

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

## **FRAMEWORK AND PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

A framework of questions was developed to assist with carefully appraising the current operations of the Metro Region. This framework took into account the following:

- . the key issues arising from the report *Directions 2000: A Strategic Management Framework for the Brotherhood of St Laurence*;
- . issues arising from reviewing some of the key changes occurring in the local community that were having, or had the potential to have, a negative impact on people who are on low incomes.

Managers involved with each of the services were asked to consider the following questions, particularly those relating to the operation of individual services. Workshops were then held with each of the key service areas to systematically work through the issues that the questions raised about their services.

This process provided the foundation for thinking about the strategic options for developing the role and operation of the Metro Region and the role of individual services.

### **General questions about the Metro Region's role in the local service network:**

- . Does the Brotherhood play a role in the local community beyond service provision? What is it and how effective is it? If the role is underdeveloped how can it be enhanced?
- . Does the Brotherhood share the knowledge it gains about provision of effective assistance to the most poor and vulnerable people in the community with other local service providers? How does it do this? In what ways could the approach be improved?
- . What has the Brotherhood provided in the local area related to seeding new initiatives that are empowering for the local community and for service users. How successful has this been? Are there any additional opportunities that exist?
- . What strategies does the Metro Region use to identify the needs of people who are poor, (or particular subsections of this group) that are not being addressed effectively by existing services? If it identifies such needs what does it do about them at present? What else could be done?
- . How are priorities currently set between use of resources for different sections of the Brotherhood's target group? e.g for homeless people, for highly vulnerable low income families?

**Questions for appraising the operation of current services provided by the Metro Region:**

- . Is the service provided to the Brotherhood's identified target group? If not what groups does the service assist?
- . Is the service provided a quality one and based on sound philosophical and consumer focused work practices?
- . What wider impact and strategic influence does or can the service have?
- . Is the service providing a unique service for people who are poor or is it providing a service similar to that provided by other organisations? What are the unique features of the service?
- . How constrained is the service in terms of what it provides, how it provides it and who it provides assistance to, by any government funding it receives? Does reliance on government funding inhibit the ability to effectively advocate?
- . What options exist for linking the insights about needs of service users and issues affecting service users with advocacy initiatives on behalf of people who are poor and disadvantaged?
- . Are there ways in which the operation and management of the service could be effectively passed on to other organisations or is there a special reason why the Brotherhood should remain involved?
- . Are the Brotherhood's financial resources provided to the service a good investment of resources? Could they be used better or differently to achieve more significant positive impact on behalf of people who are poor?
- . What role exists for effectively using volunteers to extend the capacity and quality of what the service can offer to its users?

## **KEY ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE METRO REGION.**

In approaching the task of developing strategic directions the following assumptions have been made.

- ◆ **The key rationale for the Brotherhood's activities in the Metro Region is working towards enhancing the well being and quality of life of people who are poor.**
- ◆ **The key geographic focus for the Brotherhood's Metro Region activities will be within the City of Yarra. Within this there will be a particular emphasis on the South Fitzroy area which has a higher concentration of people who are poor and with a range of circumstances which make them particularly vulnerable and at risk of poor quality of life.**
- ◆ **To be a credible organisation in the local community the Brotherhood needs to continue to directly provide some services for people who are poor. In doing this the Metro Region will be involved with some services on a long term basis and move in an out of the provision of other services.**
- ◆ **Provision of direct services is not an end in itself. Services need to be viewed as "resources" which, while providing direct and needed assistance, are clearly able to contribute to the Brotherhood's ability to work in a broader and very strategic manner to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of people who are poor. Examples of how services can contribute to the broader objectives of the Brotherhood include:**
  - . **demonstrating particularly effective practices in working with people who are poor;**
  - . **contributing to a greater understanding of the needs and difficulties of people who are poor and impacts of changing government or agency policies on people who are poor;**
  - . **highlighting inadequacies in government programs in effectively addressing or responding to the needs of people who are poor.**

**For every service provided clear strategies need to be developed for the service to contribute to the wider advocacy role of the Brotherhood. One of the key elements necessary to do this effectively is development of a strong and inter-dependent relationship between services and the staff working in the social policy, research and advocacy areas.**

- ◆ Within the group of people who are poor, the service initiatives of the Metro Region will particularly focus on responding to the needs of people who fall within the following groups:
  - low income people aged 50 and over who do not own a home, and experience additional difficulties and/or are at risk due to physical, social, emotional, health, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities;
  - people of all ages who have been unemployed on a long term basis;
  - low income families with children, particularly young children who are experiencing multiple disadvantages which place the family survival and the wellbeing of children at risk;
  - families and individuals who due to low income need access to material aid assistance;
  - young people who come from particularly disadvantaged situations and whose ability to move on to training, higher education and eventual financial independence is under considerable threat.

Amongst those who are poor and particularly disadvantaged there is great diversity in circumstances, needs and opportunities. Different people and different circumstances mean that there is diversity in the potential for moving away from long term poverty, disadvantaged and dependence on social security payments.

There is a clear tension in establishing priorities between working with those who have opportunities, with adequate support and assistance, to move away from long term poverty and disadvantage and those who are likely to remain particularly poor and vulnerable for the remainder of their lives. Success in Brotherhood's Metro Region training and support programs for people who have been unemployed on a long term basis demonstrate the potential for change and movement out of long term unemployment. In formulating the strategic directions for the Metro Region it has been assumed that work with people and on behalf of people in both types of circumstances falls within the Brotherhood's charter.

- ◆ As an agency working in the local area concerned about the needs of those who are most poor and vulnerable in the City of Yarra the Metro Region will take a particular interest in developing a range of strategies to work with and on behalf of a number of groups identified in the local community to have very pressing needs and where there appears to have been an escalation in the magnitude of numbers and difficulties being experienced. These groups include people with psychiatric disabilities, young people and people with intellectual disabilities (often combined with a range of other disabilities).

- ◆ **Effective advocacy is a responsibility of all those working with people who are poor or disadvantaged, so the Metro Region needs to play a strong advocacy role. Advocacy, described in its simplest way is the process of standing up for the rights of people who are being treated unfairly. Advocacy activities can incorporate a wide range of ways of working at many levels of the system.**

**In developing its role as a key member of the local community of the City of Yarra the types of advocacy initiatives that need to be undertaken include:**

- . **advocating with other services or organisations on behalf of individual people whom the Brotherhood is directly assisting through one of its services;**
- . **advocating with service providers in the area on behalf of the Brotherhood's key client groups as a group, (for example the needs of frail and disabled people living in boarding houses for access to appropriate home care services, the rights of homeless people to appropriate housing and services);**
- . **identifying and analysing the impacts on the Brotherhood's client group living in the local community of changes occurring to local services. (These could include changes to availability and access to particular services, changes to the fees charged for services, changes to the appropriateness of services). Using this knowledge to raise the issues of concern with the agencies/services involved.**

**Work in the local area will also identify impacts and issues which are more widespread than the immediate community arising from major changes in State and Commonwealth government policy. In these instances the starting point for responding would be close liaison with social policy and research staff to identify the most appropriate strategies and also who will have responsibility for the advocacy activities.**

## **BROAD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE METRO REGION**

**The key strategic directions identified for the Metro Region are the following:**

- ◆ Expanding the role of the Metro Region beyond its current role which is predominantly limited to direct service provision to include community development, advocacy, service development and provide strategic leadership in supporting co-ordinated and collaborative planning and service provision between key organisations involved in assisting people who are poor.
- ◆ Becoming a visible and credible key player in the City of Yarra in relation to issues associated with people who are poor and experience a number of disadvantages.
- ◆ Enhancing the capacity of services provided by the Metro Region to contribute to broader processes established by the Brotherhood and the Metro Region for improving responses to the needs of people who are poor.
- ◆ Encouraging and supporting greater flexibility in thinking about how services might operate and encouraging identification of possible ways for using available resources in different ways to achieve outcomes for the Brotherhood's target group.
- ◆ Setting in place processes for regularly and effectively monitoring and reviewing all the activities and services of the Metro Region to ensure that they are focused on achievement of priorities and objectives and the provision of high quality services focused on achieving positive outcomes for the users of the service.
- ◆ Working in a collaborative way with other sections of the Brotherhood to facilitate strengthening of the organisation's capacity to undertake its organisational mission.

More detailed strategic objectives in relation to different service areas are outlined in subsequent sections.

### **Key Actions that Need to be Taken**

The following outlines some of the broad actions/initiatives that need to be taken to start to move in the directions proposed. .

- ◆ Identification of priority areas for use of staff resources in addition to direct service provision.
- ◆ Careful analysis of the use of existing staff resources and identification of resources that could be used in different ways.
- ◆ Discussion with staff about the possible opportunities and potential changes.
- ◆ Development of new or amended position descriptions.
- ◆ Analysis of staff training needs arising from the changed roles and expectations and development of strategies to respond to these needs.

- ◆ Discussions will need to be held to identify how to establish clearer working relationships between service staff and staff involved in the broader policy and advocacy work being undertaken by the Brotherhood.
- ◆ Significant work will be required with each service to clearly identify and document the ways in which the work of the service and the insights gained by service staff can be used to contribute to strategically influencing wider policy and service development or advocacy initiatives.

Different services will have different contributions to make and these need to be clearly identified and clear steps outlined which:

- . document the way in which the service can contribute;
- . how this will be done;
- . who will have responsibility for doing it;
- . across what timeframe any changes required to enhance the strategic contribution of the service will need to occur.

Analysis will need to be undertaken of any particular support the service will require to achieve the expectations. Also issues of provision of appropriate staff support and training will need to be identified.

- ◆ A plan and timeframe will need to be prepared for progressively developing strategies for monitoring and reviewing the performance of individual services. It is essential that the approach taken is:
  - . not overly complicated;
  - . understandable by staff and service users;
  - . focuses on key areas of performance;
  - . represents a good use of time invested;
  - . once implemented is treated as a serious process and there is someone with clear responsibility to ensure that it occurs and any issues identified are addressed.

As part of the approach work will need to be undertaken to identify key service performance standards and measures for identifying their achievement. Also clear steps need to be outlined for ensuring that the information required is available and that there are clear steps for collecting and analysing the information.

- ◆ Development of strategies for linking the work done with local communities by all Brotherhood regions.



## **AGED SERVICES**

### **Current Services:**

The following services and resources are currently available as part of the Metro Region's Aged Services:

#### **Services located in South Fitzroy:**

- Sumner House, a 40 bed hostel
- Millott House, Fitzroy, a 21 bed rooming house
- Independent Living Flats: Moor St, Fitzroy (6)  
Palmer St, Fitzroy (10)
- Coolibah centre which provides activities, support and meals for people living in the Fitzroy area, particularly those living in boarding and rooming houses in the area. Staff resources available at the centre include: a community nurse, welfare worker, podiatrist, recreation and activities staff, integration worker

#### **Services in other areas in City of Yarra or just on its border:**

- Sambell Lodge: Clifton Hill, a 43 bed hostel
- Independent Living Flats: Keble Court, North Fitzroy (30)

#### **Services in wider Melbourne:**

- Carinya Nursing Home: Box Hill which has 40 beds

In addition to staff directly involved with the provision of individual services there are two other staff position working in the area and they are:

- . the admissions officer who assesses people for entry to all of the regions's independent living accommodation and for the hostels and nursing home;
- . a manager/co-ordinator of aged services.

**Budget for Aged Services:**

Expenditure:

Direct Services	\$3,599,638
Organisational Charges/Overheads	<u>\$372,816</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>\$3,972,454</u>

Sources of Funding:

Government Grants	\$2,122,085
User Fees and Charges	\$1,605,315
Brotherhood	\$245,054

(A more detailed budget is provided as an appendix.)

**Key Issues Identified:**

- . The Brotherhood's Aged Services Review has undertaken a detailed analysis of current services and strategic issues for future development of these services. The review documentation is a major information resource for the ongoing development of the Brotherhood's services and role in the aged care area.
- . A number of the Brotherhood's Aged Services provide essential support to people in the local area and are developing/have developed specialist expertise in appropriate and effective responses to the needs of the Brotherhood's traditional client group.
- . The Brotherhood's services in the City of Yarra are well targeted to addressing the needs of people who are considered the organisation's key target group and the services in Fitzroy South are in many instances assisting people with a multiplicity of disadvantages.
- . The Carinya Nursing Home, while not specifically targeted to addressing the needs of low income people, is making an important contribution to support traditional Brotherhood client's and whenever possible and appropriate will provide a bed for traditional Brotherhood's clients from the Inner City area. In addition the service is deliberately developing its capacity to work effectively with people with behaviours that are difficult to manage. (Many other nursing homes are highly reluctant to accept residents with difficult behaviours.)

- . There is a need for some creative thinking about the potential to use existing buildings, services and staff resources in some slightly different and more flexible ways:
  - . to develop a wider range of support available to traditional Brotherhood clients;
  - . to test out different ways of responding to identified needs of the target group;
  - . to work to explore and address some of the concerns raised in the Aged Care Review about the particular disadvantages experienced by people who do not have adequate and secure housing and have limited family supports in relation to being able to live in the community rather than in residential care.
  - . work to developing strong advocacy approaches, particularly in the light of the many changes occurring in the local service network.
- . A number of the buildings used by the Brotherhood for services for older people are becoming progressively less suitable and unable to provide quality accommodation and this will need to be addressed.
- . There is an increasing demand for services to effectively support people who have difficult behaviours which can arise from a variety of factors including dementia, psychiatric disabilities, consequences of long term alcohol and drug abuse. When combined with poor health and lack of family support these people are highly vulnerable. The Brotherhood has started to develop its expertise in working with this group of people particularly through the Coolibah Centre and Sumner House. It needs to develop clearer approaches for using the knowledge and skills being developed in a more strategic way.
- . In the past few years there appears to have been good progress made in increasing the capacity of the local service network to appropriately support boarding house residents and other people who are vulnerable due to their housing and personal circumstances. However in the current environment of funding, policy and organisational change it is important to ensure that the needs of this group do not become lost or forgotten, or services more fragmented, (for example through the process of tendering out local government Home Care services). The Brotherhood has a key role to play in areas such as:
  - . advocating on behalf of its traditional client group with the City of Yarra to ensure that the needs of this group are appropriately addressed when tendering out community care services;

- . taking an active leadership and advocacy role to ensure that the agencies providing services work towards effective co-ordination at both the level of service planning and service development and support to individual people.

### **Key Objectives to Work Towards Achieving**

- ◆ To restructure the operations of the Aged Services section so that increased staff capacity becomes available for essential activities beyond those directly related to day to day provision of services.
- ◆ To allocate additional time to the following activities:
  - . exploration of options for more flexibly and creatively using existing resources to meet the needs of low income people aged 50 and over who do not own a home and experience additional difficulties and/or risks due to physical, social, emotional, health or psychiatric problems;
  - . service development and redevelopment;
  - . strategically working (often in collaboration with other organisations) to ensure co-ordinated planning occurs for the ongoing provision and development of services for people in the Brotherhoods' client group for aged services;
  - . identifying how to more effectively use the knowledge being developed through direct service provision for purposes of advocacy and improvements in practices of other services. (The areas of knowledge include understanding of people's needs, limitations or negative impacts of government programs and funding approaches and effective service practices.)
- ◆ Develop a greater understanding of the needs of the Brotherhood's target group for aged services who are living in the community (as opposed to residential care) and
  - . play a much more pro-active role in identifying how to effectively respond to the needs of this group; and
  - . advocate on behalf of this group.
- ◆ To identify options for using the independent living units in Palmer St and Keble Court in a way that is more integrated with other aged services and is more strategic and targeted in approach.
- ◆ To identify an alternate use for the Moore Street flats.

## **FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES - FITZROY**

### **Current services:**

- Napier St. child care and family support service provides the equivalent of 22 full time child care places for children aged 5 months to 6 years. The child care service is structured to provide extra support to children and families through programs in the centre and through social work support. The service is particularly geared to responding to the needs of low income families, many of who are single parent families living on the Atherton Gardens Estate.
- Toy Library for children 0 to 7 years and their parents who live in the City of Yarra.
- Homework program which provides after school tuition assistance from two trained ESL teachers for 25 predominantly year 12 students. It is available to secondary students residing/studying in Fitzroy who are from "disadvantaged families". It predominantly caters for recently arrived students from non-English speaking backgrounds living on the Atherton Garden's Estate.
- Family Friends Program which is a pilot project aimed at women living in the Cities of Yarra and Melbourne who are pregnant for the first time and identified as lacking adequate family and social support. The program aims to provide them with information, friendship and support by pairing them with a female volunteer.

### **Key Issues Identified:**

The following have been identified as key issues for these services taking into account information arising from:

- . discussions amongst staff about the operational issues associated with current family and youth services;
- . appraisal of the services against the framework for identifying strategic directions; and
- . interviews with a number of other service providers in the area.

### **Napier Street Child Care and Family Support Service:**

- . The Napier Street family service is supporting low income families with young children, a number of whom experience multiple difficulties and are particularly

vulnerable. A large number of the families using the Napier Street service are families who have few other family support options available to them. There is a long waiting list (approximately 90 families) for the service.

. The Napier Street Centre is providing a service to the area that is unique in its nature, with the most unique features being the following:

- it is a low cost service for consumers when compared to other child care services, and many families pay no fees;
- it is geographically accessible to low income families in the area;
- it provides significant additional support both for the families and to children when compared to most child care centres;
- in contrast to other child care centres whose priority is working parents, this centre focuses on sole parents and low income families, most of whom do not work;
- each family has a professional assessment as to their needs and that of the child on entering the service.

. It is evident that there has been a significant reduction in the range and level of family support services available in the area. This is reported to result from some local government family support staff not being replaced and from funding cuts and changes to government programs and the services provided by agencies receiving funding. The Napier Street service is witnessing the result of these changes through increased demand for the service and the need to support families and children with more complex problems.

. There has been a progressive increase in the number of families with very complex and difficult circumstances. Also there has been an increase in the number of children at the centre with behaviours that are very difficult to manage and respond to in a positive and constructive manner.

. There are increasing numbers of families coming to the centre where there are protective issues. The incidence of children referred to the service with known/suspected experiences of abuse is very significant (43%) and seems to be increasing. This trend raises a number of dilemmas as the Brotherhood did not support the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse, but its staff now have to operate in an environment where it is mandatory to report suspected incidents of child abuse, without a clear organisational framework for handling this. The Brotherhood has historically had an objective of empowering and strengthening families, but there is often now a tension between the family and needing to respond to the "the best interests of the child".

- . There is a concern that there is not a totally "up front" approach with parents about the role of the centre beyond that of provision of child care and that children are usually referred there because of significant concerns about the child and/or the family.
- . A significant frustration for the service is the lack of ability to focus on more "preventative" approaches and ones with more potential for long term changes in family functioning. This would involve increasing the capacity to work with children and their families together, rather than predominantly focusing just on the child as happens at present.
- . It is very evident that the centre and its staff cannot go on operating the way it is with many families with very complex needs and enormous waiting lists. Also the fact that the centre at times is almost the dumping ground for families that are considered too difficult for other services to support and for those whose other service options have been reduced needs to be carefully analysed. The service has reached a point where it is necessary to very carefully review its future role and mode of operation. This situation has arisen quite independently of this strategic planning exercise. However trying to solve it needs to be done in a way that is consistent with the Brotherhood's future directions.
- . Resulting from the difficulties of the day to day operations of the Napier Street child care service the Manager Inner Urban Youth and Family Services is spending almost all her time on day to day type operational matters related to the centre. There is a need to release some of this position's time to invest in a wider range of issues and initiatives related to the Brotherhood's role in family and youth services in the local area.

### **Home Work Program**

- . The program is a highly successful one for a small number of low income students from non-English speaking backgrounds (particularly Indo Chinese who experience very real educational disadvantages due to low income, lack of family support and living circumstances). The service is not able to meet the demand and there is a waiting list.
- . The program operates as a very separate program and is not particularly linked with other services and programs within the Brotherhood or with outside services. It is filling a very real service gap for supporting students with high levels of disadvantage, but who are not at risk of homelessness. (Other existing tutoring type services are available for students who are homeless.)

- . There is a real need and opportunity to examine the experience of this program in supporting students with a particular combination of disadvantages, but who with appropriate support and skilled assistance can overcome the effects of their disadvantage and achieve well academically and go on to further training and education and potentially eventual financial independence.

**Key Objectives to Work Towards Achieving:**

- ◆ To work towards reducing the need for the Manager Inner Urban Youth and Family Services to be involved almost fully in the day to day operations of the Napier Street Service.
- ◆ To reduce the pressure and stress on the Napier Street service as soon as possible through some short term strategies while examining the longer term options for the future operation of the service. In doing this to examine and clarify issues such as the following:
  - . what the service is trying to achieve and for whom;
  - . what range of assistance it provides;
  - . how it identifies who should have priority of access to the services; —
  - . how it rations the available assistance between families; —
  - . how it relates to and is linked with other services supporting low income families experiencing multiple difficulties. —
- ◆ To identify the most appropriate longer term approaches for the Napier Street service which achieve the following:
  - clearly meets high needs experienced by low income families with children where the families and children experience multiple difficulties;
  - provides a demonstration model for working positively with very vulnerable and at risk low income families;
  - contributes to broader strategic efforts of the Brotherhood, particularly advocacy initiatives on behalf of low income families with young children.



## **MATERIAL AID SERVICE - FITZROY**

### **Current Service:**

The assistance provided through the Brunswick Street, Fitzroy service includes:

- clothing and shoes
- furniture
- household items

In addition people can purchase new items such as refrigerators, mattresses, prams and strollers at wholesale prices through the service. The service also has a special Christmas toys program where parents and children chose toys in a shop setting.

The service is available to low income people, with a health card. Most users live in the inner city.

### **Key Issues identified:**

The following have been identified as key issues for the Material Aid Service taking into account information arising from:

- . discussion with the manager of the service and the Director Metro Region;
  - . appraisal of the service against the framework for identifying strategic directions; and
  - . interviews with a number of other organisations in the local area involved with material aid/emergency relief services.
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- . The Material Aid service provided by the Brotherhood in Fitzroy is clearly assisting people who fall within the Brotherhood's target population.
  - . There are a number of agencies operating within the inner city area that provide material aid support to residents of Fitzroy. It was identified that there are numerous agencies providing assistance with meals, food parcels and/or vouchers and there is no shortage of places for people to go to meet their needs for clothing. Furniture and household goods were areas identified as being less well catered for, with fewer agencies providing these types of goods.
  - . It is at times difficult for people seeking information about material aid, emergency and crisis services to obtain well informed and accurate information provided in an appropriate manner, both within the Brotherhood and within the community.

- . The Brotherhood service provides quality assistance to people who are in need of income support. However the kind of support that is provided is not unique within the area, nor is the Brotherhood service providing a type of assistance that other agencies cannot provide.
- . The Brotherhood's Material Aid Service is perceived by a number of other agencies involved in the material aid/emergency relief field to be developing best practice in relation to:
  - staff training and support;
  - provision of material aid in a way that assists in maintaining the dignity of those who seek assistance;
  - providing a non-judgemental service that people requiring regular assistance choose to return to above other services;
  - their model for Christmas toy distribution is considered excellent and capable of being passed on to other organisations like K-Mart.
- . Ongoing improvements and streamlining of operations have occurred in various aspects of the Brotherhood's Material Aid Service. However it was identified that there was a need to restructure the way in which clothing is provided to ensure greater equity of access for a wider range of people and to ensure the most effective use of the overall resources available for material aid.
- . Effective inter-agency co-ordination in service planning, provision and referral amongst material aid services has been identified as essential to ensure that people who are poor and needing assistance receive it in a timely and appropriate manner and that access is as equitable as possible. While there continues to be extensive cross-referral between agencies, there is considerable room for improvement in the effort invested in inter-agency co-ordination efforts to achieve a more streamlined approach to provision of different types of material aid within the area. Also there has been difficulty in maintaining opportunities for agencies to come together and discuss issues about co-ordinated planning, identification of gaps etc. on a regular and sustained basis.

**Key Objectives to Work Towards Achieving:**

- ◆ To streamline the way in which assistance with clothing is provided to ensure greater equity in access and more effective use of the resources available for material aid;
- ◆ To improve the way in which the Brotherhood provides information about availability of assistance in relation to material aid, emergency relief, crisis assistance such as

accommodation in the Metro Region, particularly in the City of Yarra and surrounding areas.

- ◆ To maximise the co-ordination and collaborative efforts between the range of material aid and emergency relief agencies in the local area. (A key way of working towards this is to take on a leadership role in supporting, and where necessary facilitating, the network of agencies to come together, share information and develop strategies to progressively address issues and problems related to material aid and emergency relief provision in the area.)
- ◆ To more clearly link the daily work of the Material Aid service with advocacy initiatives in relation to people's need for access to material aid and emergency relief and in relation to the wider systemic problems of inadequate income and increased costs of living experienced (for example through new user charges for utilities and school fees) by a number of different groups dependent on social security payments or who are on very low incomes.

## **UN/EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Current Services:**

The Brotherhood's employment and related support services in the Metro Region are provided through the Employment Action Centre (EAC) located in Fitzroy. The centre has formal accreditation as a training provider. The range of employment related programs provided include the following:

- . Programs for disadvantaged job seekers providing structured training, skills development, job search, personal development including:
  - . Jobskills (paid work experience combined with formal training)
  - . Job Club (assistance with job searching)
  - . Open Access (provision of job search facilities and supports)
  - . Open Employment Unit (employment placement, onsite training and support to people with disabilities)
  - . Opening Access (careers investigation and jobsearch for people over 45)
  - . Post Program Support (which provides follow up support for former program users)
  
- . A range of programs providing varying types and levels of training and support to young unemployed people with some particularly targeted at those with multiple disadvantages. Programs/services include:
  - . Active Placement Unit (vocational guidance and support)
  - . Youth Unit (personal development and job search program)
  - . MOVE (outdoor skills program)
  - . Traineeship Access Course (preparatory training in clerical and retail areas with paid work experience)
  - . JPET Linked Access Program (employment placement and support)
  - . STEP (Group Training Scheme utilising traineeships)
  - . Housing Resource Unit (information, advice and some advocacy and financial assistance in relation to accommodation for young people using EAC Services).
  
- . The Disability Access Support Service which provides skilled support to Skillshare Programs across the state to increase their capacity to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Types of assistance provided include staff training and development, provision of equipment resources, assessing and developing training programs for participants with disabilities.

## **Key Issues Identified**

There are many detailed operating issues associated with each of the different services and programs provided through the Employment Action Centre. These arise from a diversity of reasons including limited funding levels and inflexible operating guidelines for particular services/programs and limited ability to provide assistance beyond training in a number of programs. These types of issue will not be discussed here. Rather the focus is at the broader level of issues related to the operation and development of the employment and training initiatives of the Brotherhood's Metro Region.

- . Most of the employment programs are well targeted to people who would fall within the Brotherhood's key target population, with many being people who are long term unemployed, experiencing unemployment in association with a number of other disadvantages and/or disabilities, or young people who are considered at risk due to low income, homelessness and associated problems.
- . The Centre has and continues to develop expertise in working with a number of different target groups amongst people who are unemployed. These include younger people, (a group whose life chances and potential for financial independence will be significantly influenced by how their employment related needs and other difficulties they may experience are addressed), older people and people with disabilities.
- . The Brotherhood in the Metro Region has been at the forefront of a number of innovative employment related developments which have moved on to become more mainstream employment programs, for example JPET. The challenge for the Metro Region's involvement in employment and related programs is to stay at the leading and developmental edge as programs that were once innovative become more mainstream and provided by an increasing number of organisations.
- . The ability of EAC to provide a co-ordinated and diverse range of responses to individuals people's employment and related support needs is enhanced through having a wide range of programs and approaches provided by the one service to draw on.
- . The centre has been progressively developing specialist knowledge about how to most effectively engage and support ongoing involvement of people who are particularly disadvantaged, particularly in the youth area, but also for other age groups. Staff have identified that the Brotherhood's programs take on a number of people who would not be taken on by other projects because of project concerns to achieve outcome targets.

- . The geographic boundaries imposed by funding bodies varies between programs/service, with some confined relatively closely to the City of Yarra and other taking people from a wider area.

**Key Issues For the Future:**

- . The area or labour market programs has entered a period of change and some uncertainty for existing providers, including the Brotherhood's Employment Action Centre. Most funding for programs has been for short term periods, but in the past existing providers could be fairly certain of being refunded. Competitive tendering now occurs for a number of programs with the result that there is greater competition for funding and the ability for private providers and new public sector providers to compete for running current services. There are also new directions in the type of services/programs to be provided, with the introduction of case management services the largest example. Also it is anticipated that some existing services and programs will in the future be scaled down or totally disappear. While it is clear that the Centre will continue to be funded to provide a number of programs the future scale and range of programs it will successfully attract is not known.
- . There is a need for a much clear vision to be developed for the role and contribution to be made by the Employment Action Centre. This needs to be driven by the need to contribute more strategically to informing and addressing the issues associated with unemployment and effective labour market strategies (particularly for those amongst the unemployed who are most disadvantaged), not just by government funding programs. The broad framework of a possible future vision for the centre to emerge from the discussions that have taken place to date as part of the strategic planning process is outlined below.

**Draft Framework for Future Operation of the Employment Action Centre:**

The following outlines some of the possible core areas for the future operation of the Employment Action Centre. Each of these will need to be carefully examined, and additional areas may also be identified once more detailed planning work is undertaken.

- ◆ It makes a major contribution to addressing the issue of unemployment in the local area through providing quality programs that provide effective responses and positive outcomes.
- ◆ It provides a range of existing labour market programs necessary to:

- . attract sufficient funding to keep a viable centre and to provide a range of employment related programs and to maintain the infrastructure necessary to underpin some of the newer initiatives to be developed;
- . allow for sufficient hands on experience and exposure to the problems and issues associated with the operation of labour market programs and the needs and difficulties experienced by people who are unemployed.
- ◆ It maintains and builds up credibility amongst the field of providers and amongst funders as an innovative and skilled labour market program provider with particular expertise in addressing the needs of those who are most disadvantaged amongst people who are unemployed. It becomes a centre recognised as having highly developed effective practice skills and expertise in supporting people who are unemployed and have additional particular disadvantages and difficulties to contend with.
- ◆ It works to identify gaps and develop up strategies to fill gaps in current labour market program approaches and seeks funding to address these to demonstrate the problems and the potential benefits from addressing the gaps.
- ◆ It has a mandate and the knowledge, skills and resources to provide:
  - consultancy services (in many instance fee for service) to other labour market program providers in relation to responding effectively to the needs of those who are most disadvantaged;
  - training for other providers (and government officers) about effectively responding to the needs of the most disadvantaged who are participating in training and employment related programs;
  - develop and promote program design and curriculum design especially tailored to meet the needs of those who are most disadvantaged amongst people who are unemployed.
- ◆ It has a strong focus on documentation and dissemination of information and research, both in the form of action research and more structured research about impacts and outcomes of different approaches.
- ◆ It is a strong advocate, in collaboration with other sections of the Brotherhood, about:

- . the needs of people who are unemployed and particularly those who are the most disadvantaged amongst this group;
- . limitations in the structure and operating guidelines of existing labour market programs that particularly limit their ability to achieve long term sustainable outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups amongst those who are unemployed;
- . gaps in the current labour market programs available to effectively address the needs of those who are most disadvantaged.

**Key Objectives to Work Towards Achieving:**

- ◆ To identify options available for the development of the Employment Action Centre able to achieve the following combination of outcomes:
  - . makes a very real contribution to the lives of individual people living in the local area who are unemployed and experience additional disadvantages;
  - . provides information to inform advocacy and research initiatives on behalf of low income people.
  - . demonstrates effective practice in assisting those who are the most disadvantaged and is able to draw on this to influence other organisations;
  - . is able to generate some independent income (through contracting expertise to other organisations, charging for training etc) which can then be used for purposes such as fostering more innovative pilot service developments



## **VOLUNTEERS**

### **Current Service:**

The volunteer service manages and co-ordinates the recruitment, screening and placement of volunteers within the Metro Region services and works with services to identify volunteering opportunities and the development of effective approaches for working with volunteers.

### **Key Issues Identified:**

- . Volunteers have been progressively introduced to work alongside staff in almost all of the Metro Region's programs.
- . Feedback from service managers indicates that in the past eight months there has been a significant improvement in the support and assistance provided to services to more effectively work with volunteers. The skills and interests of volunteers are now far better matched with the needs of the services.
- . There is the opportunity to continue to expand the diversity of roles for volunteers and the ways in which they can work in partnership with paid staff.
- . Paid staff have developed an acceptance and respect for volunteer involvement and now actively support placement of volunteers with their services.

### **Key Objectives to Work Towards Achieving:**

- ◆ To expand the involvement of volunteers in a number of programs/services and in operation of the Metro Region as a whole.
- ◆ To explore innovative ways of using volunteers which expand the capacity of the Brotherhood's Metro Region to support and assist people in their target group.
- ◆ To broaden the range of opportunities for volunteers to work in services and to diversify the types of volunteers working with services.
- ◆ To create an environment in which volunteers and paid personnel work together and volunteers become integral and respected members of the staff of the service.

- ◆ To examine new approaches to attracting volunteers such as corporate volunteering, where a local organisation agrees to encourage and facilitate its staff's involvement in specific volunteering tasks with the Brotherhood. This can either be through contribution of specific skills or allocation of time.

## **NORTHERN FAMILY SERVICES**

### **Current Services:**

#### **1. Craigieburn Family Services**

Craigieburn Family Services began in October, 1990 as an initiative of the Brotherhood of St Laurence to extend its work in the community beyond what it was doing in the inner suburbs of Melbourne to the developing suburbs on the metropolitan fringe with little existing social infrastructure to support families. The Craigieburn area, including Roxburgh Park was selected. Craigieburn Family Services commenced with one full-time position of Co-ordinator and two part-time positions of Community Teachers to oversee and conduct the Homework programme for local secondary school students. The Co-ordinator provided counselling and emergency relief services.

Having established a presence in Craigieburn, the homework programme ceased in December, 1991 and was replaced by a broader community development programme which employed a part-time worker. This position was to become full-time in July, 1992 and undertake social action work with residents on pertinent infrastructure related issues such as planning social services for the area's massive housing developments and the transport concerns. Opportunities were also created for residents to lend their perspective to relevant decision making.

Craigieburn Family Services established and ran the area's only Occasional Child Care programme at two sessions per week. This soon increased to the present four sessions per week as the programme's popularity grew. We have now transferred the running of this programme to the Committee of Management at Selwyn House.

In November, 1992 as the demand for individual/family counselling and emergency relief increased (reflecting the increase in population) and the Co-ordinator (now Manager) took on more management and service and policy development work, a part-time (20 hours) Counsellor was employed to focus on this programme.

In mid 1994 Craigieburn Family Services has developed as one of the significant social service providers for the eastern part of the former Shire of Bulla. It is located in a small three bedroom residential rental property in the more established, central part of Craigieburn.

## **Key Issues Identified:**

### **Local Service Infrastructure**

Craigieburn is one of the fastest growing areas in greater Melbourne. It lacks a basic service infrastructure and has a very limited range of services available to local residents.

This situation is likely to be exacerbated by local Government restructure and its focus of authority in Broadmeadows. With the exception of a small Community Health Centre Craigieburn Family Services is the only general purposed Community ageing in the area.

### **Local Management**

It was not the intention of the Brotherhood of St Laurence to remain in the long term as a primary service provider in Craigieburn. The aim was to establish a service presence and over time transfer responsibilities for operational management to the local community. It was also expected that organisational partnerships would also develop particularly within the Anglican Community.

### **Financial Supports**

In the planning stages of the project it was made clear by State Government that service support funds would not be available in the short term. It was suggested however that over time some financial underwriting could be expected.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence planned to maintain medium to long term financial support to the project. Support that would go beyond the period of organisational control.

It is now clear that any State funding towards the cost of maintaining Family Services is unlikely. Specific purposes funding may be available from time to time.

### **Key Objectives**

- ◆ To continue to assist in the development of local community networks and service streams.
- ◆ To encourage Local Government to maintain an active local presence.

- ◆ To establish a local Committee of Management for Craigieburn Family Services.
- ◆ To establish partnership with appropriate service providers.

## **2. Whittlesea Emergency Relief Service**

The service was established as a consequence of the Brotherhood of St Laurence Northern service strategy approved in 1989. It operates in concert with Whittlesea Family Services auspiced by Kildonan Homes.

The service provides:

- Financial and material aid
- No interest loan scheme
- Referral service
- Service information
- Advocacy

### **Key Issues**

### **Resources**

The service is the dominant provider of emergency relief in the City of Whittlesea. The progressive move towards user pay coupled with huge local unemployment has created an insatiable demand for support. Except for funds supplied by the Brotherhood of St Laurence the only other source of support is a modest annual grant from the Commonwealth. An additional benefit is obtained from resource sharing with Kildonan Homes.

### **Devolution**

Like Craigieburn it was always the intention of the Brotherhood of St Laurence to eventually transfer responsibility for the service to the local community. However without continuing financial support from the Brotherhood of St Laurence the service would not survive.

### **Key Objectives**

To prepare a framework for the transfer of the service to another organisation. A primary target for transfer would be our co-tenant Whittlesea Family Services.

**Other Services/Activities:**

. **Rooming House Program**

The Brotherhood's management of the Rooming House Program was to be of a time limited nature. Planning is underway for new arrangements for its management to be put in place. A number of options have been identified and the strengths and weaknesses of each of the options are being carefully assessed.

APPENDIX

METRO - AGED SERVICES: EST. ACTUAL 1994-95

AREA	EXPENDITURE			INCOME			NET
	OPERATIONS	APPORTION- MENT	TOTAL	SUBSIDIES GRANTS	FEES	TOTAL	
Sumner	640,200	59,000	699,200	356,000	375,000	731,000	31,800
Millott	89,440	24,620	114,060	-	36,000	56,000	(58,060)
Independent living	47,450	34,017	81,467	-	98,000	98,000	16,533
Sambell	614,737	67,119	681,856	306,783	392,135	698,918	17,062
Carinya	1,463,100	69,500	1,532,600	1,169,302	350,480	1,519,782	(12,818)
Coolibah	675,740	101,300	777,040	290,000	353,700	623,700	(153,340)
Res. Service	68,971	17,260	86,231	-	-	-	(86,231)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,599,638</b>	<b>372,816</b>	<b>3,972,454</b>	<b>2,122,085</b>	<b>1,605,315</b>	<b>3,727,400</b>	<b>(245,054)</b>

## **AGED SERVICES:**

### **Actions and Initiatives**

The following outlines a number of actions/initiatives that can be taken to start to move towards achievement of the objectives identified.

- ◆ Examine how to release some of the time of the Admissions Officer position by reallocating responsibility for admission for hostels and the nursing home to the people responsible for the operation of these services. Also examine the possibility of delegating responsibility for assessment of admissions to independent living units to either hostel staff and/or staff at the Coolibah Centre or a combination of both approaches.
- ◆ Set in place processes to ensure that key staff become more informed about the major issues of concern being raised by a number of organisations and through a number of studies about the limitations of a major government funding programs in effectively responding to the particular circumstances and needs of vulnerable older people who are without secure housing, personal resources and family support. (Development of this understanding will increase the ability to design new service approaches and to collect information through existing services that can then be used to support advocacy initiatives.) Particular approaches include:
  - . reading the resource material and literature available;
  - . drawing on the experience of staff in some of the Brotherhood's services (particularly the Coolibah Centre);
  - . holding discussions with other key agencies particularly RDNS Homeless Person's Service located in Fitzroy and Aged Services staff from the former City of Fitzroy.
- ◆ The current changes in local government arising from both boundary restructure and from competitive tendering have a significant potential to impact on community care services in South Fitzroy. These services have attempted to become more flexible and responsive to the special needs of people living in boarding houses and other private rental accommodation. There is a need for strong advocacy immediately, on behalf of this group, to ensure that they continue to receive appropriate services and that any opportunities to improve the services to this group which could arise through the tendering process are also explored.



Thus staff in the Metro Region need to quickly inform themselves of the issues, and possibly join forces with other relevant agencies in the area to identify how best to take a strong advocacy role on behalf of one of the Brotherhood's key client groups.

- ◆ Once having undertaken the tasks set out in the second initiative there is an opportunity to more fully examine the ways in which the Brotherhood's services and housing resources could be used more flexibly to explore different approaches to effectively addressing the difficulties experienced by very vulnerable older people who do not have the same opportunities to remain living in the community as those in more supported circumstances.

The focus could be particularly on addressing the needs of those sections of the Brotherhood's target population living in the City of Yarra who are most frail and vulnerable and lacking in family supports and where:

- more secure and safer accommodation is important for their survival in the community;
- where their vulnerability increases due to short term illness;
- a combination of factors/circumstances reduce their ability to effectively care for themselves, in the first instance on a short term basis;
- intermittent but recurring problems with poor eating and/or problems with taking medications threaten their ability to remain out of institutional care on a long term basis.

Some of the possible steps to be taken to pursue these directions include:

- . Examine the possibility of converting the existing 10 hostel places which have been approved in principle for Sumner House to Community Aged Care Packages (there is precedent for this in the City of Box Hill). These could then be used to implement a number of ways of supporting the most vulnerable people and doing this in a way that is well linked to existing aged care services and resources .
- . Expand the role and responsibilities of Sambell Lodge to take in responsibility for assessment for Keble Court flats.
- . Examine the feasibility and desirability of developing the capacity of the hostel to provide short term beds for "respite"/ recuperation, extra support for people