BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The Brotherhood commenced in 1930 as an Anglican
Religious Order, with Priestly and Lay Brothers
living under vows. From the beginning, the Brother-
hood functioned with a high degree of independence
from the institutional church. The church invited
the Brotherhood to undertake the responsibilities
of social action and social welfare in a world then
full of economic and social hardship. In a sense,
the church set the Brotherhood free to undertake those
important tasks.

From the earliest days the Religious Order readily
shared its goals with others whose motivation might
not be labelled as Christian, but who had a deep con-
cern for people. Even in the earliest years, non-
Anglicans and non-Christians frequently outnumbered
members of the Religious Order. The only test of
staff - then and now - was a genuine concern for and
a desire to help those in need.

Today the Religious Order no longer exists. The work
has rapidly extended into new fields and the organisa-
tion of that work has changed almost beyond recognition.
However, the original 'core values' of the Brotherhood
are still affirmed and expressed through such groups as
'The Companions of St Laurence'. The affirmations which
follow are the working out of those core values in rela-
tion to the wider society. They are sufficiently broad
to encompass the views of Christians and humanists alike.

I. Affirmations:

These views about people, government and the organisation of society are humanitarian beliefs that would be held by many, or even most, other people. They are expressed because they indicate the general principles on which the Brotherhood's activities and more specific views are based.

1 .. Every person has a right to an equal opportunity to develop as a person to the fullest extent through good quality education, health, housing and social services without regard to their ability to pay.

The principle does not mean that everyone can or should be equal in income, status or job satisfaction or that people have the same goals and values. But it is the basis for working for a much greater equality of opportunity than now exists for large numbers of Australians.

The right to good quality education, health, housing, legal aid and welfare services is necessary for equality of opportunity. 'Without regard to their ability to pay' does not mean that people who can pay or contribute to such services should not do so either directly or through taxation. At present large numbers of people cannot benefit from these services because they are unable to afford them. This is wrong. The extent to which people should pay and how they should contribute must be decided through policy making in politics and within the community. Other matters of policy are tied to increasing or supplementing wages with family allowances or child endowment to bring about a redistribution of income, or through programmes for the disadvantaged by the subsidisation of services.

2. Systems of government and institutions of society must be determined by people's needs and values.

Organisations of all kinds must keep in mind that goods and services for people should be consistent with their purpose, to make sure that the service is for people and not to maintain the organisation itself.

This can happen to welfare agencies as well as to political parties, corporations and self-help groups.

3. a) All people have a right to work and a right to be retrained if they cannot obtain employment. If unable to work they have a right to an income that is adequate in relation to to-day's living standards.

   b) If wages are insufficient to maintain adequate living standards, there is a need for the community through the Government to supplement this income, e.g. through Child Endowment.

In a modern, industrial society the provision of work is usually beyond the control of individuals. If they are unable to obtain work, they must not be penalised by greatly reduced living standards. An adequate standard of living should be available for everyone.

This principle raises difficulties such as the effect
of raising unemployment benefits closer to an adequate
living income. Although it is said that people would
not work if unemployment benefits were close to wages,
there is evidence that this is not so and that men work
for reasons other than wages.

4.   Social services are as essential to individual,
family and community well-being as other public services
such as transport, education and public health utilities,
and should be available to all.

The provision of social services should not be dependent
on the charitable feelings of a minority of people.
Governments must accept responsibility for seeing that
social services are available and of a high standard,
although they need not necessarily be run by government
agencies.

There should be no suggestion that voluntary agencies
are meeting, or are capable of providing, unlimited
services through their own resources, or even with
subsidy. However, government responsibility does not
mean that everything must be administered by govern-
ment bureaucracies. In fact, the government in the
carrying out of its responsibilities should direct
its efforts towards local and accountable administra-
tions, and aim at encouraging the participation of
people in government and voluntary agencies at the local
level.

5. People should be encouraged to join in community
decision making.

The earlier welfare state idea suggested that the State
would provide for an inactive community. It is important
that people should be encouraged to be actively interes-
ted in politics and the community. In this way people
can contribute their own ideas towards society's values
and goals.

II. Current Brotherhood Functions:

The Brotherhood is involved in programmes directed to
family, youth, children's and elderly people's welfare.
Its central concern is for the poorer, most disadvantaged
and rejected among these groups. Their situations are
to a large extent created and affected by broader social
and economic issues.

To the extent to which these issues affect the people it
works with, the Brotherhood tries to make a contribution
to knowledge, debate and decision making. This participa-
tion is expressed through research and social action
which are regarded as essential as the provision of
services.

The contribution that seems most appropriate for the Brotherhood depends on an assessment of particular situations, but the following functions are seen to be appropriate, and are often unique functions for non-government agencies. This is how we see our contribution at this time towards realising the affirmations expressed in the first part of this statement.

1. Filling gaps in existing services -

If these gaps are the result of inadequate Government provision of resources or public indifference, then the voluntary organisation must not be content with filling the need for a few people. It has an obligation to help change government or public attitudes and policies and see that the service is available as of right to people who need it.

2. Helping to provide a choice of service -

Most people want to use community provided services and should be helped to do so. However, there is a place for alternative services with different emphases for those who may wish to turn to agencies with different philosophies, such as Church, ethnic organisations or trade unions.

3. Community Education -

Agencies working directly with people should share with their staff and the rest of the community the knowledge they gain and their interpretations of social issues. This means setting aside some resources for communication and education and being available for consultation. It is also necessary to keep staff informed on current issues through circulation of reports and papers written within the Brotherhood.

4. Innovation and Experiment -

This is perhaps the most important role for independent agencies. Government departments are, of course, also involved in new projects, but in areas where needs have not yet been acknowledged by governments or accepted by the public. Independent agencies have a unique opportunity and an obligation to innovate and experiment. They must also be prepared to honestly evaluate their innovating activities.

Independent agencies may have certain freedoms of initiative and expression that are denied to Government agencies, but there are also constraints on independent agencies. The most obvious are the limitations imposed by the attitudes of the controlling members of the agency, lack of funds and fear of the implications for fund-raising of involvement in unpopular programmes or expression of views that are contrary to prevailing community attitudes.

5. <u>Research to evaluate existing services</u> –

Community surveys to discover unmet needs and to evaluate
services are appropriate functions for independent agencies,
particularly in areas of need where government departments
may not be permitted or encouraged to carry out research
by politically sensitive governments. Research adds to
the general body of knowledge about social issues.

6. <u>Social Action</u> –

This is a systematic attempt to bring about changes in
values and priorities. It should be an obligation of
independent agencies unless they limit their goals to a
purely problem solving role and see their solving function
as adapting the client to society. Social action has
many facets which include education, research, developing
and communicating policies, planning, participating in
membership with other agencies and community development.

7. <u>Social 'interpreters' for individuals and families</u> –

Some people find it difficult to make use of Government
services because of their lack of knowledge of the oppor-
tunities and limits of the service or because government
agencies may reject or misunderstand the requests made
of them. In these situations independent agencies have
a valuable bridging, advocacy or ombudsman role.

8. <u>Community development</u> –

This is a process of mobilising local communities for
self-determination and development of their own resources.
Self-help organisations and citizen action groups, such
as Parents Without Partners, Council for the Single Mother
and her Child, The Combined Pensioners' Association, the
Carlton Association, the Fitzroy Association, are examples
of grass roots community development. Independent agencies
and government agencies can assist these processes but they
must be careful not to manipulate or unduly influence the
policy of the group.

<u>The service must be</u>:-

a) Geared to involvement – this means that as far as
   possible administrative responsibility should be
   shared with consumers of the service and the staff
   of the agency.

   – this also means that an increased understanding
   by staff will not only develop the person but will
   also lead to a better organisation.

b) Accountable – both to the staff, the public and to
   the people who use the service, e.g. through Annual
   Reports and financial statements and evaluation
   studies of services.

c) Clear in its stated goals.

d) Evaluated at regular intervals as to the efficiency
and effectiveness in achieving its stated goals
through its services; discrepancies can arise be-
tween the goals and actual programmes. This involves
building in to any programme provisions to facilitate
evaluation.

e) Able to maintain the capacity whereby the agency volun-
tarily disbands itself or a particular service when it
is no longer required or can be provided by other agen-
cies.

f) Sympathetic and flexible as far as possible within the
framework set by the stated goals.

g) Focussed on the people who use it and not those who
provide it.

h) Honest - demonstrating publicly that it is aware of
the limits of both its resources and its skills.

i) Developmental, remedial and preventive, i.e. through
the initiation of new projects, the remedy and pre-
vention of social injustices.

j) Integrated - at national, regional and local levels.
There must be a conscious effort by agencies to be
part of the total welfare service.