

Summer 2013

Transformations

Mission Australia - transforming lives

Between these four walls

Domestic violence in suburbia

Lily's lifetime of giving

Little people with big hearts

MISSION
AUSTRALIA | together
we stand





“Our biggest and most important gift though, comes from you, and supporters like you”

CEO Welcome

One of the blessings of this time of year is the opportunity to connect with friends and loved ones - often reaching out to people we haven't seen as much as we'd like throughout the year.

Each year, my wife diligently writes out Christmas cards, some to people we haven't seen in many years. They stay in our thoughts and particularly at Christmas, we are thinking of them.

You too might be starting to think about your Christmas list, cards you will write to old friends and remembering to add a name where there has been a new addition to a family.

At Mission Australia it's just as important to think of every member of our ever-growing family. For a service like Annie Green Court, we seek out generous support from the community and our corporate partners to purchase small gifts. We then wrap and give each older Australian residing in this aged care facility something to open on Christmas day.

For our early learning services, we again reach out to the community and kind hearted supporters who are able to reach that little bit deeper at this time of year to buy gifts for our littlies who might otherwise have to miss out.

Our biggest and most important gift though, comes from you, and supporters like you who dig deep each year and assist us with a gift of money. Whether it is a one off donation or regular monthly support, money is critical for a charity like Mission Australia to continue delivering services, especially at Christmas.

Each of the stories you will read about in the following pages shows how donations like yours have changed the life of someone who needed a hand up on their search for long-term independence.

Thank you for digging deep this Christmas and supporting Australian families, and may the joy of the season be with you and those that you love this year.

Toby Hall
Chief Executive Officer
Mission Australia

Founding Purpose

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

Our Values

Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Perseverance, Celebration.
Our Vision is to see a fairer Australia by enabling people in need to find pathways to a better life.

Do you have something to say about any of the issues raised in Transformations?

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As a child, Christmas was always centred around the three homes that were part of my world...our own home, and the homes of my grandparents. They were places of rich family traditions, sixpences which magically appeared in the pudding, too much chocolate and the hope of spectacular presents (only a couple of which I can now bring to mind). And of course, as is the way with children, Christmas was always centred around me!

So I had quite an awakening one year, when we opened our home to a couple of stranded travellers, who had no-one to spend Christmas with.

To tell you the truth, I think I was worried we would lose something by having strangers with us at Christmas. There was a sense, that although this did seem the right thing to do, somehow Christmas wouldn't be the same. So, it came as a delightful surprise, that although Christmas was different, it was different in a wonderful way.

It seems that sharing the joy of Christmas with someone else somehow multiplied the joy that we usually experienced. Instead of it being a sacrifice, it became a wonderfully rich day. It's an interesting thing that sometimes when we share, it means there's less to go around, but when we share joy, it seems to expand.

Christmas is rightly a family time, but if we look at Jesus, whose 'birthday' was the reason Christmas began, He reminds us that home and family are expandable concepts, and that sharing is the essence of who He is.

Concepts like these are lived out every day by dedicated staff and volunteers within Mission Australia, but there's an extra touch of joy, when it happens at Christmas.

"We should not forget to do good and to share our good things with others." Heb 13:16

Jennifer Bluhdorn, Chaplain NSW

"I had quite an awakening one year, when we opened our home to a couple of stranded travellers, who had no-one to spend Christmas with."

Between these four walls domestic violence in suburbia

When Mission Australia first came into contact with the Anderson* family it was because David Anderson, loving husband and father of two had been abusing his wife. Struggling with a heavy drug addiction, David often acted on his own pain and frustrations by hitting his wife Mary.

On the surface it's easy to look at a situation and condemn a father who should know better, but after looking a little deeper you begin to understand this family's story.

It was nearly 13 years ago when David had been reversing the family car out of the driveway and felt something go under the tyre. Stepping out of the car he realised it was his eldest child, Hannah.

Hannah sadly passed away, and the family's lives were changed forever.

We hear these stories in the news but you never think it will happen to you. You take every precaution to lock doors and buy every safety gadget, but sometimes there is absolutely nothing you can do, bad things happen.

David never received any treatment or appropriate counselling for his guilt and his grief; as the man

of the house and a member of a supportive community, he didn't think he needed it.

Over time, the devastation of what had happened strained his relationship with his wife Mary and their two children. He was quick to anger and sleeping less and less as time went on.

It was in this period he sought relief through drugs.

Any relief David found through self-medicating was quickly taken away in the come-down of the following day. Not only was it taking a painful emotional toll on the young family, but through funding his drug habit David was quickly putting his young family into huge debt, and robbing himself of any self-respect.



On the days Mary tried to talk to him about the drugs, or hide the little money they had, David became very aggressive. Scared of what he might do under the influence, Mary gave way and parted with the cash she had to feed her children and pay the bills.

Mary found comfort through her Christian faith and support through her family and her church. These sustained her throughout the years but her breaking point came at the supermarket one day.

When shopping for things for the children's lunchboxes, her payment was declined. Mary burst into tears and knew she couldn't take it anymore. That night when she raised the issue with David his anger exploded and Mary was given no choice but to call the police to protect herself, the children and David from his own actions.

Calling the local police station Mary explained about the drugs and the domestic violence that had happened inside her home that she'd managed to hide well until now. It was here that Mission Australia became involved.

Working with the whole family

The Family Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team (FVDCRT) is a model that has been developed to help families who are experiencing domestic violence.

This is an initiative across many regions of Western Australia and is a new way of working collaboratively. In this working relationship, a non-government organisation or charity like Mission

Australia is considered an equal partner to the government bodies.

This is not about looking at the victim and the perpetrator separate from the family unit. The ideal aim is not to separate the family and lock away the 'bad person'.

We realise that each person needs and deserves support however, it is clear the safety of all must be paramount first and foremost.

Mission Australia Case Manager Cassandra Porter explains *"I am very lucky to work with the team at the FVDCRT, getting a person's story is the most valuable time we can spend with them in order to fully understand the dynamics and issues that have influenced the reported incident."*

The Anderson family - next steps

Visiting a family caught in a painful cycle of domestic violence always presents challenges, often people find it hard to talk about the very personal things happening in the family home.

Meeting David for the first time, it was important to speak about the impact of trauma that can be caused by something like the loss of a child. David was offered support through a men's health network, which he accepted.

Through talking about what had happened and how David had been treating Mary, it was important to show him that everyone in the situation accepted he wanted to be a better father and that he wanted to be the protector and not the perpetrator of trauma for his children.

Keeping in touch with the family, it was repeatedly explained what the possible outcomes could be if it was found that the children were being further traumatised.

"It's our belief that simply talking to him in a non-judgemental, honest and respectful way began the journey to change for him and consequently, for his family" Cassandra tells us.

Life after trauma

After three weeks David proudly informed the FVDCRT that he hadn't taken any drugs five days after meeting the FVDCRT. He is back at work and the children are no longer at risk of being taken from the family home.

David is able to speak about what he went through and the huge emotional impact of losing his daughter. He is using her memory as a motivating factor to stay healthy and committed to being a better father than he had previously only hoped to be.

We understand that David too was a victim, but we never excused his behaviour. In our last visit to the Anderson family, it was explained there would be no need to see them again due to the positive changes that had been made.

David hugged both the Child Protection and Family Support worker and the Mission Australia case manager and with tears in his eyes promised to keep in touch with the FVDCRT who had helped his family so much.

*Names and images have been changed to protect the identities of those we help.

News from the frontline

There are many amazing government and community organisations throughout Australia, but often those in need aren't aware of their existence. When you are struggling to buy groceries or pay the electricity bill, looking up a support service is just another phone call you don't have time to make.



Tali is a great example of what is possible when you connect a person with a service that is appropriate to them. A single mother, Tali was motivated to take the next steps to building a better life for her young children but unable to find the right path.

In the work Mission Australia does, frontline staff act as a conduit to help navigate sometimes confusing and often complex government and community organisations.

When Tali had given birth to her second child Sophia, she was keen to further her education to gain a better job. Sadly after looking at the cost of childcare, she was caught in a catch-22.

Tali was worried about how to manage a fulltime study load while also trying to pay for childcare.

Another mother in Tali's playgroup encouraged her to contact Mission Australia where her case manager Karen was able to offer a number of courses Tali could attend where childcare could be provided.

When Karen bumped into Tali in the street some months later she couldn't believe how happy Tali looked. With a real spring in her step, Tali explained how much she appreciated being given the opportunity to do a course during school hours, with childcare at no cost.

Little people with BIG hearts!

They say great things come in small packages, and that is certainly true of the children of Cavendish Kindergarten in Victoria who generously dedicated a day to helping 'people without houses'.

All eight of the four-year-old children who attend the kindergarten worked with their carers and families to raise money and awareness for Mission Australia by hosting their own PJ Day.

On the day, the kids wore their jammies and carers spoke about what it means to be homeless, a very big concept for little people.

The letter and \$24 donation we received is a lovely reminder as we approach Christmas that there is no such thing as a small donation.



Lily's lifetime of giving

In her 95th year, Lily was one of our most experienced supporters.

Born in 1917, even as a young girl she was involved with Mission Australia – then the Sydney City Mission.



In 1915 Lily's father James gave up a career as an engineer to work at the Mission, swapping his comfortable 6 (pounds) per week for a more modest 3 (pounds) a week. He didn't think twice about moving into missionary work, it was something he and his wife were very passionate about.

One of Lily's fondest memories is seeing her father come home from a long day at work with no shoes on his feet because he'd given them to a homeless person.

This charity continued when they had their four daughters, Ella, Jean, Lily and Ruth. They wanted the girls to know

the joy of giving. The girls were encouraged to come to the opening of new services at the Mission, help out with odd jobs when needed and even spent time singing to the homeless.

Lily recalls the very early days of what we'd now consider regular

giving and community fundraising. Lily's mother priced items for the jumble sale where they would sell clothes to raise money for the soup kitchens, while her father would give a monthly donation to the Mission to help pay for food and necessities. The family even helped furnish a room when a new service was being opened.

As part of the community engagement of the time, many families had their names put onto plaques in the different rooms to show appreciation for the work done. Lily still has great pride in telling us that her family's plaque had pride of place in the matron's room. This was a great honour in those days.

For as long as she could remember Lily has been donating and giving her time to Mission Australia in some form. As a child, during the depression, this meant walking down the main streets of Sydney with her father and sister Ella with their instruments as they played and sang hymns to the homeless and underprivileged.

When Lily began working, this changed to a donation of money. It was a natural progression for her. "Well I suppose it's just one of those things you've done it all your life, it shows your appreciation for the Mission. It's been my upbringing since I was a child."

This generosity extended in later life as Lily made the decision to leave a bequest to Mission Australia in her will. Lily shared her message for others considering leaving a gift "you have to give, so the work can carry on."

Lily was a joy to know and we will always remember her steadfast commitment to Mission Australia's work. It's with great thanks to kind supporters like her that the work we do at Mission Australia is possible.

If you would like further information on bequests at Mission Australia, please contact Pat Brennan on (02) 9217 1064.

"It shows your appreciation for the Mission. It's been my upbringing since I was a child."

Open the door to a happy *Christmas* for families who are homeless

15,715*

Australian children will be homeless this Christmas. Please open your heart so that on Christmas Day families are not left to struggle behind closed doors.

*Children under 12 – ABS Census Report 2006



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AUSTRALIA**

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- 2** Call **1800 88 88 68** or
- 3** Donate online **missionaustralia.com.au**