

APRIL 2022 | ISSUE NO.8

PROVINCE OF ROSALIE RENDU



NEWSLETTER



Incorporated
works



The Daughters of Charity
of St Vincent de Paul Services

GREETINGS

Sister Ellen Flynn

At the end of the January Newsletter, in which I focused on the feast day of Blessed Rosalie Rendu, our patron, I suggested that I might share something of the results of the Daughters of Charity General Assembly held in Paris last October/November. However, since then life has afforded me a different opportunity and I am parking that sharing till the next time!

You all know that we became the Province of Rosalie Rendu on March 11th 2020 and then almost immediately went in to the first lockdown of the pandemic. Those of us who took part in the ceremonies in Sydney and London managed to travel - but precariously and at some cost to our health and wellbeing. Since then it has not been possible for any visits to occur between Australia and Great Britain except on the fortuitous but not fully adequate Zoom! Longing to visit Australia again I kept watch for a safer time to return and to my delight I am now writing this introduction to our 8th Newsletter from Sydney - for the first time since its inception! You will see evidence of this in the photos from Seton Villa in their contribution below. It was wonderful to be present at the opening of Lavender Cottage and Leia's Place. The residents were overjoyed to welcome us and the houses are so beautiful that I was ready to put my name down for a bed! These two making a total of four new houses so far, Seton Villa are half way to completing their Asset Development Project. Congratulations to you all!



I was delighted to be here for Holy Week and Easter and witnessed some of the Easter fun described below at St Catherine's. I very much enjoyed my visit there which included some exciting discernment for the future of the service. At Hutt Street Centre I spent quality time with staff and board members, toured the beautifully re-designed building and delightfully assisted in the lunch-time service with volunteers and clients. I heard some moving stories from the clients which touched my heart and my own experience as I relived some of my own work and times at The Passage in London and indeed related to stories I have heard at The Louise Project in Glasgow. The clients of Hutt Street Centre send their greetings to people experiencing homelessness in Great Britain and I assured them that their thoughts would be welcomed and reciprocated. Please do pass this on!

Whilst with the Sisters in Melbourne I visited St Mary's House of Welcome and spent more happy hours comparing notes and experiences and witnessing the way the

GREETINGS CONTINUED ...

clients use the excellent facilities there. Like the projects of DC Services, the incorporated works have stories to tell of the hardship of the Covid period, the dilemmas of emerging from the pandemic and their appreciation of the continued support of the Sisters. Thank you all so much for all that you do and for making me so welcome.

The DC Services stories in this Newsletter tell of further refurbishment, funding successes, careful return to face-to-face encounters, education and healthcare, pastoral care and wellbeing and a range of activities that bring music and joy to peoples' lives. It is just as long since I visited some of these projects and I hope to do so as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, I send my admiration and gratitude to all who live, work, govern and contribute to our works and services. I pray that we can continue to enrich each other and build even closer links between our services across the world. My visit to Australia has certainly made me feel and appreciate the ethos and values we all share as a family of Vincentian services. Neither time nor distance nor nationality can dim all that we jointly hold dear. May God continue to keep us safe and well, creative and committed and full of hope for the future.

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY SERVICES

Mark Choonara

At Daughters of Charity Services we have been undergoing a period of change in recent months. The departure of Sr Margaret Barrett, who led our group as Director of Mission for almost seven years, marks a significant moment as we lose the driving force behind much of our development and growth over recent years. However, we know that change is a constant in the life of a Daughter of Charity, and we know that Sr Margaret will be greatly appreciated in her new role in Pinner.

I am delighted to have been appointed as the first lay CEO of the charity. Whilst having served the charity for several years, I now feel the weight of responsibility that comes with this role, not only in ensuring that we continue to be of service to those in greatest need, but also in ensuring that the Vincentian Charism as exemplified by the Daughters for so long remains at the heart of all our services. I take strength in the support of our team, our group of charities, and the wider community of the Daughters of Charity across the Province.

The challenges we face as a society are real and appear to be yet further increasing, and our response must rise to meet these. Our aim now is to understand how we can best develop and deliver services that can help to serve those in need, as well as to speak out alongside and on behalf of those who are forced into poverty, isolation or exclusion through unjust systems. We are currently in the process of recruiting a Research and



Policy Officer, who through collating data from our existing services and monitoring wider societal trends, will enable us to better understand emerging needs and to act accordingly.

In the weeks ahead I hope to visit each of our projects to gain a clearer understanding of how sharing our experiences of serving those on the margins of society can enable us to be even more effective in developing any new responses. Of course, through media such as this newsletter, we are also able to learn from the experiences of the projects operating within the Province across Australia too, and to understand the responses put in place through these. We also retain our commitment to sharing ideas and learning with other members of the Vincentian family, both within the Province and further afield, and seek to increase our impact through purposeful collaboration.

We currently face challenging times, but the history of the Daughters of Charity demonstrates that these are the times when our impact can be most meaningful. I look forward to working with you all in the months and years ahead.



PODCAST



INTRODUCING THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY SERVICES PODCAST

Daughters of Charity Services has launched a brand new podcast. Hosted by our Group Communications Manager, Riana Brown, the podcast takes you to the front line of Vincentian charities to explore how our 400-year charism is still lived out today.

Daughters of Charity Services will also invite special guests on to the show to examine key societal issues and how we can best meet the needs of marginalised and underprivileged people in our communities.

In the very first episode, Riana was joined by Anya Bohnsack from the homeless charity Depaul International who offers a deep insight into the current humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the response from the Vincentian Family.

The second episode features Sister Josephine Hawes who has been a Daughter of Charity for 65 years. Sister Josephine explains why the Daughters renew their vows annually, how their vows differ from other religious congregations, and what those vows mean.

You can listen to the podcast on the Daughters of Charity Services website at **www.dcsvpservices.org/podcast**, as well as on Spotify and Apple Podcasts by searching *Daughters of Charity Services Podcast*.



SETON VILLA

We are very pleased to announce the official opening of our fourth new Specialist Disability Accommodation house in Ryde, which was named 'Lavender Cottage' by the incoming residents. The décor for this home has a rustic feel in keeping with the calming influence of lavender, which is planted in the front garden bed. Families of the residents are delighted with the generous bedrooms and overall spaciousness of the house, which has a circular corridor around the centralised bathrooms to make wheelchair navigation a little easier for 'beginners'.

Residents Michelle, Vanessa, and Marlene gladly accepted the keys from our builder Ronnie, who continues to deliver exemplary new builds for us.



We were particularly delighted that Sr Ellen Flynn was visiting from the UK and able to join us for the official ribbon-cutting ceremony, conducted by our local Ryde MP, Mr Victor Dominello, NSW Minister for Customer Service. He was joined by Ryde's City Mayor, Councillor Jordan Lane, and the Lavender Cottage residents. Resident Vanessa then welcomed everyone to her new home on what was a very special day of celebration.

SETON VILLA CONTINUED ...



Later in the morning, The Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC - Minister for Communities and Justice and Minister for Disability Services - joined Sr Therese, Sr Ellen, CEO Peter Gardiner and other guests, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Seton Villa home Leia's Place.

2022 will continue to be a big year for Seton Villa, with construction of a further two Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Improved Liveability houses to commence around mid-May and due for completion by mid-November 2022. One of these properties has recently been purchased from the Trustees, being suitable for redevelopment and a great location to boot! This will leave us with just one new home to build to complete our ambitious Asset Redevelopment Project. We will also actively pursue our strategic intent to grow as an organisation and facilitate many more people with disability to live their best life.

Peter Gardiner
Chief Executive Officer





ST VINCENT'S FAMILY PROJECT

This last quarter has been a transition period for St Vincent's Family Project (SVFP), from socially restricted events to encouraging families to break out of their bubbles and attend in-person events in the lead up to Easter. The project works with young families in London's Westminster, many of whom are from low-income households. Some of these families experience social exclusion and isolation, which are exacerbated by financial pressures. SVFP has been the families on fun and educational group outings, including theatre productions and museum trips, where they have had the opportunity to meet other young families, learn and play, get practical help and enjoy activities they may not otherwise be able to experience. For many families, these were their first trips out since March 2020.



Over the past few months 14 parents successfully completed parenting courses at SVFP - eight of which enjoyed 'Mellow Parenting for Mums' and six who took SVFP's 'Positive Parenting Programme'. These courses provide an opportunity for parents to learn techniques that contribute to a happier and more harmonious way of communicating with their children. One mum said: "I am happy I had the opportunity to be part of this programme. *I learnt a lot about myself and the mistakes and positives I do.*"

Additionally, five mothers who required further support also worked through a six-week Drama Therapy Group session, and parents of bilingual children completed a five-week programme to assist with their child's speech development.

ST VINCENTS FAMILY PROJECT CONTINUED ...

SVFP was also delighted to recommence its 'Dad's Group' on the 9th April, a fun and friendly atmosphere where fathers and their children can spend quality time together while enjoy competitions and games. Sessions run every Saturday from 10am-12pm.

Promoting good mental and physical health is a core priority at SVFP. The project's exercise sessions for mothers has become increasingly popular thanks to the project's trainer, Donna, and new exercise equipment resourced by funds from Sports England.



Additionally, SVFP has carried out four Oral Hygiene workshops in local nurseries and schools to help tackle the issue of tooth decay in children. Research has shown children's oral health in London is poor and many young people are facing tooth decay. The workshops teach parents and children the importance of dental hygiene and how to take care of their teeth. Attendees also receive free toothbrushes and toothpaste.





ST CATHERINE'S AGED CARE SERVICES

The people at St Catherine's Aged Care Services enjoyed some festive Easter fun this season. Everyone enjoyed getting together to design crafty little Easter baskets decorated with Easter eggs and bunnies, as well as creating Easter banners and wall art.

During the celebrations, residents were offered special treats which related to the season, including hot cross buns, chocolate Easter eggs and traditional gingerbread Easter bunny cookies. Staff and residents got into the spirit of the celebration, with lots of dancing, laughter, and even an egg hunt.

Holy Thursday was celebrated at St Catherine's Chapel with Fr Madigan. Residents took part in group discussions and reminiscing sessions where they enjoyed recalling Easter-time memories with their family and friends. At the end of the day, the enjoyment and the appreciation on the faces of the residents was priceless. One resident Josephine, who is pictured above, said: *"Easter at St. Catherine's is always a joyous occasion and staff decorated the place in great details."*



Out There Family Centre before and after renovations

OUT THERE

Over the past 18 months Out There's Family Centre has undergone a complete refurbishment. The centre provides a safe hub for families of prisoners to come and share their worries, attend group support sessions and meet other people who are going through similar experiences. It is also a space for two other charities, Women in Prison and Home Start, to deliver support to the community.

The completed centre came just in time for Easter where families were able to enjoy fun and educational activities over the holidays, including a children's craft and cooking class. The project thanks its funders for their donations towards these Easter activities.

Since Out There recommenced its face-to-face events, staff have hosted a number of activities that aim to provide positive social interactions for families of prisoners and encourage healthy family experiences. Activities have included an online escape room, pottery classes and a trip to the farm where children learnt more about how to look after animals, the environment and each other. These sessions give the people they support the opportunity to meet other families who understand what they are going through, offer young people positive social experiences, and families can articulate their worries to the team in a compassionate and safe environment. One client commented: *"Thanks for today, you don't realise how much you have supported us already."*

OUT THERE CONTINUED ...

Out There was delighted to announce the project has been awarded three years of funding from The National Lottery to continue its vital work. Thanks to this generous grant, families with a loved one in prison will get the ongoing support they need and deserve. This funding has come at a crucial time as more and more people face issues with the rising cost of living. Out There has committed to offering support specifically around the ongoing cost of living crisis, after seeing an increase in financial challenges among the families they support.





HUTT ST CENTRE

A safe and welcoming place

Asking for help is a difficult step for anyone who's doing it tough. But for the almost 300 women who walk through Hutt St Centre's doors each month, it's a moment of significant uncertainty and vulnerability.

Around 75% of people seeking our support self-admit to having survived abuse or trauma, and half have experienced further violence on the streets. As a provider of homelessness services with strong links to the community, we're committed to offering a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for women at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Last financial year, we saw a 30% growth in the number of women aged 18-34 seeking support at Hutt St Centre, and overall, women make up approximately 40% of the people who access our services.

To address this growing need, we have recently launched the 'Ignite' program – a private group designed specifically for women facing homelessness. With a focus on wellbeing, safety and connection, the group encourages women to participate in opportunities to help build their confidence, resilience and independence.

HUTT STREET CENTRE CONTINUED ...

Participants also heard from guest speaker, Melinda O'Leary – a career consultant who volunteers her skills to provide employment mentoring so women visiting the Centre can pursue opportunities for work, training and education. First-time participant, Jasmine*, shared:

"I felt a bit nervous coming here today but everyone has been so lovely. I'm pretty much always on high alert so it's really nice to just sit and relax with people who get what I've been going through."

The program has been well-attended in its early stages and we look forward to further developing the concept through the input and co-design of women with a lived experience of homelessness. We are grateful for the opportunity to create a safe and welcoming space for women to rebuild their lives and face the future with confidence.

Kind regards,

Chris Burns CSC
CEO, Hutt St Centre



Lucy* was invited to join Ignite when she visited for a meal and health check-up.

"Walking into the Centre was so hard... But I don't have any other support so I feel like this group is just what I need."

**While these quotes are real, names have been changed to protect people's identity and wellbeing.*



THE LOUISE PROJECT

The Louise Project recently evaluated its two-year target to support 240 Roma families in their journey towards a better life. Despite being a small team, the project was delighted to announce it exceeded its target and reached 388 families in the Govanhill area. During this time, the project has addressed 5,300 issues, including complex crises involving food, clothing, finance, debt, housing and health. The team thanks everyone who has supported them in achieving this incredible outcome.

The Louise Project is made up of a small yet eclectic group of staff including three Scottish, three Romanians and two Slovaks. The team were delighted to welcome a new project worker in January, Blanka Surimova, who is already proving to be a tremendous asset and an integral and popular member of the team.

The Louise Project holds literacy classes for families in the community of Govanhill who speak little English. Over the past few months, classes have focused on studying the human body after many mothers reported struggling to communicate healthcare issues to their doctors. The sessions involve learning how to describe common ailments and using role play to practise calling their GP surgeries. Classes have already helped increase students' confidence and encouraged them to seek medical advice when needed.

From April until June, the project is embarking on a certificated course with City of Glasgow College with 12 of their most advanced learners. This course is entitled "Working with Others" and it develops employability skills as well as furthering English language proficiency. The project is pleased to have this link with City of Glasgow College and aims to have more students attending full-time.



ST MARY'S HOUSE OF WELCOME

Programs reopening

With COVID restrictions being lifted we are working to rebuild with our community through gardening clubs, programs focused on integrating back into the community and providing a place over pizza and a coffee to share ways to safely connect back into community.

Our kitchen training room program kicks off in May with William Angliss providing a nutritious Vietnamese cooking program hosted over 10 weeks to introduce concepts of food safety, handling and preparation and of course sharing a wonderful meal.

Fundraising & Events

Like so many businesses and not-for-profits, Covid-19 has severely affected our ability to generate income. Community support is absolutely crucial to continuing our vital work. The fundraising team are supporting a number of events aimed to build our connections and supporters and to raise funds for our work helping disadvantaged Melbournians living on the streets:

- A film night was hosted in April to raise funds for our programs and work with our supporters and watch the film Belfast at our local Kino cinema.

- A Bunnings Sausage Sizzle
- During February, we had many people taking part in St Mary's House of Welcome's annual *Movin' for Meals*. People pledged to walk, run, jog or skip to help raise funds for our meals program. The goal this year is to raise \$10,000 to help ensure St Mary's House of Welcome can continue to provide nutritious and delicious hot meals to people sleeping rough and experiencing extreme disadvantage.
- Over the last 14 years Run Melbourne has grown into a movement that has changed the culture of what it means to run through the city streets. It's an event that continues to inspire, empower and motivate runners to get out there, lace up and run and never give up. This year everyone is running for St. Mary's House of Welcome.



SMHOW CONTINUED ...

Research activity

The final report for the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) and St Mary's House of Welcome's research was launched at an event at ACU on the 6th April at 5pm, timed for before the Federal Election in May. ACU's Vice-Chancellor and President hosted the event and introduced the project with presentations on the project findings. This collaborative research project became real through our partnership with the Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit and reinforced our strategic intent to strengthen our research and advocacy to shine a better light of the plight of people who are experiencing homelessness, poverty and social disadvantage. It also allowed us to explore a real concern that there is going to be far more need in our community and this question of "How will the COVID -19 crisis affect demand for our service?" This is an important report which we hope to use in our advocacy and ongoing support for our work.

Stories from our community

We were thrilled to have Sr Ellen Flynn DC and Sr Debra McCarthy CD visit us in March and see the work of the Daughters and meet our team.

One of our very long-time female service users with an acquired brain injury, chronic illness, PTSD and vulnerability has transitioned to an NDIS package after living for many years in very difficult rooming house. The team have been working with providers to get her into ongoing stable accommodation. She has just moved in with new furniture, a kitchen fitted out and gifts from St. Mary's House of Welcome to make her move a joyous occasion. All of her clothes were infested from the rooming house. Our workers collected all these personal items and arranged to have them sanitised, washed,

ironed and hung in her new wardrobe. Our staff celebrated this wonderful opportunity with her to make new connections and enjoy her own house.

We had a visit from Adam Bandt, Federal Member for Melbourne in April. Adam has been a long-time friend and advocate for our community and his campaign advisor write to us to say "Thank you so much for showing Adam Bandt MP, Jesse and I around St Mary's House of Welcome last month. We already knew that you do such important work for our community, but the visit really reinforced just how valuable and significant your work is. It was also lovely to meet with your team members and service users."



Federal MP Adam Bandt talking in our courtyard with one of our art class members.

We are developing a wonderful new menu for our service users thanks to our new Cook Aidan Borrows who brings fresh favours to the table with lots of positive feedback from our community. We are very proud to continue our partnerships with Second Bite, Coles and Woolworths to deliver to 100% rescued food.



ST JOSEPH'S

It's been a busy and colourful few months in Rosewell, Scotland, as numerous occasions were celebrated in the houses of St Joseph's. Over the past quarter many exciting milestones have been reached, including a 30th, two 60th's, a 65th and a 70th birthday.

In January the people at St Joseph's celebrated Burns Night with a traditional Burns Supper and a Scottish-related quiz. Each house also took part in a tartan competition where some very impressive designs were created.

The people at St Joseph's dedicate each month to one of the charity's core values. In February the value in focus was Respect,

and everyone was encouraged to send a 'friendship card' to someone they value in their life. As word got out in the community about the card-giving initiative, the people at St Joseph's were delighted to receive beautiful friendship cards from the children at Kids World Citizen Group in Rosewell.

Sadly, St Joseph's said goodbye to Sister Kathleen Page whose time with the project came to an end in February. Sister Kathleen touched many people's lives during her almost-six years working at St Joseph's as a Pastoral Co-ordinator and will be sincerely missed by all.

As Spring arrived in March, the project celebrated St Joseph's Day and Marie Curie's National Day of Reflection with a daffodil-themed afternoon tea on Zoom.

ST JOSEPH'S CONTINUED ...

St Joseph's were also delighted to have three Seminarians stay and work with the project for two weeks. The students worked with a range of teams at the project, including the Pastoral Care team, to get a sense of how St Joseph's supports people in a truly Vincentian way, addressing not just people's physical health but also emotional well-being too.



Alan Mackenzie is supported by St Joseph's and is passionate about ensuring the voices of people with learning disabilities are heard. Alan is also the Chair of the National Involvement Network - an alliance of people with additional support needs - and has been actively promoting the network to encourage people with learning disabilities to join and help them become involved in important societal decisions that affect them. Well done Alan!



"It can make a lot of difference to people"

**- Alan Mackenzie,
Bonnyrigg**



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the marillac
neurological
care centre



THE MARILLAC NEUROLOGICAL CARE CENTRE

It's been a positive start to 2022 at The Marillac Neurological Care Centre, with things more or less back to normal following two years of restrictions. Aside from the occasional lockdown at the centre when COVID breakouts re-emerge, live events and family visits have recommenced. Residents from different units are also now able to gather and socialise together, meaning those who had not met before are now enjoying time together and getting to know one another.

The dedicated staff at The Marillac have been treating residents to a range of activities over the past few months. In early March they were delighted to welcome back one of their favourite singers, Clayton, who sings for the residents at the centre. Clayton is full of energy, makes everyone feel special and has a wonderful way with the people at the Marillac.

Over Easter residents were busy painting Easter wreaths, which were hung in all three dayroom windows of the centre. The Activities Team also held an Easter raffle for staff and families with over 40 prizes to be won.

Recently, a young Swedish student named Pierre spent a day at The Marillac as part of a work experience placement. Pierre is studying for the priesthood in Valladolid Spain. The team say they 'threw him in at the deep end' as Pierre found himself calling bingo for the residents, which everyone enjoyed. The Marillac also had an entertainer in to sing on the same day, and Pierre very confidently sang 'Can't Help Falling in Love' by Elvis Presley, which staff and residents say he did very well. Pierre said he enjoyed his time at The Marillac and the team hope he'll come back to visit someday soon.

The Activities Team are now busy prepping celebrations for her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, as she becomes the first British Monarch to celebrate 70 years of service.



Vincientian Care Plus

We make your HOME CARE difference



VINCENTIAN CARE PLUS

Over the past few months the team at Vincientian Care Plus have settled into the new offices, making the new premises a hive of activity, with training now able to take place on-site.

We have been delighted to see an increasing number of the team participate in the Vincientian Values Training course in recent months, with many more scheduled for the months ahead.

The team have continued to provide holistic care for residents of a hostel which supports former rough sleepers, and are seeking to find ways of expanding this offer of support.

In recent months we have promoted an existing care worker, Edward, who was employed with Vincientian Care Plus for the last 4 years to the position of Care coordinator. He has thrived in the role, bringing his unique perspective as a care worker and applying it to the position whilst maintaining the organisation's values. It would be minimising his experience to describe the last six months as easy, however he has now become the senior Coordinator, taking every curveball in his stride and has settled in well to this position.