

New Service for Frankston

In early December, the Brotherhood of St Laurence will open a Material Aid Service in Kookaburra Street, Frankston, for disadvantaged people in the Western Port region.

The establishment of the service comes as a result of two major recommendations published in the report 'Stretched to the limit' by Robyn Souter, the welfare worker with the Brotherhood's Peninsula Division. Robyn Souter conducted an extensive review of emergency relief services and income supports available to people on low incomes in the region.

The report showed that pensions and other forms of income supports are now falling seriously behind what is considered an acceptable standard of living for those dependent on them.

Because of this, applicants for emergency relief have been forced to apply for assistance regularly on a monthly or fortnightly basis, rather than as a one-off crisis alleviation application.

All councils and relief agencies consulted in the review believed that there was an urgent need for a fully established and independently operated material aid service in the region.

The new service will be based on the existing Material Aid Centre in Fitzroy, which is set up in a shop. People in need may choose from clothing, shoes, household goods, linen, bedding and furniture, all provided at no cost.

Access to the service will be to all residents of the Western Port region holding a pension or benefits card, low income earners, or those in financial crisis due to situations such as excessive private rental costs or sickness.

Adrian Harris, Executive Officer at the Brotherhood's Peninsula Division, said that the Material Aid Service would operate on a minimal level of screening and assessment of its users.

"It has been shown through experience that most people who use the Service are in need and they should not be subject to excessive

The Brotherhood of St Laurence

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questioning or demeaning procedures."

One of the commitments of the Material Aid Service will be to provide the possibility of choice.

"There's a big difference between a service which provides items selected by someone else and a service which allows users to make a choice," Mr Harris said.

He also pointed out that extra

stock would be used for the establishment of the Service and that this would have to come from donations from people within the Peninsula area.

"We're hoping to open on 1 December and our main concern now is to have enough stock to cover demand from the Material Aid Service and the seven Brotherhood shops in the region. We particularly



Everyone can choose their own clothing at the Material Aid Service.

need donations of good quality clothing and furniture'.

The Kookaburra Street site for the new Material Aid Service has previously been used for the Brotherhood's furniture sales. Although very limited furniture sales will still continue from the Brotherhood's Rosella Street shop, most of the furniture donated will go to the Material Aid Service.

The report's second recommendation involved the establishment of an independent regional emergency relief committee to help develop a more co-ordinated approach to the problems of poverty in the area.

The committee will be funded by a seeding grant provided by the Brotherhood of St Laurence which will also cover an establishment grant to employ a resource worker for the region.

Both proposals have been met with enormous support from the agencies and councils within the Western Port region.

Robyn Souter's report 'Stretched to the limit' can be obtained from Publications, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Price \$3.00 plus \$1.45 postage.

Dear Friends of the Brotherhood,

May I take this opportunity of wishing you all a very happy Christmas and blessings for the New Year.

It is particularly fitting to consider the coming year at this season because it has been declared the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless by the United Nations.

Last year, Pope John Paul II visited Habitat, the United Nations centre in Nairobi and he began his address with the words "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests: but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Christmas is a stark reminder of the child of refugee parents born in a stable, in Bethlehem.

The tragedy confronting us is that growing numbers of people throughout the world share the same experience. As the world's population grows, shelter becomes one of the most crucial problems confronting the human race. The

United Nations' objective is to encourage all countries, especially developing countries, to develop, by 1987, strategies, policies, and programmes that will include the shelter and neighbourhoods for the homeless and inadequately housed by the year 2000. One of the distinctive factors about our approach here in Australia is that the Australian Government has placed a two-fold emphasis on both the international perspective and our own local housing needs.

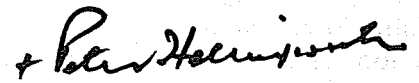
It is startling to discover that there are 40,000 people in Australia who are homeless and another 60,000 on the verge of being homeless. There are many reasons why this is so and the coming year provides us with a great opportunity to look closely at our existing housing policies to see how we can reverse a growing trend which exists even in an affluent developed country like ours.

Thus we have been called upon to assess the needs of the homeless and inadequately housed in Australia, to document and assess the effectiveness of a range of demonstration projects and then to formulate future directions for government and non-government activity. Speaking as the Chairman of the National Non-Government Co-ordinating Committee this represents a great challenge to harness the energy and good-will of the community and see whether private sector building and the finance industry can work together with government to ensure that more corporate resources are directed to those that are poor or who suffer from particular disabilities. Our committee recognises those facing the most serious problems include aboriginals, the aged, disabled people, young people and those living in caravan parks.

In conclusion, the Brotherhood has had a fine record since the 1930s of working to improve the housing conditions of low income people, beginning with those early slum abolition campaigns of Father Tucker. It is time for us to take the matter up again as a high priority within the organisation and throughout the whole community. Each of us as individuals can think about ways and means of making more land available or more housing stock available to help people in

need. This should surely not be a problem in an affluent country such as ours. It would therefore be very good to hear of any creative solutions or suggestions that you might be able to make in this process of consultation throughout 1987.

Finally, the Board and the staff join me in saying thank you for your support and wishing you a Happy New Year.



Bishop Peter Hollingworth
Executive Director

Carrum Downs Appeal a Success

Adrian Harris, Executive Officer of the Brotherhood's Peninsula Division announced recently that the G. K. Tucker Settlement Redevelopment Appeal has passed its target of \$600,000, to now reach over \$700,000.

The most recent donation was a \$100,000 contribution made by the R. E. Ross Trust from South Melbourne.

He said that work had already begun on the Settlement's 22 cottage replacement project and was expected to be completed in early 1987.

"On behalf of the residents of the G. K. Tucker Settlement for older people, and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, I would like to extend our thanks to all those who helped make this Appeal a very successful one", Adrian Harris said.

Annual Report

The 1985/86 annual report is now available to interested people. Only a small number will be mailed to supporters who have given large donations as the postage is now so high. However, we would like it to be as widely distributed as possible. Please ring Bonnie Turnbull on 419 7055 if you would like a copy.