

Media Release

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Take a virtual visit to MacKillop Family Services for Open House Melbourne

It may be Winter and many in Australia are in lockdown, but there's a warm 'virtual' welcome at MacKillop Family Services head office in South Melbourne this weekend (Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 July) as the organisation opens up via a digital tour as part of the 2021 Open House Melbourne program.

The 2021 Open House Melbourne program has quickly adapted to become an online event where visitors can access many unique and significant buildings throughout the city via digital platforms.

MacKillop's head office in South Melbourne was Victoria's first purpose-built Catholic orphanage and is one of the oldest former orphanages still standing in Australia today. The Italianate building dates back to the 1850s and, on Open House Melbourne weekend, it will be the star of a virtual tour where visitors can go back in time, accessing videos, pictures and stories of the building to discover its architectural history and how its use has changed over the years.

Two video Q&A sessions that can be viewed from Saturday 24 July, will shine a light on how the experience of children and young people in care has changed through the years. In one Q&A, former resident of the orphanage, John Ellis, shares his childhood experiences growing up in the building in the early 1950s; and in the other, we hear from Tayla Ayliffe, who talks about her more recent experience growing up in out of home care.

Sam Patterson, MacKillop's Director of Community Engagement hosted the Q&A sessions with John and Tayla and is looking forward to bringing this year's Open House experience to a wider audience.

"This is the fifth year we have taken part in Open House Melbourne and although people haven't been physically able to visit the building the last two years, the digital tour brings a unique, immersive perspective to the building and its history" Sam said.

"We launched the digital tour at Open House Melbourne last year and we were surprised at the interest, not only from people all over Australia, but virtual visitors from overseas too.

"Our staff in New South Wales, Western Australia and country Victoria also get to be part of the digital event. Every year, the most popular part of the tour is when visitors get to meet some of the former residents who join us for Open House, but we are delighted that the featured Q&A sessions will help us bring the voices of people with a care experience to a wider audience.

You can skip the queues this year and take part in MacKillop's online Open House Melbourne tour at [A unique tour of St Vincent's Orphanage | MacKillop Family Services](#)

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