

BUILDING BETTER LIVES TOGETHER

A newsletter for our valued friends and supporters



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

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Above From left: Briony, Jess, Keegan and Ashlee.

Results in: Rush to enrol at David Scott School

The word about the excellent educational outcomes with young people at our David Scott School has spread. This has led to a huge demand for places at the new school in Frankston – an unemployment hotspot in Melbourne’s outer south-east. The education program is achieving outstanding completion rates and in 2019, the roll will almost double in size, from 50 to over 90 students.

The David Scott School delivers a specialist education program based on applied adult learning – the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) – which is equivalent to Years 10, 11 and 12. Students are taught in class groups of no more than 15, with a teacher and an education support worker. Young people at the school also have access to work placements and support to undertake further education and training or employment.

“We have a dedicated team of teachers, trainers, counsellors and youth workers who support students to overcome barriers, so they can develop skills for life and work,” says school Principal Catherine Arnold.

Sally James, Head of Youth Programs at the Brotherhood of St Laurence is enthusiastic about the opportunities the school offers. “We are evaluating the education model for students who are not attending mainstream school and documenting the key features that have the greatest impact on young people achieving a good education that leads to further training and meaningful work,” she says.

The ideas informing the David Scott School are ambitious, and are part of the Brotherhood’s overall strategy for young people experiencing disadvantage. The approach is fundamentally based on tapping into the talents and aptitudes of young people.

“We need to recognise all young people have talents and aspirations and our community can’t afford to miss out on untapped potential. When you provide disadvantaged young people

with opportunities, they flourish,” says Sally James.

The vision for the David Scott School is to use the model’s successes to influence the Victorian Department of Education about the education models and teaching practices that achieve positive results. They could then be scaled up into mainstream education environments to help even more young people experiencing disadvantage across the state and beyond.

The David Scott School is joined to other youth services at the Brotherhood’s High Street Centre. Services include vocational guidance, VET programs, work experience, mentors and employment opportunities, notably the highly successful Transition to Work program. This integration provides young people with an education that links directly with employment and harnesses local community effort.

The school’s expansion will not only mean an opportunity to further reduce disengagement from education and youth unemployment in the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula area, but also the chance to bring specialist education opportunities to greater Victoria in the future.

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+

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lasting change

=

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or call us on (03) 9483 1301



Above Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg.

Executive Director's message

When I visit our services in the community, like the outstanding David Scott School, I see the potential and aspirations of people we work with.

Our school, still in its foundation years, is achieving impressive results. We are working with a group of young people who found traditional schooling deeply challenging and, this year, we have 80

per cent of the class graduating from the school. You can gain an insight into the paths of the Class of 2018 from the students featured in these pages.

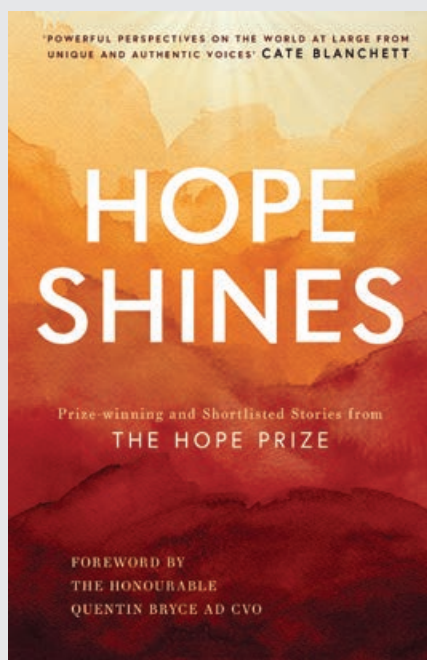
Across our programs, we aim for really practical outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage so they gain confidence and build independent lives. My conversations with people we work with, of all age groups, also reinforces a key

Brotherhood value: how important it is that people experiencing disadvantage have access to the best supports and opportunities to succeed in their personal goals. I think we all share fundamentally similar goals for a home, a decent job, and connections to family, friends and community.

When I was reading our new short story collection, *Hope Shines*, showcasing the best entries from our Hope Prize literary competition, these goals formed a strong theme that was taken up in several stories. The competition was created to shine a light on people's resilience and sense of hope amid hardship and testing times. At the Brotherhood, we know a sense of hope contributes to the resilience people need to overcome their barriers when they face adversity. We also know that with appropriate – and timely – interventions, we can spread hope and opportunity.

Best regards,

Conny Lenneberg
Executive Director



Above *Hope Shines* is published by Simon & Schuster Australia.

Hope Shines

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is delighted to announce the launch of *Hope Shines*, a new collection of short stories from The Hope Prize – our national short story competition. The publication of *Hope Shines* marks the second awarding of the prize, which seeks to give Australian authors a platform to showcase nuanced writing and to capture the resilience of the human spirit. The prize fielded over 900 entries and invites writers from across the country to consider the meaning of hope, and the theme of strength in the face of adversity. Our judging panel consisted of the Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO, Cate Blanchett and Kate Grenville whose deliberations resulted in an

anthology of compelling stories. The book features stories that challenge conventional stereotypes of poverty and reflects the humanity and capacity for hope that many people show in the face of difficult times. First prize was awarded to Finegan Kruckemeyer for his story, 'Like Dresses in a Tree'. The Hope Prize is made possible thanks to the generous support of the late Prudence Myer and her family, Simon & Schuster and Readings.

Cate Blanchett aptly summarises *Hope Shines* as follows: "Powerful perspectives on the world at large from unique and authentic voices."

***Hope Shines* is available for purchase from Readings and online.**



Above Fadowsa has been going to Homework Club for eight years.

Homework Club opening windows to the world for young refugees

Fadowsa has attended the Brotherhood's Homework Club for eight years. She is currently studying Early Childhood Education at university and recognises that the support over the years helped her on the path to success.

Fadowsa came to Australia at age eight after spending her early life in a refugee camp. Life in the camp was hard with few opportunities for education. She says, "In Kenya it was really difficult for kids to go to school because of what was going on at the refugee camp."

When Fadowsa arrived in Australia with her mother and brothers, she found the change in culture and language confronting. "I was so scared. I hadn't seen many Westerners before."

After briefly attending English school, Fadowsa went to Collingwood College and started at Homework Club in Grade 7.

The club focuses on building positive relationships with students. It has also been particularly important in helping children whose education and lives have been fractured due to the conflict and negative experiences that can arise in refugee camps. Fadowsa's entire young life before moving to Australia was spent in a camp.

"I didn't have a great childhood. I wanted to have fun and the experience of learning and education. Learn about nature, the world and what it feels like as a little kid."

Fadowsa explains that tutors helped her, not only with school work, but also to understand life in Australia. The volunteers provide academic support and can offer vocational and life advice for students who may not be able to get one-on-one support at school or at home.

Fadowsa says her tutors helped her "... to be the girl that I am now. Being inspired, helping others, having a bigger heart to be involved in other people's lives. But, most importantly, understanding others and learning about diversity."

In the future, Fadowsa hopes to support children who have dropped out of school and give them the voice and advice they need.

Of her life now she says, "Most of us are really lucky to be outside in this world, enjoying life. If I didn't have Homework Club, I wouldn't know anything about the world!"

Did you know?*



Our Research and Policy Centre published **41** research reports, submissions and contributions to external publications. Researchers presented at **30** conferences and public forums



1,917 students learned about social justice and poverty through our school engagement program over the 2017 school year



Our Refugee Child Outreach assisted families with **96** sessions and **287** links to services such as playgroups, English lessons, and employment programs



Our Registered Training Organisation achieved **834** enrolments in pre-accredited and accredited training

*FY17-18 unless otherwise stated

DAVID SCOTT SCHOOL

2018

amazing

TERRIFIC!!!



Briony, 20

Proudest moment this year: Graduating at the end of the year – I just finished year 12 last week.

Dreams for the future: Hospitality and to travel within that. I've got most of my certificates in hospitality, so I can take it anywhere, wherever I want to go.

Favourite thing about the David Scott School: Everybody gets along. We're treated like adults. You get treated like everybody else, like you're an adult.

I like the David Scott School because ... of the support that you get. Everyone works together, and helps each other – we bounce off each other.

I recently received an award: for excellence. There was an awards ceremony at the Morningson racecourse, and I had to get up on stage in front of 200 people to accept it, and I made an acceptance speech. I felt surprised when I found out I'd be receiving it, because I'm probably one of the most misbehaved students at the school! I thanked the teachers and principal, and cried halfway through my speech!



Jess, 18

Proudest moment this year: Getting through to year 12 – and overcoming everything that's happened over the last 2 years.

Dreams for the future: I want to become a cop, or something community-based.

Favourite thing about the David Scott School: How everyone is like one big family. Everyone shows respect to each other.

I like the David Scott School because ... Here you are taught proper life skills. You get taught to how to give people respect, how to grow up and become an adult and enter the working world. I'm feeling good about finishing.



Keegan, 17

Proudest moment this year: Graduating, I just finished year 12.

Dreams for the future: Next year, my dream is to continue with my hairdressing. Then in the future my goal is to own my own pub.

Favourite thing about the David Scott School: The people. We all get along and we've all got each other's backs.

I like the David Scott School because ... It's got everyone into the rhythm of understanding each other. We don't judge each other.



Ashlee, 17

Proudest moment this year: Passing year 11 and getting to year 12.

Dreams for the future: I want to be a personal trainer, so I'm starting a sport and recreation course next year.

Favourite thing about the David Scott School: Everyone is a big family and so supportive. I love our new principal, Catherine. She's the best.

I like the David Scott School because ... It's a lot different to mainstream school, with your boundaries. You always feel welcome here, and people care about you.

A great education brings greater opportunities

Volunteering has long shown to bring enormous benefits to everyone involved. Anastasia is a project officer and a volunteer at our Education First Youth Foyer in Broadmeadows. She acts as a mentor to support young people at risk of homelessness. On her experience of working with young people and the positive outcomes for everyone, Anastasia says volunteering is, “Fun overall. It is rewarding, and I learn a lot about the life of a 19-year-old and all that entails!”

Anastasia’s role involves regular meetings with her mentee, supporting them in a range of ways. Volunteers try to be sounding boards for young people when they are making decisions about school, university and life. “It’s important to be supportive in a non-judgemental way,” she explains.

Anastasia became a mentor 18 months ago. “I chose the program because it targets the ages of 16 to 24 – difficult years at the best of times – important formative years. The requirement is that the mentee must be involved in education for them to get safe accommodation, so I feel this is very worthwhile.”

Volunteers are provided training and are vital in engaging young people facing challenging life experiences.



Above Anastasia (left) became a mentor 18 months ago.

Volunteers, like Anastasia, help mentees build trusting relationships that encourage social confidence and emotional wellbeing. Anastasia says of her relationship with her mentee, “If I can be of some influence or perhaps a good role model, then that is very satisfying to me.”

The Brotherhood’s Youth Foyers give young people a safe place to live and study to improve their educational outcomes. Anastasia believes that, “Education is everyone’s best chance of achieving greater things.” We couldn’t agree more.

If you are interested in volunteering in one of our programs, find out more at bsl.org.au/volunteer



Urban Camps

Names Ashley and Karen

Ages Both 15

School Camberwell Girls Grammar School

How long is the camp?

Karen Three days, two nights. We’ve been staying overnight in the Coolibah Centre at [Brotherhood head office].

How would you describe the experience?

Karen It’s a learning experience where you get to interact with people you wouldn’t normally be exposed to.

Ashley I would recommend it to anyone.

What have you learned about disadvantage in Australia?

Ashley People don’t have a lot of choice in their situation, because it’s not a cycle that they can break on their own.

How did it change the way you think about disadvantage?

Ashley We need to learn to help people experiencing disadvantage. Incorporating people into the community and making them feel a sense of belonging is important.

What’s one thing you’ll take away from this experience?

Karen The connection we felt with everybody. The feeling of not having to say anything, but understanding each other.

How would you describe Urban Camp to your peers?

Ashley I feel we better understand what people experiencing disadvantage are going through. We realise how lucky we are.

Karen There wasn’t a day when we weren’t all smiling and having fun!

The Urban Camp initiative is a three to five-day inner-city experience that seeks to educate and influence young people on understanding the issues facing disadvantaged Australians through engaging with Brotherhood communities.

Walking the walk for Anti-Poverty Week

On the first Sunday in October, the Brotherhood of St Laurence proudly took part in the Melbourne Marathon Festival to raise awareness and funds for people facing hardship in our community.

Over 60 walkers came along on the warm and sunny day to complete the 3km walk and represent the Brotherhood.

The walk provided an opportunity to reflect on recent Australian Government changes to income support for people seeking asylum in our community. The event sought to 'start the talk', and spark conversation about the cuts, which have had devastating consequences for those affected. Funds raised went to the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Employment Pathways for People Seeking Asylum (EPPSA) program.

We were thrilled with the interest from Brotherhood staff, friends and family in taking part through fundraising and



Above Members of the Brotherhood team at the Melbourne Marathon.

walking the walk. In total, \$14,368 was raised; a wonderful and generous effort from our fundraisers and supporters.

The event marked Anti-Poverty Week, an awareness-raising week in which Australians are encouraged to take part in activities that aim to help reduce hardship. The Brotherhood is a principal sponsor of the week.

Settlement, Youth and Families programs manager Joseph Youhana oversees the EPPSA program, which supports people seeking asylum with training, work experience or volunteering opportunities. He

believes it is essential we provide people seeking asylum with tangible opportunities to overcome employment barriers. "They lack networks, they don't understand Australian recruitment processes, and employers often don't recognise their overseas qualifications."

Joseph's own story is similar to those of many people he works with. He came to Australia as a refugee in 2006. "I feel privileged to take part in this walk, to stand with people who have no voice, those most vulnerable in our community," he says.



Research and Policy Centre update

Lowering energy bills through research and action

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is celebrating an important achievement in the energy space.

The announcement of a new Victorian Default Offer and a national Default Offer will lower energy bills for all, particularly those living on low incomes. Essentially, it will provide a guaranteed, fair price for electricity. The Brotherhood has been advocating for these reforms for a number of years.

A default electricity offer will work by the independent regulator setting a fair price for electricity. Each energy retailer will have to provide at least one energy offer at or below the Victorian Default Offer. The default offer may not be the absolute cheapest price, but consumers can

be assured it will be a guaranteed, fair price for electricity and be set independently.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has been a strong advocate for a default offer. We were concerned that that the retail market is failing consumers, particularly those on low incomes. The complexity of the market, or tricks such as inflated discounts that don't deliver, have resulted in too many people paying too much for energy.

Our research has highlighted that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and many people on very low incomes (who can least afford high bills) are paying the highest prices for energy. Similar research from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission also highlighted people living in public housing, single



Above Energy bills can be a cause of stress. parents and renters are paying too much for energy.

Addressing energy poverty as we reduce our carbon emissions remains a pressing challenge for Australia. The Brotherhood's research has highlighted the challenges faced by many households to pay their energy bills. Too many anecdotal reports that households are going without heating or cooling to the detriment of their health and wellbeing. Default offers will mean those experiencing energy poverty will be enabled to enjoy a better standard of living.



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Working for an Australia free of poverty

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