



SUMMER 2014

## Asylum Seeker Housing Project

Try to imagine fleeing your country and having to come to terms with the fact you may never see your children again. Or, dealing with the pain of never knowing what has happened to your husband or wife, brothers and sisters, parents and loved ones.

Such thoughts are impossible for most of us to reconcile. We push them to the darkest reaches of our mind and pray we are spared such unbearable grief.

Sadly, it is a reality for millions of people around the world who are escaping religious and political persecution. Many have seen unthinkable violence and death, some have experienced torture.

Every year tens of thousands of Asylum seekers seek refuge in Australia. Most arrive with nothing, know no one and are deeply traumatised by the circumstances of their displacement.

Homelessness and hunger are the most immediate issues they face. Most are not able to access any form of government support and around half are not entitled to seek employment. They rely on compassionate, well organised charities to assist with their most basic needs. Safe housing that offers a decent standard of living is essential to those overcoming mental health problems and those attempting to start again in Australia.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation made a decision earlier this year to reach out and offer housing assistance to homeless asylum seekers who are some of the most disadvantaged and isolated people living among us.

After carefully researching the areas of need and assessing where our contribution would make the greatest difference we formed a partnership with the Asylum Seeker Centre which is very highly regarded for the work they do assisting asylum seekers with resettlement.

Through this partnership the Sisters of Charity Foundation will provide quality housing for asylum seekers at a property we recently purchased for this purpose in Petersham. It is a block of four, two bedroom units close to transport, shops and the Asylum Seeker Centre which is based in Newtown. In turn the Asylum Seeker Centre will provide intensive case management and support to help people rebuild their lives.





## Message from our Patron

I am indeed grateful for my long association with the Sisters of Charity of Australia, beginning as a medical registrar at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. I am deeply aware of the Sisters determination to see that "the poor get for love what the rich have for money". Their motto, "Caritas Christi Urget Nos" has been a source of inspiration in my life for many years.

An unswerving commitment to social justice led to the creation of the Sisters of Charity Foundation in 2000, and I am honoured to have been the Patron since its inception. Over the past 14 years I have witnessed firsthand the development and expansion of life-changing programs targeting some of the most disadvantaged people in our community.

I am particularly inspired to see this year that the Foundation has made a significant long-term commitment to providing transitional housing to asylum seekers who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Homelessness is a critical issue for those seeking sanctuary on our shores, and deepens our sense of compassion.

However, the new partnership between the Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Asylum Seeker Centre of NSW will offer compassionate support to those fleeing violence and persecution in their homeland. The gift of safe secure housing for men, women and children seeking to start a new life is perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give.

The Foundation's Asylum Seeker Housing Project is a legacy project befitting the Sisters of Charity of Australia on the 175 Year Anniversary of their arrival in Australia I am indeed delighted to see the Mission of the Sisters of Charity of Australia being implemented through the innovative and compassionate work of their Foundation and wish them well for the future.

**Professor The Honourable Dame Marie R Bashir AD CVO**  
*Governor of New South Wales (2001-2014)*

## Bequest Program

The Sisters of Charity Foundation invites you to consider making a gift that will be dedicated to enabling those plagued by disadvantaged to build a brighter future for themselves and those they love.

If you would like more information about the **Sisters of Charity Foundation Bequest Program**, please contact Reba Meagher or Judy Christie on **02 9367 1211**.

## Community Grants

### Bridgewater Police and Citizens Youth Club (TAS)

When young people truant from school they run a real risk of running off the rails. Regrettably, school attendance at the Jordan River Learning Federation (previously Bridgewater High School) is the worst of any school in Tasmania and numeracy and literacy achievement are also the lowest in Tasmania. However, the Bridgewater Police and Citizens Youth Club have developed an innovative program to prevent disengaged youth from getting into trouble. Funding from the Sisters of Charity Foundation has enabled the Club to engage a youth and family liaison worker to get kids back to school and provide support and activities outside of school hours.



### Gold Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Community Consultation (QLD)

'Closing the Gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader Gold Coast Community is the focus of the Black and Deadly Brother's Program receiving funding support from the Sisters of Charity Foundation. The program will offer a series of workshops that specifically target young Indigenous men between the ages of 12 to 18 to assist them overcome disconnection and alienation. An overarching objective of the group is to provide a safe space for young men to express, discuss, investigate and learn positive life skills; focussing on self-esteem, leadership, resilience, better decision making, goal setting, anger management, advocacy and confidence.

### Vietnam Veterans Federation Men's Shed (QLD)

The Men's Shed is an innovative social program that offers a mix of skills to service, and ex-service personnel, disabled, socially isolated, long term unemployed and community members. It is a place for men to gather and build friendships, support each other and learn new skills. Due to the fact they encourage woodworking, metal work, leather craft, horticultural and beekeeping activities there is an urgent need for volunteers at the Shed to undertake First Aid Training. In order to enhance the safe operation of this vital facility, the Sisters of Charity Foundation have provided funding for First Aid Training of 20 volunteers and the resupply of a first aid kit.





## Puddle Jumpers (SA)

The 'Creating Ripples for Grandparents Caring for Grandkids' is a program to support grandparents who are the full time carers of their grandchildren. Children are usually placed in the care of their grandparents due to some kind of crisis. It can be very traumatic for the children involved and very difficult for older people to adjust to full time parenting. However, Puddle Jumpers, with the support of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, provide support and respite to grandparents and their grandchildren by holding regular camps. The program aims to give kids and their grandparents a holiday they would not otherwise be able to afford as well as providing a positive environment that fosters self-esteem and personal development.

## The Social Outfit (NSW)

Funding from the Sisters of Charity Foundation enables The Social Outfit to provide education, training and employment opportunities for people from refugee communities. Refugees gain 'on the job' training through a fashion concept store and community hub in Newtown, in Sydney's Inner West. At the Social Outfit people from refugee communities will design new clothing and lifestyle items from recycled and excess manufacturing materials under the guidance and supervision of industry professionals. Students have the opportunity to undertake nationally accredited formal qualifications in fashion design through partnerships with VET education providers. After design, the garments are then manufactured on site, creating employment for talented graduates of the program. These garments are then sold through The Social Outfit's shop, generating income to help support the enterprise.



## Muscular Dystrophy (NSW)

People living with a neuromuscular disorder will inevitably experience strong feelings of isolation, grief, depression, guilt, despair and loneliness due to the progressive, often life-limiting nature of the condition. Indigenous mothers of children with Muscular Dystrophy will receive invaluable support through the Ngundabaa Connect Program being run by Muscular Dystrophy NSW with funding support from the Sisters of Charity Foundation. The program aims to empower Mothers and increase their wellbeing to help them cope with the day to day struggles of parenting a child with MD. Indigenous facilitators will run the sessions and use a range of cultural activities and proven techniques to highlight the benefits that Aboriginal culture can play in both physical and emotional healing.



## Chairman's Message

This year the Sisters of Charity of Australia celebrate the 175 Year Anniversary of the arrival of five courageous Nuns sent to the fledgling colony by the Congregation's Foundress, Mary Aikenhead.

Such a significant anniversary gives us the opportunity to say thank you to the Congregation for their remarkable contribution to social justice, health and education which has strengthened the social fabric of our Nation.

It has also represented an opportunity for the Sisters of Charity Foundation to consider how our mission to provide practical support to the poor and underserved can continue to evolve and grow.

Our current Community Grants Program and Tertiary Scholarship Program have epitomised the spirit of the Sisters and have provided a continuing link to the social work and educational heritage of the Sisters. Their commitment to social justice has always been central to their service and so this year in recognition of the 175 Year Anniversary we have sought to identify a new area where our commitment and practical support would make a real difference.

In view of the Congregation's wish to alleviate the plight of the homeless, we worked closely with Homelessness NSW, to help identify where a significant long term financial investment by the Foundation would make a difference. We wanted to leave an enduring legacy of the Sisters care and help for the marginalized.

According to Homelessness NSW, asylum seekers are one of the most vulnerable groups needing housing because most are unable to access any government support while their applications are being processed. In fact, approximately 45% of community based asylum seekers are homeless and around 70% receive no government support.

As a result, a partnership was formed between the Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Asylum Seeker Centre to provide transitional housing for asylum seekers who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

It is a long term partnership that will make a profound change to the lives of many and is a commitment that encapsulates the compassion and mission of the Sisters of Charity during their 175 Year Anniversary.

The Asylum Seeker Housing Project is a significant addition to the work already being undertaken by the Foundation and has been guided by the expertise and commitment of our Management and Directors.

This year has been a very busy year for the Foundation and I would like to thank my fellow Directors for their dedication to the Foundation. Over the course of the year Sr Rose Holman and Ms Suzie Graham retired from the Board. On behalf of the Board I would like to extend our sincere thanks for their efforts during their tenure. It gives me pleasure to welcome two new Directors, Robert McCormack and Sam Hardjono to the Foundation Board.

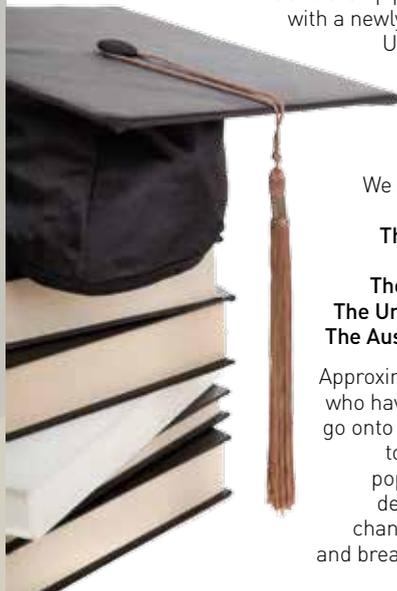
Also on behalf of the Board I would like to acknowledge and thank our CEO Reba Meagher and our Project Officer Judy Christie for the work they have done in promoting the Foundations activities.

And finally but most importantly I would like to thank our donors and supporters for the confidence they have shown through their generous gifts. With their support we are able to offer life changing support to those who need a helping hand.

May you and your family and loved ones have a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to continuing to work with you during 2015 to bring relief and hope where it is most needed.

**Richard Haddock AM**  
Chairman

# New Scholarship at the University of Western Sydney set to commence in 2015



The Sisters of Charity Tertiary Education Scholarship program will expand in 2015 with a newly created Scholarship at the University of Western Sydney. It will assist a student that has lived in out-of-home care achieve a life changing educational opportunity.

We currently have scholarships helping nine students at **The University of Melbourne, The University of Sydney, The University of Queensland, The University of Notre Dame and The Australian Catholic University.**

Approximately 2.8% of young people who have lived in out-of-home care go onto higher education compared to around 40% of the general population. Our program gives deserving young people a real chance to achieve their potential and break the cycle of disadvantage.

# Christmas Card Design Competition

The students from Mary Aikenhead Schools in Queensland and Victoria created some wonderful designs for the 2014 Christmas Cards Design Competition. The designs reflected a positive Christmas message and gave consideration to the history and charism of the Sisters of Charity. The winning design will be the official 2014 Christmas greeting of the Sisters of Charity Foundation.



First prize was awarded to **Alexandra Fritsche** a year 8 student at St Columba's College, VIC.

Our judges selected two runners-up, **Nicola Tsiolis** a year 7 student and **Tahlia Walker** a year 8 student at Catholic Ladies' College, VIC

## My Details

Title  First Name  Surname   
 Street Address  Suburb  State   
 Post Code  Country   
 Phone number (  )  E-mail

## Payment Details

Please accept my  Single  Monthly  Quarterly  tax deductible donation of: \$

My cheque/money order is enclosed payable to Sisters of Charity Foundation or please debit the amount I've indicated from my:

VISA  MasterCard Expiry Date  /  Cardholder Name   
 Signature  Card No.

I authorise the Sisters of Charity Foundation to deduct this amount from my credit card on receipt of this form. If monthly or quarterly pledge has been ticked please deduct this amount from my credit card accordingly. This authority will remain valid until revoked in writing by me or the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

- I would like to make a regular donation by direct debit.  
 I would like to make a Bequest, please contact me in the strictest confidence.

**All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Thank you.**

The following information is optional but would be helpful to us in planning for the future.

### My gift will be:

- The residue of my estate  % share of my estate  The sum of

An item, or items of value (please state)

