



### **Recipient**

Mercy Community  
Services

### **Grant Amount**

\$500,000

### **Funding Period**

2020 - 2023

### **Grant Overview**

Mercy Community sought three-year bridging funding to allow the Romero Centre to transition to full self-sustainability. The proposed funding enabled Romero to keep serving people seeking asylum, including families and increasingly women and children, while completing the final phase of three-part sustainability strategy. The grant therefore partially offset the delivery of business as usual services and provided the capacity for Romero to develop a fundraising strategy.

## CASE STUDY: ROMERO CENTRE

### **Context and Need**

Since 2007, the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Community have fulfilled their mission in providing financial support to the Romero's extremely vulnerable community of people seeking asylum and refugees. The group of men, women and children that Romero supports live on the very fringes of society – marginalised, stigmatised and impoverished, with the majority having no income, no access to Medicare and no access to any meaningful welfare net.

Ever increasing financial constraints has meant that historic sources of missional funds for the Romero Centre are rapidly shrinking, and this means that the Romero Centre has little choice, but to reach self-sustainability within the next three years.

## Activities and Implementation

The project involves completing and extending a co-designed 2019-21 Operational Plan and implementing a 2020-23 Fundraising Strategy that identifies sustainable sources of ongoing revenue. In addition, Romero sought to strengthen public promotion through leadership of interfaith restorative advocacy projects and events.

## Outcomes and Impact

In term of BAU, Romero provided 18,332 nights of accommodation; over 2,000 individual support sessions, 272

legal migration advice cases and helped 253 people with ESL classes. The longer-term objective of sustainability generated the following outcomes in the shorter term:

- 24% increase in regular donations in 21/22 (Supporter Hub analysis)
- 36% increase in the total number of donors in 20/21 (3422 donations in 21/22 compared with 2511 in 20/21, Supporter Hub analysis)
- 28% increase in number of donations greater than \$2000
- 401% increase following fundraising investment in 19/20 in three years
- 100% increase (from 2 to 4) in corporate partners
- Exceeding the donations forecasted in the proposal by a factor of greater than 290% (\$351,250 Forecast compared with \$581,000 actual)

## Learnings

Whilst there was an immediate positive impact however the main challenge for the immediate year following is that the bar of sustainability is raised higher by a decrease in the Nudgee Trust Grant of \$50k and a context of economic decline and rising costs of living. Decreasing expenditure is not necessarily a viable option as Romero met its expenditure targets this year and runs on a very lean budget. Instead, to meet that challenge, Romero needs to both increase its resource revenue and gain further efficiencies from existing resources.

Despite considerable effort and the positive uptick in donor support Romero produced a \$127k deficit in the 2021/2 year. The nature of the organisation and its valuable work suggest it will always need baseline funding to continue its work. Mercy Community Services SEQ Limited operates in a sector with multiple headwinds, particularly in the early 2020's. This made continuing to financially support the Romero Centre an ever-increasing challenge.

The Romero Centre is now a ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and continues to provide essential support and services to people seeking asylum.