Mr Richard Wynne MP  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Level 1,  
1 Treasury Place  
Melbourne 3000

Dear Richard,

Creating employment at Atherton Gardens  
*A Brotherood of St Laurence Job Creation Strategy*

Over the last two years the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) has re-engaged with the Atherton Gardens community. This coincided with a similar engagement from the Office of Housing, led by Jenifer Westacott.

During this time the BSL used our aged care services in Fitzroy as a training and employment structure to employ local long term unemployed people as trainees. Five of those trainees are now employed full time as personal care attendants within the BSL and two as Aboriginal workers with the Aboriginal Community Elders Service.

This process of creating sustainable employment opportunities through community enterprise is an approach that the BSL believes will lead long term unemployed people out of poverty and strengthen communities.

We believe that community enterprise requires a trusted catalyst who is embedded in a community and understands the issues facing long term unemployed people. The catalyst must have the ability to connect key stakeholders to maximise opportunities that lead to social change.

Through the Tower Management Project, in partnership with the Office of Housing, the BSL is piloting this catalyst role on the Atherton Gardens estate with a focus on job creation.

The project identified local residents to undertake key community roles on the estate, namely maintenance, concierge and office administration. Twelve people started a 16-week training programme and all completed it in January 2003 and are now employed. (This program is being replicated at the Collingwood estate.)

The trust and hope created on the Atherton Gardens estate gives those of us who are passionate about regeneration of public housing estates a window of opportunity to create significant positive change.

We know that unemployed people on estates want to work if the opportunities are real and well supported. Through our engagement we know that residents are interested in, and we can deliver, training that leads to jobs in maintenance, security, concierge, office administration, personal care, cleaning and gardening. Given the improved level of trust that residents now have for the BSL and the State Government as a result
of the Tower Management Project it is the time for us to act and fully develop this opportunity.

We will take this opportunity by using the BSL as an Intermediary Labour Market (ILM) to create a pathway from the BSL to other organisations. We hope to work with the state government to use contracts to further engage residents and provide employment opportunities. We will encourage the state government to create further employment opportunities in its sub-contracting process, use our own contacts to encourage our suppliers to create local opportunities. This can be achieved either formally through the contracting process and or informally by appealing to their sense of community spirit in joining us in this undertaking (there are already many clear expressions of interest in making this change on estates).

The employment opportunities within one kilometres of the Atherton Gardens and Collingwood estates are considerable; five major hospitals, two museums, state and federal government offices, large corporates, parks and gardens, sporting venues and large welfare providers. Currently very few of these organisations view these housing estates as potential sources of employees. These two estates have approximately 800 unemployed people.

Over the coming year we will use the BSL training and employment model as described in the attached strategy document to create 100 jobs for Atherton Gardens residents that could redefine the image of the people on public housing estates to both themselves and employers as a demonstration of the potential on this and other estates.

There are clearly thousands of jobs locally that residents could undertake. If we are serious about changing poverty in these communities we will do what is necessary to build the pathways to employment that will fundamentally change these communities.

The State Government has committed to a whole of government approach that is encouraging the conversations about local employment with other government departments. This has been demonstrated through the Office of Housing’s commitment in managing programmes to reignite these communities.

The BSL with the State Government is demonstrating change at the Atherton Gardens community.

Some government policies are counterproductive and will require review if our projects are to have as much impact as we believe they can have.

The attached strategy document will demonstrate how employment was used as the mechanism of engagement at the Atherton Gardens estate, what we learned from this process, and outlines five projects that use job opportunities and community enterprise to demonstrate that they move people out of poverty.

We invite Government to join us in our endeavour to regenerate these communities.

Nic Frances
Executive Director
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Creating employment at Atherton Gardens
A Brotherhood of St Laurence Job Creation Strategy

February 2003

The Brotherhood of St Laurence
will develop community enterprise
on the Atherton Gardens public housing estate
by implementing five demonstration projects
that will create 100 jobs for residents.
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1. Atherton Gardens Public Housing Estate Profile

*Physical environment*
- Located on Brunswick Street, Fitzroy bounded by Gertrude and King William Streets
- Over 2000 people reside on the Atherton Gardens Estate, within 800 units spread over four high rise towers
- There is a high turnover rate of tenants
- Drug dealing and violence is an issue
- Residents have concerns about safety, maintenance and cleaning

*People who live on the estate*
- A high percentage of residents are economically and socially disadvantaged
- 95% of residents are on income support, a proportion is inter-generational poverty
- 28% of residents are single parents
- 24% of residents are on Newstart Allowance, however it is unknown what percentage of Newstart recipients are actually job ready
- It is a culturally and ethnically diverse community – the preferred language by household is 43% English, 33% Vietnamese, 11% Chinese (includes Chinese, Cantonese and Mandarin), 3% Turkish and 10% other ethnic communities.

2. The Tower Management Project at Atherton Gardens

The development of the Tower Management Project was in response to consultations with Atherton Gardens residents, which determined the needs and priorities of the community. The State Government’s Neighbourhood Renewal initiative also influenced the project.

*Project Objectives*
- Link participants into identified employment opportunities at the Atherton Gardens Public Housing Estate
- Meet an identified tenant need on the Estate for an increase in Maintenance, Security, Customer Service and Administrative Support
- Empower tenants to have a greater influence on their environment through job creation, tenant service provision and involvement in contract management performance
- Engage residents in community collaboration, project development and self management on the Atherton Gardens Public Housing Estate

*Victorian State Government policy context*
Since winning government in 1999, the State Labour Government has committed to working with some of Victoria’s most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to build better futures for residents. Neighbourhood Renewal has been the primary vehicle through which the Government has supported new community building initiatives in disadvantaged areas.

The Tower Management project at Atherton Gardens estate complements this commitment and is strongly underpinned by the Labour Party’s stated values of fairness, community and compassion. Employment opportunities are a critical component of any attempt to overcome community disadvantage and to build more cohesive communities, particularly in areas with very high rates of unemployment.

*Creating employment at Atherton Gardens*
*A Brotherhood of St Laurence Job Creation Strategy – February 2003*
<table>
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<th>Stakeholder</th>
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<td>The Department for Victorian Communities</td>
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<td>Community Jobs Unit</td>
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<td>Department of Human Services - Office of Housing</td>
<td>Funding and project partner</td>
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<td>Department of Human Services - the Neighborhood</td>
<td>Provided the framework for resident consultation</td>
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<td>Renewal Branch</td>
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<td>Atherton Gardens Residents Association</td>
<td>Participated in consultation process and assisted in defining the positions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residents of the Estate</td>
<td>Participated in consultation process and assisted in defining the positions</td>
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Project Design

The project started on September 16, 2002 and finished January 3, 2003. It was designed to:

- respond to tenants’ needs for increased security, maintenance and cleaning
- supported by tenants and managed by the Office of Housing and the BSL
- provide twelve people with 16 weeks of training in Maintenance, Concierge and Office Administration
- provide ten participants with identified jobs on the estate and two outside the estate on completion
- foster participants’ personal development focusing on
  - improving participants’ self esteem
  - building confidence in their ability to stay in the job
  - developing conflict resolution skills
  - reinforcing work ethics and professional behaviour.

The provision of comprehensive training and a high level of personal support were seen as essential. The BSL developed a compassionate training model that included classroom and on site training, work experience, group work and personal coaching.

Profile of participants

The positions were widely advertised on the estate and in the local community, with 42 long term unemployed people submitting applications. Interviews were held with applicants, with twelve being offered the training positions.

The participants were four females and eight males, aged between 22 and 50 years and from different ethnic backgrounds. Seven estate residents were employed for the maintenance and office administration positions and five non-residents for the concierge positions. Non-residents were recruited for the concierge position for personal security and privacy reasons.
3. What have we achieved at Atherton Gardens?

Employment on the Estate

100% of the participants completed 16 weeks of training and achieved employment outcomes (CJP average employment outcome rate is 58%).

Ten out of the twelve participants moved into maintenance and concierge positions with the Office of Housing, which had been identified prior to the project. Participants were employed under the Tower Management structure, which was initiated through Neighbourhood Renewal.

The Office Administration participants have succeeded in securing positions with the BSL and in the child care industry respectively.

All positions are twelve-month traineeships to enable further education and the provision of individual support.

Social outcomes (non economic)

The participants’ social outcomes are many and varied. Informal feedback from tenants of the estate suggests that they are satisfied with the project outcomes and the impact that the positions have had on the estate environment. What residents have been promised through the consultation process is actually happening and they are seeing and experiencing a change in their physical environment. People are working together and they now have hope for a more positive future.

One participant shares her story:

"I was on single parent’s pension for the last 15 years. I am now more confident in my personal life in addition to (being confident) at work. I have the confidence to say what I think and how I am feeling. Actually earning money gives me a sense of achievement. I am doing it myself and not sitting at home waiting for the government to give it to me.

But money isn’t the only thing. I have learnt new things, had new experiences at work and am doing things I didn’t imagine I would have ever have the chance to do. I have got to meet new people. Before I used to keep to myself and just sit at home, but through the project I have got to make some good friends and because most of us live on the estate I get to see them on weekends and we see each other around and catch up regularly out of work hours."

We will continue to monitor the project to assess the wider impact on community collaboration and self-management.

Taking the project to the Collingwood Public Housing Estate

The BSL is now undertaking a similar project on the Collingwood Public Housing Estate, due for completion in April 2003. This project will increase our knowledge about how to structure employment training programs in a way that meets residents’ needs.

There was a greater awareness of the project and its objectives as a result of conversations between Atherton Gardens and Collingwood public housing residents. After advising residents 74 applications were received for the twelve positions, 31 from residents and 43 from non-residents.
4. Why did the Tower Management Project work?

**Tangible Goal** – an identified job that all key stakeholders were working toward

- Identified jobs at the end of the 16 week training period for the participants
- Jobs linked to a New Apprenticeship position which involves the BSL’s Group Training Company providing pastoral support, both on and off the job and the delivery of ongoing training

**Intensive Support** – a high level of personal, financial and project support

- Award Wages throughout the 16 week training period
- A full time Supervisor/Coach supported participants individually and as a group
- A dedicated Trainer delivered training that was flexible and varied allowing for different skill levels
- The Building Supervisor and Estate Coordinator, as managers of the identified jobs, were involved in each stage of the project and were part of the support team
- A compassionate employer, both BSL and the Office of Housing were willing to give participants “a go”
- A housing unit was converted into a dedicated training, recreation and office space

**Commitment** – from all key stakeholders and participants

- Adequate resources were provided by the BSL and Office of Housing to ensure a comprehensive consultation, planning and implementation process
- A tailored pre-vocational program that included skill based learning, intense personal development, group development and a high level of workplace experience, to prepare participants for the job
- An attitude of ‘doing whatever it takes’ to keep participants in the project
- An approach that gave participants the time and space to readjust to a workplace whilst dealing with personal issues. This resulted in reciprocated commitment from the participants
- There was a genuine interest in the individual and their needs
- A solid working relationship between the key stakeholders reinforced to the participants the commitment to both the participants’ and projects success
- Honest discussion between project stakeholders when discussing and working through complex issues

Our future project training model will include the elements that are detailed above.
5. Building on success

*Atherton Gardens Tower Management Project*

The Atherton Gardens Tower Management Project participants completed the project in early January 2003 and are now employed by the Office of Housing. Placing the participants into jobs is not the end of our involvement. We will continue to support trainees via the New Apprenticeship system whilst in the job and also “track” them as needed.

In partnership with other key stakeholders we will follow the progress of the trainees in the next twelve months to determine:

- The length of time each person remains in the position
- The impact of sustainable employment on personal lives
- Whether the positions assist participants with increased confidence
- Whether these positions help participants to identify and pursue career options
- What the impact of the maintenance and concierge positions has been on the Atherton Gardens community.

*Implementing the Atherton Gardens Community Enterprise*

The Atherton Gardens Tower Management Project went some way in addressing issues on the estate. However, to have a widespread and lasting impact we believe we must provide more employment opportunities for residents in high rise public housing. It is through community enterprise that we can achieve this.

We believe a community enterprise is *a business activity started by a community group that applies market-based solutions for the purposes of addressing community needs and generating income.*

We will create and implement community enterprise on Atherton Gardens Estate through five demonstration projects. These projects will bring together public housing estate residents, governments and local employers.

Our aims are:

- to create employment opportunities for public housing residents
- to refine and develop the training model
- to determine what key stakeholders need to invest in community enterprises to make them work.

**Our invitation to the State Government**

We invite the State Government to join us in adapting our key learnings from the Atherton Gardens Tower Management Project to develop our Community Enterprise Strategy and pilot the five demonstration projects outlined in the following pages.
6. Job Creation Strategy - Demonstration Projects

![Diagram showing the project training model]

This model relates to Demonstration Projects 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Project 1. Service Contracts – Cleaning and Gardening on Atherton Gardens

Currently, private contractors deliver the cleaning and gardening services on the Atherton Gardens estate, employing six people. None of these are residents. By redistributing the profit component, these service contracts are a tool to create new training and employment opportunities for residents.

The next Office of Housing contract is due to start in July 2003. We have been working with the Office of Housing to implement social outcomes into the next contract. The BSL will tender for this contract, and if successful will deliver tangible social outcomes by employing estate residents in the majority of the positions.

In the first 18 months the BSL will recruit, train and employ residents through a pre-vocational program such as Community Jobs Program followed by a Traineeship. The BSL will also train a group of interested tenants to form a management committee, which will then form a co-operative company. Once the skills, culture and structures are in place the BSL will sub-contract the service delivery to the residents’ co-operative.

The BSL believes that this demonstration project will create 10 jobs for residents

Project 2. State government adds social outcomes (employment of residents) to service contracts

Industry specific contractors may be the most appropriate delivery agents for services on the estate, for example furniture removal, maintenance, security and painting. Another way to provide employment opportunities for residents is by making the employment of residents an integral part of the delivery of the service.

If the state government implements social outcomes in all contracts, the conditions under which contractors that employ residents from the estate will be the preferred suppliers when allocating all future work will be created.

The BSL will act as an intermediary between the contractor and state government to manage the implementation of social outcomes, through recruitment, training and supporting the trainees. BSL will also add value by educating and assisting the contractors to implement this strategy.

The BSL believes that this demonstration project will create 15 jobs for residents
Project 3. BSL as a host employer – using Intermediary Labour Market model

The BSL will show leadership by utilising its own employment power to provide employment opportunities for public housing residents. We have experience in employing 20 disadvantaged people through traineeships in the areas of aged care, retail and office administration. We currently have 50 disadvantage people waiting to take up twelve positions in Child Care in northern Melbourne. We now believe that the Intermediary Labour Market (ILM) model enables disadvantaged people to access a supported pathway to sustainable employment.

An ILM model involves pre vocational training leading to a twelve-month traineeship with the objective of assisting the trainee to build self-esteem and develop personal skills. The BSL will explore the Intermediary Labour Market Model through transitional training and employment in conjunction with community enterprise.

The organisation will restructure its purchasing of temporary staff and contract work to create positions that will be filled under the ILM model. Managers of BSL service units will be encouraged to identify appropriate positions. This process will start at BSL operations at Head Office, Child Care, Retail and Aged Care operations in Fitzroy.

The BSL believes that this demonstration project will create 30 jobs for residents

Project 4. Encouraging local employers to employ Atherton Gardens residents and adopt social outcome contracting

There are a number of large employers within a one-kilometre radius of Atherton Gardens. We will target larger employers with high turnover rates and have difficulty recruiting entry level staff forcing them to use expensive temporary staff.

These larger employers can be grouped as follows:

- State and local government including the City of Yarra;
- Medical/Health organisations such as the St Vincent’s and Mercy Hospitals;
- Large companies such as AXA;
- Public funded bodies such the Australian Catholic University; and
- Community Sector organisations.

We believe that larger local employers can play a key role in the BSL’s job creation strategy in the following ways:

- Recruiting staff from our community enterprises; and
- Implementing social outcome requirements in their sub contracting.

Through our project training model the BSL will develop a pool of public housing residents that have been trained and are ready and willing to work. They will have gained a stable working experience through pre-vocational training and traineeships.

The BSL will provide larger local employers with access to the skilled pool of local people and assist them to implement social outcome contracting.

To increase staff retention levels, as the trainee moves beyond the traineeship and into sustainable employment individuals will be assessed to determine the level of continuing support required.

The BSL believes that this demonstration project will create 30 jobs for residents.
Project 5. Developing social enterprises on the Atherton Gardens Estate

We believe that social enterprise development on the estate is a further opportunity to create jobs for residents.

Through the experience gained around the Tower Management Project, a number of social enterprise ideas have been developing at the BSL with the Office of Housing and through interaction with other interested parties. We have brought together around 20 ideas, which are at various stages of consideration. A selection is given below:

- Developing the “Milk Bar” into a larger food store and outdoor café
- Garage for car servicing residents’ vehicles
- Reshaping the Multi-Storey car park to provide car valeting, washing and parking services for visitors to or workers in Fitzroy

The BSL is developing an Innovation Unit, supported by a fund to invest in and support the development of new social enterprises. We will allocate $25,000 of funding and dedicate people to work with residents to develop these or other ideas.

We will work with residents to develop a business case, which includes plans on how the BSL will support them to engage with and set-up these enterprises. Our project training model will be a key component for each social enterprise.

The pre-vocational training component will be tailored to include small business development and relationship management.

A small number of fledgling social enterprises will be “incubated” by the BSL to build their infrastructure, train and develop the skills of residents and then provide investment or loans to fund the start-up costs. We will link this process with the New Enterprise Investment Scheme (NEIS) and local employers who will provide mentors and commercial support. It is crucial that residents ultimately own and manage the businesses.

*The BSL believes that this demonstration project will create 15 jobs for residents.*

7. Working together with State Government

Atherton Gardens has historically been a difficult environment for service providers and charities to engage with residents. It has been an environment that has had much service provision and handouts, however there has been little change in the employment status of the residents, hence their economic and social status.

We now have the opportunity to create 100 jobs for residents on the estate and make a sustainable positive change by implementing our Job Creation Strategy.

We are inviting the state government to partner us in this strategy. This partnership is likely to involve a commitment to

- provide financial and other resources
- make a greater investment in training and support programs
- include social outcomes in service contracts that will mean residents being employed
- create the opportunity for the BSL to influence the policies that impact negatively on public housing residents

*The BSL is committed to the Atherton Gardens Job Creation strategy and the residents at Atherton Gardens. We look forward to working with you.*