

A newsletter for  
our valued friends  
and supporters

issue 30: March 2008

# building better lives



Brotherhood  
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty



## Executive Director's Message

### Keeping the dream of education alive

With students returning to universities across the country last week, I reflected on my uni days in the early 1970s. As with many students, finding the money to support myself was a constant concern, yet I was incredibly lucky to study at a time when university education was relatively free.

Sadly today many young people are making decisions about their future based on their family's capacity to afford it – not on what they aspire to be or do.

In January the Brotherhood released its *Life chances at 16* report, which draws on a survey of 125 young people we have followed from birth to the age of 16.

The report found that family income affects teenagers' chances and aspirations as they prepare for adulthood. Young people from low-income families are less likely to be involved at school and less likely to plan to go to university.

Yet today's economy tells us that without the right skills and education, young

people are at risk of falling into long-term unemployment or becoming trapped in low-paid, no-future jobs. The Brotherhood believes family income should not determine the aspirations or options a young person has after school. With the right investment, we can give young people more opportunities and choice in their lives.

With your support we run several programs that help disadvantaged young people remain interested and involved in education. Our Parents as Career Transition Supports program assists parents to advise their children on the move from school to employment or further education and training. Our Saver Plus program, in partnership with ANZ, helps parents save for their children's education so that their

kids stay engaged with school life. Our Youth Pathways program is also helping young people like Jessie (see story below).

The transition from school to further education is undeniably a lot harder than it was for previous generations. With your gift, we can continue to help young people follow their dreams.

Many thanks for your support.

Tony Nicholson



### Jessie's ready for school

Jessie is a smiling, confident fifteen-year-old who looks forward to returning to study this year. It's quite a change from where she was one year ago when she dropped out of school because she was terrified of being bullied.

'I was in a big group of friends at school ... but they turned against me,' Jessie says. 'They started spreading rumours about me ... tried to bash me. I couldn't handle it so I left school at the start of Year 9.'

Feeling rejected, lonely and scared, Jessie's confidence and self-esteem were shattered. After leaving school her levels of anxiety were so high she became a recluse and didn't go outside for three months.

continued overleaf ...



Message from our Chaplain,  
Fr Jeff O'Hare

## Your gift of words and friendship

As part of our Christmas appeal we asked supporters to send us Christmas cards that we then passed on to the people and families who use our programs and services. We were overwhelmed with the hundreds of cards we received in response. I'd like to sincerely thank you if you took the time to write. Your words brought joy to the people who read them and it was truly inspiring for staff at the Brotherhood, knowing that so many of our supporters took the time to share their friendship and best wishes with the people we care for.

Here are some of the kind words we received:

*'Although I am a stranger to you, I wanted you to know that there are many people*



Regular to the Brotherhood's Coolibah Centre, George, with his Christmas card.

*who care and who hope that life will become easier and happier for you.'*

*'We want to add our support to ensure as many people as possible can have a share of what there is to make life just that little bit more comfortable. Whoever you are I will think of you this Christmas with warm regard.'*

*'To those who are struggling just to make ends meet, I wish you all the best, a very Merry Christmas and a new year full of hope for what the future might bring.'*

Thank you for the joy you brought to many at Christmas.

Fr Jeff

## Jessie's ready for school

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Jessie's school referred her to the Brotherhood and she was soon in contact with youth worker Su Jardine. Su works on the Brotherhood's Youth Pathways program, which supports young people who are at risk of not completing Year 12 or its equivalent and helps to re-engage them in the education system.

'When I first spoke to Su she asked me to meet her at a local café. I was really scared but I agreed to do it,' Jessie says.

Su says it took Jessie a great deal of courage to leave her house that first day.

'At that first meeting, Jessie was pretty nervous. We met only 400 metres from her house but it was a big step for her. The next time we met further away during school hours ... it was the only time I could get Jessie to agree to as she knew the kids she was scared about were at school,' Su says.

Jessie and Su began to meet regularly, talking about Jessie's experiences and options.

'We started to talk about how the kids at school were affecting Jessie's whole life,' Su says. 'We spoke about her choices – either she stayed at home forever or she worked on her self-esteem and confidence so that she could get on with her life.'

Jessie decided she wanted to get out of the house and create a better life for herself.

'School was still not an option for me last year, but Su and I agreed that finding a part-time job was the next step. She helped me with my résumé and interview skills and then I looked for work,' Jessie says.

'The first day I went out looking for a job, I got one.'

While she has enjoyed working, Jessie knows that getting her Year 12 certificate will help her in the future. She's now talking with Su about the various options available so she can return to school this year.

'Su helped me out with my social skills and confidence ... I'm in such a better place now,' Jessie says.

*The Youth Pathways program is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.*



Young researchers (from left to right) Shelley, Shannon and Sharee with Michelle Wakeford.

## Giving young people a voice

Nineteen-year-old Shelley has always had an interest in community projects but never thought she would be a researcher on one.

'I was involved in a circus group and one of the guys in it told me about this research project the Brotherhood was doing,' Shelley says. 'I was interested in

community work ... had never been involved in research but I applied anyway.'

Shelley became one of three young researchers who worked on the *Youth Voice: Peer Research into Youth Transitions* project in 2007. The project focused on understanding the difficulties young people

face during the transition from school to work and gave Shelley, and fellow researchers Shannon and Sharee, the chance to survey their peers. The data they collected will now go on to inform the redevelopment of transition services and support services for young people in Frankston.

'Thanks to the feedback gathered by Shelley, Shannon and Sharee, the Youth Voice project will inform and increase our understanding about the experiences of young people in Frankston,' Michelle Wakeford, manager of the Brotherhood's Project Development in Community Services, says.

'This will help us make services more accessible, useful and youth-friendly for the young people we work with as they move from school into employment or further study.'

Published by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, the research results are now available in a report *Youth Voice: Peer Research into Youth Transitions*. The report is available on our website [www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au).

## New taskforce to tackle homelessness

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has appointed Tony Nicholson to assist the government establish a national strategy to fight homelessness in Australia.

Tony will head a steering group that will guide the government's development of its first white paper since coming to office. The paper is to be completed by September and it will include a plan of action to respond to the homeless crisis over the next decade.

'The underlying causes of homelessness – the lack of affordable housing and unemployment – more often than not are complicated by an overlay of poor mental

and physical health, of family violence, and of various forms of addiction,' Tony says. 'So this presents major challenges in the way in which the whole issue should be tackled.'

If you'd like further information, including a background paper on the inquiry, visit the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website at [www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au).



Children from our Napier Street Child and Family Resource Centre were all smiles at the Centre's annual Christmas party in December, thanks to the gifts they received through the ABC Giving Tree appeal.

## Thank you Victoria and ABC

The Brotherhood would like to extend a sincere and warm thank you to everyone who donated a gift to our 2007 ABC Giving Tree Appeal.

We were delighted with the response and we reached our target of 10,000 gifts, which is an increase of 20 per cent in gift donations from 2006.

Thank you from all of us at the Brotherhood for your gifts. Many people on low incomes feel financially stretched at Christmas and your gift ensured that adults and children all over Victoria received some Christmas cheer and a present on Christmas Day.

Thanks also go to the number of organisations who arranged the collection of gifts and monetary donations at their offices. In particular, we'd like to thank the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Melbourne University, PBR Australia, Grange Investments & The Wellcom Group, Hansen Yuncken and ING.

The Brotherhood sincerely thanks staff at ABC Local Radio and ABC shops across Victoria for their support and determination to make the Giving Tree Appeal such a great success.

## Fifty wonderful years in Ormond

The work of the Brotherhood would not be possible without the support and dedication of our wonderful volunteers.

This month we would like to acknowledge a special group of volunteers – the team who run our Ormond Auxiliary store, which will celebrate its fiftieth year of business in March.

Nineteen volunteers work in the store and the longest serving member is Miriam, who became a volunteer in 1959, at age 18.

'I think it became a habit to be honest,' Miriam says, when reflecting on her 49 years of service with the Brotherhood.

'And life is never dull here – it never can be in an op shop.'

Every Friday Miriam catches two buses from her home in Springvale to get to Ormond to work her morning shift. In recognition of her outstanding dedication and service to charity, Miriam was awarded an Order of Australia in 2003.

Another amazing woman is 78-year-old Jean Shillinglaw who has been a volunteer for 32 years and president of the Auxiliary for over 15 years.

'I had just retired from work and was looking for something to do,' Jean says,



Members of the Ormond Auxiliary: Murray, Jean, Doris and Miriam.

recalling her early days of volunteering. 'I got involved with the store through a friend, my next-door neighbour, who took me along with her one day.'

### The store has raised well over one million dollars to support the work of the Brotherhood

Three decades on, Jean says she treasures her voluntary work for the Brotherhood and the many friendships she has made with the other volunteers.

'We have a wonderful team here. We all do different jobs to make the store a success – it's all about teamwork,' Jean says.

The Ormond volunteers sort, price and sell clothes and donated goods in the smallest of the Brotherhood's 31 community stores – the floor space is only slightly larger than a small caravan!

The store has raised well over one million dollars to support the work of the Brotherhood over the 50 years it has operated, with the volunteers clocking up an amazing 6,760 hours of service each year – equalling an annual financial contribution of over \$200,000 to support the Brotherhood's work.

Thank you to the members of the Ormond Auxiliary for an amazing 50 years of service.

## Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$25  \$50  \$100  \$200  \$\_\_\_\_\_ my choice

Payment method:  Cheque  Money Order  Visa  MasterCard  DinersClub  AMEX

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me information about including the Brotherhood of St Laurence in my Will.

We respect the privacy of your personal details. The Brotherhood of St Laurence will not disclose your details to any other party. See our Privacy Policy on our website.

