



REAL WOMEN,  
REAL LIVES,  
REAL STORIES.



Our Voices

AUTUMN 2024 NEWSLETTER



CATHERINE  
HOUSE

Supporting women  
experiencing homelessness

# THE VALUE OF EDUCATION & THE IMPORTANCE OF REGAINING A SENSE OF PERSONAL POWER & AUTONOMY

## ALYSSA'S\* STORY

“ I GREW UP LIVING IN MULTIPLE HOUSES, MOVING FROM FAMILY MEMBER TO FAMILY MEMBER, EVENTUALLY BEING REUNITED WITH MY MOTHER. IT WASN'T THE SAFEST ENVIRONMENT TO LIVE IN AND I FOUND MYSELF GETTING MIXED UP IN THE WRONG CROWDS. ”

I dropped out of school, my only safe place as a young teenager. I had limited my social network and education due to spending all my time with these people.

**I was couch surfing from the age of 12**, with little to no rules on how I was living life, who I was involved with or what I would do with my days. This went on for years. Little did I realise then how it would impact me in years to come.

I was 17 years old when I met a man that I became reliant on for financial support and a place to call home, **mistaking my dependence for love**. Within a few months, I was pregnant with my first child. I was so scared of being a mother.

**I had no support, positive connections, finances or stability behind me, so I stayed in the relationship.** I knew my baby was a blessing and a reason to get my life in order, for the babies' sake and mine. We went on to have two more children in the following years.

Within the beauty of becoming a mother, much chaos came with it. I wasn't in control of my emotions, had no personal boundaries, no knowledge of how to maintain a house or pay bills independently, and had no financial safety or strategy for a stable future. **The relationship slowly turned toxic for my children and me. I knew I would have to leave, scared of what would come next.**

**I LOST THE PLACE WE CALLED 'HOME'.** I MADE THE DIFFICULT DECISION TO ASK A FAMILY MEMBER TO CARE FOR MY CHILDREN WHILE I TRIED TO STABILISE MYSELF. I HAD BECOME A COMPLETE MESS, WITH NO CONFIDENCE AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM.

After nearly 18 months of battling my habits, thoughts and behaviours, **I decided to seek help** through a social worker who suggested I contact Catherine House. I didn't know much about Catherine House at the time. My only thought was to get another place to call home, for my children's future and for me.

In early 2023, I received a phone call from Catherine House, letting me know there was a place for me.

**I REMEMBER EXACTLY WHERE I WAS THE DAY I RECEIVED THIS NEWS. I WAS SO HAPPY TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK FREE FROM THE CYCLE I HAD BEEN IN. I COULD START FOCUSING ON MYSELF. I CRIED WITH JOY.**

The moment I walked through the doors of Catherine House, I felt welcomed, respected, safe and valued by both the wonderful staff and other women on their own journeys. It was such a safe space with a warm feeling all around.

There was no interference from people outside. I was at ease. I no longer had to worry. I could finally relax.



**Late last year, Alyssa moved out of Catherine House into her own home with her children.**

## AMITAS'S\* STORY

**“ I CAME TO AUSTRALIA 23 YEARS AGO AS A REFUGEE ON A BOAT. I BUILT MY LIFE FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING. I WAS MARRIED AND HAVE FIVE BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN FROM THAT RELATIONSHIP. AFTER MANY YEARS, I BECAME A SINGLE MUM AND WORKED HARD TO RAISE MY CHILDREN ON MY OWN.**

After being a Permanent Resident in Australia for 18 years, I decided to take the Australian Citizenship test. I passed and proudly received my Australian passport.

My mum still lived overseas, I sadly had not seen her in years. One day, while I was at work, I received a phone call - it wasn't good news. I learnt that my mum was sick. I immediately asked my boss for time off to visit her – they granted me a few weeks' leave.

It was my first time returning home. I took my youngest daughter with me, she was only nine years old. A friend agreed to look after my other children while I visited. It was incredible to see my mum for the first time in almost two decades.

**I had only been there a matter of days before the news hit – the COVID-19 pandemic caused international borders to close.**

Between the pandemic, financial restraints, and visa complications, I ended up getting stuck in my home country for several years. My four older children were able to stay with my father.

While I was there, my mum passed away. As an Australian citizen, I wasn't able to gain any employment in my home country. I picked up odd jobs and sold all my possessions in order to keep sending money back to my children in Australia.

**THEN I RECEIVED ANOTHER CALL, MY FATHER IN AUSTRALIA HAD PASSED AWAY. IT WAS TIME TO COME HOME.**

I lived in a rental property when I left to care for my mother, for what I thought would be a few weeks. I returned to Australia homeless. A family friend looked after my children whilst I looked desperately for employment. **My days were so dark. After three weeks of rough sleeping and couch-surfing, I was able to get a room at Catherine House.**

**I was so happy.** Being at Catherine House, I saw a lot of opportunities and knew that I could get the help I needed to start all over again.

As soon as I could, I took my resume to the Education & Employment Officer to help me find a way to work so I could support myself and my children. I said I would do anything. I'm so grateful I was able to get help paying for educational courses.

**I WANT TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE DONORS FOR THE SUPPORT THAT I HAVE RECEIVED. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR GIVING ME A SECOND CHANCE TO GET BACK ON MY FEET AGAIN.**

The Catherine House Education Fund supported me financially in returning to the workforce. I completed my White Card and Traffic Management courses to become a Traffic Controller. I was provided with work clothing, including steel cap boots, and a laptop to complete my work inductions. I had to re-sit for my Australian driver's licence, as it expired while I was overseas, which was also paid for. **All of this helped me to become employed again.**

**Being at Catherine House for five months meant I could gain paid work and build my confidence again.** Now I'm working and never say no to any shift work. My future looks good even though it still seems a bit slow to reach my goals. But through all these processes and life experiences, I still count myself blessed to have the help and support that was available to me during this time.

**Thanks a lot to all Catherine House staff and all the donors who help us women to fix something that seems impossible and make it possible. ”**



# OUR IMPACT IN 2023

IN 2023, WE PROVIDED A SERVICE TO 414 WOMEN ACROSS ALL CATHERINE HOUSE PROGRAMS.

**54 women** were provided with safe and secure accommodation at any given time.

We provided **316,656 hours of support** to clients throughout 2023.

Our case workers held **37,626 sessions** with clients, including case management and intensive support.

We served **over 65,000 meals** and snacks to women, thanks to partnerships with local businesses.

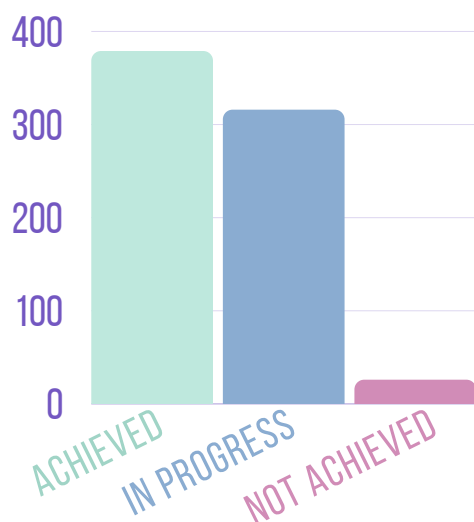
**86%** reported an improved sense of ability to achieve.

**79%** reported improved management of mental health.

**84%** of clients reported improved interpersonal skills and connections.

**86%** of clients reported achieving an improvement in their living skills.

## CLIENT GOAL ACHIEVEMENTS



**96%** of 2023 client goals were either achieved or are in progress!

### EXAMPLES OF CLIENT GOALS INCLUDE:

- Obtain driver's licence
- Perform volunteer work
- Purchase a car
- Complete University Foundation course
- Find paid employment
- Increase physical fitness
- Perform public speaking
- Access dental services
- Gain custody of children

*Data measured by Exit Assessments when women leave Catherine House.*

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IS ALWAYS A VERY SPECIAL OCCASION AT CATHERINE HOUSE.

Clients, staff and supporters came together in our Women's Centre and enjoyed delightful performances from the Catherine House Music Group! Guests also had the privilege of hearing guest speaker, Lee-Anne Lupton, share her thrilling and insightful story of running across Australia to raise funds for Catherine House.



# Christmas

## AT CATHERINE HOUSE

“ I LOVED EVERYTHING. THE DECORATIONS, THE TABLE SETTING, AND THE FOOD WAS AMAZING. IT WAS SO GREAT FOR ME TO EAT WITH PEOPLE WHO ENJOYED CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS. ”



“ THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO DONATED, IT WAS GREAT TO HAVE SUCH HIGH QUALITY PRODUCE AND MEATS ON CHRISTMAS DAY. ”

Christmas Day was a very special occasion for everyone at Catherine House. Thanks to our incredible community, over 70 women were able to wake up to a Christmas bag full of beautiful donated gifts, before sitting down to a delicious three-course lunch.

We are so grateful to the Catherine House community, we could not have provided what we did without you. On what may have otherwise been an incredibly difficult day, with your help, fond memories were made.

## MELISSA'S\* STORY

“ At the end of December 2016, I escaped a 37-year-long, extremely abusive relationship. I had to relocate from a remote area in regional South Australia to Adelaide.

**I LEFT WITH NOTHING BUT A SUITCASE OF BELONGINGS, AND I WAS HOMELESS.**

I was, however, fortunate enough to be offered a room at Catherine House through their Crisis Accommodation Service. I spent six weeks in their care, and in that time, I was given time to start my healing process.

I attended programs and classes they offered me, which enabled me to retrain and re-join the workforce. This support led me to enrol at TAFE, where I completed a Certificate 3 and Certificate 4 in Community Services, which, in turn, led to me becoming employed as a Disability Support Worker.

Catherine House also helped me find suitable housing. I had the full support of a Case Worker who helped guide me through the next five years of intervention orders, property settlement and any other issues that arose along the way.

**THEY ALSO SUPPORTED MY MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, MY SELF-ESTEEM AND MY INNER STRENGTH.**

I have now moved on, I've been able to get my own house, and I'm employed in a job I love!

**WITHOUT THE SUPPORT AND CARE THAT CATHERINE HOUSE PROVIDED, I WOULD NOT BE WHERE I AM TODAY. ”**

*\*Names changed to protect the identity of the women we support.*

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Supported by  
**Government of  
South Australia**

*We proudly partner with SA Health, Department of Human Services,  
Department for Correctional Services and Department for Education.*

## MAJOR EDUCATION PARTNERS



## MAJOR PARTNERS



## MAJOR IN-KIND PARTNERS



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