

# Transformations<sup>★</sup>

Mission Australia – Transforming Lives

Summer 2012

## A home for Christmas

Conquering  
sandcastles

What's new:  
Annie Green  
Court



Mission Australia



# It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas



**"Many of the good news stories you will read about in this issue of *Transformations* simply wouldn't have been possible without your kind support."**

**When the hot weather hits and the decorations go up in department stores, many Australians start planning for Christmas. Although the preparation can at times seem a little frantic, the idea of spending time with our loved ones come 25 December makes it all worthwhile.**

For so many Australians who have fallen on hard times, there's not a lot to look forward to. If anything, Christmas Day – this celebration of home and family – magnifies feelings of loss and loneliness.

That's why Café One will be opening up on Christmas morning to serve a special breakfast to people in Brisbane experiencing homelessness and social isolation.

While many community services are taking a well-earned break, the café will open for the week between Christmas and New Year, giving people who might otherwise have nowhere else to go a friendly place where they can enjoy a low-cost, healthy meal, good company and receive the support to positively plan for 2013.

It's thanks to your support than many thousands of families, children, youth and older Australians are ending the year in better shape than they started it. They're safely housed, have beaten addictions like gambling, drugs and alcohol, are engaged in training, work or study, have new-found confidence and resilience, and have mended broken relationships.

Behind every one of these triumphs is someone like you. Many of the good news stories you will read about in this issue of *Transformations* simply wouldn't have been possible without your kindness.

On behalf of the Mission Australia family I'd like to thank you for your support and wish you a very merry and safe Christmas. Here's to a brighter 2013.

**Toby Hall**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mission Australia

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#### 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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## Spirit matters



**"Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life."**

(Gal 6.4-5 *The Message*)

## Going against the grain

**On a flight last year to the UK I found myself sitting in a window seat next to a very frail gentleman. I'm the sort of flyer who moves about, so rather than continually disrupt his journey, I discreetly asked if I could move seats.**

The flight attendant kindly found me a place eight rows forward – and even carried my bag up. When we landed in Munich, where I had under 30 minutes to change planes, I was grateful to be closer to the exit. Then I realised my coat was still above my original seat, with a long line of tired travellers in between.

I could fetch my coat after everyone had disembarked, and miss my flight, or ask for my coat to be passed forward. No competition. My plea was passed along a line of smirking passengers, then a procession of hands delivered my coat to me.

Sometimes you have to try something a little out of the ordinary to get results. In my case, I had to go against the flow to retrieve a coat, but at times it's for a much more worthy goal. Maybe 'against the flow' type people are the kind of people who go against the grain out of a love for others. After all, Jesus did.

As Paul said, "make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that... Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life".

(Gal 6.4-5 *The Message*).

#### Nalissa Maberly

Mission Australia Chaplain



# An adventure on Highway 1

At 1,450 kilometres, the Perth to Exmouth ride isn't exactly leisurely. It is however a great way to challenge yourself and raise money for charity – which is exactly what Travis Mark did.

Travis is a 46-year-old marketing manager from Perth with a passion for travel and an adventurous spirit. He has hiked through New Zealand, Nepal, Argentina and Tanzania. His latest adventure took him north from his hometown to Exmouth in Western Australia's North West Cape.

"I decided that it would be a good opportunity to raise money for a charity that I am passionate about. I read about Mission Australia in *The West Australian*, which prompted me to call."

"I feel deeply for those who are homeless, as they are often in a catch-22 situation. But with support, I believe they can break this cycle and I think we can make a massive difference to their lives."

One of the first things Travis noticed on his ride was that his response to road signs changed. Signs reading 60km no longer meant "make sure you stay under 60km per hour" but instead "you have almost made it to a town, keep peddling".

One sign that needed no introduction was 'Highway 1': "This sign is not applicable to riders," he explains. "You are acutely aware at all times that you're on Highway 1. You live there".

"Some days were harder than others. One day I was fighting 25knot winds and then torrential rain. I was travelling less than walking pace and was being

blown all over the road, so I decided to call it quits. Then it was a case of setting up camp. How do you set up a tent in the rain? As quickly as possible."

Although some days were hard, Travis found comfort in the road and, before he knew it, the signs to Exmouth were in his view.

"The distance signs passed very quickly towards the end – 30km, 20km, 10km. By 8pm I arrived at the entrance to Exmouth with a feeling of exhilaration and achievement."

The money Travis raised will go directly to supporting Mission Australia homeless services such as Youth Accommodation and Support Service (YASS), which provides young people aged 15 to 25 with supported housing and access to services to help them deal with family breakdown, debt and substance misuse.

A huge thanks to Travis for all his hard work. If you too are embarking on the adventure of a lifetime and you'd like to fundraise, please get in touch with our Community Fundraising team on ☎ (02) 9219 8106 or ✉ [communityfundraising@missionaustralia.com.au](mailto:communityfundraising@missionaustralia.com.au)



**"I decided that it would be a good opportunity to raise money for a charity that I am passionate about."**

## News from the frontline

Young mum Lindsay came to Mission Australia after being kicked out of her family home. She soon found herself sleeping in her car with her four-year-old daughter.

### Persistence pays off

**At just 20, Lindsay\* was struggling to come to terms with no longer being welcome in her family home and having no one to help raise her daughter.**

When she came to Mission Australia, Lindsay looked worn out from the months of uncertainty. Yet she showed a real resilience and strength beyond her years.

She was ready to change her life in order to give her daughter a better chance than she had as a child.

The team worked with Lindsay and, after many applications, a generous real estate worker gave the girls a lucky break, finding them stable long-term accommodation. This is just the beginning for Lindsay as she is now working with our staff to find employment, which she is very excited about.

## Emily isn't alone anymore

**Fifteen-year-old Emily\* came to Mission Australia looking for a better life. Her mother was a heavy drinker, her father was addicted to drugs and her older siblings often passed out on the couch after big drinking sessions.**

Emily was left to fend for herself most days. It was hard enough keeping up with her studies but when the other girls at school found out about her situation, she was ridiculed and made fun of. It was then that her friend Sarah asked Emily to move in with her family.

Everything was okay for a few weeks until Emily's mother found out where she had gone. When her mother showed up drunk on Sarah's family's doorstep,

Emily refused to go home. Her mother threatened to kill her before getting back in her car and driving off.

Shaken and knowing they were out of their depth, the girls called the New South Wales Department of Community Services (DOCS), which referred Emily to Mission Australia. While scared at first, she felt relieved she was no longer on her own.

It's been a joy watching Emily come out of her shell. She has reconnected with her 95-year-old grand uncle, who has proven to be an incredible source of support. Together the two come in to Mission Australia each week. Although life is far from perfect, Emily is now a happier, brighter teenager who is on the right track.

\* Names and images have been changed to protect the identities of those we help.  
For more information on Mission Australia's services, visit [missionaustralia.com.au](https://www.missionaustralia.com.au)





# A home for Christmas



**When Hannah and Justin first visited Café One in June they had been sleeping rough for about two years. The couple were in desperate need of housing as Hannah was five months' pregnant. Over a meal at our inner-city Brisbane café, the couple began to tell their story.**

Both Justin and Hannah\* had traumatic childhoods, neither enjoying good relationships with their families. At 22, Justin had spent his entire adult life either on the streets or moving from couch to couch. Hannah, at 16, hadn't lived at home for two years.

Finding it difficult to trust anyone enough to receive support, the pair found safety at Café One.

As Café One service manager Joe Wright explains, the café's relaxed

environment enables people who are homeless to learn more about helpful community services while enjoying healthy, low-cost meals:

"We have found over the years that people respond when food and drink is part of the conversation. The environment is conducive to positive communication."

After getting to know Justin and Hannah, the Café One team discovered the couple weren't registered with any housing providers. Justin was self-medicating to manage his anxiety levels and Hannah hadn't been receiving medical support through her pregnancy.

With positive encouragement and support, Justin and Hannah got in touch with the Queensland Department of Housing. They were

also referred to an extensive list of community housing providers. Justin got assistance for his anxiety and Hannah was referred to a doctor to help her through her pregnancy.

Justin and Hannah worked hard and attended all of their appointments, and as a result were offered a three-bedroom home in South Brisbane. They are receiving long-term, intensive counselling and are excited about the prospect of bringing a new life into this world.

Justin and Hannah both know that there are hard yards ahead, but are happy that they now have all the support they need to raise a healthy, happy child.

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

## About Café One

**While it looks like any other eatery, Café One does more than just serve coffee and inexpensive meals.**

Located in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley, this inclusive cafe also provides tailored support to people who are experiencing homelessness or serious disadvantage.

As the relaxed atmosphere inspires communication, Mission Australia staff are better placed to connect people with government agencies, offer referrals to accommodation and specialised health services, and advocate on their behalf.

The philosophy is that those who come to the cafe should receive a hand up rather than a hand out. As such, those who can afford to are expected to pay for their meals.

**Café One opens its doors this Christmas**

While many services close their doors at Christmas, Café One is opening

up for its annual Christmas brekky to support those who have nowhere else to go on the day.

Last year, with the generous support of the Lord Mayor's Community Trust, Café One was able to provide breakfast and practical presents for 150 people in need.

"We had a fantastic team of more than 20 volunteers supporting us on the morning, decking out the café in Christmas decorations and helping to prepare food," says Service Manager Joe Wright.

"It's such a tough time of year for many of our customers and we wanted to do what we could to help, so with that in mind we are hoping to open 24, 25, 27, 28 and 31 December. We want to provide people with a welcoming place to go between Christmas and New Year, a period when many other agencies will be closed."

## Café One is looking for a new home

Usually it's Café One helping people find somewhere to live, but in July 2013 the café's lease is expiring. With the current premises bursting at the seams, the team is looking for a bigger space that can grow with the service.

Mission Australia is looking for at least 200m<sup>2</sup>, which is double the size of the current café. With a long standing history in Fortitude Valley, the team hopes a new site can be found in this area.

Do you have a space that might work for Café One? Please contact us at [supporter@missionaustralia.com.au](mailto:supporter@missionaustralia.com.au) or **1800 88 88 68**



# Conquering sandcastles

Having a child with autism presents many day-to-day issues, but for Danielle her daughter's aversion to sand created the most problems.



Each Christmas, Danielle's\* family meets at the beach. In fact, pretty much any family gathering is an excuse to be on the sand. Unfortunately, each time Charlotte saw sand she would burst into tears. On a particularly bad day, the sight of it would trigger tantrums that lasted for hours.

When she walked through the doors of our Miller Community Preschool and Early Childhood Intervention Service in Sydney's south-west, Danielle's one wish was for her daughter to tolerate sand so she could enjoy beach gatherings with her extended family.

This innovative Mission Australia service has dedicated places for children with disabilities and also operates as a mainstream childcare centre. The Miller team fosters tolerance and provides a strong support network for children and their families.

The children also teach each other. Something as seemingly small as sharing a toy or a game can make a big difference to a child like Charlotte.

The first step in helping Charlotte to overcome her aversion to sand was to introduce her to similar materials. They began with soft fall, a rubbery product used as a protective covering in playgrounds. Charlotte's favourite games and toys were placed on the soft fall to encourage her to walk on it.

Next, the Miller team placed sand in buckets beside Charlotte as she played on the soft fall. Over time, the sand was added to the soft fall, so gradually she became more used to the texture.

Finally, Charlotte was slowly led to the sand area. At first, she would sit on the edge, but over time she independently made her way to the sandpit to play.

Danielle and her family are eternally grateful for the support they have received at Miller. They finally are able to fully enjoy family functions at the beach, and Charlotte is now getting to know her cousins.

## More than just a preschool

Our Miller preschool aims to improve education for children aged three to six by developing learning and social skills using play. Offering a program for 40 children per day, 10 spaces are reserved specifically for children with disabilities.

Miller also works with parents, helping them to get in touch with other services and build a social network. A big part of the program is also aimed at developing parenting skills.

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

# Aboriginal Australia's night of nights

For Aboriginal high school students involved in Mission Australia's Leadership and Cultural Development Programs, 25 September was a huge night. Not only were they invited to the 2012 Deadly Awards, but some also had a professional makeover in preparation for the Sydney Opera House event.

Affectionately known as The Deadlys, the awards recognise the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to their community and Australian society. With big names like Jessica Mauboy and Troy Cassar-Daley, the night was bound for success.

Students from Dubbo and Kempsey in regional New South Wales were bussed down to Sydney where artists from the Academy of Makeup generously volunteered their time to get many of the students ready for the night.

Some had never been to the 'big smoke' and many of the girls had never had their hair or nails done, so there was plenty of excitement in the lead up.

At 13, Jenaya was one of the younger participants invited to the event for



her excellent performance at school. When asked about the program, she told us: "Well, I'm basically always good in class and don't like to talk back to teachers or miss a class."

Mission Australia's Leadership and Cultural Development program assists Aboriginal students aged from 10 to 18 to continue their education while gaining relevant life skills through practical activities such as fishing, repairing bikes and cooking.

Ian Redpath, one of our Dubbo Support Workers, said that while managing so many students can be challenging, it's also very rewarding: "I learn as much from them as they do from me," he said.

To see more of the photos from the night check out our facebook page [facebook.com/MissionAust](https://www.facebook.com/MissionAust)



In September staff from Alcatel-Lucent joined forces with Mission Australia's Liverpool Family Day Care in Sydney's south-west for a working bee to create a more natural play space.

Through the day the workers pitched in to construct a shaded area, create a garden and build an elaborate cubbyhouse.

## Putting big smiles on little faces

In the lead up to the working bee, the children were all very excited about what the cubbyhouse would look like – and they were thrilled with the results.

Liverpool Family Day Care provides support and education for children aged up to 12.

The program aims to increase children's developmental skills

while assisting their parents to find employment or sign up for further education or training.

The day was a great success and we'd like to say a big thank you to Alcatel-Lucent and all the volunteers who were there on the day, putting big smiles on little faces.



# Holding out for a brighter future



**“My name is Rose. I am the proud mother of two beautiful daughters – nine-year-old Natalie and Ella, who’s three. From the lowest of lows to the highest of highs, the last two years have been the most challenging of my life. My story is a tribute to the tireless work of various services and organisations, particularly Mission Australia.”**

After noticing Ella had started to limp in January 2010, Rose and her husband Eric decided to take her to hospital. Their fears were realised when the paediatrician suspected Ella may have had a brain tumour.

The family rushed from their rural home in Broken Hill to Adelaide, where Ella had to go through countless invasive tests before being diagnosed with an unknown strand of leukodystrophy. This is a highly progressive disorder that attacks the central nervous system. It is a terminal illness, with no cure.

“No cure. Those words echoed in my head for what seemed like an eternity. I was living every parent’s worst nightmare – the prospect of outliving my child.”

Rose quit her job. Her days revolved around physio, occupational therapy, research and more than a few trips to Adelaide for appointments with specialists – a total of 15 in 2010 alone. When she was not running to appointments, Rose researched the disease in search of answers and hope, while trying to make the most of her time with the family.

Luck turned around for little Ella in October when international experts on the disease discovered that her symptoms didn’t fit any known pattern of leukodystrophy and that it was most likely caused by a viral

infection. Rose recalls “I had won the lottery. My daughter was going to live!”

Ella still had some difficulty walking but her progress was nothing short of amazing. With the help of a team of rehab therapists, she was finally on the road to recovery.

## One year on

In January 2011, and with the dust from the previous year beginning to settle, Rose’s husband Eric decided to leave. Rose was now left alone with her two precious daughters.

**“The crisis that we had been through would test even the strongest relationships, let alone one that had been cracking along the way, but it was tough.”**

Feeling abandoned and left financially responsible for the household and all of the medical bills took their toll. With no energy left, Rose’s mental state began to suffer.

Falling in to a deep depression, Rose knew she couldn’t survive without help. While family and friends were a great comfort, she needed more than they could give. Rose began to ring around for help and soon discovered Brighter Futures, run by Mission Australia.

Walking through the doors with her mother by her side, Rose felt a mixture of failure and hopelessness: “The day I met my case worker Julie, my cupboards were almost empty. I had no money, was very depressed and suffered great anxiety. I remember how debilitating it was, unable to breathe, my heart beating out of my chest.”

## Tailored and targeted

Using a strengths-based approach, Brighter Futures recognises that parents like Rose already have skills and expertise when it comes to raising their children, but may need extra support. As a result, services are tailored according to each family’s needs.

For Rose, this initially meant groceries, and over time, counselling to help process everything she had gone through.

Many of the parents who come to Brighter Futures have children aged under eight or are expecting a baby, and are facing specific problems. These range from a lack of support to domestic violence, and drug and alcohol issues. Families with children younger than three years are given priority access to the service.

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

## What’s new at Mission Australia?

### Annie Green Court

Artist’s impression

**Around a fifth of homeless Australians are aged 55 and over and many more are living in precarious housing circumstances.\* Annie Green Court, Mission Australia’s new purpose-built aged care facility in Sydney’s Redfern, is supporting this group of vulnerable people with complex needs.**

A fully accredited aged care facility Annie Green Court provides secure accommodation and care for both men and women who have experienced homelessness.

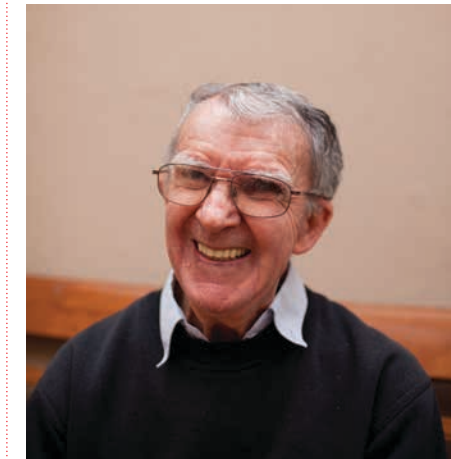
Annie Green Court and our nearby Charles Chambers Court – the model for the new service – are the only aged care facilities in the heart of Sydney with places for elderly homeless women.

Jill Bicknell, Mission Australia’s Operations Manager – Aged Care, says that both facilities have a strong focus on building a sense of community for people who have often been isolated: “We know from existing services that most elderly homeless people have no contact with family and limited social networks, so building that sense of community is really important to their wellbeing and mental health.”

\*University of Queensland Institute for Social Science Research, 2012: *Homelessness and Older Australians, Scoping the Issues*

Annie Green Court was designed with the complex needs of its residents in mind. It provides an integrated social program to overcome isolation, and nutrition and other health services.

At the heart of this service is a philosophy of respect, dignity and independence.



## What’s in a name?

Anne Syrett Green began volunteering with the Adelaide City Mission, one of the founding organisations that later came together to form Mission Australia, back in the 1870s. A dynamic and strong woman, she soon ended up in a paid position.

While at the Mission, she helped organise free Sunday breakfasts for the unemployed, English classes for Chinese settlers, and support for young prostitutes.

**“We know from existing services that most elderly homeless people have no contact with family and limited social networks, so building that sense of community is really important to their wellbeing and mental health.”**

Her forthrightness at a time when women were not considered equal led to tensions with male staff. The work culture took its toll and Anne resigned – and was persuaded back – several times.

In 1923 she was appointed superintendent of Adelaide City Mission. She went from strength to strength, even helping the Premier when the Great Depression hit.

Mission Australia felt that naming our new Redfern service for formerly homeless men and women after this fearless, tireless advocate for disadvantaged Australians was the perfect tribute to Annie Green’s memory.

To find out more about Annie Green Court please go to [missionaustralia.com.au/residentialagedcare](http://missionaustralia.com.au/residentialagedcare)



# IMAGINE CHRISTMAS WITHOUT A HOME

**15,715\*** Australian children will be  
homeless this Christmas

For countless families, this time of year means finding somewhere  
safe to sleep, scraping a meal together and trying to explain  
to children why Santa hasn't found them again this year.

Your donation can help provide a home for children like Rory.

**DONATE** today on **1800 88 88 68**  
or **missionaustralia.com.au**

