

Catherine House CONNECTIONS

Real Women, Real Lives, Real Stories



Catherine House Inc.

ISSUE #2

July 2019

A flower blossoms not for others, but for itself... and holds a beauty beyond compare



*Blossom arrived at the Catherine House Emergency Program in early 2017. She had come to Australia from Asia on a spousal visa, however had been forced to leave the marriage due to significant domestic violence. Blossom arrived at our service with no income and without ongoing approval to remain in Australia. She was facing deportation if her application for a protection visa was not approved

and would likely face significant harm if returned to her country due to having left her husband. As you can imagine, the stress that Blossom was enduring and had endured in her marriage was having a significant toll on her mental health, and she often contemplated suicide.

Upon arrival in the Emergency Program, Blossom was assigned a case worker who became her strongest advocate. She was connected to a psychologist for her mental health and was also referred to our onsite mental health clinician. Her case worker provided support around the domestic violence and also daily mental health support. It was important to provide Blossom with activities which reduced her stress as much as possible, so she was connected to our onsite Women's Community Centre where she was able to participate in activities such as art and emotional wellbeing courses.

Blossom's case worker worked tirelessly to address all her immediate needs. Through our Education and Employment programs, Blossom was referred to a mentor to support her with her ESL (English as a second language) studies. She participated in our employment course 'My Time, My Life' and received tutoring through one of our volunteer tutors. She also commenced English lessons and finally, Advanced English through TAFE.

The case worker supported Blossom during a very challenging divorce and immigration proceedings, as the trauma of having to



prove the domestic violence often threatened to become too much for her. Together they persisted, and finally won the case. Blossom was granted a protection visa and subsequently a special benefit payment from Centrelink – she could finally move from the Emergency Program into her own housing. Due to the identified need for ongoing support Blossom was referred to our transitional housing program and she moved in April 2018.

Now that Blossom was in her own unit, she was able to look to her longer term goals. She successfully passed her entrance exam for Certificate 4 in Accounting and Bookkeeping, and has since completed that certificate. She will commence her Diploma Accounting and Bookkeeping this semester which she hopes to complete by June next year. She then plans to work part time and continue her studies, hopefully at UniSA.



Last week, Blossom moved to long term housing through a community housing provider. She now has a permanent roof over her head, a stable income and is working toward pursuing a career for herself. Through it all, her case workers have provided ongoing emotional support to assist her to see past her current situation. She has received continual encouragement to maintain appointments with her GP, psychologist and connection to our community centre activities. Whilst with her ex-husband Blossom had not received any support to navigate Australian welfare, medical, migration and legal systems. Through the ongoing support and encouragement of Catherine House staff, she is now free from that oppression and has the strength and hope for the future all our clients deserve.

**Client name changed to protect privacy. She chose the name blossom as her case worker once referred to her as having blossomed.*



From Louise

Each woman coming to Catherine House is assigned a case worker. That case worker's job is to find a housing outcome for the woman, but also to help her to address the many challenges she may be facing. So, how do our case workers achieve this?

Our case workers are experts in navigating the complex housing system, finding a property that will suit the needs of each woman so that she can move on – a home. Some women need a home in order to be reunited with their children so they might need multiple bedrooms. Some women want to have their beloved pet with them. Some need an ongoing supportive environment or have disability needs. They may need to be near public transport. Case workers try to match as many of the woman's needs with a property, because ultimately, that's what makes the difference for helping women to move on from homelessness and rebuild their lives.

But, our case workers are also supporting the women to deal with all the other issues in their lives. Poverty is almost always part of the reason why people become homeless. Many women

exiting a long-term relationship or, having lost a job, come to us with no income and no idea what income support they might be eligible for. Therefore, our case workers are experts in Centrelink too. Many clients are keen to find work and create some financial security for themselves, in some instances after a significant career gap. And so, our case workers are experts in the pathways to employment and education and we have a series of partnerships that can help make these things happen.

Many of the women have stress, anxiety and depression from being homeless. Other forms of mental illness are also common, and exacerbated by being on the streets. Our case workers need to be able to work with them when they are living with us, help them to learn to manage their symptoms, as well as linking them to the supports they need.

Trauma is a common feature for many of the women who come to us - sometimes domestic violence, sometimes a terrible childhood, sometimes the death of a spouse, partner or child that has caused such grief that they can barely function. All of our staff are trained in trauma-informed care, and understand the hypervigilance, the fear, the social anxiety that often accompanies PTSD. Some women self-medicate their pain with alcohol or drugs and they may be withdrawing while they are with us, so our case workers are experts in dealing with people with addictions.

I am so honoured to represent Catherine House when I do public speaking events, and I am often told "you do such good work". But really, it is the front line staff who bend over backwards, go the extra mile and show such creativity, perseverance and determination in helping every single individual who comes to Catherine House.

The wonderful work our case workers do, thanks to your support, is why so many of our clients keep in touch, send Christmas greetings and love to tell "their" case worker of how far they've gone since they left Catherine House, how much they have achieved. It's challenging work, but seeing the changes in women's lives is so rewarding.

Louise Miller Frost

CEO

Sunday Mail
PRESENTS
WESTPAC
CITY BAY

Sunday September 15th
Join Team Catherine House
and support women experiencing homelessness

catherinehouse.org.au

Ready to join us?

Step One: City Bay Race Registration – www.city-bay.org.au

During the registration process it will ask – Join a Team to support them?

This is where you select Catherine House from the drop down menu.

Please note that the entry fee paid to enter the race is not charged or donated to Catherine House.

Step Two: Register with Team Catherine House by visiting our website <https://catherinehouse.org.au/city-bay/>

This will ensure we can order the correct number of t-shirts and cater for the breakfast accordingly.

Step Three: Set up your Fundraising Page through Everyday Hero.

<https://nfp.everydayhero.com/au/catherine-house-inc>

Select the City Bay Event and then follow the prompts.

We would love to see as many people as possible running (or walking!) down Anzac Hwy proudly wearing their purple Catherine House shirts!

Achieving what they felt was never possible

Our mid-year and end of year celebrations are an important part of our events calendar as they serve important functions, which help make Catherine House the unique place that it is.

These events provide us with a public way to acknowledge the achievements of our clients, in this case, certificates of attainment from our onsite Adult Education Courses.

“ In this last Semester, 16 women were recognised for meeting the competency of their accredited course. ”

It also allows clients that are participating in the non-accredited courses, Art and Music, to showcase their work, which is always spectacular.

The Mid-Year celebrations falls in NAIDOC Week. As with all of our events we start with a special acknowledgment to Kaurna country. Vera, an aboriginal client, was thrilled and proud to be part of this at our most recent event.

of confidence, so being supported to speak up and speak out is a vital component of our “setting women up for success” model. We are fortunate to have a professional voice coach volunteer her time to work with past and current clients. Robyn, a current client, accepted an invitation to speak and did very well in front of our audience of over 60 people:

“I was very happy to be invited to speak at the Mid-Year Celebration and I was very willing to share my story so other clients who may feel nervous attending courses could see how much I enjoyed it. If I could finish the course, then they could too. Look at me now, I feel happy. Since doing the school talks they gave me more confidence to speak in front of others and to talk to people about my problems. I learnt how to use sticky notes when preparing my talk. The classes were very helpful, I gained some friends and I learnt more about myself. Speaking in front of people helps me to learn more about myself.”

Our theme for this year’s Mid-Year Celebration was ‘celebrating diversity’. Several clients were really inspired and worked on art pieces reflecting the theme, they were also interviewed about their inspiration and guests had a chance to hear about



The other important function is the bringing together of our Catherine House community. This includes a range of stakeholders, donors, funders, volunteers, staff, and past and current clients. A common thread in the feedback of clients is the sense of belonging they feel when in our services. Many have never experienced the inclusion, acceptance, warmth and hospitality that guide our service approach. They report feeling cared about, nurtured, a feeling of being lovable (often for the first time in their lives), respected, and part of something bigger than themselves, which helps them strive towards a more purposeful, satisfying life for themselves.

Equally important to us is giving clients a platform to use their voice. Many clients have been silenced due to fear, shame or lack

of their future plans and goals. The music group performed three creative pieces, one to Ava Max’s song “So Am I”. Ava is a young superstar, fiery about female empowerment. As usual, the music group surprised us and evoked laughter and tears.

These celebrations also allow us to share with our stakeholders the outcomes achieved by clients at Catherine House, while hearing more specifically why they remain involved with our service. Four special people readily accepted the invitation to be panel guests at this year’s Mid-Year Celebration. They were interviewed about why they became involved in Catherine House, why they are still involved, what it means to them personally, and what they learn from working with clients using our services. They were all very open with many heartfelt responses, which affirmed

to all clients present just how much they are thought of and valued. Our hope is that it affirms to them that their lives and experiences do matter. Each panel guest is noted below along with their feedback from the event:

Emmanuel Njuguna is an Associate at Fisher Jeffries Lawyers and Barristers. He has been coming to Catherine House to provide pro-bono legal services as part of the Housing Legal Clinic since 2012.

"It was a great pleasure to represent Fisher Jeffries at Catherine House's Mid-Year Celebration. The speeches by the clients were truly inspiring with the resilience and courage they showed. The greatest takeaway for me was the big impact that little acts of service can have in the lives of others who are in difficulty."

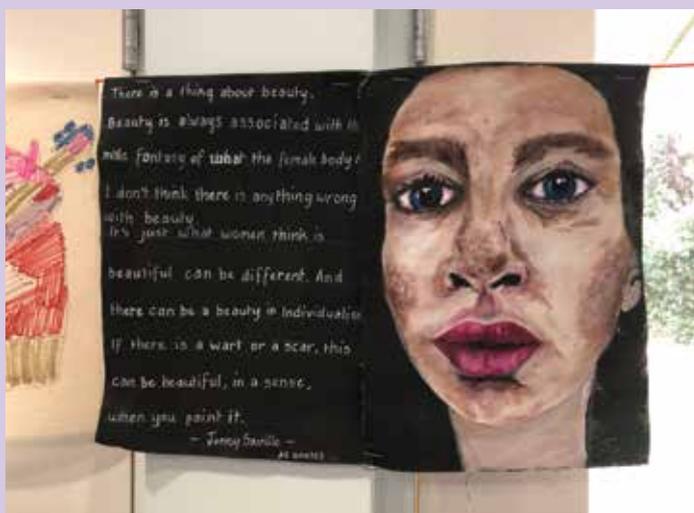
Karen Adamson, Case Worker - Post Crisis Program, has worked at Catherine House since 2009.

"It was wonderful to see and hear the growing confidence of the women, such that they were able to perform speeches, take part in performances, sing, produce such meaningful and well-crafted works of art for the gathered crowd, but above all have some FUN after all they have come through! It just shows what holistic,

was incredibly emotional. The music, singing and artwork was really uplifting and came from the heart. I hope that in some small way my role assists clients re-enter into the workforce confidently as part of their journey."

Megan Edwards' involvement began 31 years ago in 1988, her first year of teaching at St Aloysius. In 2006 she became involved in our fundraising subcommittee and has been a behind the scenes helper ever since. Her husband Dr Tim Edwards, a plastic surgeon with Adelaide Plastic Surgery also got the bug and has personally donated over the years and provides a pro-bono service to clients, recently supporting a client with scar treatment over a 2-year period.

"I felt honoured to be asked to speak at the Mid-Year Celebration. I was so impressed with how many women received course certificates. It's always rewarding to see the many and varied talents of the clients of Catherine House. It was inspiring to hear clients talk about their art with such confidence and clarity, and to listen to clients articulate their story so eloquently, and with compassion and humour.



compassionate, targeted and professional support, in partnership with the women's own strengths and tenacity, can achieve. BRAVO!"

Jasson Worrall, Team Leader - UniSA School of Nursing and Midwifery, has worked with our Education & Program since 2012.

"I was invited as a representative of the UniSA School of Nursing and Midwifery to participate as part of a panel for the Catherine House Mid-Year Celebration and found it incredibly rewarding. I met many brave women who are coming from difficult circumstances yet rebuilding their lives with the assistance of Catherine House. Listening to their stories of hope, strength and regained confidence

“ I especially love hearing the singing group – I just need to remember to bring tissues because it's always so moving that they bring me to tears! ”

Catherine House Women's Centre

★Boxfit feedback★ 18/07/19

I have attended 5 Boxfit classes at the Women's Centre so far. Our instructor, Celia, is fantastic. She is energetic and fun. Celia eases us in to different exercises and she accommodates all fitness levels and abilities.

I have always been a very active person but due to illness, I haven't done much physical exercise over the past year. Having the Boxfit classes held at the Women's Centre has allowed me to ease myself back in to fitness in a place where I feel safe.

Emma A (ex)

During my time assisting Sharon in the Women's Centre to run the Women's Personal Safety Course I have become so much more aware of my own personal safety and strategies I can use to protect myself in a life threatening situation. Sharon has demonstrated patience and understanding with each participant all the while injecting some light hearted humour along the way.

Each session has its own focus but is very much client led which is a credit to Sharon's teaching abilities and the success of the program. I have watched women participate and witnessed their confidence, knowledge in safety and belief in themselves grow more and more within each class and and is at the heart of what the Women's Personal Safety Course is all about.

It has been an absolute pleasure to be a part of the training and I look forward to each and every one as do many of the women who participate.

Tenny,
Catherine House
Case Worker



Client Reflection - Heather

My journey to create this art piece about diversity and inclusion has helped me overcome social anxiety by speaking and listening to other people's views on this social issue.

Their input helped me with collaborating on ideas of how best to represent diversity and inclusion among the vast cultures within our communities.

- The human torso represents the body of Australia
- The heart shape is covered with an Indigenous design and represents the Indigenous culture that is the heart of Australia
- The material on the puzzle pieces represents how each individual person fits into society as a whole, regardless of what country they are from or what clothes they wear
- The plain coloured material behind the puzzle pieces highlights the individuality of each person as they are
- The mask represents how different cultures celebrate their personal beliefs through festivals, and how a person dresses up for that occasion.



"It struck me that Heather's art was not only beautiful to look at, but very reflective and insightful on the theme it was making a statement about.

I felt really moved by the conceptualisation of Indigenous culture as the 'Heart of Australia', and felt that how Heather had visually communicated this was quite powerful."

Margot - Heather's Case Worker

The Healing Power of Art - The Art of Being Human

Catherine House was invited to be a participant in this exhibition which was conceived by Serafina Tane from Teaspoons of Change. The aim was to provide an opportunity for artists experiencing adversity and hardship to exhibit their work, whilst generating awareness of vulnerable and at risk people in the community and the services supporting them. This multifaceted exhibition provided an opportunity for clients to:

- Exhibit their work at various businesses in the city South precinct for the duration of the 2019 Fringe Festival.
- One client from each service was selected as a subject for a bronze cast sculpture by artist Scott Eames, and our sculpture was sponsored by Jane and Justin Harmen. Catherine House clients were invited to submit Expressions of Interest to be selected for this opportunity. Angela was our successful applicant. Subjects were paid for their sitting services.
- A short film documentary titled "Faces of Clay" depicting the journey of the exhibition, the sculpture work in progress, and the journey of the client and their time with their respective service was created. The event screening for Faces of Clay featured at the Mercury Cinema on the 14th of March this year as part of the 2019 Fringe Festival.
- Catherine House held an unveiling ceremony to celebrate the arrival of Angela's sculpture.



Artist Reflection.....

"Last year I commenced work on four portrait busts while working on a project named 'The Art of Being Human'.

One of those people was a beautiful human being named Angela Rose.

I got to know Angela as we worked together as Artist and Model, and we built a bond through the shared experience of the Art.

The work was very much a spontaneous piece that went through a period of transition until it reached its conclusion of how I portrayed her.

We had a conversation about how she closes her eyes, especially in crowded places, in order to block everything out and reach connection with God, and that is when she feels at peace and can let go.

When we commenced our sessions working live on North Terrace outside the Royal South Australian Society of the Arts Gallery in the Institute Building, she sat on a chair and did just this, and I worked from her and portrayed her in this way, just letting go, and totally at peace, and connecting with God.

I also placed two roses on her right side of the Bust, one a bud and one opening up and blossoming.

The roses symbolise her surname, but also the bud being closed, and then opening up and blossoming just like she is to a better future.

For me personally, this work actually helped me, it enabled me to put into practice something I am very passionate about and something I have long been considering, the healing power of art.

And I feel I truly saw healing taking place with this shared experience, and this experience has been very rewarding for me.

I am extremely proud knowing the Bust will now be on permanent display at Catherine House, and may offer women of the future using their services a feeling of peace as they get to know the Bust of Angela, and experience what the work speaks and radiates".

Scott Eames, Sculptor FRSASA

Angela's Reflection

"Thank you to Catherine House who supported me to be a part of The Art of Being Human, it was a great honour and privilege to be a part of this amazing event. Certainly a once in a lifetime opportunity to be a part of something so remarkable. Humbly sharing my story openly and honestly allowed me to be real, be heard and be healed.

There are so many people who personally supported me during this project. Thanks to Serafina for her vision and energy for starting and organising this project. Scott was the gifted and inspirational Sculptor who patiently and with lots of laughter sculptured a Bust of me. Harvey, a caring and talented young man who filmed and edited the movie production, which was absolutely and profoundly stunning. Elizabeth who worked with Harvey to interview me during filming was so helpful and supportive during the whole process.

Thank you to all who were involved in bringing this artwork to life. It will be remembered by me with a smile on my face and a tear on my cheek". Angela



"It's very exciting to have a vision and see it come to life. When I created the concept of The Art of Being Human I didn't realise it was going to have such a profound impact on so many people. It's because of the brave people, like Angela from Catherine House, who put themselves forward to participate that the event was able to be such a success. Angela's willingness to be vulnerable, to open her heart and share her story to camera was a beautiful experience that we all grew from, she taught us a lot!"

For me, The Art of Being Human is not about a hand up or a hand out, but holding hands, where we all come together to create something amazing and learn from each other. I am grateful to Catherine House for their ongoing support and belief in the Art of Being Human. I look forward to working with the Catherine House Community on The Art of Being Human, Adelaide Fringe 2020!"

Serafina Tane- The Art of Being Human Founder



Contact Details

PO Box 6031 Halifax Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone 08 8232 2282

Email reception@catherinehouse.org.au

For more information visit

catherinehouse.org.au or

  [catherinehouseadl](https://www.instagram.com/catherinehouseadl)