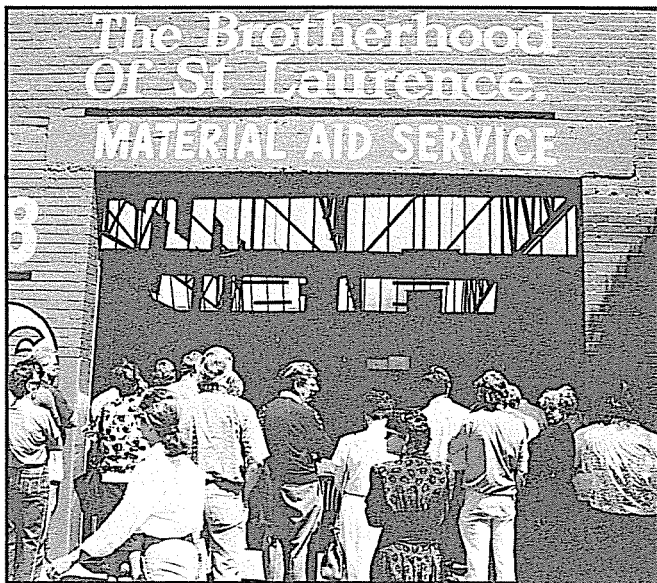


# BROTHERHOOD ACTION

## BROTHERHOOD EXTENDS EMERGENCY RELIEF



*Standing room only at the opening of the Barwon Region's Big Bin Material Aid Service in Geelong. Approximately 80 people attended the opening, which was officially performed by the Hon Kay Setches, Minister for Community Services.*

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has opened the first of two new Material Aid Services located in areas of high need to meet the increased demand for emergency relief.

The two new services, located in South Geelong and Melbourne's northern suburb of Lalor, add to the Brotherhood's existing Material Aid services in Fitzroy and Frankston.

Bishop Michael Challen, Executive Director, said the opening in February of the Brotherhood's "Big Bin" in Geelong was an immediate response to the suffering in the community created by the recession.

"This extension of our emergency relief operations will complement other welfare agencies' services in the region. The Brotherhood has worked in close co-operation with these agencies and the Geelong Community to produce a forthcoming publication, entitled The Geelong Report.

"The report is a major survey of the social and economic problems of the Geelong Region during this recession, which also highlights its wonderful sense of community," he said.

While the report found the economic decline of Geelong is attributable to the same factors that have affected business in all parts of Australia, these are compounded by factors (such as tariff reductions) that have had particular effects on Geelong and other regional centres which have a significant manufacturing component.

Bishop Challen said that as more people lost their jobs and remained unemployed for longer periods, mounting financial pressure and the erosion of savings were adding a substantial burden to families.

"The opening of two extra Material Aid outlets is part of the Brotherhood's overall response to the recession. Since July, we have collected and distributed approximately 60 tonnes of food. However, food alone is not enough and we must now extend our material and financial support.

"Families with teenage children and also single individuals with no family support are feeling the recession more than any other group.

"In many cases, our welfare workers are seeing people who have never before sought help from the Brotherhood. Breadwinners, who never expected to be unemployed, are hit hard when retrenched and their self esteem disintegrates further as they then discover alternative jobs simply don't exist.

"More than a quarter of our jobless are family breadwinners and over half of them have been unable to find work for six months or longer.

"And while material relief does not address the cause of this suffering, it can temporarily alleviate the immediate problems of food, clothing and basic household items.

"In launching this service, the Brotherhood's earnest hope is that it will be made redundant within two years because the Federal Government has created jobs", he said.

Bishop Challen said the new Material Aid Services were still only band-aid solutions to much wider and longer term social and economic issues. He said the Brotherhood will continue to press the government to develop policies which address sustainable employment growth and provide jobless people with reasonable unemployment benefits.

The Brotherhood's "Big Bin" Material Aid Service in Geelong was officially opened by the Hon Kay Setches, Minister for Community Services, and is located at 96 Fyans Street, South Geelong.

The second Brotherhood Material Aid service will open in Lalor during April.