



WEST SIDE STORY

Tradespeople and contractors, many of whom have been providing their services for free, haven't let the pandemic stop our new youth refuge.

Homelessness in the City of Wyndham has increased by 76% in the last five years, and the coronavirus shutdowns were particularly difficult for at-risk young people who found themselves disconnected from their friends, family, school and employment.

West Refuge in Werribee will be one of four MCM youth refuges across Melbourne committed to providing not only emergency accommodation where young people can stay for around 6 – 8 weeks but also the practical, mental health and therapeutic support that helps young people start to heal from trauma and works to break the cycle of homelessness.

West Refuge will provide emergency and crisis accommodation and round-the-clock staffing and support for up to ten young people at a time. Residents will be able to access early intervention programs, parenting, education and living skills programs, therapy using art, music and animals, and housing support, all on-site.

The help available to young people across all of MCM's accommodation network relies upon kind donations, and West Refuge is no exception. On behalf of MCM and all the young people whose lives you will touch with your support for West Refuge, thank you. Your dependable kindness is very much appreciated.

West Refuge is due for completion later this year.



A NOTE FROM VICKI...

Thanks for your loyal support over what's been an incredibly difficult year. While COVID has disrupted so many things, it has not slowed or mitigated the challenges faced by so many people among us those struggling with mental health, those who live with disabilities, the young people who don't have a safe place to sleep every night.

Yet, because of your generosity, MCM's work to help these groups has kept going. To me that's the wonderful, enduring, resilient powers of love and compassion in action. You reassure me that we live in a community that is strong and connected.

So, I hope you enjoy reading about the many wonderful ways you are supporting people to live positive lives, even in the most difficult of circumstances. There's some super exciting stuff happening, and I look forward to watching your impact on individuals and the community play out in the coming months.

Vicki Sutton
CEO



STUDENTS ARE AIMING FOR 'A'S IN MENTAL WELLBEING AND THEIR EDUCATION.

There are young people who have been struggling at school and even falling out of education because they're also dealing with complex mental health issues. Now, thanks to our Living Learning program, they're getting a better shot at success in education - and life.

The Living Learning program at The Hester Hornbrook Academy is an innovative program designed to help these young people finish school. It gives them the best chance by making sure their mental health and wellbeing gets the same level of attention as their academic learning.

Students in the Living Learning program get a higher degree of support from teachers, youth workers, mental health professionals, and healthcare workers and this extra support helps students to build their mental wellbeing while they go to school.

Thanks to a unique social investment opportunity, the first Living Learning students embarked on their 3-year learning journey this year. They are now working towards their educational and wellbeing goals in an encouraging and caring environment, with plenty of support to help them on their way.

Deep and heartfelt thanks go to:

- * Gandel Philanthropy
- * Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- * Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- * Paul Ramsay Foundation
- * The Ross Trust

Their generous contributions have given these students their best chance at graduating, a possibility that didn't exist for them without Living Learning.

ART THERAPY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

How do you deliver an art therapy program in the middle of a pandemic? This was the curly question MCM's Creating Connections team found themselves asking last year.

Art therapy has the potential to help people heal from trauma, learn techniques for self-regulation, and improve wellbeing and social engagement. It looked to be a perfect 'tool' for our Creating Connections team, which helps young people who are disengaged from community, employment, and education to develop confidence and overcome social anxieties.

Creating Connections, in partnership with ACU and the IKON Institute, and supported by your kind donations, was planning an art therapy program called For Art's Sake last year.

Then the COVID-19-induced lockdown came into play. With no telling when face-to-face



interaction would be possible again, the team quickly adapted, and started delivering For Art's Sake online.

Armed with an art kit from IKON they could use at home, young people were able to access art therapy despite the pandemic. Many of the participants flourished in this new remote format developing the confidence to take the next step towards their education goals.



SURF'S UP AT FRONTYARD!

In January, young people from Frontyard went surfing for the first time ever.

Together with a member of Frontyard staff, they set out bright and early one Sunday morning for their date with a surf instructor at Torquay. Suffice it to say the budding surfers loved every minute of the two hours they spent in the water.

The lesson was kindly run by Go Ride a Wave, who supplied the surfboards and wetsuits. More young people are keen to have a go, and so with the help of your generous donations, this is certain to be a popular activity.

THE HESTER HORN BROOK ACADEMY SUNSHINE CAMPUS

We are delighted with the brand new Sunshine Campus of The Hester Hornbrook Academy which has opened for the start of the school year.

The new campus has purpose-designed classrooms including art spaces, a hospitality kitchen and sport and recreation facilities. It is built perfectly for an applied learning Senior School in Melbourne's west.

This wonderful facility was in part possible from a generous bequest from Malcolm Parris, who had a passion for education and young people achieving their potential.



COACHING PEOPLE TOWARDS HAPPIER, HEALTHIER LIVES.

A mental illness can colour the way you feel, think, behave and see the world around you, and that's why people with a mental health disability might need support with the complex challenges of day-to-day living. That's where the new Recovery Coach service comes in.

A Recovery Coach helps people with a mental health disability to navigate daily challenges and take more control of their lives.

In October, MCM launched its brand-new Recovery Coaching service. Our Recovery Coaches are excited about the new service's potential to

support participants to live full and meaningful lives. They will help them to understand their NDIS plans, access support from other services and build strong and respectful relationships.

The Recovery Coaching program came just at the right time, with many people dealing with mental health issues triggered or exacerbated by the anxiety, isolation and uncertainty wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the program was launched, MCM's Recovery Coaches have helped people from across Victoria via face-to-face and telehealth appointments.

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SENSORY ROOMS FOR YOUNG MINDS

Connecting children to their learning environment and the people working with them is the aim of the new sensory rooms at MCM's Early Years Hubs in Brunswick and Doreen.

Having identified the benefits of sensory rooms within existing sites, after the success of a purpose-built version at Frontyard Youth Services, MCM has installed tailored sensory rooms for children who would benefit from learning new skills around processing sensory information.

Thanks to donations from our generous donors, the sensory rooms will combine a range of stimuli to help children engage with the senses of sight, sound, touch and movement, in a play-based, fun environment.

"The two sensory rooms are an exciting addition to our Early Years Hubs. For children with development delay or learning difficulties, and will provide opportunities to gain new skills in a purpose-built environment." Andrea said.



SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT THE REALITY OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

How does someone end up without a roof over their head? What does it feel like to be homeless? How do you get out of homelessness? And what can my school and I do to help?

These are just some of the questions asked by the 1,907 secondary students who participated in Frontyard's popular School Engagement program last year. The program, made possible thanks to your generous support, gives secondary students a better understanding of homelessness and a greater appreciation of the challenges faced by young people in Melbourne.

The program carried on last year despite COVID-19, and delivered 73 remote interactive workshops, spanning 10 different aspects of youth homelessness, to 39 Victorian schools.

The most requested workshop topic of 2020 was Family Breakdown and Youth Homelessness. This session gave participants the chance to hear directly from a young person with lived experience of homelessness. By all accounts it was a powerful experience, bringing to life the issues the students had been learning about in the classroom.

SOME STATS TO CONSIDER...

5 OUT OF 10

5 Australian children have been exposed to family violence and physical abuse.

2.2 MILION

Australians have experienced **sexual violence** since the age of 15



97% of Victorians experiencing homelessness have been exposed to four or more traumatic events

Of all adults who are experiencing chronic homelessness in Victoria today,

50% BECAME HOMELESS DURING THEIR TEENAGE YEARS.

OVER 13,900

young Victorians sought assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services in 2018/19

CLASS OF 2020

2020 was tough for everyone, not least for our youngest clients. That's why it was a very big deal indeed for Early Years' Class of 2020 who recently held their graduation a Congratulations to all the graduates and the Early Years staff who have worked so hard to get them all to this special moment.



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

COVID-19 meant it was a long time between catch-ups for our 'Circle of Friends': the special group of supporters who've included MCM in their Will. Thank you to all who attended our first Zoom event as it was a chance for CEO Vicki Sutton to talk about the life-changing work supporters made possible in the tough year that was 2020.

Leaving a gift in your Will to MCM is a beautiful way to carry on your values and care for people in need across our community. If you'd like to know more about the lasting impact you can make with such a gift, please contact our Supporter Care Team on **1300 364 507** or **bequests@mcm.org.au**



Do you recognise this face?

Suzanne McGraw, who has been dedicated to MCM for over 13 years, has decided to embark on her well-earned retirement in June. Amongst her many tasks over the years, Suzanne has enthusiastically organised get-togethers and activities for our 'Circle of Friends'. Thanks Suzanne for all your hard work!

YOU MADE THEIR CHRISTMAS - THANK YOU.

Your generous gifts to our Christmas appeal brought support, safety and kindness to the huge number of young Victorians who had nowhere else to turn last Christmas. A year of lockdowns, job losses and uncertainty left more Victorian families struggling to cope - and more vulnerable young people facing life on the streets.

But thanks to your extra support, our dedicated team had the resources to help when those young people really needed it over the tough Christmas period. Your care brought them somewhere safe to sleep, a listening ear, and support to get their lives back on track.

You've made a huge difference to the lives of young people like 15-year-old Frankie, who found herself without a home last year. You helped her and others through crisis in 2020, and are supporting them to study, work and realise their dreams in 2021.

Thank you for making last Christmas easier for young people like Frankie, and for giving them a new year filled with possibility and hope for 2021..

SLEEP AT THE 'G IS BACK IN 2021!

We will once again be taking over the MCG to put youth homelessness to bed. It will be a bit later in the year than our usual night in May, but look out for an invitation soon!

Stay tuned for more information about the upcoming event and our ongoing work to disrupt the trajectory into long-term homelessness for vulnerable young people.

To make sure you get news and updates, please register your interest on our website **www.mcm.org.au/get-involved/sleep-at-the-g**.



Thank you for your ongoing support.

Donate online at mcm.org.au/makeanimpact or call 1300 364 507