

BROTHERHOOD
BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

*67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065 Australia.
Telephone: (03) 419 7055, Fax: (03) 417 2691*

29th September, 1993

Mr Jan Wachowski
Charitable Trust Administrator
Scobie & Claire MacKinnon Trust
ANZ Trustees
21st Floor
530 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Wachowski,

On behalf of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, as well as myself, I wish to thank the Scobie & Claire MacKinnon Trust, most warmly, for their very generous donation of \$5,000.00.

I note that this is as a response to an approach to assist with the operational costs of our Share House project located in Frankston.

Be sure that the money will be directed to that purpose and that, indeed, it is contributing to a very effective programme which is not only concerned with immediate needs of individuals and families but also their development and ongoing empowerment.

It is a great joy for me to know that there are Trusts like yourselves who, notwithstanding the numerous demands upon them, still give so generously to us.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,



THE RIGHT REVD M B CHALLEN
Executive Director

cc. Lesley Dredge

Submission

To

The Scobie and Claire MacKinnon Trust

From the

Brotherhood of St Laurence

SUBMISSION TO:

Mr A A Stewart
Chairman of the Trustees
The Scobie and Claire MacKinnon Trust
ANZ Trustees
7th Floor
91 William Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

SUBMISSION FROM:

Brotherhood of St Laurence
67 Brunswick Street
FITZROY VIC 3065

AIM OF PROJECT:

To assist a growing number of people with low income by providing material aid and social support.

GRANT SOUGHT:

\$ 25,000

CONTACT:

Mr A Harris
Director, Peninsula Region
782 1000
or
Ms Barbara Elliott
Development Manager
483 1340

April 28, 1993

Mr A A Stewart
Chairman of the Trustees
The Scobie and Claire MacKinnon Trust
ANZ Trustees
7th Floor
91 William Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Stewart,

The Brotherhood of St Laurence respectfully requests consideration by the Trustees of the Scobie and Claire MacKinnon Trust when allocating grants towards worthy projects.

The project before you demonstrates the Brotherhood's commitment to helping those most disadvantaged by promoting independence, thus affirming the practice of self management and community participation.

The Frankston and Dandenong regions have been severely affected by the recession which has resulted in a significant increase for material and social support to people who are unemployed and on low incomes.

The Sharehouse Project is a further development of the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Family and Community Service Base in the Peninsula region which was supported by the E.M.T. in 1991.

The need to expand the service is the result of a 163% increase in people seeking assistance between 1989 and 1992.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Elliott
Development Manager

The Sharehouse Project

The Sharehouse Project was established in July 1992 to provide a combination of material and social support to people with low incomes. The Project is a development of a Material Aid Service operated by the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Frankston since 1987. The need to expand the service is the result of a 163% increase in people seeking assistance between 1989 and 1992.

The Project aims to provide a high quality and innovative service which assists people with low incomes to participate in the community to their potential by providing material and social support. It is based on the belief that by assisting people to access information and resources and to strengthen their relationships and ability to make decisions, people with low incomes can increase their quality of life.

The Sharehouse Project has been established to create a range of pathways through which people, who have become isolated, can become re-involved in the community. These pathways acknowledge that:

- people will, in general, make choices in their own interests and in the interests of other members of their families if all the information is available to them;
- people who have lost confidence may have difficulty accessing services or resources;
- any support should be in a form which encourages and assists people to identify and realise their own goals;
- the goals of a family as a whole should be the basis of support, where ever possible;
- an individual or family's personal social support network is a major form of support and an important resource; and
- recognition needs to be given to the difficulties individuals and families experience living on a low income.

In particular these pathways involve people in:

- gaining direct material support and information.
- self-help, educational and other activities and programs which promote the development of personal and social support networks and life skills, including those skills necessary to gain employment.
- communicating their experiences and undertaking advocacy on issues which affect them.
- gaining greater access to resources in the community and to government and non-government services, while influencing those services to be more responsive to their needs.

The initial strategies put in place to develop the Project beyond the Material Aid Service have included:

- self-help activities, designed to involve people in activities from which they and others benefit;
- visiting services which introduce participants to new services in a familiar environment;
- recreation programs which engage both children and families in ways which strengthen social networks; and
- outreach to other services which develops closer liaison with those services and helps participants utilize community resources.

The Establishment Phase of a Social Support Program

During the past eight months the Project has been establishing its social support program. This has been spent developing a greater awareness of the range of needs of people who use material aid and additional support. The program has had a strong social focus which has been designed to involve people. Drop-in activities such as coffee mornings and community lunches, prepared by participants, and recreational activities, including a school holiday program for children, have played a significant role. The collection and organisation of information has also been a priority. A wide range of people have utilized the facility. Approximately 100 people use the social support service in a month. Individual support has also been provided, including through outreach to other services, for example, to arrange child care.

The Second Phase: Towards a Structured Program

Self-help Activities

The social support program is now entering its second phase with the establishment of support groups for both men and women. The formation of a women's group has raised issues related to the stress families are experiencing in the recession and reinforced the need to address issues faced by those who have experienced domestic violence. These groups are an important stage in people realizing that they are not alone in their experiences.

Other types of self-help activities include the establishment of a bartering system, an exchange program for infants furniture and accessories, further development of an information service, and the establishment of a group of people able to speak to the media.

Another area being developed is dealing with communication skills between families, particularly those experiencing long term unemployment. These developments will occur in the context of increased participation by people in planning processes within the project.

Recreational Programs

The recreational programs will continue with an emphasis on school holiday programs and family camps.

Visiting Services

Coffee mornings have already provided a context for visiting speakers. This part of the program will now be expanded to include regular speakers and visiting services, such as from the Department of Social Security.

It is also proposed to develop educational programs, such as parenting skills and literacy. This may be run in-house or through visiting services. Another development will be the establishment of a low cost loans scheme, in co-operation with the City of Frankston.

Empowering People

In setting out work with the most isolated members of the community, the Sharehouse Project is seeking to empower people. Some of the changes one might expect to see if individuals or groups go through an empowering process include:

- * improved status, self esteem and cultural identity
- * the ability to reflect critically and solve problems
- * the ability to make choices
- * increased access to resources
- * increased collective bargaining power
- * self discipline and the ability to work with others (Labonte, 1990)

It is through this empowering process that people can gain the strength to become more active in the community. Each person will have a different starting point and will therefore follow a different pathway. The following stories illustrate some of the experiences of people involved with the service.

Phoebe's Story

Phoebe had used the Material Aid Service for 2 years. She has lived an isolated life as a result of her ethnic background and having an injured husband constantly at home. She had difficulties speaking English. When the school holiday program started she enrolled her children and then came back for each holiday program. She would come back afterwards to thank staff. She started coming to the drop-in activities and would sit and drink a cup of coffee by herself. Slowly she became more involved, sitting and talking with the people before asking if she could participate in community lunches. She has now become involved in preparing community lunches and in showing people how to cook Lebanese food. Both her English and her assertiveness have improved through this process.

Jo's Story

Jo got involved with the Material Aid Service through the Office of Corrections. Initially she had difficulty relating to staff but when she moved to the social support program she was very helpful. When she started bringing her children to the service other participants found it difficult to cope with the way in which she related to and expected others to look after them. People started to get upset and would leave or not come in when they saw she was around. Staff helped organise full time child care and the situation improved. Her husband, who had been violent, left her and Jo became more relaxed and began taking up activities outside the Project.

Nicholas' Story

Nicholas began using the Material Aid Service over six months ago. He was very shy and had bouts of crying which embarrassed him. He explained that because he had been married previously he was not accustomed to looking after himself. His clothes were unkept and his personal hygiene was very poor. This did not assist in his relationship with some of the service users who only tolerated him. Nicholas started dropping into the Sharehouse on a regular basis and asked for volunteer work. He has become friendly with some of the other volunteers and recently shaved off his very dirty long hair and beard. Nicholas now bathes regularly and takes more care with his clothes and hygiene. He looks much younger and has gained a lot of confidence. He has joined a Greek drama group and is spending less time in his small flat.

Roger's Story

Roger came to the Sharehouse six months ago with his wife Sonia. Both were very distressed because they were renting privately and could no longer afford the rent. They had no money and one of their daughters birthday was the next day. Staff helped organise food and alternative accommodation with a local church group. Roger had been unemployed for twelve months and was very depressed. He was concerned about Sonia and her five children as he had taken them on as if they were his own family. Roger and Sonia volunteered their assistance in the Sharehouse and over a few weeks formed new friendships with other service users. Roger felt he had somewhere to go where people did not look down on him and accepted him the way he was. He began helping other participants with delivering furniture. He is very mechanical and so fixed up his van and lawn mower and began mowing lawns for other Sharehouse participants for a small fee or as part of the mutual bartering system that some of the volunteers had informally set up.

Evaluation

Traditional welfare agencies use a service plan as the main way of documenting the relationship between a service and client. This is inappropriate in a more informal self help environment. Some alternative ways of recording whether people are becoming more empowered which are being developed include:

- action plans through which participants create a format for their own plan ie. goals, who can help, what is needed, as a skill development process.
- case studies based on interviews by someone not involved in the day to day activities talking with selected people about how their situation has evolved since being in contact with the service.
- surveys, for example a questionnaire attached to the pro-forma parents complete to allow children to participate in the school holiday program.

Other forms of evaluation include a record of participants:

- involvement in "in-house" planning processes.
- involvement in more demanding "in-house" activities.
- development and use of an effective information centre.
- use of external services.
- moving on because they are able to access other resources and have established support networks.

Request for Assistance

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is seeking assistance to maintain the social support aspect of the Sharehouse Project. The main expense relates to the employment of two staff. The continued high demand for material aid has put considerable pressure on the organisation capacity to raise funds.

BUDGET

Staffing

Centre Co-ordinator	\$ 39,000	
Project Worker	\$ 33,000	
On-Costs	\$ 15,000	
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		\$ 87,000

Children's Programs

School Holiday Program	\$ 7,000	
Less Fees	\$ 960	\$ 6,040

Self Help Programs

(Development of personal and social support network and life skills)
Community Lunch
Information Centre
Bartering and skill exchange program
Children's furniture repair and bank project
Computer skills
Support groups - Mums group

- Womens group
- Parenting group
- Communication skills
- Domestic Violence

Session salaries	\$ 6,000	
Materials	\$ 2,000	
	<hr/>	
	\$ 8,000	
Less fees	\$ 1,000	\$ 7,000

Family and Adult Programs

1.	Family camps at St Pauls	\$ 6,000	
	Discovery Centre, Phillip Island		
	4 camps x 20 people (average)		
	Less Expenses	\$ 800	\$ 5,200

2.	Social Nights	\$ 1,500	
	i.e. movies, cards, excursions, picnic		
	Less Fees	\$ 300	\$ 1,200

	TOTAL		\$106,440

Appendix

The Need

The Peninsula region has been severely effected by the economic recession. During the three years from May 1989 to May 1992 the unemployment rate in the Mornington Peninsula region increased from 3.9% to 13.9% (ABS 89/92). This Australian Bureau of Statistics region includes 10 local government areas surrounding Dandenong and Frankston. The cause of this rise in unemployment has varied across the region. On the Mornington Peninsula employment is concentrated in activities such as wholesale and retail trade, finance, property and business services, road transport and construction. All these areas have contracted. The Dandenong region has developed as a large manufacturing base which attracted less skilled and more disadvantaged job seekers. The area built up a pool of semi skilled personnel who have been amongst the first retrenched. The closure of Nissan and the flow on effect this has had on component suppliers is one example of the difficulties faced by manufacturers in the region. The other major impact on the region has been a drop in new building commencements. In 1991 new dwelling commencements in the region, which includes the South Eastern Growth Area, were approximately 50% of the peak they reached in 1989 (Western Port Development Council, 1991).

The population of the Peninsula (or Western Port) region accounted for approximately 18% of the metropolitan population in 1981, or approximately 580,000. The region has higher unemployment levels (22%) and higher social security dependence (29% of the metropolitan areas recipients of the Family Allowance Supplement) than its size would indicate. It is disadvantaged in terms of transport which is very limited compared to its population and growth rate. It also has limited support services compared with central and middle suburbs in Melbourne.

Material Aid Service

In 1987 the Brotherhood of St Laurence established a Material Aid Service in Frankston based on the model of its service in Fitzroy. This new service provides support to people in the Peninsula region, including the Mornington Peninsula, Frankston, Chelsea, Springvale, Dandenong, and south eastern growth corridor and south west Gippsland. It assists a range of people, including the unemployed, sole parents and people who, for a range of reasons, either could not gain employment or had a low wage. Eligibility for support is based on people being entitled to a Commonwealth Government Health card. The service provides second hand clothes, furniture and linen, which is given away and some new items which are available at close to cost price.

Since 1989 the number of people seeking assistance has increased by 163%. In 1989 there were 4,986 requests for assistance. By 1992 this number had risen to 13,120 requests. 56% of those assisted in February 1993 were dependent on unemployment payments.

Since the service was established in 1987 it has played an increasing role in referral and social support. This situation was reviewed during 1991 and with the result that in 1992 the Material Aid Service was being relocated to a larger building to allow a social support and referral component.