



St Anthony's Family Care

HEARTmatters

Christmas 2022

An Update From Our CEO

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to be writing to you all at this time and to share that we have had a wonderful year at St Anthony's.

Despite the challenges with construction and Covid of recent years, we have successfully moved on to be in a position to fulfil our vision to grow services and support more children and young adults with disabilities.

Figtree, our Inclusive Early Learning Centre, has had the opportunity to enrol many new children during the year and we are currently at our planned capacity. We have continued with our commitment to provide education and care services to young children with disabilities and have welcomed numerous children into the centre. In the past, our focus was on children who had an autism diagnosis, however in 2023, in response to community demand, children with varied diagnosis, including Down Syndrome, Global Development Delay and hearing impairment will commence at the centre.

The design and layout of the new Figtree site has improved visibility for supervision of children, level access and accessibility across the entire centre and provides more inclusive outdoor play spaces.

The team at Figtree have worked exceptionally hard over the past year and are no doubt looking forward to a well-deserved Christmas break before welcoming existing and new children and families in early 2023.

The Disability Services program at St Anthony's has also had a very positive year. In addition to the

existing individual and group programs operated on weekdays, weekends and over the school holiday periods, it has been pleasing to see a strong response to our new programs.

The expansion of the Short-Term Accommodation service, with the opening of the three new houses, has been well received by not only existing clients but many new families have also accessed the service. In the past, it was not uncommon to have to turn families away as there was no capacity to meet their needs with only one house available. With four purpose-built properties available for accommodation, this is no longer the case, and numerous clients can now access the service simultaneously for a night, a weekend or for a longer period. Clients can have a house to themselves or can share with a sibling or another client for a more social experience.

The opportunity to stay in a house which is safe, well-resourced, and appropriately staffed, gives many parents the confidence to take a night off from their caring responsibilities. In addition, knowing that their son or daughter is in good hands and not only having fun but also developing vital life skills, makes this a winning situation for all involved.



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

The Forge Day program for school leavers aged up to 25 years, commenced this year with the opening of the new Jean & Thally's Activity Centre. As a new program, the year started off with only a handful of clients however this has increased over the months, and there is strong interest from school leavers who are due to complete their high school studies in 2022.

The Forge Day program provides an option for school leavers for who employment and further education may not be an option due to their disability and care requirements. The Forge program focuses on further developing life skills, accessing the community, and forming social connections.

The weekly schedule at Forge includes participating in a broad range of activities including grocery shopping, cooking meals, washing cars, gardening and growing vegetables, movement and exercise, music programs and art and crafts.

There are never any shortages of volunteers in the office to taste the latest treats baked by the Forge participants on cooking days!

In August, the Sisters of St Joseph Congregational Leadership Team, St Anthony's Board of Directors, Management, and staff all came together to celebrate Mary MacKillop Feast Day. This has been an annual tradition for quite a



number of years however, due to covid, we were unable to celebrate the past couple of years. This year was particularly special as we came together for the first time to host the event onsite and also acknowledge the 70th Anniversary of St Anthony's Family Care.

As we looked back on our history and mused through black and white photos of the past, it was overwhelming to see how much has changed over the decades. Despite the changed faces and buildings, it was reassuring to know that our mission has remained consistent over the years and our commitment to children and families needing support was still at the forefront of the organisation.

It is only with the dedication and commitment of St Anthony's donors and supporters, who give so generously, that we can continue the work of St Mary MacKillop.

I thank you for your continued support and wish you life's greatest blessings for peace, faith, and love, at Christmas and always,

Joanna Najdzion
Chief Executive Officer



Sabina Donnelly
Chairperson

Sr Louise Reeves
SOSJ Congregational
Leadership Team

Evie's Experience



Our lovely little girl Evie, born in 2005, was diagnosed with severe autism and developmental delay at age 3.

The early years with Evie were very hard. She had severe sleeping problems which kept us exhausted, and her challenging behaviours made it very difficult to go on any kind of outing or see family and friends.

Although Evie had a lovely school to go to, our weekends and school holidays were long, lonely and isolated.

When Evie was about 9 years old, some friends suggested we contact St Anthony's Family Care and, in many ways, I feel that suggestion saved our lives.

From our earliest interactions with St Anthony's, the genuine, caring and cheerful culture of the organisation was obvious.

Evie first started in the Saturday Community Access program 9 years ago. The amazing carers at St Anthony's, with their gentle and persistent support, enabled Evie to experience so many wonderful adventures – the Royal Easter Show, Chinese New Year festivals, playgrounds, picnics, discos, bowling and swimming, just to name a few!

The St Anthony's Afterschool Group Program allowed me to keep working at a job I loved, and the Vacation Care program simply transformed school holidays into opportunities for all sorts of fun for Evie and allowed us much needed respite.

Now 17, Evie stays overnight in the beautiful new cottages. These stays allow her to develop the confidence to be away from home and challenges her to keep developing her living skills.

In the coming years, as she moves into adulthood we hope she will be able to participate in the FORGE Young Adult Day Program.

Over the years, St Anthony's have been amazingly flexible. When workdays or work hours have changed, when Evie hasn't wanted to go on a particular group outing or when more help has been needed at short notice, St Anthony's have always managed to support us.

The carers at St Anthony's are truly a special group of people, seeming to really understand and enjoy each child for the individuals they are. We are greeted with smiles every time we arrive, and Evie runs in the door, impatient for us to go. Her happy experiences at St Anthony's are a gift for which we will always be profoundly grateful.

– Noni, Evie's Mum



Follow Us on Social Media!



SAFC is happy to announce that our 2022 Annual Report is out now.

Grab a cuppa and read through what we've been up to for 2022!

Head to:

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For more information and to provide your feedback:

Ph: (02) 9747 5782 Email: enquiries@safc.org.au Web: www.safc.org.au

Peace at Christmas

Thank You for your support in helping children with disabilities to reach their greatest potential...

...Wishing you all the blessings of a wonderful and safe Christmas Season.





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