



# Lifeboat Geelong

FOUNDATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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## A Message from Fr Kevin Dillon AM – Chair

It is almost ten years since Lifeboat began in 2013, and I wish to take this opportunity to trace where we have come from, report on how we have developed so as to meet emerging needs, and outline some of our hopes for the future.

In the late 1970's there were early indications of the abuse of children by priests, religious, and other trusted church-related personnel, such as teachers. First there was a trickle of allegations, then tragically, a flood of stories of victims, with most being proved to be both true and accurate.

Alongside these allegations were the responses of Church authorities, responses which demonstrated that either the authorities did not understand the damage that had been done or, if they did understand, they were not prepared to provide even the most basic justice for the young victims and their families.

In 1994, the ABC 4 Corners programme ran a documentary, "True Confessions", outlining numerous offences of sexual abuse within the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese. Nearly 30 years on, it is difficult to identify major improvement in the way in which the Church as an

institution has handled the issue, or addressed the needs of victims and their families - all of whose lives have been so horrifically damaged by the actions of people they had trusted implicitly.

Lifeboat was established by a small group of concerned people to try and assist the practical and pastoral needs of victims of church-related abuse, initially in Geelong, and then soon after in Melbourne, and now throughout Australia.

Lifeboat was a response to the personally degrading effect of the legalistic and adversarial approach of the institutional Church, an approach which re-traumatised victims by treating them as the enemy, not to be believed, rather than as lost sheep seeking the compassion and personal care of a Good Shepherd.

In a tight-knit community like Geelong and its surrounding region, it became clear that there were many victims, who had been jettisoned, thrown overboard and left to flounder by the institutional Church. Hence, the need for a "Lifeboat" to rescue and help them, as much as possible, back to safety.

The founding purpose of Lifeboat was to meet the practical, personal and where possible and wanted, the spiritual needs of abuse victims whose education, and therefore earning capacity, had been dramatically affected by the trauma they had suffered as children. As we have journeyed with the victims, we have also witnessed the pain and suffering experienced by their families - the



May God bless you for what you are giving and what you are doing.

Fr Kevin Dillon AM

mothers, fathers, siblings, partners, and children. Clerical sexual abuse has devastated so many families, and in the yawning absence of Church assistance, Lifeboat has tried to fill this void for both victims and their families.

With the help of freely-given donations from people who gradually learnt of Lifeboat's work and purpose, funds were raised to meet essential costs for people who, for the most part, are on a disability pension, or whose abuse has meant they have lacked the capacity to earn a reasonable living and manage life effectively. The costs for which Lifeboat has provided assistance have included accommodation, utilities, food, as well as medical and counselling expenses which were not being met by any Church authorities.

The personal care and affirmation that the payment of these bills has reflected for our clients has meant as much, if not more, to them than the actual financial relief itself. This assistance, personal and practical, is the focus of Lifeboat's work.

Over time more people have come to know of Lifeboat and have offered support, financial and in so many other ways. For some, a few dollars was what they could manage, while others, including some Foundations, have donated quite substantial sums. This generosity has made it possible for Lifeboat to employ four staff on a part time basis for 12 hours a week - though they all work many more hours longer because of their commitment and dedication. This allows us to visit and keep close contact with our clients on a regular basis, including those who live interstate. The personal inter-action means a great deal to our clients, who truly value the friendship and respect they receive, along with the most-appreciated practical help.

Lifeboat has received only minimal financial support from the "institutional Church", despite the reality that the damage Lifeboat seeks to address was actually caused by personnel of the Church. Our fundraising has been supported almost entirely by ordinary



people dismayed at the lack of justice and compassion in the response of the institutional Church. Even more, they cannot comprehend how and why victims whose abuse has been proven are still being harassed within the courts when if they seek “compensation” – which is not really the correct word. (“restorative justice” might be much closer to what is needed).

The practical, real-life experience of Lifeboat is that understanding, compassion and contrition toward abuse victims would have come at minimal cost to church authorities, compared to the enormous legal fees incurred by the church trying to defend the indefensible. Lifeboat is totally independent of any church, despite the fact that most of its supporters are people who have either a current or past church background.

Most people seeking Lifeboat’s support have been Catholic, but there are some whose abuse background is from other denominations. However Lifeboat’s support is for all who have suffered institutional religious sexual abuse. The spiritual damage suffered from religious institutional abuse is rarely mentioned, let alone addressed, but that damage can be profound. For so many, the loss of their religious faith following abuse by religious personnel can be damaging in the extreme, yet few religious leaders seem to acknowledge this. It is arguably the most damaging effect of all.

Despite the fact that Lifeboat is not a church organisation as such, the

compassion, care and support it can provide is made possible by the goodness of our supporters, and this is recognised by our clients as the genuine compassion of Jesus being there for them in both their practical need and personal distress.

Lifeboat constantly tries to reassure our 150 clients and their families that they are truly worthwhile people, and often we borrow from the motto of the cosmetic company “L’Oreal”, that we support them not only out of a sense of genuine justice and recognition, but also “because they’re worth it”.

Providing Gospel-based respect, care, and compassion for victims and their families is, by its very nature, an ongoing activity - a marathon, not a sprint. As we are about to reach our 10th anniversary of operation, we can see a clear need for Lifeboat’s service to continue for at least another decade or more - and we are planning ahead with that in mind.

**If you are reading this, it means you have been, in one way or another, a supporter of Lifeboat’s work. We thank you for your care and your interest, not only for the organisation itself, but by extension for the individual people we seek to help. May God bless you for what you are giving and what you are doing.**



Michael and Louise King

## Lifeboat Geelong Foundation Board

Members of the Board are:

Fr Kevin Dillon AM – Chair

Mr Kevin Larkins – Deputy Chair

Mrs. Cath O'Reilly – Secretary

Mr Ian Kelly – Treasurer

Mr David O'Brien - Legal Advisor

Mrs Liz Riordan

Mr Bruce Lindsay – Legal Advisor

Mr Terry Falkingham

During 2022, year the Board met on six occasions, mainly by Zoom, with special attention being given to our professional and compliance responsibilities.

The Board is consistently looking at Lifeboat's ongoing ability to provide practical and personal support to our clients, as well as continuing to develop a vision for the future.

The Board is also seeking new benefactors so as to ensure our younger clients can continue to have the personal support they will need for the years ahead.

## Lifeboat Patrons

Following the loss of our founding Patron, Frank Costa AO, in 2021, the Board Invited Michael and Louise King of Geelong to take up the important role of Patrons to Lifeboat. In keeping with their constant and generous support for Lifeboat at all levels and over many years, Michael and Louise have graciously accepted.

For eight years the Kings have generously provided Lifeboat with a well-located office and meeting room in central Geelong. With plans to relocate their business premises in 2023, Michael and Louise have generously offered Lifeboat office accommodation in a new location in the Geelong suburb of Newcomb.

To say simply,  
"Thank You" is not  
enough, but it is  
sincere and heartfelt.



## Lifeboat Staff

Lifeboat employs 3 staff on a part time basis, 12 hours per week.

- **Office Manager: Mrs Cath O'Reilly.**  
Cath is responsible for all the administrative work required to keep Lifeboat functioning efficiently and with compassion. She is the "front door" of welcome to our clients, donors and supporters. Cath's personal engagement with our clients is deeply appreciated by them.
- **Client Support Officers: Mrs Anne Johnson and Mrs Trudy Maiden.**  
Anne cares for clients in the Geelong region and Trudy those in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Both have a number of clients in other states. As Client Support Officers, Anne and Trudy visit and keep close personal contact with clients on a regular basis. That personal contact means a great deal to the clients who truly value the friendship and respect they receive, as well as the practical help given.
- **Accommodation Advisor: Mr Patrick Caruana** (employed part-time, hourly basis). Cost and availability of accommodation is one of the main challenges facing our clients. Patrick has extensive experience in the affordable housing sector and provides expert advice and assistance to our clients who can benefit from his experience and wisdom in this challenging area.

Having such dedicated and competent staff has enabled Lifeboat to deal with clients and their families on a face-to-face, personal level, which is critical when dealing with what can be sensitive and raw issues. Lifeboat is not just an organisation that helps, but a person who really listens and cares.

Thank you to the  
Lifeboat staff for being  
the face of Jesus to  
our clients.

## Our Clients

Lifeboat is in regular contact with 150 victims / survivors in every state of Australia, but with the majority in Geelong and Melbourne. About two-thirds of our clients have received some financial assistance, some regularly and others, just on the odd occasion when they need it.

The remaining one-third may not request financial assistance, 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 of the injustice and rejection they have experienced too often when they have reached out to Church authorities for help.

In some cases, strenuous legal opposition from church authorities has re-traumatised clients seeking



appropriate compensation for their suffering and the injustices experienced. The compassionate listening ears of all associated with Lifeboat has been of substantial help in helping them to achieve and maintain a balanced and healthy outlook on life.

To meet the challenge of isolation posed by Covid, Lifeboat introduced group meetings of clients via Zoom technology. Notwithstanding its obvious limitations, a number of clients still found this a helpful means of social interaction, and it is planned to continue the practice in 2023.

We also increased our connections with the families of clients, as we became aware of a number people in need of support of one kind or another.

The total number of people receiving Lifeboat support is therefore significantly greater than our 150 individual clients.

## Lifeboat Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee continued to meet each month, thanks to the technology of Zoom.

The purpose of the Committee is to provide first-hand advice and feedback from clients and their supporters on Lifeboat's activities. The regular attendance of supporters and visitors has given the meetings a vitality and purpose which has been most positive. Attendance of clients who are being assisted remains an important focal-point for keeping Lifeboat grounded and on track.

The Advisory Committee is, in nautical terms, the "engine room" of the organisation, while the Board is "the bridge". The contribution and commitment of all involved is both effective and appreciated.

## Finance

The Covid years of 2020 and 2021 limited fund raising initiatives, and 2022 was similar, at least as far as events were concerned.

However, the Combined Catholic Parishes Raffle generated almost \$9,000 profit. Sincere thanks to Sr Anne Lourey, Liz Riordan and Lyn Howard for their organising prowess. They were assisted by numerous committed people in various parishes across Geelong and Melbourne who worked very hard, yet again, to generate a great result for Lifeboat.

Hopefully, the Raffle will continue in 2023, under the leadership of the Keysborough Parish.

A generous response to the distribution of the 2021 Annual Report was especially helpful for our finances. Many donations, large and small, were received from readers who continue to become more aware of Lifeboat's mission to people who truly deserve all the help that can be provided.

Donations, again both large and small, are regularly 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 to continue and even expand.

As well as meeting our staff costs and the many requirements of our clients, Lifeboat has managed to establish a Sustainability Fund, or "reserve", to ensure continuity of service, even in the event that donations are fewer and grants become more difficult to find.

Lifeboat is both grateful and, in the correct sense of the word, proud to say that we have been able to provide support and assistance to all who have requested and needed it.

Geelong Community Foundation . This has enabled our Geelong-based clients to receive therapies such as massage and exercise classes. These have proved to be of significant benefit to their physical and emotional wellbeing.



## Grants



**Anthony Costa**  
Foundation

### Geelong Community Foundation

A grant from the Anthony Costa Foundation enabled the employment of Patrick Caruana as our Accommodation Advisor, an appointment which has proved most effective and is deeply appreciated by our clients. With that grant now fully exhausted, Patrick's work is being funded from within Lifeboat's own funds.

A grant to provide "complimentary therapies" was received from the

### Geelong Yacht Club

Once again, the hospitality and support of the Geelong Yacht Club has been a much appreciated feature of Lifeboat's year. The Club has provided meeting rooms and a venue for social events. We are hopeful that in 2023 we can once again hold our major fund-raiser in the wonderful facilities of the Club. Our sincere thanks to the Geelong Yacht Club.

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Lifeboat has received  
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## Car Donation Project

A “quiet achiever “ for Lifeboat in 2022 has been our appeal for cars to be donated to our organisation, either to be given to clients as an “upgrade” for their own use, or to be sold, with the proceeds assisting clients in other practical ways. When a car is sold, the amount generated by the sale can be recognised as a tax deductible gift from the donor.

Lifeboat has requested all parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne to advertise the car donation scheme in their weekly bulletins. Some parishes have obliged, but for many Lifeboat’s mission seems to have been ignored or overlooked, and our request has been unproductive. Sad, but true.

Nonetheless, the support which Lifeboat has received has resulted in 15 cars being donated in the past 2 years. Some cars come from deceased estates, some as a result of a driving licence has been relinquished, and others have just been lying around, unused and unloved. Advisory Committee member, Adam Kaali has been an energetic and imaginative manager of the project in a most productive way. Thank you Adam.

## Mary MacKillop Lifeboat Conference

The St Vincent de Paul Mary MacKillop Lifeboat Conference has been operating since 2017 to support the clients of the Lifeboat Geelong Foundation and continued its good work in 2022.

The Conference assists Lifeboat clients by providing additional practical assistance in areas such as accommodation, utility bills, repairs, and food vouchers.

Because the Society of St Vincent de Paul is a national organisation, the Conference extends the reach and flexibility of Lifeboat’s contact with interstate clients.

The Conference shares the same vision as Lifeboat and so works in great harmony with Lifeboat in every way.

## St Ayles Skiff, ‘Covent Garden’

In 2019 the generosity of the Anthony Costa Foundation allowed for the purchase and construction of a St Ayles Skiff, named “Covent Garden”, which Lifeboat used as a social and active focal point for our clients and supporters.

However, the Covid lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 saw very limited use of “Covent Garden”.

With the consent of the Anthony Costa Foundation, the skiff has now been handed over to the care and direction of the Geelong Yacht Club, and is available for wider community use, but this arrangement most certainly includes Lifeboat clients and supporters.

## Formal Church Contact

Lifeboat continues to generate little interest or practical support from the institutional Church.

The release of “Pathways Victoria” by the Archdiocese of Melbourne as a replacement for the “Melbourne Response” and “Towards Healing”, provided a degree of initial promise that it would be an improvement on the two protocols it was replacing. However, further investigation and discussion indicates nothing fundamental has changed in the denial attitude of the institutional Church to victims, and certainly not to their devastated families.

Church lawyers are still strenuously and fiercely fighting damaged victims in the courts in civil actions. The psychological strain on victims by unnecessarily prolonged legal proceedings is significant, debilitating, and cruel.

Even so, substantial damages are being received by some victims, and the defence arguments assembled by Church lawyers have been successfully challenged by victims.

Lifeboat does not act as an advocate for our clients in legal cases. Lifeboat’s role is to provide pastoral support to our clients, and that applies whether or not the client is taking legal action against a Church.

## Conclusion

The Board anticipates that the work of Lifeboat will be necessary for at least another decade, and so is highly aware of this ongoing need in our pastoral and financial planning.

2022 has been a difficult, yet productive year and our clients have been assisted, in nearly all cases, quite substantially. We look forward to a more settled 2023, hopefully with even better outcomes for our clients (victims/survivors), and their families, who are the key focus of our mission.

Sincere thanks to all concerned - the Board, our dedicated staff, the Advisory Committee, the Mary MacKillop Conference, our many generous supporters, other Foundations which have provided support, 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.

## Contact details

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**Lifeboat Geelong**  
FOUNDATION



## How to donate

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT DETAILS (tick your method. e.g. ☑ )

By Direct Deposit to Lifeboat Geelong Foundation

BSB: 633 000  
Account: 1602 40438  
Reference: Your Name  
or indicate:

By Cheque or money order (enclosed).

or indicate:

By Credit Card     Visa     Mastercard

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_

Cardholders Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Tick to be provided with a receipt.



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