

# Independence

Spring 2019



MISSION  
AUSTRALIA

## A chance to change

**You may have heard it said that we're all just one or two major life events away from becoming homeless.**

For James, it was the loss of his mother, followed 10 months later by the sudden death of his partner, that saw his life fall apart.

James spent four to five years falling in and out of homelessness. He developed addictions to alcohol and other drugs, and lost touch with the world around him.

James says his turning point was a referral to the Mission Australia Centre (MAC) in Sydney.

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"When I first arrived at Mission Australia I was very suicidal. I felt very worthless. I didn't feel like I could fit into the world anymore."

**James**

James likens the support he received at the MAC to that of "an intensive care unit – not medically, but for my emotions, my grief, and my addiction".

After about a year living at the MAC, he was able to move into more independent housing with Mission Australia.

Today, he is completing a university course with Australian Catholic University through the MAC's Catalyst study program and dreams of pursuing a law degree.

**James describes the counsellors who have supported him as "angels with invisible wings".**

**"They're beautiful people. Beautiful hearts, and most importantly, 100 per cent supportive."**

James knows that the support he has received wouldn't be possible without the generosity of Mission Australia's supporters.

**"Thank you so very much for everything that you have given me, from the food, to the medical, to the counselling.**

**Without any of your donations this would not be possible."**

# Celebrating the wins

**In her role as a caseworker at the Mission Australia Centre (MAC), Marijana (MJ) Brcic spends a lot of time celebrating with the people we help.**

**Whether it's their birthday or they've completed a short course, if it's a win, we celebrate it. Most importantly, there must always be cake.**

It is this atmosphere that makes me love my job. At the MAC, we don't see anyone as a number. Every person who comes through our door is unique, so the way we support them varies.

Our amazing variety of services and programs includes general health care, chiropractors, creative writing, art classes, counselling and even yoga and tai chi. We also partner with Australian Catholic University to provide a study program.

If you read the cover story, you will have met James – or Jimmy as we call him. When Jimmy first

came here he needed a lot of support. The initial few months were all about emotional support and addressing the reasons behind why he was homeless. But I soon got to know that Jimmy was a real go getter. He was receptive to the services and programs and he built strong foundations to ensure he could get to the next steps. We even had the joy of celebrating his move into more independent accommodation!

**I hope this newsletter encourages you as you see the difference your generosity has made not just in Jimmy's life – but in so many lives across the country.**

**We truly couldn't do this work without your support.**



**Marijana (MJ) Brcic**  
Caseworker  
Mission Australia  
Centre Surry Hills



**synergy**  
AUTO REPAIRS

Brought to you by  
**MISSION AUSTRALIA**

## celebrates 5 YEARS

**It's been five years since we first opened the roller doors to our Melbourne-based social enterprise Synergy Auto Repairs.**

Synergy offers high quality smash repair services and provides a training and work experience program for young people who are disengaged from education and employment and have a history of motor vehicle-related offences.

Program manager Troy Crellin says more than 100 young men and women have been trained at Synergy since 2014, with almost three-quarters of those now in full-time work or education.

"Synergy Auto Repairs is the first social enterprise of its kind in Australia. We're thrilled to celebrate this five-year milestone and reflect on the many students who have come through our roller doors and, with some support and guidance, paved their own road to independence."

## Connect with us:



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**Purpose** Inspired by Jesus Christ, Mission Australia exists to meet human need and to spread the knowledge of the love of God.

**Values** Compassion • Integrity • Respect • Perseverance • Celebration

# Continuing a legacy

**Margaret Dobbin was practically born a supporter of Mission Australia.**

**On 6 May 1928, her grandfather, long-serving Baptist minister the Rev W M Cartwright, had moved his family from Victoria to Sydney to take up his appointment as Superintendent of the Sydney City Mission, now known as Mission Australia. Sadly, on the very day he was to commence his new role, he died, aged 51.**

Margaret's grandmother, eager to make a worthwhile contribution, soon joined the Sydney City Mission's Ladies Auxiliary and for many decades was the secretary of that committee. Margaret has many memories from her childhood of sitting in at monthly meetings where plans for fundraising events were hatched and successfully implemented. She also vividly recalls their Saturday afternoon visits to the various children's homes run by the Mission.

Young Margaret quickly came to realise that there were many people lacking the support and love of a family, financial security, access to medical help, education and a happy environment in which to live – things that she took for granted.

Her grandmother's enthusiastic commitment to the wellbeing of others was a great example to Margaret, fostering in her the desire and willingness to be a friend and helper to lonely and older people.

Margaret feels a great sense of joy in knowing that the benefit of her bequest will be felt for years after her regular donations have ceased.

*"My giving to Mission Australia is a gift I give myself"*

**Margaret, Mission Australia regular donor and Gift in Will supporter**



**Margaret is very aware of the blessings that life has brought to her, and she insists that Mission Australia has been one of those blessings.**

**It's because of that gift that she's inspired to keep giving for as long as she is alive. And to ensure her help and support continues, she has included a gift in her Will to Mission Australia.**

**For more information about leaving a gift in your Will, please call Christine Thomas or Sarah Lendich on**

 02 9307 0111 or visit  [missionaustralia.com.au/mywill](https://missionaustralia.com.au/mywill)

# Making connections can be tough

**“They say in a small town everyone knows each other, and everyone helps each other. “That’s wrong.”**

**A few years ago, Allen moved across the country to Broken Hill in outback NSW to care for his sick grandfather, leaving his immediate family, his friends and his job behind.**

“He passed away in his sleep,” says Allen. “I was devastated. He was the main person in my family that really cared.”

Suddenly all alone, Allen became extremely isolated.

For two years, the only time Allen left the house was to buy groceries and to check the mailbox.

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“I didn’t speak to anyone for over a week at one stage. I wasn’t leaving the house at all. I got to the point where I was nearly talking to myself.”

**Allen**

It was at this low point in Allen’s life that Mission Australia’s Connections program came into the picture.

Connections links lonely people to community activities in the evening and over weekends. This is the time when people often turn to hospitals as their only option for support.

The program is run by peer support workers – people who can draw on their own personal experiences of mental health issues and recovery to support participants.

Sessions range from catch ups at a local café to fun activities like trivia, cooking, scrapbooking, movie nights and even karaoke. There’s also a weekly life skills class to help the participants in their daily lives. By reducing hospital bed time for Connections’ most regular attendees, the program has led to savings of \$760,000 for the health system in just six months.

For Allen, Connections has completely turned his life around.

**“I don’t really know myself now. I’ve changed dramatically, drastically.”**

# "I remember you"

**Our Miller Community Pre-school and Early Childhood Intervention Service works with children aged 3-5 years. In 2004 a little girl named Georgia enrolled.**

Georgia had a diagnosis of cerebral palsy and developmental delay. She was a bright and endearing child who spent her time with us improving and mastering her motor skills, developing her communication skills and learning to share and make friends.

Last year Georgia turned 18 and needed work experience for a high school course – so we arranged for her to come to work with us once a week. It had been 12 years since Georgia had seen any of us and yet she had memories of us all. There were lots of hugs and lots of tears.

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When I first saw her, she ran into my arms and said, "I remember you". She then looked into my eyes and said "I loved this pre-school, I just couldn't tell you then".

**Jo-Anne Platt, Georgia's teacher**

I will remember Georgia's words for the rest of my life. They validate my beliefs as an early childhood



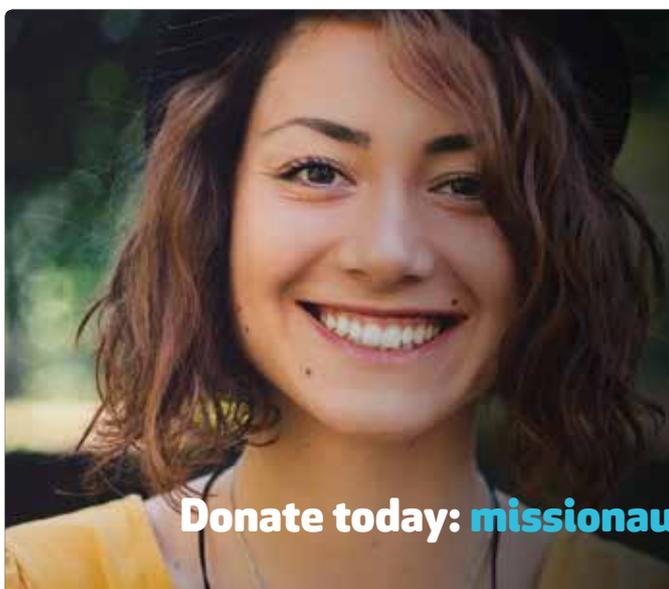
*Georgia at pre-school*



educator. They give meaning to the work that we do and they provide evidence that our work makes a difference.

**Jo-Anne Platt**

Miller Community Pre-school and Early Childhood Intervention Service Centre Manager



## "I finally felt like there were people who believed in me"

Trauma shatters young lives. Help pick up the pieces and give them hope for the future.

Donate today: [missionaustralia.com.au/springappeal](https://missionaustralia.com.au/springappeal)



## Q & A

with Leisa Garling  
Circles of Care  
Coordinator

**Q: Tell us about the Circles of Care program. What makes it different?**

**A:** Circles of Care helps Indigenous families and schools work together to achieve positive outcomes for children's learning and wellbeing. We have the unique flexibility to be able to adapt the program to each student's needs.

**Q: Circles of Care is funded through Mission Australia's fundraising programs, rather than the government. Does this allow you more flexibility? How so?**

**A:** Absolutely! It has allowed the program to adapt and grow over the years. From feedback from the community, we have been able to see what works and get rid of what doesn't to allow the program to evolve and stay relevant for those that need the service.

**Q: What are the greatest joys and challenges in your work?**

**A:** The greatest joys are seeing a family I have worked with succeeding, watching a child build their

confidence, and having their attendance improve or achieving a milestone.

The greatest challenge is that the services a family needs to access aren't always available in their area; that adds to a family's struggles.

**Q: Tell us about the 'jars of kindness' that the kids recently made for Mission Australia staff.**

**A:** The girls wanted to thank the team that supports me, so they filled jars with personal items, positive messages and things to tell our staff to enjoy the moment.

They then went with me to deliver the jars and had an amazing time. They couldn't wait to tell the other girls and their families how many people worked at Mission Australia and that you can actually get a job being kind to people!

**Mission Australia's Circles of Care program currently runs in Cairns and Inala in Queensland.**

*This article originally appeared on Fundraising Institute Australia's website ([www.fia.org.au](http://www.fia.org.au))*