

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



GOOD SAMARITAN INN

MAKING A HOME FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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GOOD SAMARITAN **INN**

MAKING A HOME FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

2020/2021 Financial Year Snapshot



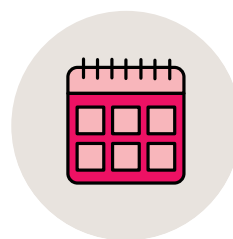
45 WOMEN
SUPPORTED
WITH CRISIS
ACCOMMODATION



28 CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
SUPPORTED



2,537 BED NIGHTS



AVERAGE LENGTH OF
STAY OF 28 NIGHTS



25 YEARS OF
SERVICE



20 STAFF
EMPLOYED



259 VOLUNTEER
HOURS



\$1,480,935
GOVERNMENT
FUNDING AND
GRANTS



\$123,779
DONATIONS



5 STUDENTS
PLACEMENTS
SUPPORTED



20 WOMEN
SUPPORTED
THROUGH WOMEN
IN WORK



4041 HOURS OF
CASE WORK

From the Chair

As I write this report the Federal Government is hosting a two-day National Summit on Women's Safety. In his opening address the Prime Minister conceded that Australia has a problem with the way it treats women. "Right now, too many Australian women do not feel safe. There is still an attitude, a culture that excuses and justifies, ignores, or condones gender inequality that drives ultimately violence against women and that is on all of us. I don't believe that we can talk about women's safety without talking about men".

We know that in Australia, 1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner; 1 in 4 women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner; 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence and a woman is killed every 9 days in a domestic situation.

Good Samaritan Inn has for 25 years supported women and children escaping family violence. We know that affordable housing is integral to a women's ability to leave abusive relationships and live with dignity, independence, and safety. There is a housing crisis in this country for women with little or no income and especially those with no permanent residency.

We encounter women and children in their first steps leaving family violence. As a crisis accommodation facility, our staff often work with highly traumatised families who need somewhere to rest, recover, and begin to imagine a life free of fear and trauma. Over the last 4 years, since offering a 24/7 service, we are able to work more closely with families to provide the services and support needed for them to take 'next steps'. For some this may be a week or 10 days whilst for others it could be months. GSI staff are committed to individualising the care, support, advice, and guidance given to each woman and child.

GSI remains committed to providing longer term accommodation post crisis and refuge accommodation. Our transitional housing project is a key priority, and we hope to be able to finalise our plans for a second facility in early 2022.

If violence against women is to be significantly reduced there needs to be a strong investment in primary prevention programs. GSI is involved in a schools-based project with a boy's school where we are planning to work with staff and students to raise awareness of different expressions of violence and the importance of healthy relationships and emotional health and wellbeing.

Pathways to employment is also another important part of the journey to recovery, safety, and independence. At GSI we have built networks with a range of organisations where we are able to mentor and provide training which enables women to successfully enter the workforce. We hope to be able to extend this program in the future when we have expanded our service to include longer term accommodation options for women and children.

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.

Finally, my thanks to the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and the Trustees of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.



We live in uncertain times. Living in a time of a pandemic only increases the fragility of the marginalised and vulnerable in our community. GSI remains resolved to our vision to support women and children to recover from the trauma of family violence and homelessness; regain their personal strength and sense of self; and be empowered to make clear and informed decisions about their next steps.

Patricia Bergin
Chair of GSI Board

From the Executive Director

Whilst we never imagined that we would still be in a COVID-induced lockdown, we are humbled with the thought that whilst we provide care and support to women and children who are experiencing violence from a partner, the women and children in Afghanistan are potentially facing a new ruling government that will significantly curb their rights to secondary and tertiary education, employment, choice to marry freely (or not) and even to walk around without a male chaperone. UN Women call it a 'gender emergency' and the UN have promised to remain in the country continuing their work of empowering and protecting women and children. With a new government in place that includes no women, the Taliban has already shown signs of forcing women to return to a life of subservience to men. We know that the most significant driver of violence against women is an environment where women do not have equal rights.

Whilst we have only supported 21 women and children over the past few years who identified as being born in Afghanistan, we recognise that this number might grow as Australia commits to supporting people fleeing from this country. The difficulties of having to emigrate can be significant at any time, but in the chaos and crisis of this transition period in Afghanistan, it is likely to leave those who land in Australia or elsewhere with serious impacts of trauma. We also know that during such crises, the incident of family violence and violence against women, increases.

In 2020 we closed during the 'peak' COVID period from late July to mid-October to undertake renovations to the amenities at the Inn. These renovations included the installation of a new disability accessible bathroom (full DDA compliant), a kitchen renovation to create more storage space and safety for children, and a new security fence and gates. We were incredibly fortunate to form a partnership with Architects without Frontiers (AWF - <https://www.architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au/>) who engaged their partners Hayball Architects to manage the renovation project. A huge effort that resulted in the complete overhaul of all the bathroom amenities transforming them from their original state. Reliance Constructions undertook the works and numerous other companies were engaged by Hayball including LCI, Tract, Caroma, Designstuff and others, to provide either cost or no-cost products and services.

There is no doubt that due to our partnership with AWF, we were able to undertake these critical renovations with significant savings. Hayball have also provided plans for a portable children's groupwork and play space that will be installed before the end of 2021. The works were a huge effort, all undertaken during COVID-19 restrictions. We are incredibly grateful to Sarah, Emma, Chris, Ron and many others who provided many hours of consultation, meetings, drawings and construction works to create such lovely, fresh spaces as well as a more secured environment for our guests. Since reopening in October 2020, we decided to only accept four new families to ensure that each family had their own bathroom helping us transition into a COVID-safe workplace. Wearing full PPE was a challenge for direct service staff, but a much bigger challenge for babies and small children who like to see and touch the friendly faces of the workers. Possibly not a trauma-informed way of working, it was nevertheless a COVID-safe way of working. Staff were very relieved when they could return to wearing *just* masks.

We have provided 73 women, young people and children with supported accommodation over the 2020/2021 year. Although this is not a large number in comparison to other years of service provision (mostly due to the 3-month close for the amenity renovations), this includes over 4,000 hours of direct service staff time dedicated towards supporting, advocating for, undertaking risk assessments and safety planning, providing crisis interventions, counselling, planning and goal development and therapeutic groupwork. This work occurs over seven days per week and often into the evenings ensuring that women, young people and children are given every opportunity to be in a more settled, connected and emotionally stable position prior to moving to their next and hopefully longer-term accommodation option.

As we continue to operate through the latest rounds of restrictions across our state, we are kept informed on a weekly if not daily basis by Laura, our Finance & Risk Manager's comprehensive COVID coverage. We are now adept at online meetings, training, supervision, counselling and even social events. Whilst we have had to put on hold most of our volunteer activities during COVID restrictions, we have had volunteers provide tutoring to children and young people, English language coaching to women and support us with our social media posts. We

live in hope that we will soon be able to re-engage our volunteers back with their usual complementary activities. We continue to reap the rewards of having a close and effective partnership with Parade College. We thank Andy, Sally, John, Jacob, Catherine and Arthur for their generosity, support and friendship over the past difficult year. We also especially thank the students who have broken things (with purpose), built things, weeded gardens, and provided some much needed 'muscle' when it was in short supply!

GSI successfully undertook our three-yearly Accreditation process in early 2021 to ensure that we are deemed to have the appropriate policies, practices, and infrastructure in place to continue to be government funded, delivering critical services to those requiring them. It was a huge amount of work by Val, our Organisational Development Manager, and all the management team. We also had support from Anna who was our assigned worker through the *Working for Victoria* recruitment process. She was employed by Darebin Council but based with GSI for six months. We thank Darebin Council and particularly Anna for the time she spent with us.

We continue to explore new ways for GSI to increase the services we provide including progressing projects with Catholic Parishes to provide more transitional housing for women and children experiencing family violence. We know that the issue of housing affordability is probably at its most critical point across Victoria and the rest of the country, and we welcome the support from Catholic parishes and the Archdiocese to work with us to create new opportunities to redevelop church-owned buildings.

Despite the Housing and Homelessness sectors' consistent national advocacy to increase the availability of public and social housing across the country, and the knowledge that family and domestic violence is the most significant driver of homelessness for women and children, the federal government's Women's Safety Summit had little to offer in the way of any tangible evidence that this was an issue to be tackled in any comprehensive way.

As I write this, I don't recall a time during my 30 odd years working in Community & Human Services, where the housing affordability situation was more dire. Even

in the regional areas where housing has traditionally been more affordable, people on limited incomes (and even those in work with decent incomes) cannot find somewhere to live. We know that housing availability and affordability are basic necessities, and we also know that women will remain in unsafe situations in preference to being homeless. During the recent Census count the Homelessness Services in the Northern Region coordinated to attempt to capture the voices of all people irrespective of where they were living. What shocked some of the long-term Homelessness & Housing practitioners, was the fact that there were areas in the northern suburbs where people were living in almost 'shanty-town' type dwellings. Victoria's *Big Build* cannot come soon enough and needs to be supplemented by both federal and state government policies that prioritise women and children escaping family violence as well as create a housing system that keeps enough public and social housing for all those who require it.

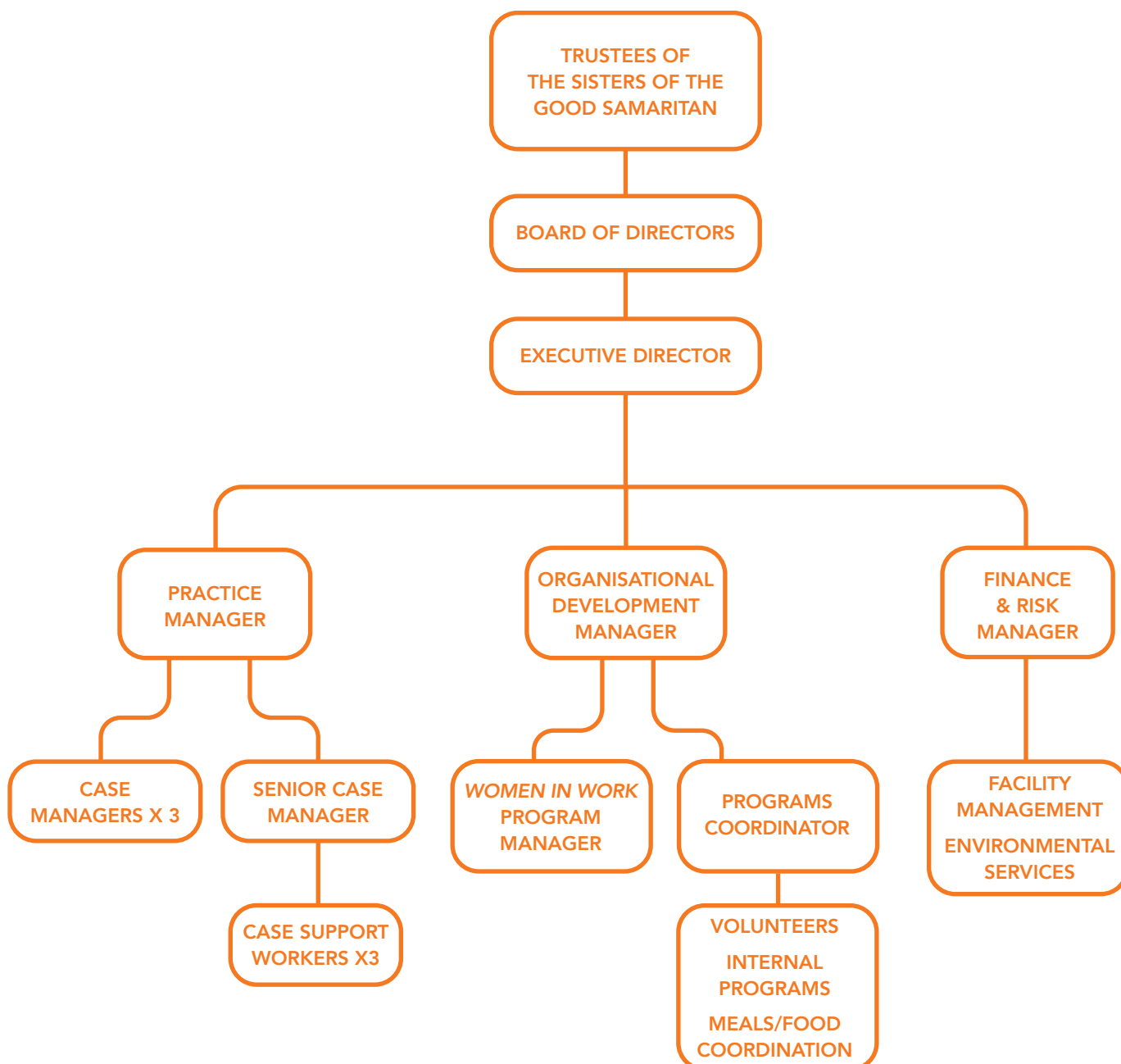
We hope that the new financial year will bring hope for the COVID-19 pandemic to be managed in a way that keeps us all safe, but also shines a light on those who have experienced more despair, psychological distress, and family violence. We hope that more dedicated systemic responses to these issues will occur.

To conclude my report I want to acknowledge that throughout all the restrictions and lockdowns that Melbourne has experienced over the past 12 months, our direct service and housekeeping staff have continued to go to work, don PPE gear or at the very least, masks, and worked tirelessly to keep the service 'COVID-clean', maintain 'COVID-rules', and persisted in providing trauma-informed, best practice responses to women, young people and children. This work has been made more difficult by clients, who by virtue of their long-term experiences of being marginalised, homeless or having mental health concerns, are not necessarily compliant with 'public health-advice'. I thank each one of these staff members for the commitment and care they continue to provide despite the challenges.

Felicity Rorke
Executive Director



Our People



Our People

Board

Patricia Bergin
Chair

Mike Roberts
Deputy Chair

Scott Hartley
Secretary

Sr Kerin Caldwell

Jane Seeber

Kate Jackson

Simone Tassone

Helen Scotts

Committees

Development Committee

Mike Roberts Chair
Felicity Rorke
Marie Mohr (retired in June 2021)
Patricia Bergin
Ronnie Egan
Helen Scotts
Simone Tassoni

Felicity Rorke
Kate Jackson
Patricia Bergin

Finance, Risk and Audit Committee

Scott Hartley Chair
Andrew Firn
Felicity Rorke
Jane Seeber
Laura Kubeil Webb
Patricia Bergin

Governance and Standards Committee

Sr Kerin Caldwell Chair
Bronwyn Lane

Staffing

Executive Director Felicity Rorke

Practice Manager Cym Thompson

Finance and Risk Manager Laura Kubeil Webb

Organisational Development Manager
Valerie Richards

Support Services Manager
Kirsty Manning (resigned in July 2021)

Case Managers

Nardine
Nga
Hazel
Georgia

Case Support Workers

Sally
Brenda
Isterlin

Housekeeping

Annette
Milva
Shiney

Direct Service Report

Since reopening in October 2020 GSI's capacity for accommodating women and families has increased to five families and three single women, with the recent opening of the eighth room downstairs. The renovations created a disability-accessible bathroom so we are now able to accommodate women who have a mobility issue, are injured or are heavily pregnant or have needs that are best met when they are located close to the overnight staff. The new room has barely been empty since opening up to guests.

"I got all the help I needed. They did an amazing job. I am overwhelmed with their support. Thank you to all the staff"

This year also saw GSI offer its clients case work across seven days a week with dedicated Case Managers supported by the Practice Manager and Child and Family Practitioner. Case Support Workers continue to support guests with their emotional needs in the evenings as well as undertake practical tasks such as cooking, making up rooms, etc., when required. This model has allowed GSI to work at its highest capacity to ensure case plans are achieved within the short timeframe clients are intended to stay at GSI. The impact this has on a woman's journey is by allowing her immediate needs, including access to income, access to critical healthcare, immigration support and mental and emotional support, to be addressed earlier on her journey to recovery. By doing so, GSI works to ensure women and children are protected from moving between various motels and services and attempts to limit the woman re-telling her story and being re-traumatised before finding suitable longer term transitional or permanent housing.

GSI staff provide critical advocacy with and on behalf of victim survivors both with and to other services and organisations. This is a key component of GSI's impact on changing the life circumstances of women and children. GSI continues its working partnerships with the many organisations that help walk alongside the women and children in supporting them on their journey.

GSI is unique in maintaining minimal criteria for entry to its service. GSI continues to be a leader in the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, migrant and refugee women including women without Permanent Residency, women being released from prison and women being discharged directly from hospital. This year saw GSI support a growing number of women under the age of 18 and created an opportunity for GSI Case Managers and Case Support Workers to upskill, ensuring the unique needs of young unaccompanied women are identified, understood and met by our service.

GSI's Transitional Housing Program supports women and children without access to income to ensure they are supported on their journey to becoming financially secure and independent. The transitional house currently houses a woman with the fulltime care of her three children and part time care of her other two children. GSI's employment program, *Women In Work* is supporting her re-engagement into the workforce.

During the year, GSI reduced the capacity of its crisis accommodation in response to the COVID-19 risk in the community. The reduced number of guests in conjunction with other COVID-19 safety measures were implemented to ensure risk of the virus is mitigated. As restrictions in Melbourne eased for a short time, we returned to full capacity. Additionally, continued restrictions saw GSI hold women and children for longer periods of time with staff monitoring exposure sites with guests on a regular basis. GSI also conducted regular meetings with guests to ensure changing COVID restrictions were known and understood by our guests with the use of translated information for CALD women.

Facility Upgrades

We have continued work on improving the garden spaces with skilled horticulturalist and our Garden Therapist, Anne. Of course, our talented group of volunteer gardeners have provided pruning, weeding and planting when they have been able to, but this has been severely curtailed due to COVID restrictions. Apart from the weeds, who have enjoyed unprecedented freedoms, the garden spaces have coped despite the lack of love and attention. We also have a brilliant new blue softfall under the children's playground, making it very safe for small tumbling bodies.



During the close-down period in 2020 we were still able to demolish the shed and create more car parking spaces, albeit losing a significant amount of storage space. We also installed a new fence and security gates surrounding the whole facility, keeping all those staying or working at the service, safe. Even though GSI is a secured location supporting women and children who have often just recently escaped a violent partner, there have been no serious security breaches. The new fence and gates just ensure that this continues to be the case.



The planned portable groupwork space.

One of the issues identified in our co-design project in 2019, was the fact that we didn't have an appropriate space for undertaking group play and therapy sessions for any of our guests but in particular for children and young people. Somewhere that was a dedicated space that didn't double as a dining, lounge or meeting room space. The space also needed to be an 'all-weather' space to be used during Melbourne's inclement days.



Hayball Architects designed the space and found a company, ARKit, who agreed to create a portable room that would fit in the Inn's yard, facing the children's play areas. We are very excited to have this new portable addition coming soon.

The amenity upgrades have made a huge difference to the experiences of women, young people and children who stay with us. The staff are also still delighted being able to show new women and families such modern, fresh and light-filled bathrooms and toilets. For those who have been to the service these *before and after* photos are a clear reminder of how good design can create such positive outcomes. (architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au)

We are incredibly grateful to *Architects Without Frontiers* and *Hayball* for the careful, committed and creative support in these projects.



Demolition of shed and partnership with Rizeup

Our ability to store donations has been severely limited by the demolition of the shed at GSI. Whilst this allows us to have a couple of extra car spaces, we are now unable to keep the back-up items such as clothing, cots, furniture, and other household goods. We love that people think to donate to us, but we have been asking if anyone has items that are of good quality and would be useful to others, to please contact our new partner Rizeup – <https://www.rizeup.com.au/>.

Rizeup have supported GSI refurbishing our transitional property for a family to move into. The Queensland based organisation have supported thousands of women and families across Australia in setting up a new flat or house after they have had to leave a violent partner. They carefully consider who the family consist of and set up the property with colours, toys and items that are likely to be appealing to those who move in.



Nadia's Story



Nadia arrived to GSI after experiencing significant family violence from her partner, and historical family violence and sexual abuse during her childhood. Nadia grew up in New Zealand, and does not have Australian Permanent Residency. Nadia arrived to GSI eight months pregnant. Nadia's five other children were in the care of her mother. Child Protection was involved with the family, and Nadia feared the immediate removal of her new baby after the birth.

Unfortunately, in Nadia's case, the Child Protection workers involved did not have a strong family violence and trauma-informed way in which to view her story. The key Child Protection worker in Nadia's case was of the opinion that Nadia was continually choosing to be in a relationship where family violence was present, instead of protecting her children. The reports written by Child Protection about Nadia and her family engaged in victim-blaming narratives and put no onus on the father for his abusive actions and the unsafe environment he was creating. When the baby arrived, Nadia was resistant to breastfeed him. She articulated a fear of becoming attached to this new baby and then having it "ripped" away from her. Child Protection had articulated that the only reason this had not occurred was due to Nadia residing in 24 hour supported accommodation at GSI.

"Good Samaritan made me so strong and brave."

Nadia stayed at GSI for seven months. In this time the GSI case management team advocated tenaciously with Child Protection for Nadia's right to have her children returned to her care. The first victory was getting the Child Protection Order removed from the new baby, meaning Nadia was acknowledged as his permanent care giver, with no need to be supervised. Nadia's confidence grew, and she articulated wanting the remaining children to be returned to her care.

After strong advocacy and negotiation, eventually Child Protection agreed to let Nadia's four-year-old daughter spend weekends at GSI. A few months later, the same permission was granted to Nadia's four other children.

The predominant reason that this outcome was achievable was due to GSI's commitment to keep Nadia safe for as long as needed until these children were rightfully back in her care. The GSI transitional property provided a longer-term solution, and Child Protection could see Nadia would still remain supported by the GSI team, whilst continuing to build her independence in affordable and safe accommodation.

Nadia has been residing at this property for several months, with all her children. There are no longer Child Protection orders in place, as Nadia has proven consistently that she is a protective, capable mother. Nadia remains supported by GSI Case Managers, however is now in a position where she is needing much less support.

Women In Work

Women In Work is an employment program within the Good Samaritan Inn focused on finding employment for women who have experienced family violence.

Our purpose is to help women build a thriving sense of self and generate a sustainable income through employment.

Family violence can take many forms including financial abuse, which can cause women to feel trapped in a violent relationship due to insufficient finances and or a perceived inability to support themselves or their families without their abusive partner. Some women may never have had the opportunity to work outside the home and some may have left that employment due to caring responsibilities or because it became too difficult to work whilst being in an abusive relationship.

Women In Work provides participants with a one-on-one coaching program during their first six months of employment. The coaching program has been designed using EMPATH, a world-wide Economic Mobility Pathways Model, with a family violence lens.

A Family Violence Specialist practitioner delivers the coaching program and builds on participants skills and resilience to address barriers and to motivate sustainable change and a pathway to self-sufficiency, whilst maintaining employment gained through *Women In Work*.

In the second half of 2020, after Victoria's strict lockdown, *Women In Work* re-engaged referring agencies and business partners to recommence its program. Due to the pandemic and spike in family violence, *Women In Work* witnessed a greater need for employment amongst women and heard from participants the increasing challenge of accessing appropriate employment. Within months the program saw an increase of participants referred into the program and a number of new opportunities with business partners.

During the first half of 2021 the program continued to work hard to find employment for women in cleaning and cooking despite a challenging employment environment and multiple lockdowns. In 2021 staff within *Women In Work* completed the Foundation Mobility Mentoring EMPATH course and now continue to build on the development of its coaching model. A Community of Practice with other organisations has been formed offering staff the ability to share knowledge and learnings of the EMPATH coaching model.

Key Program Highlights:

- GSI leveraged \$45,000 of grant commitment to generate approximately \$40,000 of income for program participants.
- Participants were able to engage in training and education through their employment placements and continue to earn ongoing income through *Women In Work*.
- Number of women referred into the program **20**
- Number of women linked to Interviews (Job opportunities) **18**
- Number of women gained employment **5**
- Employment includes; cooking, cleaning, administration
- Number of staff that have completed Foundation mobility mentoring EMPATH course **3**
- Number of business partners **5**
- Number of referral agencies **5**

Women in Work case study

Linh was a guest at GSI for a few months before Nga's consistent advocacy helped find a permanent safe and affordable home for her to live in. Linh was settled and doing really well on her own but Nga was aware that she was very keen to find employment so suggested that she might apply for a position that the Women In Work Program created as a cook at GSI. Given the COVID restrictions meant that our usual volunteer cooks were not always able to undertake their roles cooking the evening meals each night, there was a gap that was being filled by the Case Support Workers, only adding to what is already a very busy evening shift.

Linh started cooking and we were incredibly fortunate to have a Vietnamese speaking volunteer support Linh with attaining her Food Safety Certificate and translating the menus and supporting her into the role. This was Linh's first job in Australia and when she received her first wage, she wanted to give it back to us because she was so grateful for the opportunity to work.

The other volunteers love working with Linh, she finds the western food 'very easy to cook' and she is always doing more than what is expected of her. Her English language skills have improved significantly

Linh is consistently telling Nga after each shift how much she enjoys the new job and how grateful she is to have been given the opportunity.



"After meeting the staff of GSI, I learnt how to plan my day and can organise it better setting 3 goals a day. Now I am more organised and can plan tasks in a better way".

Student Placements

In the first half of 2021 GSI supported one RMIT student to complete her first placement requirements in her Bachelor of Social Work degree. This direct service placement gave Esther a breadth of knowledge and experience covering multiple learning areas. This included policy, the use of knowledge in her practice, intervention skills and the ability to learn self and critical reflection. Esther completed her placement at GSI with a firm grasp on areas required to become a future social worker.

"I'm so grateful for all the opportunities I received while I was a student with GSI. I learnt a lot about the family violence sector and the different services it provides, and the importance of delivering services with a feminist and trauma-informed lens. I feel my practice has greatly benefited from my time as a student at GSI, and I feel more confident in myself and my abilities as a future social worker. I felt really well supported during my time there and was very lucky to be able to work alongside such an amazing team".

Esther, RMIT Student

In 2021 GSI welcomed another RMIT student undertaking her Masters of Social Work. Sarah's burst of energy and colour brought a new vibrancy to the Inn. Sarah particularly had a passion to work with children and brought smiles to guests staying at the service. When Sarah was asked what the most enjoyable part of her placement had been; she answered that working with the team of wonderful, incredible case workers and managers has been very special. Sarah mentioned at times, the work was overwhelming but the support she received made her feel truly honoured to learn amongst some of the most effortless feminist advocates she had ever experienced. Sarah expressed that during her placement she had learnt more than she could possibly imagine. Sarah has loved the constant learning environment. A few stand-out areas for Sarah has been the opportunity to use an interpreter service, write case notes, engage with a variety of guests and advocate for women and children.

"I have learnt the very complex web of services that GSI works with, which is a huge win in my eyes!"

Sarah, RMIT Student.

GSI also supported another student to complete her direct service placement to enable her to return to her husband and family in Sri Lanka. Maria was trying to finish her Diploma of Community Services, but COVID restrictions meant that the proposed placement had to cease. Maria was living with the sisters of the Good Samaritan at Marian House, and a chance suggestion to Sr Kerin Caldwell resulted in Maria being invited to finish her remaining three weeks of placement at GSI. Maria returned to Sri Lanka determined to find a Family Violence service to volunteer at so she could continue her learning in working with women and children who have experienced family violence.

With the multiple complexity of guests' experiences, the pandemic and restrictions, our students rose to the challenge and continued to learn in the key areas of direct service to support women and children who had experienced family violence. Students have learnt to complete risk assessments, participate and facilitate intake work, and gain a greater understanding of the service system and in particular, how to advocate for guests to ensure that they are receiving the services they need and have a right to, in a timely, ethical and inclusive way.

GSI is committed to welcoming students into its service to provide a learning environment so that students develop skills and gain the appropriate experience to become the best practitioners to support women, young people and children who have experienced family violence and homelessness.



Volunteer Program



259 HOURS
VOLUNTEERED



33 ACTIVE
VOLUNTEERS



OVER 100 EVENING
MEALS PREPARED

Not only have we had a difficult year for our volunteers due to the COVID pandemic, but we have also had a resignation from a very important and much valued staff member. Kirsty Manning, our Volunteer Manager, resigned and finished working with GSI in August 2021. Kirsty started at the Inn by doing overnight shifts and eventually undertook many of the roles synonymous with running a supported accommodation service including supervising staff, overseeing the internal group work programs, being the First Aid officer and keeping us safe and compliant in all things relating to First Aid, managing the housekeeping staff, overseeing the shopping and cooking and much more.

Her passion and energy were particularly focused on building up and maintaining a group of dedicated and skilled volunteers. Kirsty was overwhelmed with good wishes from all the volunteers when she announced her resignation. They all mentioned her ability to maintain a strong connection with them individually and as a group. She believed in the ability of a volunteer program to create positive change and opportunities for women and children whilst ensuring that the volunteers themselves found their roles fulfilling and felt fully appreciated. Despite Kirsty only working part-time, she was always very responsive to the needs of the volunteers, getting back to them in a timely manner. In the pre-COVID world of 2019 we had over 100 applications for new volunteers. A record for GSI unfortunately followed by a pandemic that put a damper on the enthusiasm of volunteers and our ability to have them onsite.

Volunteer Program – moving forward

We are very fortunate to have one of our staff step into the role of supporting the volunteers and already she has begun to think about how we can safely and thoughtfully engage volunteers in ways that are still fulfilling. Tutoring young guests with their home schooling has begun and could be an ongoing activity both in and outside of lockdowns. Children are given school work when they are in refuge, but parents can often find it difficult to allocate time to follow through with them. A volunteer can ease the pressure on both the mum and the children.

From **garden to plate**. Working with Anne, our Garden Therapist, Georgia, one of the Case Managers & volunteers we will be focusing on establish an edible garden that produces fruit, herbs & veggies that can be used from the garden. Working with the cooks to menu plan around producing home grown food that is nutritious and tasty and can support healthier eating habits.





We are considering setting up 'conversation groups' for English development which could include conversations about topics such as the garden, weather, public transport, Australian culture and stories from their countries of origin. This dialogue will help broaden their language skills. With the continued interest by current or ex-teachers to our Volunteer Program it is a natural way to utilise their skills and experience.

Our friendly 'therapy dogs' through the **Lort Smith Program** will return as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Sing & Grow provides families with a safe space to interact in new and positive ways, to increase their confidence to use music and play, and to learn new ways to support child development. We are very fortunate to have a Sing & Grow practitioner visiting GSI to provide a session once a week. It has moved online during COVID restrictions but will resume as soon as possible.

Farmwall is a community-oriented social enterprise that aims to grow fresh, local and natural produce in close proximity to food venues. We have been asked to join Farmwall and have received free training and a free kit to start growing micro-greens. This endeavour will 'feed' into the kitchen garden, the children's program and may require a dedicated volunteer (with a green thumb) to manage the program.

"They have been such wonderful help advocating for my children and I. We would have been lost without their support"

Lena's Story



Lena was accommodated by the Good Samaritan Inn for three months. Lena was 16 years old, escaping family violence perpetrated by both of her parents, and her older siblings. Lena's family are from Jordan; however, Lena was born in Australia. Whilst a lifelong experience, the family violence had been escalating for Lena as she was becoming older and more independent. The risk peaked after Lena's family became aware that she was in a relationship with a boy at her school and had been sharing intimate pictures with him. Lena's school played a huge role in supporting her to contact Safe Steps and exit the family home.

Lena's risk remained imminent throughout her entire stay at GSI. Her family were actively attempting to locate her. Lena's older brother and sister were harassing school friends and threatening to harm them if they did not disclose Lena's location. Additionally, through information sharing between GSI and Child Protection, it was revealed that the family had purchased flights back to Jordan to visit family. Before leaving the family home, Lena had regularly been threatened that she would be sent overseas to enter into a marriage (forced marriage) with an older man.

Lena's mental health was understandably deteriorating, and her future was very uncertain. There was a possibility that she would be forced to return to the family home if Child Protection did not assess her risk accurately. Lena began ignoring her friends and isolating in her bedroom for most of the day. She stopped eating. Lena became actively suicidal, with an attempted overdose that thankfully was not fatal. GSI worked closely with our contracted Kind Heart Counselling practitioner Jo, who provided ongoing secondary consultations to support GSI staff to conduct regular suicide safety plans and risk assessments.

Lena slowly built relationships with the GSI staff. These relationships kept Lena alive. Feeling safe enough to do so, Lena disclosed historical sexual abuse to a trusted GSI worker. The Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) became involved in Lena's case, and she chose to make an official statement.

Lena was referred to the Lighthouse Foundation, an organisation that provides homes and therapeutic care programs to children and young people impacted by long-term neglect, abuse and homelessness. After a lengthy referral process which required Lena to partake in a multiple interview process, she was accepted into an accommodation facility for young women at risk of being trafficked or at risk of forced marriage. This was an incredibly good outcome, and an option that would not be readily available to other young people who may be supported by GSI in the future.

Child Protection took the case to court, and were successful in applying for an 'Interim Accommodation Order to Self', meaning Lena would not need parental consent to make decisions. With advocacy from GSI, Child Protection began to understand the imminent risk Lena was facing. Lena was linked into the Virtual School of Victoria, which meant she was more appropriately supported to complete her studies at a slower pace, in an online capacity. Before leaving GSI, Lena was linked into the Child and Youth Mental Health Service at the Austin Hospital, who agreed to refer her to a similar youth focused mental health support in her new catchment area with the Lighthouse Foundation. The Lighthouse Foundation will provide Lena with supported accommodation for the next 18 months, with the focus on assisting the young residents to develop important life skills, all whilst providing a stable accommodation that fosters the ongoing development and safety of these young people.

Maria's Story



Maria arrived to GSI as a 35-year-old women from Iran. She speaks Persian, and no English. Interpreters are needed for every conversation between Maria and GSI Case Managers.

Before arriving to GSI, Maria had experienced family violence from her husband and his family. Maria's husband would abuse her physically and verbally. He became particularly fixated on the fact that she was not falling pregnant, as though this was in her control, and she was failing as a wife to give him something he was entitled to. This is a common pressure faced by many women from CALD backgrounds, and stems from rigid gendered roles that expect women to be first and foremost wives, mothers, and home keepers. Maria rejected this narrative, realising that to stay in this relationship would be a risk to her life.

Unfortunately, the Australian Housing and Homelessness system is not designed to support women like Maria. She is on a Bridging Visa E, which means she has no working rights in Australia, and is not eligible for government benefits. Maria is hoping to be granted a Protection Visa, with the matter being heard in court.

GSI has been working together with the Department of Immigration and AMES Australia to identify whether Maria would be eligible for a Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) payment. SRSS payments are available in a limited capacity to those who are on Bridging Visas and awaiting Protection Visas. The outcome of this application is still pending and is not guaranteed.

GSI have explored exit options for Maria with Safe Steps and Haven Home Safe, however these organisations are unable to support her beyond a few days in emergency

accommodation due to her lack of income. Maria does not qualify for public housing due to her visa status. Even if she did, the wait list is upward of ten years.

Due to her lack of income and housing options, GSI has explored the option of Maria living with family who reside in Melbourne. Maria has a sister, brother and cousin who have all remained supportive throughout Maria's separation from her husband. GSI felt that with a combination of security upgrades to their houses, an active IVO, a referral to a local Family Violence organisation for ongoing support, and thorough safety planning, this could be a viable exit option. Unfortunately, Maria is adamant that it would be unsafe to reside with them. Their addresses are known to her husband, and despite the active IVO and the potential security upgrades, Maria believes her husband's rage and entitlement would compel him to kill her. As Specialist Family Violence workers, GSI understand that a woman's self-assessment of her risk is a vital component in the overall assessment of her risk of being further harmed or killed by an ex-partner. As such, GSI have continued to support Maria, and plan to hold her until the upcoming Immigration Hearing. Unfortunately, it has been indicated by Maria's Immigration worker that Maria's hearing will not likely result in being granted a Protection Visa, but instead result in Maria being deported back to Iran.

This potential outcome poses many risks to Maria's ongoing safety, including the ongoing deterioration of her mental health, and increasing the risk of suicidal ideation. GSI have not worked first hand with women at this end of their immigration matters, however suspect a portion of guests who are awaiting permanent visas may share similar outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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Sr Marella Rebgetz sgs
Sr Catherine McCahill sgs
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Sr Meg Kahler sgs

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Parade College,
Preston & Bundoora
Sacred Heart Primary School, Preston

Santa Maria College, Northcote
St Columba's College, Essendon
St Joseph's College, Ferntree Gully

Partners

Berry Street Northern Family &
Domestic Violence Specialist Service
The Bridge – Preston & Thornbury
Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV)
City of Darebin
Darebin Information Volunteer
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Domestic Violence Victoria (DV
Vic) & Domestic Violence Resource
Centre (DVRCV)
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☐

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☐

\$50 per month you can sponsor a room and enable more women, young people and children to access our service

☐

\$200 will provide a family with a safe room, winter jackets, clothes and all their needs for one night

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Your privacy is important to us. The Good Samaritan Inn may use your information to keep you updated about our work and offer you a range of ways you can help give hope to women and children escaping family violence and homelessness. We don't rent, sell or exchange your information. To find out how we store and use your information, please contact us on 0435 779 064.



The Good Samaritan Inn

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