

Summary of MIRP in Griffith, Australia.

Sr. Tricia Johnson and myself returned to our hometown after many years. Sisters of Mercy had taught in schools and conducted pastoral work here for ninety years. It is a city called Griffith in the middle of New South Wales, Australia. We belong to ISMAPNG.

In March 2016 we gathered together eight people who were interested in looking at the needs in our small multi-cultural city. There was a school counsellor, two teachers, mother whose daughter is drug effected, one with a daughter with a mental disability, the Anglican minister and his wife and parishioner who is a catechist. We met five times, prayed and brought to the group our knowledge of the city after interviewing personnel in schools, community health agencies and youth and multi-cultural services. We looked at youth homelessness and the reasons for same. Finally we decided on the need for a sub-acute rehabilitation residential centre for young people effected from drug and alcohol abuse in Griffith and surrounding areas.

At the end of 2016 we did not feel we could let this need and our enthusiasm die. The group agreed to continue. Early in 2017, we opened the group to anyone interested to attend a public meeting in the city library, after advertising on social media, air and the local newspaper. All this year we have met monthly in St Vincent's Community Private Hospital. Our group, 'Justice for Youth' Committee attracted a fairly stable group of people comprised of the Major and local shire councillors, a representative of the Federal Member, parents of drug effected young people, young people who have been rehabilitated from drugs, the police drug co-ordinator for youth, representatives from relevant community agencies, hospitals, schools and Aboriginal services.

It was difficult to obtain credible statistics, but information from the services was that youth after making appointments with the counsellors do not continue to attend and therefore default on their treatment. At present, after a meeting with the local State Member of Parliament and National Mental Health representatives we are gathering information on models throughout Australia that treat young people who are effected by drug, alcohol abuse and mental disorders. Our task, at the moment, is to obtain statistics, letters from residents of the area and to circulated petitions that we endeavour to present to our National Parliament in order obtain financial assistance to establish a sub-acute residential centre in our town and district.

Sr Theresa Foley RSM

