

PEPLOW HOUSE

The first homeless man to walk through the doors of Peplow House entered the building at 4 Webster Street, Ballarat on July 7, 1976. This was the beginning of a service that has provided thousands of homeless men with a safe haven, a roof over their heads and support for over forty years.

Identifying a need for a local homeless service to provide meals and a place to stay, Fr Gerry Baldock with the support of the Ballarat Council of Churches advocated for the establishment of a men's homeless shelter. For over two years Fr Baldock spoke with local parish communities, the Ballarat City Council and the Department of Social Security. In 1976 his passion and commitment to the homeless saw the establishment of Peplow House.



Fr Baldock's passion and dedication for the centre and helping those in needs was evident. "The quality of life of all sections of the local community is a concern shared by all, and with the prospect of Ballarat coming under the influence of greater growth, the need for emergency overnight shelter is urgent", he said.

After opening the doors of Peplow House, financial support was needed to maintain the day to day operational cost of the shelter and meals program. In November 1976 an Auxiliary was established with nine members. The first year of the Auxiliary saw a fundraising program which culminated with a cheque being presented to the Committee of Management.

From 1976 – 1986 the Auxiliary raised over \$103,000 with activities including movie nights, fashion parades, fete stalls and the Auxiliary Recipe Book.

In 1997 a review of the service was undertaken. The review acknowledged the rich tradition and proud history of Peplow within the Ballarat community. "The way to the future is to build on the successes that have been achieved, while adapting carefully to the demands and expectations of the present". *Review of Peplow Homeless Men's Service, February 1997.*

The review focused on moving the service delivery from transitional overnight stay accommodation and meals to a case management model with capacity to maintain crisis accommodation support. The focus would shift to preparing residents for independent living, and support for three months after moving from the shelter.

The outcome from the review saw the management of Peplow House move from a Management Committee model aligned to the Ballarat Council of Churches to the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat's social welfare agency Centacare. The funding model also shifted from self-sustained funding to a state government funded program under the Department of Human Services.

Today Peplow House is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and remains managed by Centacare. The service continues to provide transitional and crisis accommodation, housing support and outreach to over 150 homeless men each year. Demand for support of the homeless in our community remains an ongoing issue.

Centacare Ballarat

Illustration of Peplow House above courtesy of Kristen Murray

The Ballarat Courier reported the following:

Long standing support venue reaches key milestone

Vital crisis support centre Peplow House reached a 40-year milestone recently. Local members from across Ballarat community agencies gathered at the Centacare run facility on Thursday, August 11 to honour the tireless work of those who have volunteered over the past four decades.



The Webster Street house has played a pivotal role in providing crisis support and outreach services to homeless men in Ballarat and its surrounding communities. The homeless men's shelter was opened under the banner of The Ballarat Council of Churches when it was established in 1976 by Fr Gerry Baldock.

Centacare Executive Director David Beaver said the needs of homeless men has required Peplow House to stay operational with ongoing community and government support. "The success and longstanding nature of Peplow House is a credit to the hard work and dedication of the endless volunteers, the Ladies Auxiliary and Fr Baldock," Mr Beaver said.

"Over the last 40 years Peplow has been a refuge, a place of solitude and a safe haven for thousands of men. Although the demographic of those who access Peplow services has changed, the need for the services has never wavered."

The milestone was celebrated with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and an afternoon tea at Peplow House. Centacare has reproduced the 1976 Ladies Auxiliary Cookbook in commemoration of the event, with copies available from local parishes or on the www.centacareballarat.org.au website.

Text: Michael Pollock, Picture: Luka Kauzlaric