



St Anthony's Family Care

HEART matters



Christmas 2021

An Update From Our CEO



Dear Friends,

With the end of the year now well within sight, reflecting on 2021 is filled with many bittersweet memories.

The year 2021 commenced with great excitement and positivity as we all thought that the Covid issues of 2020 were well behind us.

Figtree Early Learning Centre commenced a new year in its purpose-built facility, and it was wonderful to welcome many new little faces and their families to our service.

Our Disability Services programs returned to full swing and January saw Vacation Care programs operating from both the St Anthony's Family Care site in Croydon and from a school facility in Campsie. Many children enjoyed their school holidays participating in centre-based activities such as painting, gardening, and cooking and adventures exploring Sydney parks, beaches, and entertainment venues.

The growing demand for Disability Services was evident and we were thrilled to see continued progress on stage 2 of the site re-development. The completion of stage 2 would include three additional houses for children and young adults for short term accommodation, a new Activity Centre from which Disability Services could operate a range of programs and a new administration centre.

Several events were planned for May to celebrate the completion of the development and to welcome donors, stakeholders, families and the local community to see what has been taking place behind the temporary fencing over the past two years.

On the 12th May the Official Opening of the new St Anthony's Family Care Village was held, and it was



wonderful to see so many donors and supporters who have had a close relationship with St Anthony's over many years and decades attend and be part of the celebration. Burwood Mayor, John Faker along with Sr Monica Cavanagh gave speeches at the event and Sr Carmel Whybrow and Ms. Thalma Dickson cut the official ribbon. All attendees were then given informative tours of the buildings prior to enjoying refreshments. It was lovely to come together with so many people who share a passion for the work of St Anthony's and are keen to see the organisation move into a new era whereby the work of Saint Mary Mackillop can continue for many more decades.

In the days that followed we held a large community open day which saw over 600 people come through the gates to learn about the work of St Anthony's and many registered for services.

A special event was also held for the Sisters of St Joseph – many of whom have a long-standing relationship with St Anthony's. Some of the sisters had worked in the old buildings and were thrilled to see how the site had been transformed.

Sadly however, not long after these very exciting weeks, the joy of the first few months of the year would draw to an end.



For those of you on Facebook or Instagram, we often post our latest news to our pages, so please like and follow us.



Sr Monica Cavanagh,
Congregational Leader SOSJ

In mid June, Sr Carmel Whybrow, who many of you have known for many decades, sadly passed away. As the St Anthony's community came to terms with the loss of Sr Carmel, the Delta strain of the Covid pandemic was thrust upon us. Unlike the outbreak of 2021, the Delta strain hit St Anthony's hard and saw many of us forced to work from home for several months. The Early Learning Centre continued to operate throughout the year with only a brief eight day business closure due to a close contact in the centre.



Sr Carmel Whybrow &
Ms Thalma Dickson

The Disability Services programs were required to continually modify service delivery due to possible infections and cross contaminations. Committed to our mission, all possible steps were taken to ensure that those children and families in greatest need were able to continue to access services through out this period. This resulted in considerable additional work for the team as we introduced detail risk management strategies and operational models

to limit contact between various workers, clients, vehicles, and premises.

Fortunately, we all came out the other end and I am pleased to say that feedback from families that access St Anthony's services has been extremely positive and complimentary as to how services were managed during these difficult months.

In mid-October, all staff returned to site and we have now resumed full operations and have our sights firmly fixed on the future. There has been a significant uptake in services since we have recommenced all services and we are already planning the introduction of more services for the new year.

It is wonderful to see the buzz of activity when we come to work every day. To see the children's beautiful faces and to hear the chatting, singing, and giggling of children and youth throughout the village.

It is without a doubt that the year 2021 will stay with many of us for a very long time. It truly has been a year of ups and downs, but it has been amazing to see how a common mission can unite us and achieve wonderful outcomes despite adversity.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your constant support, well wishes and concern during difficult times and your ongoing commitment to the mission of St Anthony's Family Care.

Sharing warm and joyous wishes to each of you this Christmas,

Joanna Najdzion
Chief Executive Officer



Please note
our address has
changed to:

St Anthony's Family Care
11 Monash Parade,
Croydon NSW 2132

Maintaining Essential Services During a Pandemic



St Anthony's Disability Services provide a range of individual, group and accommodation services for children and young adults with disabilities. We support participants with a range of moderate to complex support needs to enjoy various experiences and participate in community life. It brings the staff at St Anthony's great joy to be part of a young person's life as they achieve individual goals and milestones.

With COVID this year, it again bought home the significance of support which St Anthony's Disability Services provide. The year 2021 has not been like any other, and as we celebrated the International Day for People with Disabilities on 3 December, the meaning and importance continued to resonate with us more than ever.

In June this year, we began facing another wave and new strain of COVID; our operational team were quick to maintain engagement with our participants and their families. From previous experience, we knew that focusing on our mission of supporting children and young adults would ensure that we were able to respond to individual and family needs, and we quickly connected from our new "home offices" to focus on our participants and staff members' well-being during this time of change.

From a perspective of "essential service" needs, we looked at how we could best continue to operate services and support those in greatest need whilst minimising all potential risks. Services were adapted from community settings to in-home care

to reduce person to person contact, and we created small teams which we called "bubbles" to reduce exposure when close contacts arose and to assist us with contact tracing.

As the government guidelines changed frequently, our ability to navigate flexible and adaptive services would soon become our strength. Assessing risk became a core focus with a need to protect participants and their support workers alike. As the days rolled into weeks, and then months, the challenges continued, and we saw many acts of kindness and outcomes for which we are grateful and hold close.

Overall, the disruption to everyone's life, health, and mental well-being this year was immeasurable, and the impacts will be felt for years to come. The added complexity for families with a child or person with a disability added further pressures for many. Through this constantly, and rapidly challenging year, safety remained paramount, and we ensured that we offered transparency in our approach to both staff and support workers.

"The disruption to everyone's life, health and mental well-being, as a result of the ongoing COVID19 pandemic is immeasurable and as a society we will be revealing, investigating and counting the cost for years to come. The added complexity of COVID when you have a child with a disability, or indeed any person with a disability, makes our full and already completely bonkers life even more chaotic. We rely heavily on the support and unconditional love that our son receives by the staff (both management and support workers) at SAFC. During this constantly, and rapidly, evolving time SAFC staff have been outstanding in their communication with us and have been as accommodating as possible to ensure that we have continued service. This has never been at the expense of our safety, or that of our beloved son or SAFC staff. Thank you for your adaptability and understanding. Our decision to use SAFC as a service provider in 2014 is one that we have never regretted".

—Parent

As time progressed, and vaccinations increased with cases declining, the SAFC Community is re-established, and now grows again. Our children and young adults are recommencing their community access and group programs outside of their family homes with activities such as swimming, bush walking, and dance classes.

With so much to appreciate and to be grateful for as we re-establish our previous supports, the 2021 International Day for People with Disabilities offered so much more meaning this year, as we look forward and hope for an inclusive future for all.



Simon Bartholomew
Manager, Disability Services



Vale Sr Carmel

Our much-loved Sr Carmel Whybrow died peacefully at St Joseph's Hostel, Hunters Hill on 15th June 2021. Sr Carmel dedicated many decades to the Ministry of St Anthony's and was known by many of you. Sr Carmel first commenced at St Anthony's in 1957 where she worked in the Baby Nursery.



She worked here 7 days per week for two years. She then moved to Victoria, her home state, for six years before returning to St Anthony's. Her work continued at St Anthony's until 2018 and she continued to be a highly valued member of the team.

According to her friends, one of Sr Carmel's major highlights of her life and ministry was being able to cut the ribbon at the official opening day and having one of the Cottages in the Village named after her.

Sr Carmel was greatly loved and will be missed by many.

May she eternally Rest In Peace.

For more information and to provide your feedback:

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