# St Kilda Gatehouse Annual Report 2020

# OUR VISION

Women and girls involved in street-based sex work or affected by sexual exploitation have access to the space, support, and connections they need to respond to challenges and to cultivate personal strengths aiding recovery and empowerment.

### OUR MISSION

St Kilda Gatehouse takes a relational approach to deliver practical assistance, places of belonging, and to holistically build on strengths and capacity to enable positive pathways for women involved in street based sex work and young women and girls affected by sexual exploitation.

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### REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

The financial year ended 30 June 2020 was one of extremes for St Kilda Gatehouse. In the first half of the year, we were excited to have sufficient funding to provide full services at the Drop In Centre in St Kilda and at the Young Women's Centre in Dandenong. In addition, we recruited our new Chief Executive Officer, Stacey Aslangul as we looked to a future with a healthy funding pipeline, sustainable funding being provided through our thriving boutique Op Shop 'Greeves St.' and the potential to expand our support services.

The demand for our services is always greater than the funding we receive, and therefore St Kilda Gatehouse uses all funds available to optimise our outreach. We operate with a minimal financial buffer for difficult times. Consequently, we were hit hard when our funding pipeline suddenly halted in February, after the bushfire disasters over the summer and as the global pandemic took hold in Australia. Stacey commenced in the role of CEO at the start of February and within a month St Kilda Gatehouse was in financial crisis. We are grateful to Stacey for the calm, considered, caring leadership that she provides to our dedicated staff, volunteers and clients. Although she experienced the worst turmoil I can ever imagine for any new CEO, Stacey has conducted herself with courage and grace throughout this storm.

At the end of March we were forced to reduce staff hours and stand down staff. Limited socially distanced essential services were provided to clients from the Drop In Centre and the Young Women's Program was placed on hold. It was heartbreaking to know that at a time when vulnerable women and girls needed our support more than ever, we were not able to open our doors. In fact, we needed to tightly control any spending of available funding, to ensure that we would be able to reopen when the lockdown restrictions were lifted. We are immensely grateful for the continued support of our stakeholders who gave generously through difficult times for our June appeal, ranging from trusts and foundations to individual donors. We could not continue without you and we value deeply your commitment to partner with us. The government support through JobKeeper and the ATO Cash Flow Boost provided a lifeline as intended, and we are ready to reopen fully as soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

At 30 June we farewelled, Mark Watt AM, who faithfully led our organisation as Chair for the past 12 years, including nearly 3 years as acting CEO. His unwavering commitment to St Kilda Gatehouse has been an inspiration for all of us. We also farewelled Ruth Baker, who served the board admirably for 6 years and provided pastoral care and support to our staff, especially at the Drop In. Amanda Bartley retired in December 2019 after 2 years' service and her contribution to the board and input to our 3-year strategic plan for 2019-2021 was invaluable. We thank these three champions of the St Kilda Gatehouse Board for their terrific commitment and support of our mission; we also thank Desiree Smitt for her ongoing contribution and the wisdom she brings to the board.

In June and July 2020, we welcomed new board members, John Sutherland, Linda Wise and Alan Marr, then Andrew North in October 2020. I am delighted to pass the Treasurer's role into Andrew's capable hands and especially as the crisis (hopefully) draws to an end. I accepted the role as Chair from 1 July and feel both honoured and respectful of the trust placed in me to lead St Kilda Gatehouse forward.

The Board and key staff members took the opportunity through the COVID-19 closure to scrutinise our program delivery and financial management. With Stacey's resilience and passion, our dedicated team of staff who actively pursue our mission every day, the support of our wonderful volunteers and the wisdom of our newly reconstituted board, I feel confident that we are ready to pursue our strategy to reach as many women and young girls at risk as we can.

Please continue to partner with us, as we take St Kilda Gatehouse through its next phase of growing our community support services to enable positive pathways for vulnerable women involved in street based sex work and young women and girls affected by sexual exploitation.

S. Dianne Azoor Hughes Chair, St Kilda Gatehouse



### MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

What began 28 years ago as a dream to care for St Kilda's homeless community has grown into an organisation that is continually adapting to meet the needs of those we support. Today, our Drop In Centre in St Kilda is a place of dignity and belonging providing crisis support and a safe non-judgmental space for women involved in street sex work. The Young Women's Project in Dandenong, now 6 years old is all about providing early intervention, intentional support and education for young women and girls affected by sexual exploitation. And our Op Shop is not only a social enterprise, it has grown into a vibrant community hub that creates positive pathways for women often forgotten and invisible to connect, develop valuable life skills, and experience empowerment.

Who wouldn't want to be part of this incredibly passionate team who are deeply committed to valuing and supporting disadvantaged women and girls? It is a joy and privilege for me joining the team as CEO. Every woman, every girl, every story of challenge and hope affirms how important it is that St Kilda Gatehouse exists.

Last year's drought and bushfires followed by the global coronavirus pandemic has greatly impacted St Kilda Gatehouse. Like many, we have had to adjust our operations. However, I am proud to say that we have continued to operate within whatever guidelines and restrictions were imposed. We have listened to the needs of the women and girls we support and have been creative and inventive in our responses. For instance the Greeves St sewing group kept meeting and supporting each other on zoom and responded to the pandemic by creating face masks; the Op Shop moved some beautiful products online and used the opportunity to streamline their business systems; the Drop In team now loads up the van weekly for health and wellbeing outreach; the Young Women's Project connects with at risk young women by providing telehealth calls and virtual walks; we have a fun cookbook project underway that will capture the wonderful diversity that makes up the St Kilda Gatehouse community and we are excited to welcome a new Program Manager for the Young Women's Project. St Kilda Gatehouse is small enough to care and big enough to dare.

Our services may have looked different this past 6 months, but they have achieved the same objectives – to love and support women and girls impacted by trauma, domestic violence, homelessness, addiction, mental illness, poverty, and isolation. These factors and more threaten to diminish a woman's choice and put young women and girls at risk of sexual exploitation.

I wish to thank the staff and Board for their endless compassion and resilience. And I want to acknowledge the wonderful encouragement our volunteers, supporters and donors have provided especially during this difficult season. You make the world a kinder place.

I hope you are encouraged by this annual report, as I am. It shows how much can be achieved with a shared vision, a daring team, and a spirit of hope. I am wholeheartedly committed to working with you, the staff and Board as we continue to advocate for the rights of women and girls and discover the best way their voices can be heard.

Warm regards

Stacey Aslangul/CEO

# ST KILDA GATEHOUSE COVID-19 RESPONSE

St Kilda Gatehouse Drop In and Young Women's Project (YWP) and the services we deliver were early on considered essential activities by the Victoria Government. The impact of COVID-19 on both support services has meant we have provided a limited service and the health and wellbeing of participants and staff remain our highest priority.

The young women engaging with the YWP continue to receive support from our staff. It is essentially business as usual, with modified practice to accommodate social distancing and reduce the risk of transmission among participants and staff. We continue to accept referrals and are engaging with young people predominantly via phone and other apps.

The Drop In centre has adapted quickly to demand including the provision of material aid, health, housing and mental health support. We have developed a Friday outreach program that is essentially our support service 'on wheels' to those who cannot physically access the drop in due to Government restrictions.

The Greeves St Op Shop is the organisation's social enterprise. As it provides a retail business, the shop has been closed for the most part and the loss of income has had a significant financial impact on the organisation's revenue this year. Moving forward with our COVID safe plan we are confident that our 'COVID normal' will continue to provide much needed support and care for vulnerable women and girls.





### DROP IN CENTRE : STORIES OF STRUGGLE AND HOPE

by Fiona Cowan

HOPE

OPEN

Like every other year in the life of St Kilda Gatehouse Drop In, this year has been full of challenges, highlights and opportunities.

This past financial year has brought a whole new set of challenges for the staff, volunteers and the women who utilise the service. From July to December 2019 the Drop In experienced first hand the rise in homelessness in Melbourne. Many people were struggling with issues around mental health and substance use and a lot of the women were sleeping rough and struggled to secure housing. Due to this higher demand and with the help of Igniting Change and Anne-Laure Cavigneaux from March Studio Architecture and her team, the Drop In was able to install a shower unit and washing machine and dryer.

Even within these challenges the Drop In continued to be a place of community and friendship. We celebrated many milestones such as birthdays, resilience week, Overdose Awareness Day and topped off with our famous Drop In Christmas party.

COVID-19 crept up on us and landed on our doorstep in March of this year. It seemed that, as each month passed there was a new set of restrictions. The Drop In adapted quickly to each change and set of new restrictions, our main aim being to remain open for the women who use the service. The question being how do we maintain community when this pandemic is pushing us further apart? At the beginning of the pandemic we linked women into housing via Launch and The Victorian Government's Emergency Housing Initiative. We have made the Drop In COVID safe and during the strictest lockdown remained open 3 days a week providing masks, hand sanitizer and education around hand hygiene and COVID safe practices.

Many people have done it tough during COVID and are struggling financially so the Drop In provided food parcels, meals and other types of material aid. The need for food has been so great that we have started doing outreach on Fridays providing food parcels, hygiene packs but more importantly saying g day to people and touching base. Many of the people we serve continue to feel isolated and fragmented from their community. Our challenge moving forward is to continue to adapt to meet the needs of our Drop In Centre community and continue to create spaces of belonging and hope.



\* Includes storage of belongings, providing backpack beds and assistance to housing issues. St Kilda Gatehouse defines being Homeless as not having stable, long-term housing. This can look like someone sleeping rough, couch surfing or finding temporary accommodation in a hotel.

\*\* Approximately 85% of women who access the Drop In centre struggle with drug addiction. Providing safe needles, condoms and pharmacotherapy payments are essential to health and well being.

Since the installation of a shower (see photos opposite) and washing machine in 2019, 179 warm showers have been had and 103 uses of the washing machine/dryer have brought some comfort and restored a little dignity.



Feedback from some of the women we support at Drop In "You guys have been a constant in my life, The Gatehouse. The only constant actually"

"You guys do a great job caring for us all. You are like family to me ... I suppose thats a bit sad but you know what I mean".

"Thanks for your care this week. It's been a bad week for me and last time I was in I took it out on you. I'm sorry"

"I love it how it's so homely in the Drop In"

"We live here, this is our home"

"Thank you. You are my friend: you are actually my family, an angel. Thank you for always caring and never judging".



### GREEVES ST. OP SHOP : A VIBRANT AND CREATIVE COMMUNITY

### by Andie Patchett

In 2017 we had the dream of developing a social enterprise that would create positive opportunities for women experiencing hardship and help provide money to support St Kilda Gatehouse programs. This dream has grown into a reality.

Greeves St. Op Shop has evolved into a vibrant and creative community. The goodwill and love from of the local neighbourhood (and beyond!) has seen new initiatives arise and relationships grow.

We are grateful for the variety of high-quality goods and extraordinary recyclables that are donated regularly. Money raised from sales is used to provide support to vulnerable women and cover shop costs. Until COVID-19 forced the shop to close, our sales were set to exceed another annual target. We had set our target for 2019 – 2020 financial year at \$200,000. Our actual proceeds from sales over 2019 – 2020 was \$174,927.

This year local businesses and office places have organised clothing drives for us and a much-needed shed and security cameras have been installed. The staff have focused on consolidating shop procedures and processes, streamlining our connection between back and front of house stock management. The Op Shop team have also worked diligently to improve pricing policies making them more user friendly and our pricing more consistent. Service users come to the Greeves St. Op Shop for a variety of reasons. This year in particular, has seen women claim ownership over volunteer roles, such as sorting clothing for Drop In and sorting and pricing donations for the shop. They take great pride in their work and do an amazing job.

### Greeves St. Sewing Group

The sewing group was severely affected by COVID-19 as we could not meet face to face. Zoom meetings replaced classes but many women did not have access to appropriate technology to be able to join in.

We sadly lost one of our sewing group graduates to an overdose, which was devastating to our community at the shop. Life is precious and often fragile. The Greeves St Op Shop is not just an op shop – it is a community, a place of belonging, connection, love and hope.

One of the ladies started out saying *"I can't sew!"* However, by the end of the sewing class she was amazed, *"Wow I didn't know I could actually do this. Can't wait for the next class!"* From that week on she has hardly missed a week and now makes product for the shop.

We have also had many people walk past the shop windows and say "I walk by each week deliberately to see the new shop window display. It brings joy because they are always so amazing."

"This does not feel like an op shop. It's looks like a beautiful boutique."

Ladies that come in for the Friday sewing group or come to find that special piece of clothing often say, *"I love coming here because there's always laughter and I am treated as just one of the gals. It doesn't matter who you are, we are all equal in the shop."* 

Come in some time and visit us!







### by Kimberly Porter

Well, what a journey this past year has been for the Young Women's Project (YWP). We have learnt so much and grown with all the changes that the team and young women have experienced.

In the past 12 months, due to funding restrictions and COVID-19 affecting the world, the YWP closed for a month in April 2020. Thankfully we were able to open our doors within the month, but to a much different looking YWP.

Sessions in person, including the introduction of the ERIC+YR (an emotional and relationship wellbeing tool) intervention came to an end. Luckily, we squeezed in one birthday party for the young women just before lockdown. We believe that celebrations are important as many of the young women we support have not had the opportunity to mark milestones and special occasions.

We adapted to online support for the young women. Virtual walks & talks became the new norm, and providing practical support in the way of food parcels, vouchers, personal protective equipment such as masks and sanitisers and sending cards have offered a lovely gesture of hope and reassurance for those we support.

During this lockdown period, there have been increased risks around online safety and child sexual exploitation. The YWP has provided valuable insight, advocacy and training for services and agencies engaged with at risk young women. This year, despite COVID restrictions we have supported 33 extremely vulnerable young women, incorporating 753 various sessions of support. We are grateful for our valuable volunteers who have helped in the facilitation of our group work sessions and provided encouragement, dignity, and new possibilities for the young women.

Hope and strength have evolved this year and provided a stronger foundation moving forward as we continue to be innovative and provide the best care we can.

#### Feedback from YWP participants

"I have learnt to listen to my body and what it is telling me about how I am feeling. I kind of knew before but did not listen and now I am listening"

"I usually don't get along with girls in general, except for here. Because there's no judgement"

### "Mistakes"

If you regret your mistakes how will you learn to fly? How will you know what mistakes are if you don't make any? Mistakes make you stronger than you could ever think, Because sometimes you face them alone."

-Poem by a young woman supported by Young Women's Project.





### **Training and Education**

Studies indicate between 70-80% of young people exposed to sexual exploitation have a history of significant childhood trauma; ranging from abuse, neglect, exposure to violence and parental substance use or mental illness<sup>1</sup>.

Launched in 2018, ARISE (Australian Research and Innovation for Safeguarding against Sexual Exploitation) is the training and education arm of St Kilda Gatehouse. We are proud to be providing professional development focused on understanding, preventing and intervening in child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Project Insight endeavours to equip practitioners with concrete therapeutic resources, to expand knowledge and deepen the pragmatic work that is being implemented in the community between workers and children, young people, and families affected by CSE.

In 2019 over 100 practitioners from key agencies including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police participated in ARISE training.

Feedback from an Arise participant

"I support high risk young people who are sadly exposed to all sorts of challenges in life including sexual exploitation. ARISE training has equipped me with insights, invaluable tools and knowledge that will assist my best practice. We need more training like this."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1.</sup> Chohaney, 2016; Naramore, Bright, Epps, & Hardt, 2017.

# ST KILDA GATEHOUSE FINANCES

### by Helen Colston

We are grateful for financial contributions ranging from State Government, Local Government, Trusts and Foundations, Churches, Corporates and Individuals who make it possible for St Kilda Gatehouse to run all our programs effectively.

During the year ending 30 June 2020, income from trusts and foundations was adversely impacted by the decline in the economic environment due to COVID-19 restrictions. Further, the provision of support services and op shop sales were also impacted by lockdown restrictions. The result for the year includes \$133,928 in JobKeeper and ATO cash flow boosts, which enabled us to cover our costs during a period of restricted activity. We have also been grateful for rent relief granted by landlords during the lockdown period.

An enormous amount of in-kind contributions such as volunteering, labour, nonmonetary donations in the form of material goods and more are not reflected in the below financial figures but we would like to acknowledge the significance and importance of these contributions as well.

#### **Income Statement**

| Total Revenue     | 19-20     | 18-19      |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Income            | \$936,819 | \$771,574  |
| Expenses          | \$878,018 | \$831,161  |
| Net Profit/(Loss) | \$58,801  | \$(59,587) |



#### Where your funds were invested this past year

Support services and program costs represent the cost of services delivered by St Kilda Gatehouse' four programs (the Drop In Centre, Young Women's Project, Greeves St and ARISE) which total 84% of expenditure in the last financial year. Allocated funding was directed toward the particular program for which the funds were given in accordance with funding requirements and agreements.



\* please see our website or the ACNC to download a complete audited report of financial statements for more information

### ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

St Kilda Gatehouse has continued advocacy to local and state government to foster better responses to address the issues experienced by women involved in street-based sex work, violence against women and child sexual exploitation.

Our advocacy is incredibly important, as it elevates the experiences and issues of extremely marginalised and stigmatised women who are often invisible. St Kilda Gatehouse believes that every girl and woman has a voice. Our role is to help that voice be heard. This year we:

- were invited to contribute to the review into the decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria. The review hopes to achieve better public health and human rights outcomes for those involved in the sex work industry.
- we provide Alcohol and Other Drug training to community groups and tertiary institutes
- contributed to secondary consultations with Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services that provide vital care for young women and girls affected by sexual exploitation.
- provided individual safe drug use education to women who would not otherwise have access and individual sexual health education to young women and girls.
- enabled corporate volunteer opportunities for organisations and businesses.
- shared relevant articles, research and information on our social media platforms and educate the public on the issues impacting the women and girls we support.
- participated in events that acknowledged International Women's Day (March), National Volunteers Week (May), International Overdose Awareness Day (August), Homelessness Week (August) and International Day of the Girl (October).

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Our four Strategic Directions are:

In 2019 St Kilda Gatehouse developed a 3-year Strategic Plan. In collaboration with St Kilda Gatehouse staff, community, key supporters and state-holders we committed to four strategic directions to help shape our future service delivery, social impact and sustainability as an organisation.

Deliver high quality services Serve Build stronger partnerships Connect Raise awareness of St Kilda Gatehouse's impact omote Secure a sustainable future Thrive

We are now in the 2nd year of that 3-year plan. The Board took the opportunity during the COVID closure to scrutinise our program delivery and financial management with key staff to build and strengthen our service offering. Despite needing to deviate to respond to COVID this year, we remain on track to grow our service offering in response to community needs.

St Kilda Gatehouse operates in a highly complex environment. This strategic plan guides the way we provide support for women and girls navigating life in extremely difficult circumstances as well as inform the implementation of key initiatives.

# THANK YOU

To our funders and supporters, during the year ended 30 June 2020. Thank you for making all this work happen and for creating dignity and hope in the lives of vulnerable women and girls:

| City of Port Phillip                    | Grill'd                              |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Harold Mitchell Foundation              | Jetstar Airways                      |
| Bendigo Bank                            | St Kilda/Elsternwick Baptist         |
| City Life Casey                         | Grace Church of Christ               |
| Streetsmart                             | Mildura Church of Christ             |
| Flora & Frank Trust                     | Churches of Christ Victoria/Tasmania |
| Igniting Change                         | Pitcher Partners                     |
| Bank of Melbourne                       | Pacific Pirates                      |
| Coopers Brewery Foundation              | The Age staff                        |
| Macpherson Kelley Foundation            | Aware Environmental Group            |
| Gospel Resource                         | Erdi Foundation                      |
| Department of Health and Human Services | Elwood Community Bendigo Bank        |
| RACV                                    | Westpac Bank St Kilda                |
| Whitelion                               |                                      |

Further, a number of individuals and organisations provide pro-bono goods and services that assist us tremendously. We wish to thank:

Urban Zeal RSM Australia (Auditors) MVA Bennett (Accountants) Port Phillip Community Group Barnabas Oz Harvest David Wilson Robert Coller Share the Dignity Pinchapoo Vicki MacDermid Bombardier Transport Melbourne Fire Brigade Fitted For Work The Esplanade Hotel

And to all the individual donors who have given to us this past year please know your generosity is not taken for granted. Thank you for partnering with us!

### CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

We are proud to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment that is caring and nurturing for our volunteers. Each incredible volunteer brings a unique gift and reason for volunteering but shares the common vision of making the world a safer and fairer place for vulnerable women and girls.

More than 70 amazing people from all walks of life and a range of age groups contribute their experience, ideas and hundreds of hours of time in supporting St Kilda Gatehouse – they truly are the backbone of the organisation and we are tremendously grateful.

Here are some of the comment's St Kilda Gatehouse volunteers have shared:

"I love coming to the Op Shop. It's highlight of my week" (Op Shop volunteer)

"I learn so much from the women we support. I've had such a different life experience and the women teach me about courage and resilience." (Drop In volunteer)

"Volunteering with St Kilda Gatehouse helps my mental health and gives me an opportunity to give back to the community I love." (From an Op Shop volunteer)

"Providing support to young women who are incredibly vulnerable and marginalised reminds me that we can all offer something, however little, to help someone feel loved and valued. Everyone deserves that." (Young Women's Project volunteer)

'The Greeves St community offers unique experiences. Not only do we forge and enjoy new friendships we work side by side with these caring women of diverse backgrounds.

The opportunity of learning new skills is very special. From working in the shop to sorting and pricing; The Craft afternoons or Sewing groups; The laughter, birthdays and banter.

Greeves St gives every one of us greater self confidence and compassion. It's simply a wonderful place to be. " (Op Shop volunteer)

# ST KILDA GATEHOUSE BOARD

Our Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation as well as significant operational decisions. This team of generous and compassionate people meet monthly on a volunteer basis to provide accountability, governance and oversight of the organisations finances, policies, and procedures.

At the date of publication of this report our Board comprises:

Dianne Azoor Hughes – Chair of the Board

John Sutherland – Secretary

Andrew North - Treasurer

Desiree Smit – *Member* 

Linda Wise – *Member* 

Alan Marr – *Member* 

Retired Board Members (June 2020)

Mark Watt

Ruth Baker

Amanda Bartley

" I am proud of myself and know I deserve better and I know you need to love yourself first before you can love other people"

From a YWP participant (Photo is stock image)

# JOIN US ON THE ROAD AHEAD

St Kilda Gatehouse provides spaces of belonging, connection and hope for women involved in street sex work and young women and girls affected by sexual exploitation. Now more than ever, the challenge remains to continue to discover ways to provide meaningful support to vulnerable women and girls, offer pathways into positive life choices and secure funding for our vision and work. Will you join us?

#### Donate:

Your donations will help us extend our services and programs to support extremely vulnerable women and girls. Whether you donate monthly or once, your contribution will assist us in supporting women. Jump on to our website to donate today!

#### Fundraise:

You can become a fundraising champion for us! There are many ways to fundraise for us. Contact us for ideas.

#### **Regular Giving:**

Would you like to partner with us by giving on a regular basis? Perhaps you'd like your financial donation to go to a specific program? Please contact us to find out how.

#### Workplace Giving:

Workplace Giving is a great way to donate to us and provides an immediate tax benefit by reducing your taxable income! You will need to speak to your Payroll and/or Human Resources department to set this up, but there are a number of organisations out there who provide workplace giving platforms.

#### Customised fee-for-service training

Want to know more about the issues impacting on women involved in street-based sex work? Or understand sexual exploitation? We can develop a customised training session to suit the needs of your workplace or organisation to build your knowledge and skills. Get in touch today to find out more.

#### Volunteering comes in all shapes and sizes:

Each year we host information sessions for people wanting to donate their time to St Kilda Gatehouse. We'd love to hear from you if you are interested!

Workplace volunteering provides the opportunity for corporate teams to spend some time with us getting involved with one of our programs while learning more about what we do and the women we support.

No matter how you support us, your generosity will help build dignity and hope and ensure our work continues. For more information about our various projects or for fundraising ideas visit www.stkildagatehouse.org.au or email us at admin@stkildagatehouse.org.au

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