

TOTAL PROJECT COST
\$7.2 million

CENTENARY GRANT
\$1 million

PARTNERSHIP
Commonwealth Government
Victorian Government
Corporations, Trusts and Foundations

Brotherhood of St Laurence

Sidney Myer House

Background

The Brotherhood of St Laurence was established in 1930 by Father Tucker, a priest working in the poverty-stricken streets and lanes of Fitzroy, an inner Melbourne suburb. Today the organisation helps disadvantaged people by providing goods, services and shelter, speaking up on their behalf and working toward preventing poverty.

Recent years have seen the rental housing market disappear around Fitzroy, with very few affordable rooming houses for locals. Through its aged-housing program, the Brotherhood provides secure low-rent housing of a standard that otherwise would not be available to local people.

In 1999 the Brotherhood launched the "Building Better Lives Appeal" to strengthen its mission to improve the well-being of those on low incomes at a time of profound economic and social change. The appeal contained several projects, including upgrading and renovating two residential facilities, a hostel and a rooming house for aged citizens.

Irene, a resident of Sidney Myer House

The Project

The Centenary Grant helped redevelop the two residences, one of which was named in honour of Sidney Myer (the other is known as Sumner House). The project began in October 1999 and the first residents moved into Sidney Myer House in February 2001.

Sidney Myer House is a high-quality residence for aged members of the local community. The initiative means that old people are no longer forced to move out of the area in which they have spent most of their lives.

The house currently has 15 elderly residents, most of whom are frail. Many also have psychiatric problems and alcohol and prescribed drug addictions. There is a long waiting list, with referrals coming from other aged-care agencies.

Each resident of Sidney Myer House has his or her own well-appointed room and private bathroom. They share dining and lounge facilities and use the on-site Coolibah Day Centre, where they can enjoy therapeutic recreation. Counsellors provide support on health, community and housing issues.

Partnership

The Centenary Grant of \$1 million was core funding for the \$7.2 million residential renovation and redevelopment. The Centenary Grant reinforced public attitude toward the Brotherhood and provided leadership for other philanthropists. Without doubt, it encouraged other trusts, foundations and governments to support the project and inspired individual donors and companies to make personal gifts. The appeal was held during a period of enormous demand on public giving, the result of several major appeals being held simultaneously.

Impact

Sidney Myer House and Sumner House will have several long-term benefits. They will continue to provide housing for aged people on low incomes living in the Fitzroy area, reduce the long-term waiting period (up to ten years) for Ministry of Housing accommodation and improve the standard of rooming house accommodation.

The impact of Sidney Myer House on disadvantaged elderly people living in and around Fitzroy will unfold with time. For many residents, most of whom have led troubled lives, it is the first safe, warm and quality home they have experienced. The benefits of spending their final years in such a community are immeasurable.

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THE SIDNEY MYER CENTENARY CELEBRATION
1899-1999

Sidney Myer

