

## Cheaper Fridges for Families

A refrigerator would be considered a necessity in most homes and yet it is one of the most expensive items to buy. For a family on a pension or benefit, it would be out of the question to pay cash for one, so that most low income people who need a fridge end up buying it on hire purchase, paying high interest rates and a greatly inflated total price.

The Community Buying Advisory Service (CBAS) was set up by the Brotherhood and funded by the Brotherhood and the Victorian Government to help people get the best values and prices on household goods. They found that many people were unjustly treated when buying fridges, paying high prices, being sold second-hand goods as new and often being charged exorbitant repair rates.

Seeing the need for both the fridges themselves and for reasonable prices for low income people, staff at CBAS helped get a fridge refurbishing programme off the ground. Funded by the Victorian Government's Community Employment Programme, the project staff collect and repair old fridges which are then sold at reasonable prices to people on low incomes.

Up to ten fridges a week are reconditioned by the staff, who include the co-ordinator, a qualified fridge mechanic and a trainee. They replace missing or broken parts, repair motors and repaint if necessary. Washing machines are also repaired and the demand for both far outstrips the possible supply.

The trainee, who recently completed his 26 week training period, was able to gain work skills, including spray painting, and using hand tools and electrical equipment.

Donations of non-working machines come from the Brotherhood, the Salvation Army and other agencies. The fridges are sold at a small profit to customers who are referred by welfare agencies and who are all on low incomes.

The present funding runs out by the end of February and various

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sources are being approached for continuing support. It would be unfortunate if such a successful and practical program supporting low income people were unable to continue.

If you have a fridge that you would like to give to the project, please ring Russell Wallace on 328 2501 to arrange collection.

*Alternative Fridge Scheme co-ordinator Russell Wallace (right) with fridge mechanic Bill Anderson.*

