



THANK YOU!

It's been both a year of celebration and challenge at the House of Welcome. This Christmas, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping us celebrate our relocation and for supporting us to rise to the many challenges we've faced.

Your support of our relocation to larger premises in Granville has already delivered an increase in many of our services. Here are some of the ways you have helped to make our service more accessible to people seeking asylum:

- We can now run quadruple the amount of Employment Program sessions to assist with job-readiness
- Our capacity to distribute food to people in need has quadrupled to **4830** distributions this year
- **43%** increase in clients accessing English classes
- We can now provide up to **34675** safe sleeps a year for people seeking asylum through our Housing Program

We're excited to share more about two of our big achievements this year over the page, the Employment Program & our Catering Social Enterprise. You also helped us to launch the collaborative Humanitarian Hub, which will increase capacity in the sector by maintaining a central database and training schedule to match the skills and experiences of community volunteers with the most pressing needs of our clients.

But despite all this growth, the last year has been the toughest to date for us. We receive no government funding, so we rely solely on grants and individual donations. Our income is heavily impacted at times like this when household debt is the

highest it has ever been and the grant application process has become increasingly competitive.

We are stretched further when government policies are changed at whim. In September 25 people in NSW who were sent from Manus Island due to extreme medical conditions were stripped of all government-funded accommodation, financial and casework assistance. Their support fell to organisations like the House of Welcome without warning. With your help, the House of Welcome was able to collaborate with other members of the NSW Alliance for People Seeking Asylum to fill in the support gaps and assist these people.

As we head towards the end of 2017, one big thought is on our minds:

We couldn't have done any of this without YOU!

Thank you for assisting us and advocating for people seeking asylum. Your support continues to energise our team and our clients when faced with disheartening situations and controversial government policies. It shows us how much hope there is!

On behalf of the team, the Board of St Francis Social Services and our clients, I thank you.

We all wish you and your family a wonderful Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

In gratitude,
Lyn Harrison
CEO



Expanding the *Empowered to Work* Employment Program

The critical expansion of the Empowered to Work program has given us the opportunity to extend the service from pre-employment support through to direct job placement. Through funding provided by Cumberland Council's Stronger Communities Fund, the House of Welcome has partnered with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to employ a combined Employment Program Coordinator, Leonie Dyer, which has allowed the growth of the program from once a fortnight to four days per week.

Our clients come with their own employment skills from across the full spectrum of work and are motivated and driven to participate in the Australian workforce. The growth of the program enables HoW to provide a full continuum of support, establish networks of local businesses and supportive employers and provide wraparound support to clients as they become job ready.

If your workplace is interested in providing work experience opportunities for people seeking asylum, please contact Leonie for further information on Ph: 97279290 or email: leonie.dyer@employmentproject.org.au



The House of Welcome Catering Social Enterprise

Head Chef Rui Olim has recently joined the House of Welcome to establish, develop and run our catering social enterprise; combining flavours and cuisine from House of Welcome client chefs, creative menus and a passion to serve food with heart. We acknowledge the great work of our Community Development Coordinator, Suma Pillai, who has developed the program to date alongside our talented chefs and dedicated volunteers who have made this opportunity possible. House of Welcome Catering is taking catering bookings for corporate & private events, and employs House of Welcome client chefs who are seeking asylum.

For further information & bookings please contact Rui Olim, Ph: 97279290 or email: r.olim@houseofwelcome.com.au

CHRISTMAS APPEAL: can you give safe housing for people seeking asylum this Christmas?

An interview with Christine: House of Welcome Housing Program volunteer



Lindsay & Christine, HoW Housing Program volunteers

What is your role volunteering with the House of Welcome housing program? What does a day volunteering often look like?

Christine: My title is Housing Support officer. A typical day involves meeting with or calling clients in one of our transitional properties who've been granted Protection Visas or Permanent Residency and as a consequence are moving into the wider community. Often, they need help in understanding the rental property market and how to go about applying for the rental properties. We will often sit and look at properties online and start the application process. It also involves offering help with furniture for their new property.

What motivated you to volunteer in the role?

Christine: I have been increasingly frustrated/angry/disappointed/sad at consecutive Government's response to people seeking asylum and felt I had to contribute positively to their well-being. House of Welcome has given me the opportunity to be welcoming and useful to people seeking asylum and refugees despite the negative rhetoric of much of the media that they may hear on a daily basis.

From your experience in the role, why is the housing program needed? What difference does it make?

Christine: Housing is an essential part of helping people feel safe and giving them a sense of stability. This is especially important for those with school-aged children. It also enables them to focus on other things such as improving their English, if necessary, and seeking employment.

What challenges have you experienced in the role?

Christine: How to be helpful and compassionate without being drawn into people's past traumatic experiences, trying not to 'rescue' those who desperately need rescuing, but trusting the system. Working with people with very different abilities, skills and attitudes and switching between their various needs is also challenging at times.

How would you describe the impact your contribution has made to the program?

Christine: Not sure about this one – in many ways it is very hard to gauge our impact and then one day one of the clients will give you a big hug and thank you for helping and suddenly it is all worth it. My hope is that our clients will remember the Australians of all backgrounds that tried to make a difference and made them feel welcome. Lastly, it is not just what we can offer to our clients, it is what we can learn and receive from them that makes this position so interesting and motivating.

To donate to safe housing for people seeking asylum this Christmas please visit:

www.stfrancis.org.au/donate-now

...or contact us via the details overleaf.





A property in the House of Welcome Housing Program

- **\$50** Provides a family moving into HoW accommodation with a housing start-up kit & groceries
- **\$100** Provides the occupancy fee for 2 week's accommodation for a couple seeking asylum
- **\$250** Provides food support to a client in HoW accommodation for 5 weeks
- **\$500** Provides financial assistance for a family in HoW accommodation for 1 month
- **\$1000** Provides a month of support from a House of Welcome case worker
- **\$2000** Covers the utilities costs for 4 houses for 3 months
- **\$5000** Provides 3 months paid work experience for a person seeking asylum or refugee as a HoW Housing and Maintenance Project Officer

To donate to the House of Welcome Christmas Appeal please visit:

www.stfrancis.org.au/donate-now

Or contact us on the details below:

House of Welcome: 197 The Trongate

PO BOX 10, GRANVILLE NSW 2142

Email: office@houseofwelcome.com.au

Ph: 02 9727 9290 ABN: 670 649 78 347

All donations above \$2 are tax deductible.

The House of Welcome is a project of St Francis Social Services.

