



Artful Dodgers Studios participant, Aaron B

## Artful Dodgers Studios keeping creative spaces alive

Jesuit Social Services' Artful Dodgers Studios in Collingwood is one of Victoria's longest running community spaces for young people who are often experiencing multiple and complex challenges in their lives.

The Studios invite young people to explore music and art in a safe, welcoming and vibrant space. It creates, as one participant describes it, a sense of 'radical inclusivity'. The ongoing physical distancing restrictions in Victoria, however, meant the team had to urgently adapt the way services were delivered to ensure participants don't feel shut out while we all stay in.

Jesse Sullivan, Music Studio Coordinator and mentor at the Studios, recognised the effects COVID-19 restrictions had on participants. "A lot of our young people were quite upset. They understood why they couldn't come and perform and create, but it was really hard," says Jesse.

"So, the question of how we can keep engaging people was on my mind. In just two or three weeks, myself and other members of the team learned how to stream live through our computers, how to utilise Zoom and to facilitate the same music sessions we used to have face to face".

*Megaphone* and *Braided* are productions that demonstrate how the Studios have adapted their work so participants can perform and connect. *Megaphone* is a regular lunchtime concert that started five years ago. It gives participants the opportunity to perform in front of fellow participants, mentors and the wider Jesuit Social Services community. The first online *Megaphone*

lunch meant the chance for participants to develop confidence and performance skills was not lost to the pandemic. The event was a huge success.

Similarly, the producers of *Braided*, an original podcast series, ensured that a diverse group of eight participants could tell their stories of isolation for its second season. For Co-Host Agum Maluach, the thing she treasures most about creating *Braided* is "the friendships I have with the people who are in this with me". The voices heard are those of young people who are not often represented in traditional media. Reflecting on this, fellow Co-Host Matisse Laida, says "it's important that these conversations are broadcasted and normalised".

Despite every challenge presented, the Artful Dodgers Studios community has grown ever closer, more connected, more braided together.

Find out about the next *Megaphone* lunch by signing up to the Studios mailing list at [artfuldodgers.tv/get-involved/](https://artfuldodgers.tv/get-involved/)

Listen to the *Braided* podcast at [braidedpodcast.com](https://braidedpodcast.com)

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## Maintaining connections

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well during this unprecedented period of our lives. COVID-19 has impacted us all in ways that were unimaginable 12 months ago – including our relationships with loved ones and our sense of social connection.

It is this connection, and the importance of relationships, that continues to drive Jesuit Social Services in all that we do. As you know, for 43 years our work has focused on building relationships with people and communities on the margins.

This work is as important now, during the pandemic, as it has ever been. Many of the vulnerable people we work with experience a range of multiple and complex challenges, including a lack of secure housing, mental health problems or long-term unemployment.

Maintaining and strengthening our connections with these people, despite the lack of face-to-face contact in many cases, has been our key goal during recent months. As you will read in this newsletter, a number of our programs have rapidly evolved their service delivery models to continue working with people remotely.

During COVID-19, we have continued our advocacy for marginalised people, in the hope that the post-COVID world is more just and equitable than the pre-COVID world when it comes to giving people opportunities to flourish.

Jesuit Social Services has been working with the Victorian Government, via its Working for Victoria initiative, to provide employment for six months to people who lost work due to the pandemic. This scheme helps keep people employed and job ready while broadening the skill base at Jesuit Social Services.

As always, thank you for your support, and I hope my next note finds us in less challenging circumstances.

Julie Edwards CEO, Jesuit Social Services

## Overwhelming response helps to keep The Store open

The Ignite Food Store (The Store) in Mount Druitt is a vital community service. The Store provides low-cost, fresh and healthy food for Mount Druitt residents, who live in one of the most disadvantaged communities in New South Wales.

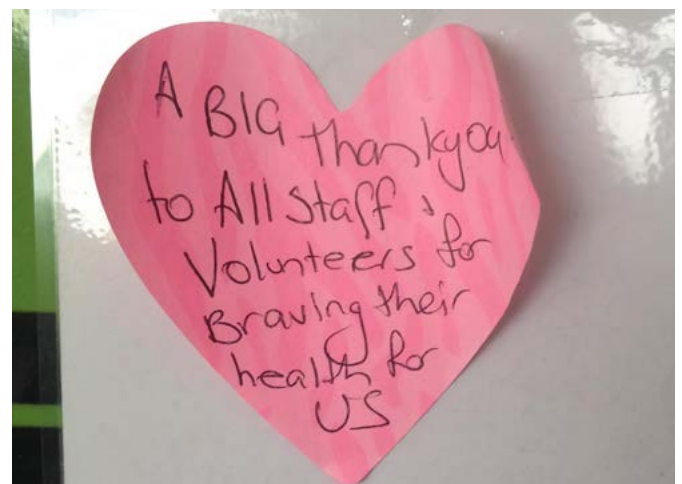
When COVID-19 hit, The Store felt its impact immediately. Social distancing rules meant school and parish food drives were cancelled, so The Store's supply chain was severely disrupted. To keep the shelves stocked for its customers, The Store had to purchase food and grocery items which increased operating costs considerably.

Staff members at The Store were determined to keep its doors open to the community. In June, Dave Hammond, our General Manager - Western Sydney, wrote to Jesuit Social Services' supporters asking for their help to keep The Store open. The response was overwhelming.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, The Store remains open. The funds raised enable The Store to continue to stock essential items on its shelves and provide local families with fresh, healthy and affordable food. The funds also contribute to purchasing face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser so The Store is 'COVID-safe' for its staff and customers.

"The support we have received is wonderful, it has given us a confidence boost," says Monique Perusco, Manager - Social and Community Services at Jesuit Social Services. "The investment of supporters shows how important The Store is here and also to the larger community."

Customers are very grateful The Store is still open. They are particularly thankful to the staff who have continued to work through the crisis, enabling the local community to access healthy and affordable food for their families.



## Unpacking The Man Box report finds too many young men constrained by rigid masculinity

A ground-breaking new report from The Men's Project at Jesuit Social Services finds that a young man's belief in rigid masculine stereotypes can much more accurately predict harmful behaviours such as violence and sexual harassment than other demographic information such as education levels, cultural heritage and where he lives.

Executive Director of The Men's Project, Matt Tyler, says the report, *Unpacking the Man Box*, builds on the findings of 2018 *The Man Box* report. Both reports draw on the findings of a survey of 1,000 young Australian men aged 18 to 30 about what it means to be 'a real man'.

"Through this research, we have found that too many young men are constrained by rigid ideas about what it means to be 'a real man'", says Matt. "To be 'inside the Man Box' means endorsing a set of rigid ideas about masculinity, including always acting tough, using violence to get respect, never seeking support for personal problems and always being the main breadwinner for a household."

"Our 2018 Man Box report showed the dangers for young Australian men who believe in rigidly adhering to traditional masculine stereotypes – in that they are at higher risk of using and experiencing violence, engaging in risky drinking and report poorer levels of mental health. Clearly, these attitudes can have dangerous consequences for men themselves as well as the women and children in their lives."

Unpacking the Man Box shows that masculine norms were 25 times more likely than demographic variables, such as where someone lives, their employment status, educational level, cultural background or sexuality, to predict the use of physical violence, sexual harassment, bullying and cyber bullying.

In addition, they were 11 times more likely than the above demographic variables to predict very risky drinking and ten times more likely than the demographic variables to predict negative feelings such as distress, guilt, being scared, jittery, ashamed and hostile.

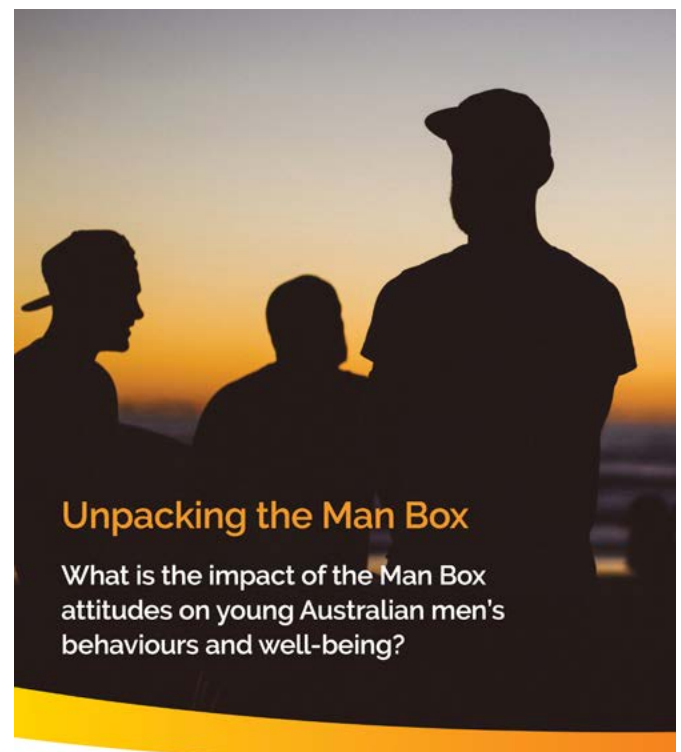
The new report contains a range of recommendations to support boys and men to be free of the Man Box and to be their best selves. A key recommendation is the building of workforce capacity to engage on issues related to the Man Box.

Matt says it is crucial that this work reaches people who work with men and boys every day, such as teachers, sports coaches and social workers.

"These types of community leaders have the capacity to support sustained progress on the definition of what it means to be a man and ultimately work to prevent violence and mental illness.

"This means safer and stronger communities for everyone."

For more information about the new report, visit: [bit.ly/umb-report](http://bit.ly/umb-report)



## Exploring the needs of people on Community Correction Orders and opportunities to improve rehabilitative pathways

Rates of imprisonment have consistently risen in Australia over the past few decades. In addition to the significant economic cost, research shows that prison is not an effective deterrent and may itself lead to criminal behaviour. Community-based options show promise in relation to recidivism reduction and cost effectiveness.

In Victoria, the Community Corrections Order (CCO) is a sentencing option that enables people to serve their sanction in the community, with access to treatment or other rehabilitative support.

Funded by the Victorian Legal Services Board, Jesuit Social Services has conducted research aimed at improving understanding of the needs and experiences of people on CCOs. The study, based on survey data collected from 200 men and women on CCOs in Melbourne's west metropolitan region, as well as in-depth interviews with 20 participants, explores how the system can better support rehabilitative pathways. Implementation challenges are identified that potentially affect rehabilitative impact and there has been scant research attention to this area of the justice system.

The findings demonstrate the intersection of justice system involvement with disadvantage across a range of measures including low levels of educational attainment, economic exclusion, financial distress, social isolation, physical and mental health issues. Over half of the 200 people who took part in the study reported that they were unemployed and seeking work, and approximately two thirds of these had been unemployed for more than one year.

Though many participants described having actively taken steps themselves to make positive change, unfortunately, there was little evidence to suggest participants were receiving adequate professional support to address self-identified needs or to improve their inclusion in the community. Very few reported gaining assistance to overcome key barriers to employment, including the stigma associated with having a justice record.

Participants commonly described community work as time-wasting, demeaning and with few links to community benefits. The findings of this study highlight ongoing challenges associated with timely provision of appropriate programs and services targeting this cohort, but also the potential value of investment in this area.

Implications for practice are explored, highlighting the importance of the following key elements of community work: placement in productive, skill-building and valued roles; opportunity for interaction with community members and pro-social interactions with supervisors and others; and individual or small group placements. Broader service features include relationship-based engagement; holistic, long-term and tailored support; and emphasis on building confidence and motivation.

As part of the research process, consultation was undertaken to strengthen communication, collaboration and information sharing between key stakeholders in local government, education, justice, and related sectors – with a focus on improving outcomes for people in the justice system in the City of Brimbank. The findings also bear consideration in relation to planning, policy, program development and practice in other contexts.



## Worth a Second Chance gains momentum

Jesuit Social Service's #WorthASecondChance campaign is working to improve the Youth Justice system by engaging the community and calling for programs that work to get young people back on track.

While it is often a divisive issue, the campaign has proven there are many members of the community who want to have an informed discussion about these complex issues. The campaign has seen a massive spike in supporters over the past month.

One issue that has gained a lot of attention recently is the need to raise the age of legal responsibility in Australia. Right now, a child aged 10 can be charged and locked up. Jesuit Social Services has been campaigning for more than seven years to see this age raised and many other organisations and individuals have worked tirelessly to put this on the national agenda.

We were so pleased to finally see progress recently when the ACT became the first State or Territory across the country to put in motion plans to raise the age to 14 years old.

Supporters of the #WorthASecondChance campaign have contributed to this success by sending close to 900 letters to Members of Parliament calling for them to support raising the age of legal responsibility. Our campaign supporters also shared our social media content with their own networks and encouraged friends and family to do the same.

Campaigning on this important issue has been challenging in the COVID-19 environment but the team has been adept in finding new ways to build community support and reach people interested in these issues.

Campaign Manager, Jess Sanders appeared on a popular youth work podcast *Ultimate Youth Worker*, where she was given the opportunity to talk about the #RaiseTheAge campaign.

Recently the #WorthASecondChance campaign hosted a webinar on trauma-informed practice for educators and youth workers. Panellists Nick Grainger (Trauma Consultant, Australian Childhood Trauma Group), Gaya Jambulingam (Coordinator of our Navigator Program in Brimbank-Melton)

and Louise Mapleston (Schools Program Coordinator, South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence), brought diverse perspectives on identifying and responding to trauma, building relationships, accessing support and understanding the importance of being able to work in a trauma informed way with young people.

There were just under 200 guests in attendance and all remained engaged throughout the 75-minute session with lots of questions and comments to the panellists and to each other.

If you would like to find out more about #WorthASecondChance, head to [www.worthasecondchance.com.au](http://www.worthasecondchance.com.au) or find us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to sign up and lend your voice to this important issue.

#RaiseTheAge

**Because children cannot fully understand the consequences of their actions.**

Experts maintain that children between **10 and 14** are not developmentally mature enough to be **fairly tried** in the criminal justice system.

WWW.WORTHASECONDCHANCE.COM.AU  
Delmage E. (2013). The minimum age of criminal responsibility: A medico-legal perspective. Youth Justice 13(2): 102-110

## Transitional support and housing pilot creating hope for the future

Making a fresh start upon release from prison can be challenging. For many, finding stable housing can be one of the hardest aspects of this transition. The lack of affordable housing options can lead to people ending up in short term accommodation, rooming houses or, as is often the case, grappling with homelessness.

Established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maribyrnong Community Residential Facility is a pilot initiative funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Situated on the site of the former immigration detention centre, the facility houses men exiting prison who are at high risk of homelessness. Jesuit Social Services has been engaged to deliver the transitional support to the men.

Tess Roberts-Hook, Coordinator of the Transitional Support Pilot, says the initiative offers a crucial step down from prison back into the community. "This facility gives participants those couple of months that they need to find work and create a bit of stability so that they can get a job and then find housing," says Tess.

"A member of our team has been working to support one of our residents to get his license back because it had been suspended. Since he got it back, he's been applying for lots of jobs, had an interview this week and has been offered casual work. He's getting up at five in the morning to go, every day. He is working with our housing worker here. He's looking into things like the national rental affordability scheme and the private rental assistance programs."

Tess says being able to access the wrap around supports offered at the facility are vital for the men to successfully re-establish themselves in the community. "You can't just get out of prison and have housing and a job as you walk out the door. It's still very early days, but from what I'm observing, (this program is) definitely giving them that leg up."

Manager of Adult Justice Programs, Suzi James-Nevell sees a range of benefits to this supported approach. "It makes sense to spend money to assist people to make a successful transition back into the community. This sets them up so they do not return to custody," she says.

"If you're interested in the actual people who are in custody and what's happened to them, then giving them another chance makes sense. But it also makes sense in terms of community safety.

"These people are being provided support to reintegrate back into the community, which lowers their risk of getting into trouble in the future. We're offering them clear pathways out of offending and supporting them to find jobs and houses because that's the future they want."



*Transitional Support Program coordinator Tess Roberts-Hook (L) and case manager Hana Ghazale*

## An essential lifeline in Melbourne

Jesuit Social Services' Ecological Justice Hub, located in Brunswick, has continued responding to the needs of the local community through its Meal Drop Program. With the extension of COVID-19 restrictions, the Hub has met an increased call for assistance by creating 620 nutritious, gluten-free, nut-free, vegan meals, all packaged in fully biodegradable cardboard boxes. Head Chef Johnny and his kitchen team offer a weekly menu centred around supplies and seasonal vegetables available at the Hub. The team has also been able to include additional items in its deliveries, including bathroom and grocery care packages, as well as fresh food packs.

Through the *Working for Victoria* scheme, the Ecological Justice Hub has employed several new staff members whose previous employment has been affected by COVID-19. The new team is made up of cleaners, drivers, permaculture gardeners, kitchen staff and program, welfare and community liaison staff. The creation of these additional roles has meant that the Meal Drop Program can operate safely, efficiently, with more impact and an expanded reach.

In a time of extreme isolation for many, the Meal Drop Program is proving to be more than a food delivery service. By connecting to people in the community through food, staff have been able to identify other needs such as depression, anxiety or other material aid needs. Michael McGarvie, Senior Project Advisor at the Hub, has found that the "opportunity to make real human contact, even if socially distant and COVID-safe, makes all the difference".



*The Ecological Justice Hub team preparing meal boxes (photo taken prior to mandatory wearing of masks)*

## The importance of connection

*ANDREW HAMILTON SJ reflects on the importance of connection to maintain wellbeing during COVID-19*

Not so long ago if we spoke of friends who were connected, our hearer would assume that they had influential friends, or they were all wired up. Handy things to have, but not essential. In the time of coronavirus, however, we would be taken to mean something deeper about them as human beings. The virus and its effects on our daily lives have unscrewed the connections that are part of our identity, our happiness and our resilience. Social distancing affects the touch that is so important in our relationships. Masks muffle the words and muddy the non-verbal signs through which we read one another. Lockdowns of workplaces and houses eliminate the games, the work, the means to pay our bills, the casual meetings and little rituals that give meaning to our lives. We risk becoming disconnected from other people, from society and from our deeper selves.

Many people, including those with whom we work at Jesuit Social Services, are particularly vulnerable because their connections are already fragile. The erosion of daily routines and opportunities for social gatherings and meetings with friends caused by the virus can increase the anxieties and

other afflictions that already make it difficult to connect with society. It is doubly important for us to find ways to accompany them in this testing time when our staff members themselves are stretched.

Lack of connection is a human affliction that calls out for human remedies. For both ourselves and for the people we serve, such small gestures as phone calls, emails, messages, shared hobbies, small donations and other generous actions deepen our connections. They help us enlarge our own hearts so that we can hold others in them.



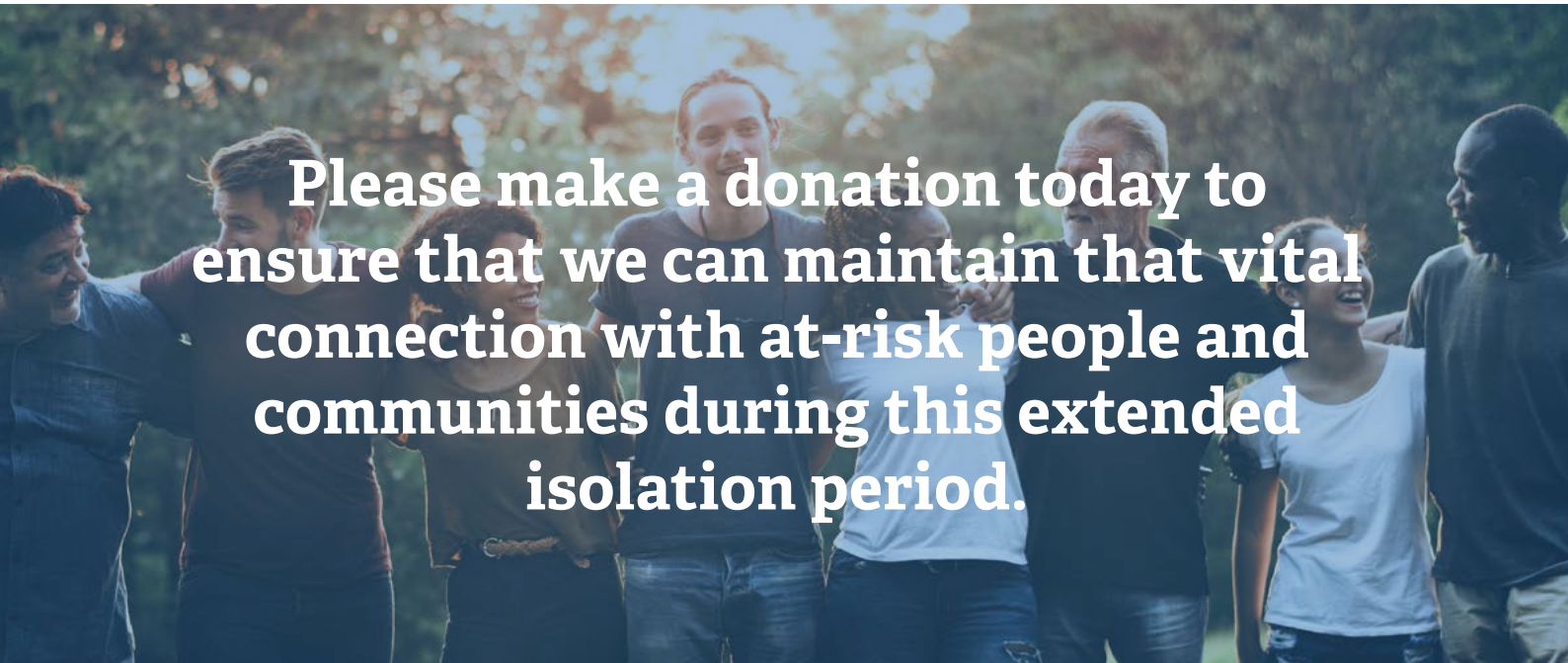
*Andy Hamilton SJ*



**Relationships and social connection are at the heart of what we do at Jesuit Social Services.**

**COVID-19 restrictions have challenged us like never before. We are having to re-imagine what our work looks like at a time of isolation and distance.**

**We are committed to finding new ways of staying connected and fostering meaningful relationships – too many people are counting on us.**



**Please make a donation today to ensure that we can maintain that vital connection with at-risk people and communities during this extended isolation period.**

#### Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

**I would like to make an ongoing monthly gift of:**

**\$** \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify amount)

**I would like to make a one-off donation of:**

**\$75**       **\$150**

**\$500**       **\$1000**

**\$**

Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.

#### Contact and payment details

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First name \_\_\_\_\_

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Due to current safety restrictions in Victoria, we kindly ask you to consider donating online, if you are able. To do so, please visit [jss.org.au](http://jss.org.au), click DONATE, and select 'Spring Appeal' in your campaign selection. We still welcome donations by mail but please note there could be a delay in processing your generous donation.