

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Good Samaritan Inn acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land on which its services are based. We recognise that colonisation took away the lands and rights of First Nations People, and that the later policies separated children from their families. We commit ourselves to work towards a just future for all peoples in our land. In particular, we believe that Australia can never reach its full potential until there is true reconciliation with First Nations People.



GOOD SAMARITAN INN

MAKING A HOME FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN



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Chair's Report

The GSI Board comprises a diverse group of people who come together with a common purpose - to steer GSI towards a sustainable future by adopting sound, ethical, and legal governance, and strong financial management practices, to ensure GSI has adequate resources to advance its mission.

The board endorsed earlier this year, the 2023 and 2024 strategic plan for GSI. The plan is built around four key pillars:

- Our clients are safe and empowered to take control over their lives.
- Our people are valued, skilled and engaged, and reflect the diversity of our community.
- Our organisation increases its influence and impacts positive change.
- Our organisation is financially sustainable, and resources are managed in line with our values and mission.

Some of our key strategic intents are ensuring that the lived experience of our clients inform our decisions; enriching our organisational culture; growth of our services through partnerships and collaborations; amplification of our advocacy and leadership within the sector; and the diversification of our funding sources.

I wrote in my 2022 Chair's Report that I hoped that when I came to write the 2023 Chair's Report, I would be able to inform you that we had started construction of a facility that will accommodate 10 women and their children for up to twelve months in self-contained accommodation. Although not quite there, I am

pleased to report that the tripartite agreement with GSI, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, and the Victorian State Government is nearly complete, and that construction will start in September with a completion date of early 2025.

Once operating we will be able to support women with high levels of disadvantage to recover from the trauma of family violence and homelessness; live in a safe environment; regain their personal strength and sense of self; and be empowered to make clear and informed decisions about their future.

Approximately 40% of places will be allocated to indigenous women or those with no Permanent Residency status.

Over the 12-month period the families are with us we will use a range of therapeutic interventions to enable restoration and recovery; and support mothers/ caregivers to be the parent they want to be by repairing damage done to the mother-child attachment.

We will also offer a range of support responses including counselling and other therapeutic group programs, case planning and goal setting, connecting to specialist and other local services and advocacy. These responses will be shaped by the needs presented by individual women and children, but it will broadly focus on healing and recovery, building resiliency and empowerment, upholding rights, and creating pathways to employment, permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

The GSI Board has responsibility for the oversight of GSI, ensuring it is faithful to the Inn's mission and abiding by the responsibilities assigned by Corporations law. They willingly collaborate to ensure GSI remains a quality and connected service to the women and children we serve. I wish to acknowledge the expertise, energy, and commitment of our directors. Each one brings skills and experiences that ensure that we remain strong and strategic stewards of this special Good Samaritan ministry.

I also extend my appreciation to the staff and volunteers. Central to our ability to support and care for the women and children who walk through the door of GSI are the staff who work with them on a 24-hour basis. Their dedication and commitment to making a difference are at the heart of who we are and what we do.

In conclusion I reflect on an article I read in the Age last week. It was about a film called Shayda, that is being screened at the Melbourne International Films Festival. The film is made by an Iranian woman Noora Nissari. It draws on her life experience of when she was five and with her mother moved into a women's refuge in Brisbane, for what was meant to be days, maybe weeks at most. Eight months later they finally moved into a home of their own. Her mother didn't have residency status, or any income or family support in Australia.

The film is shot in Melbourne and could easily be telling the story of a woman and child at GSI. Without permanent residency, women cannot work or study, or access health care. They have no ability to gain financial independence, making the decision to leave a violent relationship fraught with difficulties. A significant number of the women and children who come to us do not have permanent residency status, any family network, or ability to access government services.

The Inn strives to live out the mission of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. We are mindful that our ministry connects back to the Sisters' first ministry in Australia.

We are appreciative of the support that has been given by Sr Patty Fawkner sgs, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, and to Sr Marella Rebgetz sgs, the Chair of Members, who are finishing their term of office in September this year. I look forward to working with the new Congregational Leader Sr Catherine McCahill sgs.

Patricia Bergin
Chair of the GSI Board

Executive Director's Report

We have become accustomed to hearing the statistic that in Australia one woman every week is killed by her current or former partner (Our Watch). The cynics among us might say it has become the 'new normal'. In early July 2023, however, not one but *three* women lost their lives in a single week. These women were all killed by someone who had supposedly been in an intimate relationship with them.

Women are victimised regardless of where they live, how wealthy they are, and what culture they belong to. Yet violence is not inevitable, and we now know more and more about how we can stop it before it starts.

The National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey gauges change in attitudes and knowledge about violence against women. The most recent survey conducted in 2021 provides cause for hope as it indicates some slow but positive improvement. Nevertheless, there were some concerning findings.

For example, 91% of those surveyed recognised violence against women as a problem in Australia, yet only 47% saw violence as a problem in their own neighbourhood. This suggests a misconception that gender-based violence is not a community-wide issue occurring at all levels of society. We must rectify this through primary and early intervention strategies that shift such problematic attitudes.

GSI's work with Catholic schools over the past 12 months is one example of how we are driving change at a local level. We have delivered workshops that engage students and teachers in raising awareness of the prevalence and impact of violence against women. Every one of these engagements has the possibility of shifting an attitude that is steeped in misconceptions about what violence is, why it happens, and its impacts. These conversations can also reach someone who is experiencing violence and may encourage them to seek help from someone who can change, and perhaps even save, their lives.

In addition to schools, we have continued successful partnerships with a range of people, organisations, and businesses who support us to enrich the support we provide to victim survivors of family violence.

The Darebin Falcons have continued to bring 'footy fun' to GSI with weekly 'clinics' that teach ball skills and allow the women and the children to use their physical abilities to play and have fun.

Architects Without Frontiers (AWF) have delivered another important project for GSI with the development of a portable groupwork and activity space. They brought in one of their skilled and trusted contractors, ARKit to create a beautiful space that sits abutting the refuge playground. The portable space will be used for a myriad of activities including an Art Therapy Program, the Sing and Grow music program, counselling for women and children, Sensory Garden Program on wet days and much more.

We are incredibly grateful to the people and organisations who donated funding and materials to bring this space to life. Important other partners include Decjuba, Seytim Cabinets, Educating Kids, Tract Consultants, and LCI.

Our donor community also generously chipped in by giving to our EoFY children's appeal. These critical funds will enable us to run programs from the portable to help children and mothers heal and re-connect after family violence. This was the second time our donors responded to our call out for funds, having already generously donated to the appeal we held at Christmas time to refurbish the rooms where women and their children come to stay. In addition to donations from our appeals, I would like to highlight the contributions of a dedicated number of people who donate to us on a regular basis. This support enables us to plan and to respond with agility to the needs of the women and children seeking refuge.

We continue to receive much support in many forms from Parade College. They recently held a 'pyjama morning' and donated boxes of cozy sleepwear. The gowns and pyjamas were a wonderful addition to the new curtains, linen, and towels, we purchased for women and children using the funds from our Christmas appeal. We also had another 'Pay it Forward Day' with a group of volunteers from Parade staff who installed more much-needed cupboards and cooked many tasty meals and treats.

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan have provided a wealth of support for our mission and our staff. As the SGS Congressional Leader, Sr Patty Fawcner, steps down from her role, I would like to acknowledge how she has inspired us with her eloquent and relevant prose that has helped make sense of some of the more confounding and dispiriting happenings across the world. I would also like to thank Sr Marella Rebgetz as the Chair of Members for her unwavering support of myself and the work of GSI as she moves on from this role.

As I write this in early August, we are very close to finalising the lease, building contract, and funding agreement for Banyule House, our new 10-bed accomodation project. It is a 'labour of love' and Tricia the GSI Board Chair, Donna our Company Secretary, and Asher the architect and project manager, have worked tirelessly to bring all the moving parts together. The project would not have been possible without the extra funding that came from Family Safety Victoria's 2022 Budget Bid.

GSI have been working through the process of the Rainbow Tick accreditation, and whilst we are not undertaking the full accreditation until early 2024, we are ready to open our services to trans and gender-diverse people. We acknowledge that trans and gender-diverse victim survivors experience high levels of violence perpetrated against them and are often marginalised because of their gender identity. Our Board, staff and volunteers are therefore all committed to ensuring that GSI is and remains an inclusive place for all those who need a refuge. We look forward to

continuing our work with LGBTIQ+ organisations to ensure that we are connected, act as positive allies, and offer services that are best-practice to support and enhance the safety and wellbeing of trans and gender diverse victim survivors. You can read more about our work on the Rainbow Tick on page 11.

In the past 12 months we have farewelled a number of staff members. Thank you to Laura Kubeil, Catherine Di-Franco, Hazel Alverio, Rawinia Pierce, Donna Hargreaves, Valerie Richards, and Serap Filiz. We will always think highly of you and treasure the time, skills and commitment you gave to GSI.

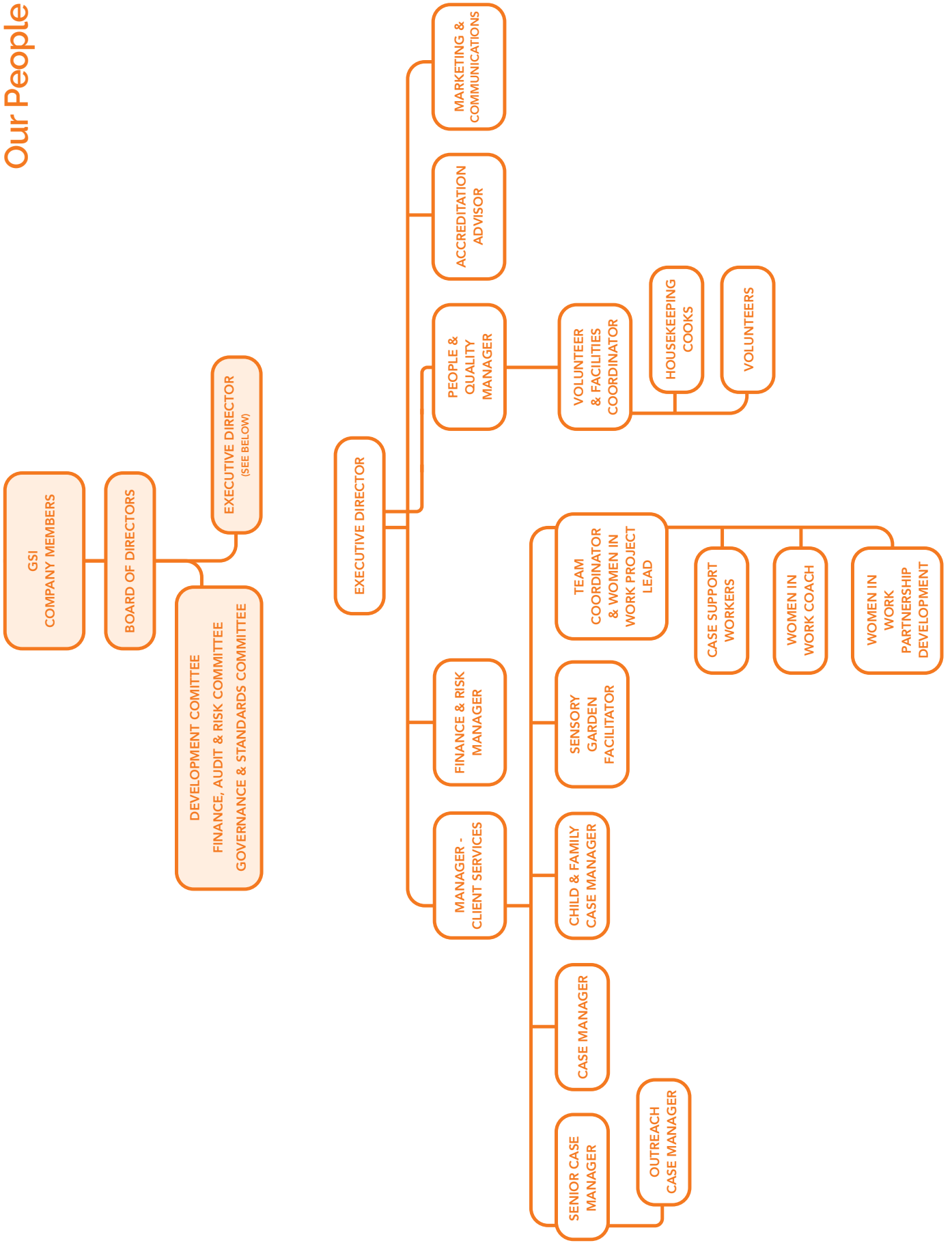
The GSI Board and Committee members continue to guide us through the complexities of running a small community-based organisation with their deep knowledge, skills and expertise. Board, Committee and Banyule Project meetings add up to an incredible amount of time and effort that is undertaken because of their total commitment, belief and passion for GSI's mission.

Although our volunteer numbers have reduced significantly post-COVID we still have a team of dedicated, skilled, and very enthusiastic people who harness their skills and share them with us. We are incredibly grateful to you all and value everything that you do to assist GSI to support and empower victim survivors. I would particularly like to thank Anne, our volunteer who organised a very successful fundraising event at a Bowling Club.

Whilst we have had some of our valued staff members leave us over the past 12 months, we have also welcomed others and thank some of them for very quickly stepping into the organisation to support us in our work. We have a team of incredible, committed people who make a difference every day to the women and children we support. I thank them all for their continued energy, passion and skills.

Felicity Rorke
Executive Director

Our People



GSI impact



37% OF WOMEN WERE AGED BETWEEN 26 – 45 YEARS



27% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WERE AGED UNDER 5 YEARS



43 GUESTS IDENTIFIED AS CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE.



26% OF GUESTS IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER.



42% OF GUESTS SPOKE LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH AS THEIR PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME



25% OF TOTAL GUESTS DID NOT HAVE PERMANENT RESIDENCY IN AUSTRALIA.



12 GUESTS REQUIRED AN INTERPRETER TO SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNICATION AND ENABLE INCREASED ADVOCACY.



27 NIGHTS IS THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY



1,857 SUPPORTED NIGHT STAYS WERE PROVIDED THIS YEAR

GSI is often one of the first places victim-survivors stay after leaving family violence. As such, the physical and emotional safety and wellbeing of guests is our priority.



106 GUESTS WERE ACCOMMODATED THIS YEAR, COMPRISING OF 68 WOMEN AND 38 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



29 WOMEN REFERRED TO 'WOMEN IN WORK' ENABLING THEM TO ACCESS TRAINING, EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES



40% OF WOMEN WERE SUPPORTED TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE HOUSING



94% OF GUESTS WERE NEW CLIENTS. 6% HAD STAYED WITH GSI PREVIOUSLY



24/7 STAFFING, SECURITY CAMERAS AND NON-DISCLOSED ADDRESS AT ALL FACILITIES



THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS INCLUDE COUNSELLING, SENSORY GARDEN THERAPY, ART THERAPY, PET THERAPY AND ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT FOSTER POSITIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



13 WOMEN HAVE SUCCESSFULLY GAINED EMPLOYMENT AND COACHING



GSI aims to ensure that all interactions with guests are respectful, empathic, non-judgmental and convey optimism. We meet each woman with hope and the belief that change is possible.

Our Services

In the past twelve months we have provided a safe and nurturing space for 106 victim survivors and their children. Of these, there were 68 adults and 38 children and young people, including 6 pregnant women and 3 newborns! This is not surprising, given that pregnancy and birth are times when family violence can escalate, and women and children can be most vulnerable.

Our staff worked tirelessly throughout the year. They greeted women and their children with compassion and respect, providing care and an exemplary level of service. Our Case Managers and Case Support Workers bore witness to women's struggles and experiences, and ensured they had all the support needed to begin their lives away from violence. Their work included helping women secure what they needed to set up in a new home, ensuring their children had access to childcare or school, accompanying women to court, and applying for financial and material aid.

Behind the scenes, our cooks and housekeepers continued to provide a clean and spotless living environment, nutritious meals, and sense of community for guests. The food prepared by our cooks Tuyet and Vesna, is always appreciated and enjoyed, and we receive many compliments on the cleanliness of the Inn. Hospitality is one of GSI's five values so the efforts of our housekeepers and cooks are always recognised, appreciated, and celebrated.

Two new developments at our refuge have allowed us to enhance the services we provide to women and children this year. Thanks to our donor community, we were able to refurbish our 8 guest rooms and the staff sleepover room with soft new linen, towels, and curtains. This warm welcome is helping women and children feel safe and soothed after the trauma of fleeing life-threatening violence. We have also completed building a portable structure in the garden of our refuge. From there, we will deliver a range of programs such as art and music therapy, to help women and children heal and recover.



Our new portable structure for child and family programs.



A guest room with new curtains and fresh linen.



A day in the life of a family at the inn

Children usually appear in their pajamas for breakfast in the shared kitchen and living area. Mostly they arrive snuggled close to their Mum. Sometimes we give mum a break and take the little one to play with some toys while she has a shower or a coffee. Sometimes mum and child head off early for childcare or school.

During the day there are many activities and programs on offer at the refuge, including the sensory garden, footy skills, and Sing and Grow. These support and enable children to express themselves, heal through play, enjoy an activity with their parent or siblings, or simply have fun during this time of relative instability.

Many families spend numerous days onsite before they feel safe or confident to leave the refuge and go to the local shops, Centrelink, or a doctor's appointment. Some of the barriers they experience include trauma, low language skills, unfamiliarity with public transport, and anxiety. It may take a great deal of support and care from our team to help rebuild their confidence and independence.

When women and their children head off to appointments, we support them to do this with safety, care, and planning. During the day case managers aim to provide all aspects of support to assist in reaching the families' goals. This might involve using interpreters, looking after the child while mum talks with a medical professional, or safety planning to prevent any further exposure to family violence.

The newfound safety of our refuge offers a chance for women and children to reconnect and strengthen their bonds. We see so many ways in which mums are protective of their children. Parents develop a strong routine around mealtimes, play, and bedtime. They are affectionate and loving and enjoy the quality time they have together during their stay at the Inn.

In the evenings, guests sit down together in the dining room to enjoy a nutritious and tasty hot meal prepared and served by our cooks. Children's favourites are fried rice, spring rolls, and bolognaise. Our overnight support worker joins the group, making conversation and building connections with guests.

Most families turn in early, returning to their rooms for much needed rest and downtime. There, they can choose a bedtime story from our large selection of children's and adult's books. Once the children are asleep, parents sometimes return downstairs for a chat.

Each morning and afternoon, the day staff handover to the evening staff. At these times we share knowledge, learnings, and clarify the priorities for our guests. We often share many moments of feeling connected, inspired, moved, and uplifted by our guests and their journeys to safety.

Programs and partnerships

The Women in Work program aims to increase the financial independence of victim survivors of violence by providing them supported employment opportunities. The past twelve months have seen an expansion of the program as well as the recruitment of two new staff, Vesna and Bernie. Vesna is coaching program participants, a process that includes identifying women's goals and working to remove any barriers to employment. Bernie is developing partnerships with businesses who can offer employment placements. He is also educating these businesses about the impacts of family violence on women's workforce capability and how organisations can respond in a trauma-informed way to disclosures of violence from their own staff.

In the past year GSI began an Outreach Program that supports women for up to 6 months after they have left our refuge. Outreach Case Manager Gurinder joined GSI to deliver this program. Gurinder brings rich experience of providing outreach in the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's Out of Home Care Program and as a Residential Care worker with Berry Street Services. Since joining us, Gurinder has supported multiple women and their children as they make their first steps from living in our refuge, to starting new lives in the community. Like the Women in Work program, our outreach work extends GSI's commitment to securing long-term outcomes for victim survivors by preventing women falling back into the vicious cycle of violence and homelessness.

The Darebin Women's Sports Club continued its partnership with GSI in providing weekly 'Footy Fun' sessions for residents of all ages, facilitated by former AFLW superstar, Aasta O'Conner. Grounded in feminist roots, the Darebin Falcons are trail blazers in women's sport in Victoria. In sessions, our guests participate in active play and sport that benefits not only their physical health, but also their social and psychological health and wellbeing. The Footy Fun program enables women and children to re-build and re-connect with their self-confidence, strength, autonomy, and power, while also having a laugh and sharing joy with others.

We hosted four therapeutic programs last year. Berry Street delivered the Northern Healing and Recovery Program (NHARP) every week for traumatised children and their parents. The Sing and Grow program also visited each week for mums and children, bringing a range of instruments for participants to have a try with. Children delighted in hearing sounds they have never

experienced before. Play Matters joined us last year for the first time. Like Sing and Grow, Play Matters is a government-funded initiative that supports children and families to build relationships, skills, and confidence through play.

When the weather was fair, these programs could take place in the garden of our refuge, where we also deliver our sensory garden program. Twice a week, our therapeutic gardener, Anne, supported children to learn about plants, make constructions in the sandpit, build bug houses, and create little signs. Our adult guests engaged in the garden in a range of ways from passive enjoyment to active gardening. Women have been involved in tasks like harvesting and drying herbs, and planting and caring for plants. Many women tell us that they find the garden relaxing. One guest spoke about the garden as a place of healing metaphors explaining, 'It (the garden) sends a message to say that we can grow and change, it is beautiful, it is calming'. Another guest requested that we plant a plant in the garden so that we can remember her and her child, saying 'GSI has been so important for us moving forward, I want you to remember us, to walk past that plant and think, I remember them.'

Research into the positive benefits of green space and being in nature is mounting. The fractal shapes of plants are calming, the soft attention we pay when in a garden space improves our ability to focus and attend to tasks. The garden offers often unconscious but powerful metaphors of hope, growth, and renewal as the cycle of the seasons unfold. Time in green spaces has also been shown to lead to measurable physical changes including lower blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones.

Our work at the Inn could not have been possible without the support of generous government funding bodies, philanthropic trusts and foundations, individual donors, and organisations. This past year we were graced with support from CWA Alphington who came to our door every month with baked goods and premade meals. Whenever we need anything like nappies, umbrellas, balance bikes, etc., they have gotten them for us. Thread Together came on board to deliver capsules of quality clothing in all sizes. Thread Together are an organisation driving social and environmental change by saving clothing from landfill. Decjuba continued to show their support of our work by donating beautiful clothing from their stores. Women who were staying at the Inn were absolutely thrilled to be able to pick and choose from high-quality, fashionable, brand-new clothing.

Enhancing inclusion for LGBTIQ+ victim survivors

After a period of planning and preparation work, we are well on our way to meeting our target date for our Rainbow Tick Accreditation audit with QIP in March 2024. Our Rainbow Tick working group meets regularly and we have had the opportunity to network and collaborate with other organisations such as GMI, Good Shepherd, and VincentCare. Staff have taken part in an incredible day of LGBTIQ+ foundational knowledge and inclusion training with Zoe Belle Gender Collective, and we are looking into further training and professional development for staff as well as our volunteers. We held a morning tea in May for IDAHOBIT, with another upcoming in August to celebrate Wear It Purple Day. Behind the scenes a lot of work is going into the review and audits of, and additions to our guiding and direct service documents to ensure the Rainbow Tick standards are met and embedded into all areas of our work, with the ultimate goal of being able to provide a welcoming environment and inclusive and affirming services to members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

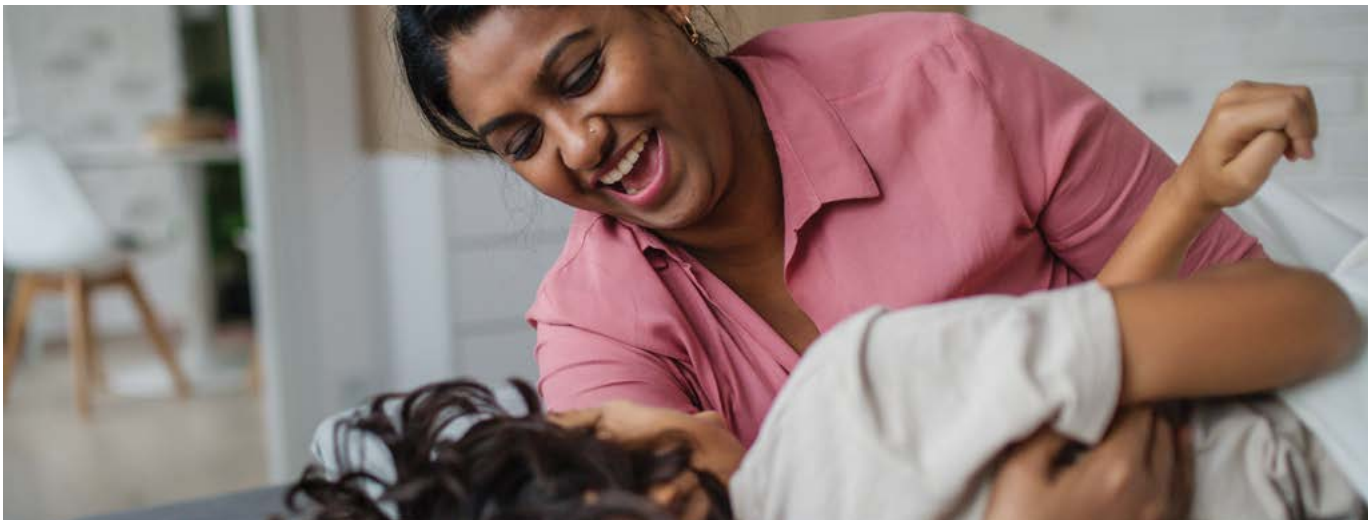


Primary prevention of family violence through advocacy and education

GSI partners with a number of Catholic schools in the primary prevention of family violence. In this work we aim to influence young people by raising awareness of family violence, challenging pervasive and harmful gender stereotypes, and promoting healthy relationships. Our staff have given presentations at numerous schools, including Parade College and Sacred Heart College in Oakley. We also participate in the Street Retreat run by Santa Maria College which sees students do a sleep out and a 'walk in their shoes' project to better understand the lived experiences of victim survivors of violence.

We are proud to have reached hundreds of students through this work over the past twelve months.

Roshni and Aayan's Story



Roshni came to Australia from India with her son Aayan, her partner and his family. Her partner's violence toward her and Aayan was becoming increasingly dangerous. And it was not only him that perpetrated the abuse – his family did too. They controlled every aspect of her life. She was rarely allowed to leave the house and her poor grasp of English meant that she struggled to communicate and build connections in her new country.

Roshni and Aayan came to GSI earlier this year. By then, the violence had become life-threatening, and Child Protection urgently requested we make a room available for them. Roshni was very apprehensive when they arrived. Years of abuse had left her feeling incapable of surviving on her own and she was overwhelmed at the prospect of becoming a single parent.

Roshni slowly became comfortable at GSI. She began to chat with staff members and other guests, building confidence in her ability to communicate. At first, Roshni would cook for Aayan and herself at every meal. Once she was settled into her stay, she began to cook for staff members and other guests. This practice made Roshni very proud of her own abilities and helped rebuild self-esteem that had been so deliberately eroded.

Roshni was still recovering from the trauma she sustained after years of isolation and family violence. She became comfortable enough to share these feelings with our staff. Her biggest worry was that her ex-partner would try to take Aayan away by demanding full custody.

Roshni feared her ex-partners' knowledge of English and the legal systems would be used against her, making him appear on paper as a better parent.

When her fears became reality and her ex-partner went for full custody of Aayan, GSI supported Roshni to take out an Intervention Order (IVO) against him and his family. We also assisted Roshni to secure legal representation through iInTouch, Multi-Cultural Centre Against Family Violence and to advocate against full custody by writing support letters on the importance of Aayan remaining in Roshni's care. Weeks later, Roshni was granted a full IVO against her ex-partner as well as full custody of Aayan.

Staff recall this as a pivotal moment in time for Roshni. Her confidence and her hope for the future could take root for the first time. Roshni and Aayan have an evident and heart-warming bond and the doubts she harboured about her parenting abilities disappeared after gaining custody.

GSI was successful in securing Roshni and Aayan long-term housing through another service and after 5 weeks with us, they moved out into a new home. Our Outreach program will continue supporting them both as they settle into their new lives, away from the fear and violence that had plagued them for so long.

Our Volunteers



680 HOURS VOLUNTEERED



22 ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers play an integral role in the care and support of the women and children at our refuge. In the past year, 22 enthusiastic individuals volunteered over 680 hours of their time and talent helping us deliver many projects and activities.

We recruit, match and train volunteers to work with us. Recently, we have begun to diversify the volunteer opportunities we offer, which has successfully resulted in a more inclusive and engaged volunteer base.

The dedication of our volunteers enabled us to achieve these amazing outcomes:

- Growth and development of the Sensory Garden Program and the ongoing care of the garden.
- Continual management of the many maintenance issues besetting a very old building.
- Tutoring for children to help them with their schoolwork.
- Pet therapy with the Lort Smith therapy dogs.
- Regular management of the donations room and assistance in the office.
- A whopping **\$10,011** raised by volunteers at a Trivia Day.



In the coming year, we look forward to onboarding more volunteers. We plan to introduce pampering sessions for guests with hairdressing, nail care, yoga, and relaxation sessions. One of our volunteers will be launching a fundraising Cookbook with recipes sourced from our two wonderful cooks, guests, staff, management, and some well-known chefs.

GSI extends our heartfelt gratitude to all of the dedicated volunteers for their selfless service and unwavering commitment.

Their contributions enhance our work with additional practical, emotional and creative assistance.

Our Students



During the year we hosted two students on placement from RMIT who were completing their Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work degrees. Field Education like that undertaken through placement with GSI, provides students the opportunity to integrate their classroom learning of knowledge and theory with practice in real world environments.

Students 'shadow' GSI's Case Managers throughout their 500-hour placements, enabling them to refine their practice skills while learning the various elements that are involved in the support of guests both onsite and in an outreach capacity.

Hosting students is a powerful experience for the staff at GSI.



We are not only contributing to the learning of each and every social work student that we host, we are also contributing to building a skilled and experienced workforce for the future. And the learning goes both ways – students share the latest skills and research knowledge with us, which supports our staff to stay abreast of recent developments in the field of social work.



Andrea and Felix's Story



Andrea had lived in regional Victoria with her then partner, Nicholas, for ten years. Andrea first met Nicholas when she had returned to the country to look after family. Prior to that she'd had a thriving career in hospitality in Melbourne and was working towards establishing herself in the industry.

During their ten years together, Nicholas subjected Andrea to psychological, verbal, and severe physical abuse. He wouldn't allow Andrea to leave the property they lived on, and he coerced her into using methamphetamines. After the birth of their son Felix, Nicholas became even more controlling, and he was physically violent for the first time. Andrea could only leave home to run errands and was beaten if she returned home later than Nicholas expected. Felix was present for most of this violence. Andrea tried to flee many times but was always intercepted, with dire consequences. One day, in fear of hers and her son's lives, they escaped with the help of Andrea's family.

Andrea and Felix were referred to GSI by the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), Djirra. When they arrived, Andrea was reluctant to engage with workers and was anxious about Felix's behaviour around co-guests and workers. Felix was traumatised from witnessing family violence, and he could not regulate himself around others. He was constantly on the alert for threats and could not calm himself down. This made it so hard for him to be around people he didn't know and trust. He would become angry or upset very easily, and he struggled around noisy or big groups of children, having lived in isolation for so long.

Andrea was distressed by Felix's behaviour and harboured a lot of guilt about his traumatic childhood. Applying a trauma-informed approach and a strengths-based lens, GSI staff worked around the clock with Andrea and Felix, to establish trust, build Andrea's confidence and work towards their goals collaboratively.

Being safe from Nicholas was essential for Andrea and Felix. A full Intervention Order was taken out against him, preventing contact with Andrea and Felix for five years. This brought them immense relief. Within the Inn's communal environment, Andrea and Felix began to blossom. Andrea has begun to understand the impacts of family violence on adult and child victim-survivors, and this has helped her see Felix's behaviour in a different light. She has also made valuable connections with co-guests at the Inn and regained the confidence which had been stripped away. Felix has also grown tremendously; regular socialising with workers and co-guests has helped him to regulate his emotions and relax around other children.

GSI worked alongside other services to advocate for Andrea and Felix. One of Andrea's goals was to reduce her dependence on alcohol, which she had been using to cope with the impact of her traumatic experiences. She's been proud to make real strides through the collaborative work of GSI staff and her dedicated Alcohol and other Drug worker. Andrea is also attending women's groups, cultural workshops, and a cultural parenting program facilitated by another ACCO, Ngwala. Felix has begun attending a culturally appropriate kindergarten through the advocacy of GSI workers, which has been helping him to develop socially, personally, and culturally.

GSI advocated for Andrea to receive extensive dental work as her teeth were damaged from years of prolonged family violence including coerced drug use. She now feels confident for the first time in years, which is positively impacting her mental health and future aspirations. Andrea's plans for her family's are to re-join the workforce and establish a safe and comfortable home.

Acknowledgements

In the last financial year we received \$2,705,332 in government funding and grants, together with \$90,546 in donations.

Our work would not be possible if not for the generosity, passion, and partnership of the people and organisations acknowledged here.

Government and Philanthropic funding

Good Samaritan Sisters
CCI Giving
Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness & Housing
Family Safety Victoria
Fr Kevin Broderick Memorial Trust
Good Samaritan Foundation
Lendlease FutureSteps and Community Enterprise Foundation
MF Foundation
Myer Community Fund
Perpetual Philanthropic Services
StreetSmart Australia
Tank Foundation
The Ledger Charitable Trust
Woodards Foundation

Parishes, Community Groups & Individuals

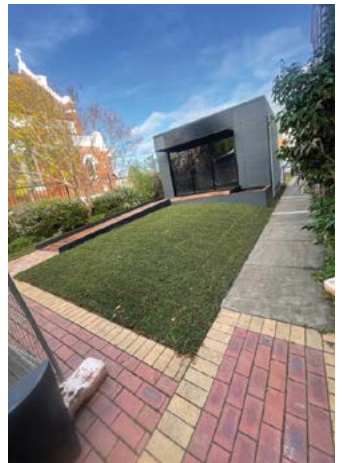
Anne Greening, volunteer fundraiser
Asher Greenwood
Archdiocese of Melbourne
Catholic Social Services Victoria
Dominican Sisters
Fr Aloysius Nato
Fr Bill Edebohls
Fr John McCarthy
Ged Kearney MP
Karen Hart
Mariana Community
Marist Brothers, Fitzroy
Marist Sisters
Meryllyn Bear
Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Melbourne
St Bernadette's Parish, Ivanhoe
St Bernard's Parish, Coburg East
Darebin Hard Rubbish Heroes

Businesses

Alpha-Form Constructions
Architects without Frontiers and service partners
ARKit & partners
Catholic Development Fund
CCB Envico PTY Ltd & Reeves International Pty Ltd
Chris Power, PowerProjects
Collins & Co Pty Ltd
Decjuba
Educating Kids Pty Ltd
GKA Architects
Hayball Architects
Myer Melbourne
SNAP printing, Preston
Seytim Cabinets
Virtue Concrete & Building

Schools

Mount St Benedict's College, NSW
Nazareth College
Parade College, Preston & Bundoora
Santa Maria College, Northcote
St Bernards Primary School, Coburg
St Columba's College, Essendon
St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully
St Mary's Star of the Sea College, Wollongong
St Scholastica's College, Glebe





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