this garden is an extension of the ground floor community space for individual or group use. It's a safe place for children to play when visiting onsite.

## Cooking facilities

There are two kitchens and dining areas in the building. Both form the heart of McAuley House's hospitality, bringing women together for cooking and eating. The upstairs kitchen is used for teaching cooking skills and providing meals for women not confident in cooking for themselves.



“ I think this place is so awesome, from having cooking to activities, this place has everything we need. ”





# A space for community and me

Many women who have been homeless for a long time have few to no friendships, social networks, and often have lost the skill of communication. McAuley House has many different spaces which allow for individual reflection, social friendship groups, as well as room for the whole community to come together.

## Harmony and Interaction

The design encourages interaction and community while respecting the right to privacy and confidentiality.

## Wellbeing and Empowerment

All accessible spaces provide access to natural light, good ventilation, colour, selection of materials and the design and use of space all directly impact on physical and emotional wellbeing.

“ There are so many spaces where I can read and think, or meet with friends, watch TV or play scrabble. ”



# Art is at the heart of McAuley House



**Artist:** Baby Guerrilla

**Artwork Title:** Untitled

## About the Artwork

This artwork was created as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. It stems from the artist's own experience of violence and assault. The underlying philosophy behind most religions and the appeal of meditation for Baby Guerilla is the belief that part of us is purely spirit, an energy which can't be broken. This piece is a celebration of spirit. The red door in the artwork symbolises both a new beginning as well as the red doors at Catherine McAuley's first House of Mercy, opened in Baggot Street, Dublin in 1827.

*Artwork funded through the generous support of Carol Schwartz AM.*



**Artist:** Alice Pasquini

**Artwork Title:** Unveiled

## About the Artwork

The iconography of the woman with her face covered is something that recurs throughout Alice's work. To her it's interesting that you don't know whether the woman is covering up or revealing her face. How the work is read can change according to the culture of the spectator.

**Curated:** Dean Sunshine





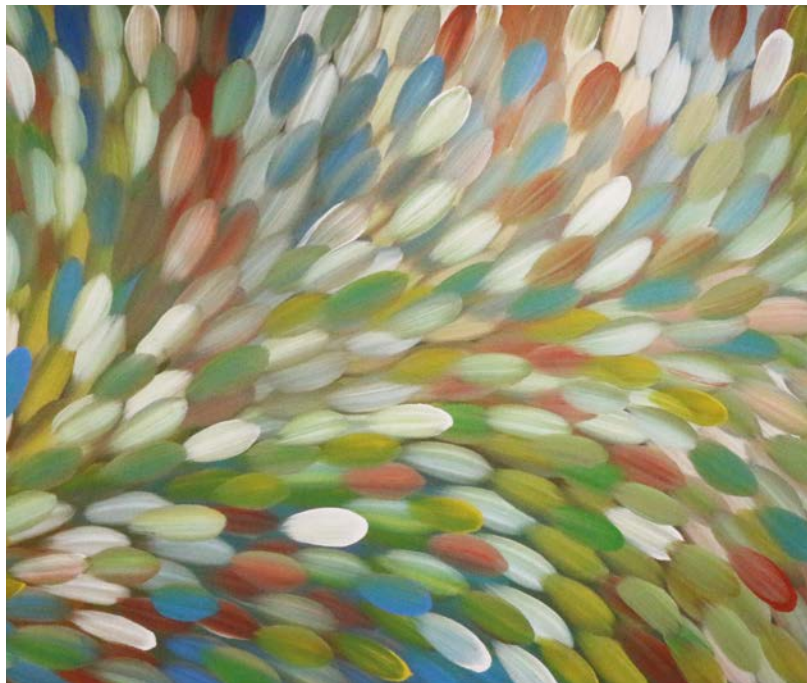
**Artists:** Lucy Lucy and Kaff-eine

**Artwork Title:** Inspirational Women

#### About the Artwork

The mural by street artists Lucy Lucy and Kaff-eine depicts a collection of diverse and inspirational women representing strength, pride, bravery, peace, love, happiness and solidarity. The centre of the mural features a stag, which represents Ireland, the Sisters of Mercy country of origin; and a kangaroo, representing Australia, the current location of the new McAuley House. Both animals sit inside the international gender symbol for 'woman'. Inspirational women throughout the mural include Saint Joan of Arc, riding into battle; Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Nigerian activist whose work has greatly improved women's rights in her country; and Rosie the Riveter, the iconic mid-century feminist character who represents female strength and economic power. The two ends of the murals symbolize hope and a bright future, with both end characters looking forwards happily to what is yet to come.

**Curated:** Dean Sunshine



**Artist:** Gloria Petyarre

**Artwork Title:** Bush Medicine Leaves

#### About the Artwork

This painting represents leaves, some of which have medicinal qualities. This style by Gloria Petyarre is one of the most prestigious styles in Australian art, winning her the acclaimed Wynne Prize in 1999. This subject does not pertain to stories from Gloria's culture, but is an original idea created by Gloria.

*Various Aboriginal Artists who created 25 original paintings throughout the building.*

*Artwork funded through the generous support of Denis Moriarty and Brendan Shanahan.*

# Art is at the heart of McAuley House



**Artist:** Stephen Cole

**Artwork Title:** Cole's Neon Shop

## About the Artwork

When artist Fiona Dempster (page 14) held a focus group with the women, Brave was the word that resonated the most. Stephen Cole has created a neon sign to reflect their input.



**Artist:** Jessica Kease / 23rd Key

**Artwork Title:** Bouquet

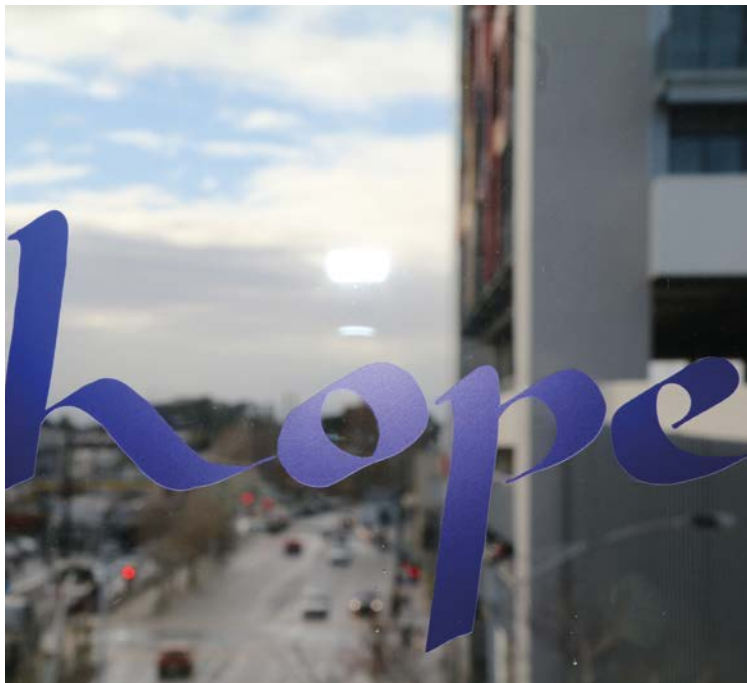
## About the Artwork

Having explored the idea of representing women as flowers in the past, Jess came up with this composition to represent women as a bouquet of flowers, from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Jess began her foray into stencil art in 2005, first exhibiting her work in 2008, and has spent most of her time toiling over a table ever since. Under the pseudonym 23rd Key, she creates photo-realistic stencils, taking no short cuts and cutting everything by hand. With a background in printmaking, graphic design, audio engineering and currently studying Architecture, she brings the knowledge from each of these into her already photo-realistic style. She hand carves each doily-like layer, and this attention to detail is fast becoming a trademark of her work, winning her the Australian Stencil Art Prize in 2011 and world Stencil Art Prize in 2014.

**Curated:** Dean Sunshine



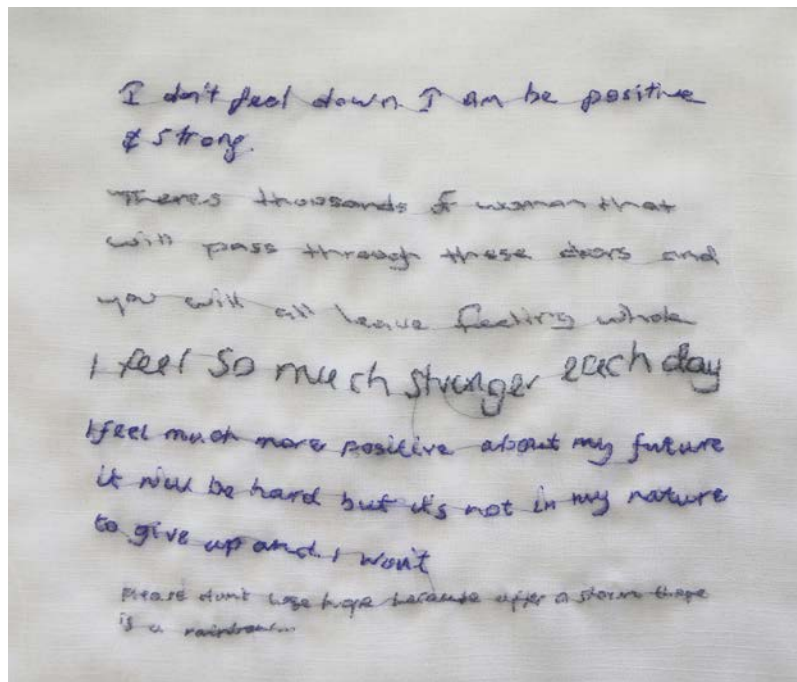


**Artist:** Fiona Dempster

**Artwork Title:** In Peace and Stillness

#### About the Artwork

Within this space for meditation and reflection, the central band of two lines displays words for peace in the 16 languages spoken by women of the service at the time the artist visited. The floating words come from a workshop Fiona held with some of the women, and reflect how they hoped to feel in the meditation and reflection room. They are melded with words of wisdom from one of the Sisters of Mercy. The words are written in a calligraphic script the artist designed which is flowing and gentle. The words are sized to fit each window, and to be small – to not shout or be overbearing. They require stillness and time to contemplate and absorb them. In peace and stillness...



**Artwork Title:** Life Fragments

#### About the Artwork

Within this space for meditation and reflection, the central band of Life Fragments is a collection of four works where the words of women who have been supported by McAuley Community Services for Women are gathered under the four values of: Hospitality, Compassion, Justice, Community. Both Hospitality and Compassion reflect the comments women have made about their time at McAuley; how they felt valued, cared for and supported by the service. Justice and Community contain comments from women to women who will follow – words of hope, dignity and strength.

# About McAuley Community Services for Women

McAuley is Victoria's largest women-specific homeless and family violence service. We deliver responsive, holistic programs that empower women, restore morale and enable reconnection to the community.

## Housing Service

The housing we provide throughout our service is aimed to suit women's needs at the time that it is needed, whether that be crisis, temporary refuge, within a community at McAuley House, or in stand-alone, family friendly accommodation.

Ultimately, we assist women to secure their own, long-term, affordable housing. Once housed, we support her to sustain that tenancy, including the option to return for a respite stay if needed.

We are unique in having the capacity to support women over time, and it's not untypical for past residents to stay connected.

## Independent living skills

McAuley House's independent living skills program is open to current and past residents, those in temporary refuge and other women who are at risk of homelessness.

The program, co-designed by women, offers a range of life skills educational sessions that women choose to participate in to achieve their goals of independence, social connectedness, health, wellbeing and employment. Topics on offer can include peer mentoring, gardening, music, art, literacy and life skills such as budgeting, cooking and banking.

## Working in the Community

McAuley House provides a 'bridge' into, and from, the community. Women who have moved into their own homes are welcome to return to take part in social activities, such as 'birthday night', excursions, or to catch up with friends. Past residents can access support to help negotiate practical issues that might have arisen. Whatever the circumstances, our team take all necessary steps to prevent a breakdown in housing and a return to homelessness.



## McAuley Works

This intensive employment program assists women to achieve financial independence through meaningful employment. The intensive, personalised and free program includes: resume preparation, mentoring and referrals to interviews, securing recognised vocational qualifications, job seeking skills, work experience and support to retain employment.

McAuley Works is currently funded by the Victorian Government through JVEN, Jobs Victoria Employment Network.

## McAuley Care

Our 24 hour crisis services is for women and their accompanying children (including teenage boys up to the age of 17) who are experiencing family violence. The program provides women with safe accommodation, and practical, legal and emotional support. McAuley Care is currently Victoria's only accessible safe house that is available around the clock. McAuley Care encompasses five refuge properties as an extension of the service which enables us to provide longer term support for those who need it.

## Specialist Children's Program

Operating within McAuley Care, our dedicated children and young persons' program assists children and mothers to strengthen their relationship, which is often adversely affected by family violence. The program is focussed on the needs of children and young people, which differ from their mothers / carers.

## Engage to Change

This employer education program aims to increase awareness and response to issues of family violence within the workplace. We anticipate the long-term impact of this program will be more women able to remain employed, with a reduced risk of family violence and homelessness.

## Court Support 4 Kids

Our Court Support 4 Kids program directly addresses the problems faced by women who have to bring their children to court because of lack of child care or fear of what might happen.

Delivered now in three courts in partnership with other family violence services, Court Support 4 Kids provides a qualified worker to distract and entertain children and young people, shielding them from the distress of their surroundings and allowing women to focus on their vital court business. This service is currently being delivered in Sunshine, Geelong and Ringwood Courts.

## Economic and Social Contribution

McAuley Community Services for Women has entered into an agreement with Deloitte Access Economics to develop an evaluation framework which will provide a defensible and clear estimate of McAuley's economic and social impact, and value proposition over time.

“ We all have a right to decent homes and supportive environments. We have a transformational building which we hope will stimulate change in the lives of those who live there. ”

- Jocelyn Bignold, CEO, McAuley Community Services for Women

# Invest in the future

To end homelessness for women and their families, we need your support to grow our housing service and to take our programs to the next level.



## Donate

With the foundations of our housing and support program in place, we now aim to increase our housing options to women and their families throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Join with us in:

- Investing in our housing program;
- Matching employee donations with a company donation;
- Donating a percentage of sales.



## Engage

Make a tangible difference, encourage your employees to become involved through:

- Workplace giving;
- Inviting us to speak at an employee event;
- Volunteering, which can be a rewarding experience.



## Change

Prevent more violence and homelessness. Sponsor one of our programs or talk to us about ideas that you have that will add value to what we already do:

- Support McAuley Works, our jobs-ready program, by signing up to the program to help women find jobs;
- Look after your employees and keep your staff safe – contact us to deliver Engage to Change in your workplace. This education package will help you understand and deal with the impact of family violence at work;
- Sponsor our community program which supports women in their own homes to manage the stresses of living on a low income and with chronic illness;
- We can't do this alone, support our vital volunteer coordination and help build our pro-bono corporate program.

“ You have to have somewhere to live if you are to be truly alive. McAuley has been life giving to me. ”

- Aliza



# McAuley House

McAuley House in Pickett Street would never have been realised without the generous support of many people.

## They include:

- The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- Victorian Labor Government;
- Freemasons Public Charitable Foundation;
- The Gellibrand Stronger Communities Program;
- Green Acres Golf Club;
- Carol Schwartz AM;
- Matt Tilley and the KIIS FM Family Feud team and Network Ten;
- Denis Moriarty and Brendan Shanahan;
- Dean Sunshine.

## Major Supporters

---



# Homelessness should never be the safer option.



McAuley Community  
Services for Women  
A ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

**McAuley Community Services for Women**  
18 Robertson Street, Kensington, VIC 3031  
T 03 9371 6600  
E [mcsww@mcauleycsw.org.au](mailto:mcsww@mcauleycsw.org.au)  
W [www.mcauleycsw.org.au](http://www.mcauleycsw.org.au)  
ABN 85696671223

**You can like and follow us**

f Facebook: [McAuleycsw](https://www.facebook.com/McAuleycsw)  
t Twitter: [@mcauleycsw](https://twitter.com/mcauleycsw)