

October update from Mt Druitt

“Mercy is not easy...It requires courage”
Pope Francis

So much has happened since our last update, we thought it might be a chance to pause and advise all our friends at Our Lady of the Way Parish on the fruits of our partnership.

The Willmot Project

The most recent and exciting news from the Willmot Project is the transformation of the gardens surrounding the Willmot Community Hub. It has become a breathtakingly beautiful place to be. Garden beds are filled with hundreds of plants. There is a new driveway, new pathways and of course the greenest lawn in Mt Druitt! It has become an oasis for Willmot families who can now sit with a coffee and enjoy watching their children play on a surface which gives them a soft landing.

As I type, the weekly mobile skate park program is underway. There are 40 children outside learning to ride skateboards safely and playing soccer on the lawns. I can hear the gaggle of happy little voices obviously enjoying themselves, learning new skills and playing safely. Meanwhile their parents are sitting at our new picnic tables talking together, enjoying their children and experiencing a couple of hours of peaceful community connection.

The big question of course is “When does the playground equipment get installed?”. Well that’s the exciting news. We are talking with designers, suppliers and installers right now to ensure we get the best playground we can. The \$26,000 raised during 2017 by Our Lady of the Way Parish will be enough to complete the entire playground including the safety fence, soft fall material for the floor and of course the play equipment itself.

Another exciting bit of news from Willmot is the number of programs being provided is increasing. We continue to partner with other organisations, Blacktown Council, Willmot Public School and others and are currently targeting teenage girls through a film making program.

The Deputy Mayor of Blacktown spent the morning here yesterday. The Council is so excited about the achievements at the Willmot Hub they are offering any and every support they can contribute. What a huge difference it will make to have our Council as an integral partner into the future. They are asking our advice on how they might invest more funds into the community and arrange community meetings at the Hub.

There is so much going on here that we can't possibly fit it all into this update but we hope to keep the stories coming and keep you informed on how your efforts are changing lives.

“I've decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

The Store and Opportunity Shop

Thanks to our partnership with **Harris Farm Markets** we have been able to significantly increase the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables at The Store. This has meant a huge increase in people being helped and there are a lot of very grateful families. **The challenge is keeping up with all the other food items - at present the shelves have never looked so empty.** We are working hard on sourcing more food from a variety of places including from food drives in Catholic schools. Our goal is to have a food drive each month from February to November. So far, we are excited that 5 schools have signed on and we expect more to follow. Without those donations we wouldn't have survived the last few months. The result of the Annual July Appeal by OLOTW Parish was outstanding this year. We filled our shelves over and over for lots of very grateful and happy customers. I might add that we had a very relieved and happy staff team led by Rose. I see their concern when the shelves grow empty because they know what that means for the local people. The July Appeal is a huge gift to everyone at Mt Druitt.

Our wonderful Opportunity Shop continues to be restocked by generous donations from Our Lady of the Way Parish. The Ron Dyer Centre stair well magically fills up every week or two providing us with high quality clothes and household items to put on our shelves. While the Op Shop sales help our bottom line we remain committed to it being a service to disadvantaged people first and foremost. Your donations make this possible.

The Challenges

While we are making great progress, there are of course always challenges for us to overcome.

Things we need now:

- *Getting more organisations and schools on board for annual food drives*
- *Reliable Volunteers at the store to drive the truck and van (only a car licence is required)*
- *Urgent need for a Volunteer Electrician for some upgrades at Willmot.*

A Special Thank You

1. To Linda Curtis, a parishioner of North Sydney, for her ongoing work on grant writing. Linda was successful in obtaining the State Government grant that allowed us to buy a new truck and van for The Store. She has just obtained

another grant from the Mary MacKillop Foundation to help with a range of things including some training for Willmot locals.

2. To Trish Martin, another Our Lady of the Way parishioner who remains our frontline partner out here. Trish is constantly dropping things off, coordinating donations and keeping Dave in line!

We are so very grateful for the friendship and support we receive from our family at Our Lady of the Way Parish. We hope you know how important you all are to us, we think of you everyday.

Your Partners in Justice

The Team from Jesuit Social Services

Monique, Rose, Lisa, Bernadette, Lynn, Aaron, Neil, Danielle and Dave



Breaking News.

Thanks to Harris Farm Markets anyone can now donate food at any HFM Store by dropping purchased goods into these new 'Food Bins' placed in every store. This has huge potential to help stock our shelves all year round!

Please pass this on to your friends and family!