

Response to ‘Under Investigation’ TV Program – Esther Foundation

Cyrenian House would like to provide a response and an update to the recent television program on the service previously provided by Esther Foundation in Kalamunda. Earlier this year Cyrenian House, with the support of the Department of Communities took over the operation of the service and facilities previously operated by Esther Foundation.

On Monday 7 November 2022, the Nine Network television program ‘Under Investigation’ was broadcast. This program focussed on the allegations regarding the operation of this service while under the management of Esther Foundation. The presenter and journalist Liz Hayes, spoke with former residents who allege they were physically and psychologically harmed by the service. They also alleged that the Esther Foundation service operated as a cult.

The allegations outlined in this program were shocking and appalling, and also consistent with what had previously been reported earlier this year about the operation of the service under its previous management. These reports ultimately led to Esther Foundation entering administration and liquidation, and the transfer of operations and facilities to Cyrenian House in May 2022.

Since we took over, the service has been completely transformed into a new 25 bed evidence-based program provided by Cyrenian House and funded by the Department of Communities. The new service has been renamed “Munda Mia”. Munda Mia still provides services for young women, and their young children with alcohol and other drug and other issues associated with family and domestic violence, homelessness and mental health issues. While the target group is the same, the program itself, and the management and operation of the service is completely new. Further, like all Cyrenian House programs, there is no religious content in the program.

Cyrenian House’s services are certified against two separate accreditation standards specifically designed for alcohol and other drug services. This accreditation, along with oversight from our government funders and the delivery of evidence-based treatment provides assurance as to the safety and efficacy of the services we provide.

The appalling tragedy of what happened at Esther is a lesson in what can occur when unregulated, non-accredited operators are allowed to establish and operate alcohol and other drug treatment services. Such regulation is required for mental health, disability, and aged care services but for some reason in WA anyone can establish an alcohol and other drug ‘treatment’ program.

While this situation persists, there is a real risk that a similar scandal, with similar abuses of power and trust could happen again. Our strong view is that at the very least, independent accreditation be required for all alcohol and other drug services operating in WA. This will ensure only evidence-based, and safe services can operate. In the meantime, we encourage anyone seeking help to ensure the service they chose is provided by an accredited organisation.

Finally, if you do need help with alcohol and other drug problems, please contact us on 9328 9200 to discuss what services we can offer. Information on our various services, including the new Munda Mia service, is also provided in the Programs and Services section of our website. <https://cyrenianhouse.com/programs-services-information/>

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