



Lou's News

Summer 2011

A Safe Place for Women

Season's Greetings to our clients, friends and supporters

A new, improved look for Lou's Place



Our renovated front office

Lou's Place re-opened in late October after a four week closure for internal renovations – the first significant closure since our opening in April 1999.

Our landlords had engaged builders to undertake urgent repairs to the front office and hallway; this involved demolishing the floorboards and laying a new cement slab. We used the opportunity to make improvements to other areas of Lou's. The result is a better looking, more comfortable and functional premises.

With the support of the Campbell Edwards Trust, all interior walls and woodwork were repainted, new wool carpet was laid upstairs and new flooring laid in the art studio. The Trust also covered the cost of purpose-built office storage, a more functional reception

desk, extra phones, new office furniture, a computer server cabinet and privacy screens for caseworkers and clients.

The ANZ Staff Foundation provided us with financial support to enhance the upstairs lounge with two custom-built workstations, bookshelves and activity storage.

Lanier Australia kindly donated a high quality multifunction, commercial size photocopier, printer, scanner and fax machine for the front office.

Our thanks to designer Robbie Nicol who advised us on materials and suppliers, Rachael Devine of Resene Paints who donated the ceiling paint and Robert Twomey of Simple Studio: Bespoke Window Furnishings who donated a wooden venetian blind for the office.

The power of love in the community

Love, according to our local Federal politician Malcolm Turnbull, defines our humanity and makes us human. Too often we do not love enough.

Those sentiments, made during a speech in Federal Parliament in 2009, were reiterated recently when Mr Turnbull spoke at a new Potts Point neighbourhood speakers' forum called Walkie Talkie.

Mr Turnbull, the Member for Wentworth and Federal Opposition spokesman for communications, talked about love, politics and the community. He lamented the decline of respect and love of country among politicians for whom point scoring and winning votes too often took precedence over higher aspirations.

Remarking that Lou's Place and The Wayside Chapel were two places in Kings Cross where one could find genuine unconditional love, Mr Turnbull invited the audience to ponder the place of love not only in intimate relationships but in fostering healthy communities.

Walkie Talkie was established earlier this year by Potts Point residents Indira Naidoo and Daisy Turnbull-Brown. We are delighted that the convenors have chosen Lou's Place and The Wayside Chapel as the charities to be supported by their monthly speakers' forum.

For more information, visit their website, walkie-talkie.com.au.



Walkie Talkie convenors Indira Naidoo (left) and Daisy Turnbull-Brown.

A Safe Place for Women

Lou's Place is a daytime drop-in centre for women in the heart of Kings Cross. A part of the community since 1999, Lou's is a Sydney charity that provides respite and support for women in need. Our mission is to provide a safe and welcoming place for women, meeting them at their point of need and supporting them in rebuilding their lives.

Celebrating 12 years together

It would be impossible to calculate how many of our clients have benefitted from advice given to them by lawyers from Blake Dawson.

For the past 12 years Blake Dawson has held a free weekly legal clinic at Lou's. That's more than 600 clinics. When they began their pro bono work here in 1999 they became the first firm in Australia to offer an onsite legal service at a women's centre. The women have been advised on matters such as tenancy, financial management orders, domestic violence and apprehended violence orders, credit and debt, victim compensation, discrimination, fines and criminal law.

From the start Blake Dawson appreciated the importance of offering a legal service in

a safe, supportive environment. They were aware that many of the women would not seek out a lawyer if they couldn't do so within the safety of Lou's Place.

Blakes also recognised that a small organisation such as The Marmalade Foundation which operates Lou's Place would be hard pressed to afford legal support. And so, Blakes' lawyers have generously provided advice whenever we've needed it. We've been fortunate to receive such long-term "behind the scenes" support.

Over the years Blakes has provided other kinds of support: financial support to fund Saturday openings, generalist volunteers to help our staff, and delicious Christmas lunches.



Blake Dawson lawyer Teresa Dyson (left) and Pam Bartlett of Lou's Place at a dinner hosted recently by Blake Dawson to celebrate the partnership.

We are extremely grateful for Blake Dawson's continuing advice and support, and for the fact that they've been with us for the long haul.

Eureka support

Thanks to the generous support of the Eureka Benevolent Foundation, we have been able to employ an additional staff member to increase the level of service we provide to our clients. The support of the Eureka Benevolent Foundation, a family trust, has also enabled us to design and create a new outcomes assessment tool, the Independence Assessment, which focuses on independent living goals for our clients.

The benefits of fun and sharing

Our caseworkers, Kathryn and Melanie, have started a Fun in Recovery programme, linking in with the life skills topics covered in our Personal Development discussion groups.

Each Friday they organise casual social events such as visiting a local park or playing board games. Sharing experiences and having fun helps the women feel good about themselves and reduces anxiety and depression. As some clients have rarely been able to trust anyone, the act of sharing can have a great impact. Acquiring life skills and increasing social interaction helps clients see what they can achieve; they gain an understanding of what is possible and the opportunities available to them.

Some now have jobs, something they thought would never happen.

Dual diagnosis work continues

Lou's Place is grateful to have received a grant from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. The grant, to be paid over two years, will meet the costs of employing our Dual Diagnosis Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Caseworker, Melanie Joyce.

More than three years ago we identified an outstanding need to address the dual diagnosis issues suffered by many of the women who come to Lou's. Unfortunately, this need remains a high priority. Often women suffering from a mental health disorder who are also dependent or addicted to a substance have fallen between the cracks because health authorities have required one issue be treated before the other. This has resulted in neither being tackled successfully.

With the support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, this important caseworker's role is secure for another two years. We are very pleased to be able to continue funding this role which has been supported previously by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, and the Thyne Reid Foundation.

Chiropractor services

We have been very lucky to obtain the services of Dr Carol Langley DC, a chiropractor specialising in Cranial Release Technique.

Dr Langley is committed to a holistic approach to wellness, incorporating energy healing work to help reduce stress resulting from physical, chemical or emotional sources. The Cranial Release Technique, which she primarily employs, is a gentle method with a goal to release hidden stresses in the skull, allowing the spine to unwind. She has been a great hit at Lou's Place where the women have benefitted from her work in helping them to gain stress relief and ease of physical pain, with some even reporting emotional clarity.



Dr Carol Langley DC

Jobs for our clients

How wonderful that some of our clients are now working; many have never had jobs before.

- Client C is working three days a week with Hope Street in Woolloomooloo.
- Single mum Client A is a full-time receptionist in the city.
- Client L completed her first aid certificate before starting full-time work in aged care.
- Client T secured permanent casual work with The Big Issue Women's Subscription Enterprise.
- Client G has completed a TAFE course in hospitality.
- Client J is working at Hungry Jacks.
- Client H is working with Hope Street and is studying for her accountancy degree.
- Client E is working in the front office of TAFE.

Client E sent us the following note:

"Today we had a NAIDOC BBQ and flag raising ceremony at TAFE which I have been helping to organise. We had sausages, burgers, salad, hummus and even tofu for our vegetarian Community Services teacher. It was a lot of work to get the funding from various sections, organise catering and encourage students to get involved. I had to use negotiation skills and be assertive – something which I think we are constantly learning in large organisations... Everyone helped out and got involved..."

"I have started working in the front office and am required to do the banking – what a responsibility – and customer service. I still struggle with confidence and anxiety. I think we have to just force ourselves to do things."

The joy of music

We were thrilled to hear from Carla (right) recently.

"This photo is from my last recital (exam) for the winter trimester at the Australian Institute of Music. I wouldn't have gotten to be a music student without the help and support of the volunteers and staff at Lou's Place. Lou's Place has saved my life, and helped to give me hope in some of the worst times of my life." – Carla



Wrapped up in comfort and warmth

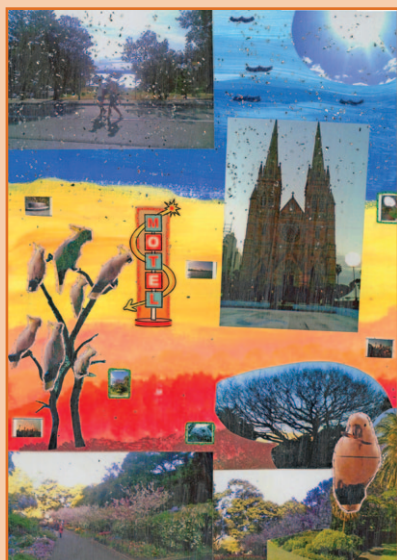
We are fortunate to be given beautiful patchwork blankets made from knitted squares by a group of very creative women. One was so spectacular I decided to hold onto it for just the right moment.

One day a new client came to our door, sobbing, cold and exhausted. She had escaped from a local brothel where she had been working like a slave and had been wandering the streets for hours.

The conditions for sex workers in some of the local clubs and brothels can be dire. Many live there, grabbing sleep when they can before they are given drugs such as ice to ensure they can keep on working with minimum rest. A lot of the women are paid in drugs so their money is fuelled straight back into the club or brothel.

While I was sitting with this woman, the special blanket caught my eye and I knew the right moment had come. I wrapped it around her shoulders. Its softness and beauty embraced her and calmed her down while I got some details so I could refer her to a refuge. We needed to get her as far away from the area as possible, as quickly as we could. That evening the refuge manager called to let us know she was safe in bed asleep, wrapped in the warmth of that beautiful blanket.

– Deborah Banks, Executive Manager, Lou's Place



Treasured memories

Treasured memories are the focus of Lou's Treasure and Craft group, held twice a week. Sydney artist Mary van den Berk and creative craft specialist Jenny Quist, together with a team of art volunteers, work with the women to help them create mixed media works that have personal meaning and evoke positive feelings.

The artworks incorporate a variety of materials and techniques such as personal photos, internet or magazine images, fabric, stickers, text, stencils, sewing and painting.

Some women make works to celebrate the lives of estranged children or as a gift for someone special. Others like to make personal keepsakes as reminders of significant people and special places.

"One of the women wanted to create a 'shoe work,'" recalled Mary. "She collected lots of images of gorgeous shoes from magazines and the result was amazing. It turned out she was making the work for her 14 year old daughter whom she was estranged from. She wants to make the next one with a sporting theme as a gift for her other daughter."



Networking – a key activity

Building strong relationships through networking is one of our most critical staff activities. We work collaboratively with a range of other service agencies so we can give our clients the best possible support; we also connect with people on a corporate level to increase awareness of Lou's Place within the broader community.

We rely on networking for up to date information about resources and services for our clients. We work with other services on specific projects, on avoiding duplication of services and to address systemic issues that our clients face when navigating the system. With our clients' informed consent, we can share information about individual clients and work with other agencies to find the best possible outcome for them.

Lou's Executive Manager Deborah Banks is a member of the Sydney Homeless Women's Alliance, a group of managers

representing homeless accommodation and day centres in the Sydney area. Deborah also regularly attends the City of Sydney Homeless Interagency Meeting. Our caseworkers, Kathryn Clark and Melanie Joyce, attend regular Health Promotion and Partnerships meetings for representatives of local health services such as St Vincent's Hospital, the Kirketon Road Centre and the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre.

Lou's Place has a booth every year at the Sydney Homeless Connect event at the Sydney Town Hall which gives us the opportunity to connect with other services. While we can reach out to potential clients, it is also important for our existing clients to see us actively participate and meet with them on neutral territory.

Deborah Banks also makes regular presentations at functions held by corporate



Melissa Ellis, Chief Executive of The American Club Sydney and friend of Lou's Place.

groups such as Grant Samuel, Macquarie Bank and Blake Dawson.

With the invaluable support of Chief Executive Melissa Ellis and also Hacy Tobias who has organised clothing and product donations, The American Club Sydney has chosen to adopt Lou's Place as their charity. Deborah attends the monthly American Club Ladies Connect luncheons and makes a quarterly presentation about Lou's Place.

A great start for our Partnership Programme

We've been delighted with the generous response to the Lou's Place Partnership Programme which we launched in May. So far more than 100 people and families have signed up to become Partners by pledging to donate \$1000 a year for five years.

Our goal is to sign up 200 Partners – so we're halfway there!

We need \$450,000 every year to stay open. The objective of our Partnership Programme is to provide a regular source of funding. If 200 Partners pledge support, we'll achieve a guaranteed annual income of \$200,000 which will supplement the one-off donations and support we receive from trusts, foundations and our corporate donors. Thanks to all who have become Partners with Lou's so far. Your support will help us to continue our services and keep Lou's Place secure and well-maintained.

You can help us by spreading the word that we are still seeking Lou's Place Partners. Pledge forms are available on our website and/or by contacting Pam Bartlett on 0407 362419 or jasawi@bigpond.net.au.

Other donations

Please visit our website lousplace.com.au for general donation forms.

Our new neighbours

We are excited about the impending arrival of our new neighbours, K2, which is a satellite clinic of the Kirketon Road Centre in Darlinghurst. Kirketon Road's administration office is also moving next door with K2.

After the building is renovated at the end of 2011, K2 will run nurse practitioner clinics and needle exchange Monday to Friday from 1.30–10pm. There will be a 2.5 hour overlap with our weekly operation times.

While the main target group for the K2 clinic is sex workers, we can refer all our clients to them for a range of health and medical services and assessments. K2 is keen to partner with Lou's Place on joint projects, staff training and provide health promotion and training for volunteers in their area of expertise.

Fashion sale success

Our annual fashion sale, Spring at Lou's Closet, raised nearly \$23,000 this year – the best result yet. Lots of gorgeous clothes were donated and sold; and it was a successful day for everyone involved. Thanks to the organisers: Jane, Kate and Tara.



A Safe Place for Women