

MCAULEY HOUSE OPENS IN BALLARAT

This year brings a significant milestone for McAuley Community Services for Women, with the opening of their first service based outside Melbourne. McAuley House Ballarat will bring their model of integrated support – a proven method of eliminating homelessness for women – into regional Victoria.

The opportunity to do this came about because of their connection to the wider Mercy family. They have now converted a property previously used by the Institute into medium-term housing which will provide support for at least seven women.

The building has been completely refurbished and has many of the trademarks associated with their pioneering services at McAuley House Footscray: individually decorated bedrooms each with an ensuite, vibrant artwork, a sense of tranquility and space, and views onto a sunlit garden. It also has a communal kitchen and shared dining area.

Importantly, the building is adjacent to a new aged care facility operated by Mercy Health. This development, Mercy Place Ballarat, opened in September last year, and is pioneering an innovative approach to supporting people as they age, involving 14 small and connected households rather than a large, impersonal and institutional setting.

In fact the Mercy Place aged care model – with its emphasis on relationships, personal choice, and reducing loneliness and isolation – is very much in harmony with their own approach to supporting women who have been homeless.

“Being neighbours is a natural fit and will lead to some exciting new ways of doing things,” said Jocelyn Bignold, CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women.

“Our employment program, McAuley Works, is a central part of this development and now has a new case manager working from McAuley House Ballarat. We will be assisting women who are experiencing multiple barriers to employment find work.

As well as Mercy Place Ballarat, we will be making connections with local health, housing and legal services. We know that women who have been homeless have multiple and complex needs.

Having the security of a roof over their head is of course vital, but with that settled, addressing the trauma, mental and physical health issues and financial disadvantage that they have experienced is also essential.”

“This expansion outside Melbourne is an objective of our strategic plan for the next five years,” Ms Bignold said. “The establishment of Ballarat is the first step in achieving that vision, and is of course new territory for us. We know we



can't just transport the McAuley House model, lock stock and barrel, and make it work. There is a lot to learn, but it is also very exciting and we look forward to working with the Ballarat community to bring our new service to life."

Click [here](#) to visit the McAuley Community Services for Women website

This article first appeared in the March Edition of Just Mercy - <https://institute.mercy.org.au/news-centre/just-mercy/>

