

CASE STUDY

Cheryl and Cassie are looking forward to the end of COVID-19, but until then we will continue support them, but just a little differently.

A welcoming face has been a key part of the emotional support we provide to women and children when they arrive at Kara House. The COVID-19 restrictions means face-to-face contact is very limited and over the last 15 weeks we have radically changed the way with work with our clients.

Cheryl* is 42yo and was referred to Kara House with her 12yo daughter Cassie* for specialist family violence support. The perpetrator of Cheryl's violence was her husband of 17 years and she was in urgent need of secure and safe accommodation.

Due to COVID-19, Kara House as communal property has had to restrict to the number of clients that can be accommodated. Luckily we were soon able to locate a suitable transitional property nearby for Cheryl and Cassie that would provide them with safety for the coming months.

Like other services, Kara House has limited face-to-face interaction with clients, only meeting with them when absolutely necessary. Therefore our first introduction to Cheryl was via the phone, completing risk assessment, safety planning and intake. We first met with her in person when she came into our office for intake. Currently we meet clients in our large conference room, standing

at either end of the room using protective gear and armed with sanitiser.

Normally the Family Violence Practitioners would personally drive families when they move from refuge and help settle them into their new accommodation. For Cheryl we used a taxi to transport her to the property, and from a distance we stayed on the phone with her while she settled into the house.

We continue to support Cheryl and Cassie in the transitional property. To combat her sense of isolation, we make frequent phone calls to Cheryl to ascertain wellbeing and provide support. They have been linked into Telehealth, and have commenced counseling via zoom.

We have applied for funding for stay-at-home school supplies for Cassie allowing her to continue her schooling and provided Cheryl with activities she can do with Cassie to assist with overcoming boredom.

Thanks to generous donations we have been able to deliver food boxes, wellbeing, craft and hygiene packs to both Cheryl and Cassie. We wave to them from the driveway.

Like everyone else, Cheryl and Cassie are looking forward to the end of COVID-19, but until then we will continue support them, but just a little differently.

*names changed



Welcome

I hope this edition of our newsletter finds you all safe and well. The first half of 2020 has been a challenge for all of us and I am incredibly proud of the way the Kara House Team has responded and pivoted to meet these challenges. We remain as committed as ever to providing the best possible services to women and children in our care. Full credit to the team for their resilience and creativity in the face of Covid-19. We could not have made many of the ongoing improvements to our refuge and service offerings without the support of our donors and the community, whose assistance has helped us continue in these worrying times.

Catherine Lockstone
CHAIR
KARA HOUSE BOARD

It's not been a great year and women have been the hardest hit



Dr. Ilsa Evans, Higher Instance Education Coordinator at Chisholm, Melbourne and member of the Kara House Board writes about the traumatic effects of 2020 on women and how it will continue to reverberate for women for years to come.

The year 2020 began in the midst of a bushfire crisis, before sliding almost seamlessly into a pandemic that necessitated an unprecedented global response. Impacts have been felt on every societal level - macro, meso and micro. Lives lost, economies battered, along with job security, tourism, education and immigration. With regard to COVID-19, there is no doubt that Australia has weathered the situation comparatively well. Nevertheless, particularly as much of Victoria enters a second period of lockdown, there would be very few people across the nation who have not felt the effects in some way.

However disaster situations are also a little like icebergs, in that many ramifications are less visible than others. One of these is the gendered nature of both the immediate impacts and the longer term recovery. Data collated by Women's Health East (2020) reveal that the women are disproportionately affected. They form the majority of essential workers, and they are also in the lowest paid jobs.

At the same time, women are performing far more unpaid labour during lockdown, including the responsibility for education at home. 55% of job losses related to COVID-19 belong to women, while the majority of the casual workers unable to access job-keeper payments are women, and women are depleting their superannuation at a higher rate than men. The mental health impacts of COVID-19 are also gendered, with women experiencing higher rates of depression, anxiety and stress, while the Women's Mental Health Clinic at the Alfred Hospital has seen a 2800% increase in demand.

In addition, existing gender inequalities are often exacerbated during a health crisis. Women already provide disproportionate care in both the workplace (70% of workers in the health and social services sectors are women), and at home (globally, women perform 76% of unpaid care work). Early evidence already indicates that women are facing increased financial insecurity. The bottom line is that one of the most potentially harmful impacts of the pandemic, for women and their children, is a heightened risk of domestic violence.

Relationship violence increases in the wake of a disaster. For instance, after the Canterbury earthquake, NZ police reported

a 53% rise in domestic violence. Reports of domestic violence in France have increased by 30% during lockdown, while calls to emergency helplines in Singapore recorded a 33% increase.

Within Victoria, a survey of practitioners responding to women experiencing violence during the current pandemic found an increase in both the severity and frequency of violence, as well as an increase in complexity of needs and even, disturbingly, new forms of intimate partner violence (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2020). There are over 500 calls being made each week to Victoria Police, a 94% increase to men's services, and a 50% increase within the Magistrate's Court (Women's Health East, 2020).

Returning to the iceberg analogy used earlier, research has long indicated that the statistics on violence against women only represent the tip of the issue. The majority of victim survivors never come to the attention of authorities, or even the service sector. The long-term effects of an abusive relationship reverberate through the lives of those affected, even many years after the relationship itself has ended (Evans, 2007). Yet they live with the impacts in silence. As we manage our response to these unprecedented times, we owe it to them to not do the same.

FAMILY VIOLENCE STATS IN LOCKDOWN

200+

Calls a week to Victoria police

50%

Increase to Magistrates Courts

94%

Increase in calls to men's services

55% OF JOB LOSSES DUE TO COVID-19 ARE WOMEN

The majority of essential workers are women are in the lowest paid jobs Cleaners, Teachers, Early Childcare and Retail workers

DURING LOCKDOWN WOMEN ARE EXPERIENCING MUCH HIGHER LEVELS OF DEPRESSION

35% of women have moderate to severe levels of depression compared to 19% of males

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• Women's Health East (2020). 'Towards a Gender Equal Recovery' COVID-19 Factsheets. Available at: <https://whe.org.au/blog/2020/06/towards-a-gender-equal-recovery-covid-19-factsheets/>
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Community generosity allows us to respond in new ways.

In early April we made the hard decision to suspend physical Material Aid donations from the Community in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Our Family Violence Specialist Practitioners were continuing to work with clients and to ensure their health and that of the clients we had to limit community contact with our office.

Kara House has always relied heavily on our wonderful donors and supporters to help us provide basic necessities and to create the best possible environment for our clients. We have been heartened by how many individuals, organisations, and corporates have reached out to Kara House over the past months by donating to our **COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND**.

The fund has allowed us to develop the programs below to assist our clients during the crisis:

- **CRISIS CLOTHING PACKS** – warm winter clothing
- **CONNECTION PROGRAM** – petrol vouchers, taxi vouchers, phone card vouchers
- **WELLBEING PACKS** – for women
- **AGE APPROPRIATE CRAFT PACKS** – for kids

To find out ways to help go to www.karahouse.org.au

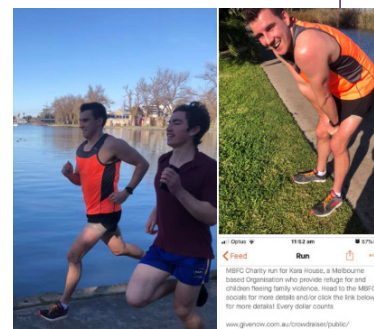
Keeping our clients mobile and connected thanks to StreetSmart



To meet COVID-19 guidelines our Specialist Family Violence Practitioners must limit face-to-face contact with our clients. This means they are unable to transport our clients to Centrelink, Court cases, Child Protection or even to get basic necessities. We received a Community Grant from **StreetSmart** which has enabled our clients get to important appointments by providing them with TAXI VOUCHERS, PETROL VOUCHERS and MOBILE PHONE CARDS. Now we can meet clients at the appointment and give them support while maintaining the clients and our teams safety. Thank you Adam and **StreetSmart** for your years of support.

Monash Blues Football Club Isolation run Crowdraiser

The Members at **Monash Blues Football Club** have a long history of supporting women and children impacted by family violence. On May 31st the Team Members held the ISOLATION CHARITY RUN with all proceeds going to Kara House. *"The team had already been doing some running to try and keep fit whilst footy wasn't happening... and so we thought we could use it as a way to give back to the community,"* said Joe Harrison, one of the organisers. They encouraged participants to make a donation and run 5km or 10km on the day. The Monash Blues set a target of \$2,500 but with the help of family, friends and the club community. They smashed it, raising \$3,070. The money raised will be used to purchase CRISIS CLOTHING PACKS to keep clients warm during the coming winter.



Wellbeing and craft packs thanks to Rotary

Thanks to Rotary for their wonderful donation that enabled us to purchase 35 WELLBEING PACKS for mums which included mindful colouring books, journals and other goodies and for children 40 age appropriate CRAFT PACKS including craft projects, pencils, books and toys. Thanks to **The Rotary Club of Box Hill Central** for making the donation possible with the kindness of **The Rotary Club of Box Hill, The Rotary Club of Nunawading, The Rotary Club of Mont Albert & Surrey Hills, The Rotary Club of Mitcham, The Rotary Club of Forest Hill and The Whitehorse Rotaract Club.**

Now and next

Catherine Lockstone CHAIR – KARA HOUSE BOARD

The past few months have created some opportunities to make improvements at the refuge. Just before the first Covid-19 lockdown, a volunteer team from the **Dulux Group** painted the bedsit apartment and the courtyard at the refuge. With the help of **Rotary MASH** we were also able to continue with the garden project and install the new retaining wall.

Over the coming months we are going to install a washing machine/dryer in the bedsit, thanks to the generosity of the **Lions Club of Box Hill**. This gives greater flexibility for the family staying in the bedsit, as they will no longer need to share a laundry with other families in the main refuge.

We are nearing completion of plans for the new Bathroom, a joint effort between **Sally Feeney Design** and **Reece** over the next few months. This has been a long term project for Kara House, and again gives the residents of the refuge much more flexibility and independence while living in a shared space.

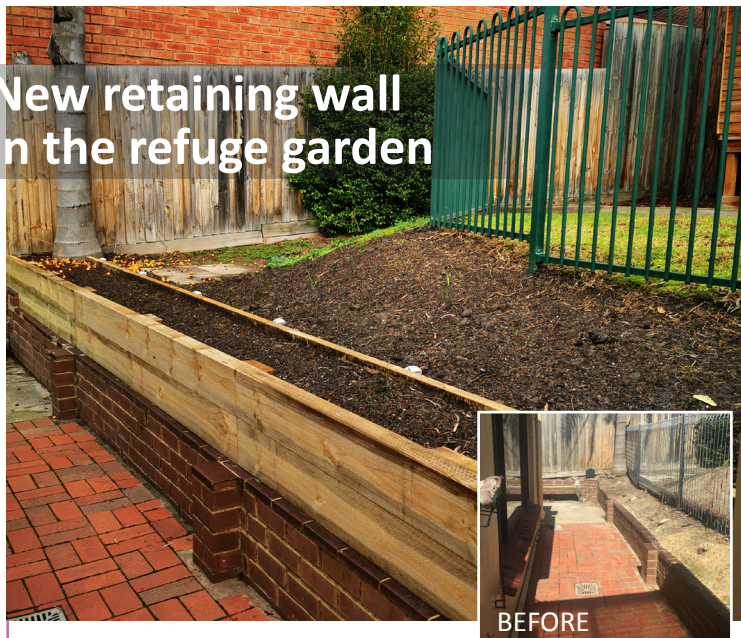
Our second development, funded by DHHS, is continuing and the department is predicting it will be ready for occupancy in mid 2021. This purpose built facility will greatly improve our ability to respond to the needs of our clients, give them the independence and safety they need, as well as building our capacity to offer the services that make Kara House special.

I thank our generous donors through this trying time – it's made a huge difference for our clients. I look forward to sharing the details of the development as it progresses and the changes it will bring to Kara House.

Catherine



New retaining wall in the refuge garden



The garden at the refuge is an important place for kids to play and mum's to take time out from the busy environment.

The Rotary Club of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills assisted us to put in a new retaining wall and garden. The improvement is incredible and we look forward to planting it at the beginning of Spring. It's really opened up the area and improved the outlook from the refuge. Thank you to Anne, Nicole and Mick and all the Members of Rotary MASH.

Thank you for your kindness

We'd like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their support, kindness and generosity.

- Impact for Women
- The Lion's Club of Box Hill
- The Lion's Club of Nunawading
- The Lion's Club of Blackburn
- James Maurer
- Stephen Crosby
- Margaret Morrissey
- Toni Wallis
- Susanne Goldie
- Suzie Jacobovits
- Lauren Walhuter
- Andrea Dillion

Interested in finding out more?

Please contact **Ruby Lampard – Development Officer** Email ruby.l@karahouse.org.au or phone **1800 900 520**



Health
and Human
Services

We would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services who provide our operational funding under the Funding and Service Agreement and to the staff in the Eastern Region who have assisted with their donation collections and ongoing support.

Kara House is a child safe and child focused organisation.

Kara House respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land we work on and pay respect to their Elders past, present and future generations.



Kara House

