

brotherhood action

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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JOB CENTRE OPENS

The King Street Job Centre was officially opened by the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, the Honourable A. A. Street, on February 28. The Centre has been established by the Brotherhood to complement the Commonwealth Employment Service and to give people an alternative way to go about getting work. It has the co-operation of the Minister's Department, the Victorian Employers Federation, Department of Social Security, the Trades Hall Council and the Ethnic Communities Council. All these are represented on the Centre's Consultative Committee.

Research by the Brotherhood has shown that some people need help in getting jobs — they lack confidence, don't know what is expected of them by employers, or how to present themselves for an interview. Many do not know their rights as unemployed people.

The Job Centre, at 181 King Street, Melbourne (telephone 677 668) has been designed by students from RMIT to give an easy, informal atmosphere. Unemployed people can be helped in various ways at the Centre. They can make use of the free newspapers and telephones for finding and contacting employers. They can use the Centre's job placement service, get

advice on how the Commonwealth Employment Service can help them, and join discussions on subjects such as getting and keeping jobs and employers needs and expectations. They can come in, talk to the staff, discuss their employment problems over a cup of coffee and meet other people in the same situation. Much of the work is concerned with improving their 'employability' and helping them to present better at interviews.

There are four full time staff. Bill Wells, the co-ordinator, has been employer, employee and unemployed and so is in a position to understand all these groups. He previously owned a metal finishing business which went to the wall and left him unemployed for six months in 1976. He tried unsuccessfully for many jobs and finally got one as leading hand on night shift in an electroplating shop, before joining the Job Centre.

John Rickard and Sandra Marsden are employment resource workers who specialize in job counselling and placement. Kathy Mingos has just left school and speaks Greek, Macedonian and Serbo-Croat.

In the first few weeks the Centre was stretched beyond its capacity with people looking for jobs and had to close until noon for a while. In 14 days over 250 people registered, all with one purpose only — to find



King Street Job Centre staff members (from left) John Rickard, Kathy Mingos, Sandra Marsden and Bill Wells.

Photo by courtesy of 'The Age'.

a job. The majority of these are aged between 18-26 years, are unskilled or semi-skilled and are not receiving unemployment benefits. A significant minority are not even registered with the Commonwealth Employment Service.

Some examples from this group include a 21 year old apprentice plumber, re-trenched when he had only five more months to complete his apprenticeship and an 18 year old man, unemployed for 12 months after two years as a salesman. A woman from the Philippines has a science degree and teaching qualifications not recognized in Australia and is at present working on a process line.

While in this same 14 day period, 100 jobs were registered by employers, these examples demonstrate why it is not simply a

question of an unskilled unemployed person filling an unfilled vacancy.

Vacancy: Process workers (2) — junior males. Experienced in boot/shoe trade.

Vacancy: Labourers (2) — Girls 16-18. Clothing factory. Must be eligible for NEAT.

Vacancy: Trainee personnel clerks (2) — Male or female. Must be eligible for NEAT.

Vacancy: Labourer — No skill, but must have background in foundry.

The Brotherhood feels that this project is so important in the search to find the facts about unemployment that \$50,000 has been budgeted to cover the cost of rents and salaries for one year. This money only became available through an unexpected legacy, and if the project is successful, full government funding will be sought at the end of the year.

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The 'Age' is supporting the Centre with a weekly Job Centre column and the 'Sun' with a job seekers column. Employers have been both interested and helpful and an early visitor was Mr. J. D. Norgard, Chairman of the Commonwealth Employment Service Review Committee. It is difficult to say anything of significance in these early stages, but two facts are already very apparent. The number of jobs available is far less than the number of unemployed, and the requirements of these jobs and the skills of the unemployed do not match. It is not a question of any person for any job but the right person for the right job.

SAVINGS AND LOANS FOR ARC

The Action and Resource Centre for low income families or ARC is run and staffed in the main, by low income people. Among its activities, ARC provides help and information on housing, employment, social security and financial planning to help people to make decisions about their own affairs. A Savings and Loan Project has started with several objectives: to introduce ARC members to a pattern of saving; to counter the strong influences of the media to spend; and to encourage group savings, akin to credit union principles. Each family participating saves \$2 per week for 16 weeks and then becomes eligible for a loan of \$100 including their own \$32. This loan is then repaid at \$2 per week. Two supporters of the scheme are needed for each loan and as repayments are made, this money is returned. There are no interest payments involved in any part of the project.

Dear Brotherhood Friends,

I would like to thank you for the generous support you have given to the work of the Brotherhood, particularly over the Christmas period.

Our Christmas Appeal for clothing and household goods received a record response. In the month of December, we received the extraordinarily high number of 13,000 phone calls inviting us to pick up donations. The staff and particularly the drivers of the Salvage Division responded magnificently. In one day the drivers and their assistants made over 900 calls for donated goods. Of course, we always need more donations to Salvage, but the goods received at Christmas give us a good start for the year in stocking our Material Aid Service which gives clothing and household goods to low-income people and also in providing goods for our shops which produce a very important proportion of funds for the Brotherhood's social welfare services. Some \$27,000 was donated to our Christmas Appeal which helps to finance our Material Aid Service, Day Care Services for children of working mothers and the Action and Resource Centre for low-income families.

Two new projects, the King Street Job Centre and Sumner House hostel for frail aged, will come into operation in February. These projects will add considerably to our financial commitments, but the history of the Brotherhood shows that whenever we have set out to establish a new service that meets a real and demonstrated need, we will in some way or another receive the support that is required.

David Scott

DAVID SCOTT
Executive Director

As an incentive to save, a lucky draw for \$5 is made each week, and this money has been donated by three ARC supporters. Sixteen families have become eligible for loans so far, with twelve supporters lending \$32 each. The families involved are learning more about managing their finances, and the project is helping ARC move into new areas

of group buying, discounts, financial counselling in small groups and credit union principles.

More supporters are needed for the project who are prepared to lend \$32 for a period of six months, interest free. If you are interested and would like to help, please ring Judy Cassar or Patrick Murphy at ARC on 41 4151.



ARC support worker Patrick Murphy hands the Savings Project's first loan cheque to Maureen O'Connor, watched by ARC member Ian Carter.



Miss Edith Jack (seated) and her niece Miss Dorothy Brewin, in the garden at 'Carinya'.

A HUNDRED, NOT OUT

Miss Edith Jack, a resident at 'Carinya', the Brotherhood's nursing home in Box Hill, was 100 years old on January 5. She celebrated her birthday with many telegrams including one from the Queen, and several parties. Miss Jack's new dress for the occasion came from the 'Young Sophisticate's' section of a department store. Quite appropriate for someone who only gave up work at the age of 86 and says she's 'a hundred, but not out'.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

THE FAMILY CENTRE PROJECT: A THIRD OVERVIEW

The Action and Resource Centre is now a well established and active force in the welfare field. With its programme of self-help and social action for the low-income community, and its large staff team, many of whom were themselves members of the Family Centre Project, the Centre has come a long way since the Project was first set up late in 1972. During the Family Centre's third year, 1975, many dramatic changes occurred, culminating in the establishment of the Action and Resource Centre, as an independent and self-governing organization. These changes are described in detail in the Project's most recent research report, 'A Third