

LIFEBOAT GEELONG FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2020

INTRODUCTION:

This 2020 “Annual Report” is actually the first for the “Lifeboat Geelong Foundation”, which commenced in 2013. The inaugural meeting was (as were many subsequent meetings) held in the office of Frank Costa in Myers St.

As of November 2020, Frank has accepted the invitation of the Lifeboat Board to be Patron of the Foundation. His support of the organisation and its focus of pastoral and practical care for victims / survivors of church-related sexual abuse, has always been deeply appreciated.



Footnote – May 2021: Lifeboat Geelong has been deeply saddened by the death of our Patron, Frank Costa AO in May 2021. His support of “Lifeboat” from its inception and on many levels has been of incalculable assistance. His wise presence at many meetings was especially appreciated.

Our deepest condolences to Shirley and the family. May his gentle yet energetic and generous soul rest in God’s peace.

2020 was a turbulent year across the globe, and the isolation occasioned by lockdowns and other restrictions has impacted significantly on many of Lifeboat’s clients.

CLIENT SUPPORT OFFICERS:

The extremely positive personal engagement with clients provided by Client Support Officers, Trudy Maiden and Anne Johnson, along with Executive Officer Cath O’Reilly, has meant the world to our clients who deeply value their practicality, their empathy, and especially their patient, listening ears.

“Lifeboat” is indeed fortunate to have found such dedicated and competent people and we thank them for their genuine commitment, which has always been well and truly “above and beyond”.

In recent months, we have also gained the expertise of our Housing Officer, Patrick Caruana, who is providing practical guidance based on his professional training and years of experience in social housing. Security of accommodation is without doubt one of the most pressing needs for many of our clients, and Patrick’s leadership will be a most important component of the quality of service Lifeboat can provide in this area of need.

Anne



Trudy



Cath



Patrick



LIFEBOAT FOUNDATION BOARD:

The Board now meets regularly every second month, paying special attention to its professional and compliance responsibilities, as well as forming a vision for Lifeboat's future. The Board believes that realistic planning and strategies will be very valuable to "Lifeboat" in both the immediate and long-term future.

Kevin Larkins has accepted the position of Deputy Chair of the Board, which now has a membership of eight: Fr. Kevin Dillon (Chair), Kevin Larkins (Deputy Chair), Cath O'Reilly (Board Secretary), Ian Kelly (Treasurer), Tim Hardiman, Liz Riordan, David O'Brien and Kevin Roache.



Fr Kevin Dillon
Lifeboat Geelong Founder and Board Chairman

FINANCE:

2020 afforded few opportunities for fundraising events, due to the COVID restrictions, but the Combined Catholic Parishes Raffle generated around \$12,000 – with thanks to the great work of Sr. Anne Lourey and of Lyn Howard, assisted by a number of committed people in various parishes across Geelong and Melbourne.

There is a growing awareness within the wider community of the damage done to people whose lives as children have been horrifically damaged by the abuse they suffered, inflicted by people they had been given to believe were to be trusted. Lifeboat's mission to help and support them is gaining increasing trust and recognition.



Donations - both large and small - are consistently received from people who appreciate and understand the mission of Lifeboat. To these are added a number of charitable foundations whose consistent

generosity has allowed the work continue and expand. This has been especially evident in Lifeboat's capacity to engage our four part-time staff members, and also to set aside funds which can ensure that the support of clients can be maintained for as long as possible, even in the event that the current generous support of Lifeboat is somehow diminished for whatever reason e.g. COVID-related financial issues etc.

With nearly all clients assisted so far, Lifeboat has been able to provide appropriate support and assistance to all who have requested it.

MARY MACKILLOP LIFEBOAT CONFERENCE:

The "Lifeboat Geelong Foundation" is deeply appreciative of the moral, spiritual and financial assistance of the Mary MacKillop "Lifeboat" Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which also meets monthly and follows up additional needs of our clients. The Conference shares the same vision as "Lifeboat", and works in great harmony with the Foundation in every way.



Tim Hardiman.

Inaugural President of Mary MacKillop Lifeboat Conference

OUR ST. AYLES SKIFF – "COVENT GARDEN".

In 2019, the generosity (again!) of the Anthony Costa Foundation allowed for the purchase and construction of a "St Ayles Skiff", which we have used as a social and active focal point for our clients and supporters.

The COVID lockdowns of 2020 made use of the “Covent Garden” very limited, but we believe 2021 will allow new and worthwhile uses of the skiff to be initiated.



GRANTS:

We did not receive every grant we applied for, but were successful in two major areas.

Through the initiative of Anne (Johnson) assisted by Kevin Larkins, Lifeboat received a grant of \$30,000 from the Anthony Costa Foundation. This funding is being directed towards the employment of our Housing Officer and the development of an ongoing contact system with organisations and individuals who can assist our efforts to sustain housing improvement for our clients, many of whom require assistance with sourcing or improving their accommodation.



Anne also initiated an application which resulted in a grant of \$10,000 from “Give Where You Live”, specifically for Geelong-based clients. This enabled Lifeboat to provide ten clients with laptops and internet services. Another Lifeboat client with appropriate technical skills has

assisted greatly in the selection and purchase of suitable laptops, which are currently being distributed to individual clients.

SURVIVORS:

Currently “Lifeboat” is in regular contact with up to 150 victims / survivors in every state of Australia, but especially in Geelong and Melbourne. About two-thirds of these have received some financial assistance – some regularly, others just on the odd occasion that they need it.

The remaining one-third may not request financial assistance of any kind, but still receive regular contact and support, either in person or by phone. They ask for nothing other than compassion and recognition of the damage done to them and, in too many cases, of the injustice and rejection they have experienced when they have reached out to church authorities for help. The compassionate listening ears of all associated with “Lifeboat” have been of substantial help to them, helping them to maintain a reasonably balanced and healthy outlook on life.

“Light at the end of the tunnel”



Photographed by Lifeboat Client Pete Rogers

LIFEBOAT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

The Committee continues to meet each month, and in 2020 “Zoom” allowed our meetings to continue effectively. The regular attendance of members and visitors has given our meetings a vitality and purpose which has been most positive. From the very first meeting, we have had clients attending meetings, often telling their stories of their suffering and engaging in frank discussion. This has kept the Committee both informed and focussed on the purpose and importance of “Lifeboat”.

The Committee is essentially, in nautical terms, the “engine room” of the organisation, while the Board is the “bridge”. The contribution and commitment of all is both effective and appreciated.

FORMAL CHURCH CONTACT:

“Lifeboat” has occasioned little interest or practical support of any kind from the institutional church. In December 2019, a contribution of \$10,000 was received from the (Melbourne) “Archbishop’s Charitable Fund”, for which we were grateful. However, no contribution was received in 2020. We are yet to receive any other expressions of interest in our mission and work from church leaders, with the exception of the positive interest from Bishop Vincent Long of Parramatta, an enquiry from the Archdiocese of Perth (the follow-up of which has been compromised by COVID-related travel restrictions), and a single generous donation from one order of Religious Women.

SINCERE THANKS - THE GEELONG YACHT CLUB, MICHAEL AND LOUISE KING:

This report would be quite incomplete without a “special mention” of the hospitality over the past five years of the Geelong Yacht Club for our meetings and social functions, and of Michael and Louise King in donating to Lifeboat the excellent office premises of Kings Funeral Services in Myers St., Geelong. This acknowledgement of Lifeboat’s work and worth is deeply appreciated, and is a source of great encouragement to the Board, the Committee, our supporters – and most importantly our clients. Our sincere thanks to them.



THE FUTURE:

We anticipate that the work of “Lifeboat” will be necessary for some time to come, and we will be highly aware of this ongoing need in our pastoral and financial planning.

2020 has been a difficult yet nonetheless productive year, and despite COVID-19, our clients have been able to be assisted – in nearly all cases – quite significantly. We look forward to a more settled year in 2021, hopefully with even better outcomes for those victims / survivors who are the key focus of our mission.

Sincere thanks to all concerned – our dedicated staff, the Board, the Committee, our many generous supporters, other Foundations which have supported us, and the many individuals whose financial, practical and prayerful support has enabled the Foundation to continue its work for the positive benefit of our clients.

Fr. Kevin Dillon
Chair
Lifeboat Geelong Foundation