



Towards a new research agenda

It is an exciting time to be joining the research team at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. New moves are afoot in Australian social policy. The 1980s and 1990s were tough decades when economic reform took precedence in a manner that relentlessly marginalised social spending and intervention. Today the social dimension can no longer be ignored.

We see this at the international level with the end of the (neoliberal) 'Washington consensus' and at the local level with the proliferation of initiatives to promote regional development and social inclusion. It can also be observed at the national level. Thus Garnaut (in Dawkins and Kelly 2003) argues: 'Growth promoting policies that violate community perceptions of distributional equity are not feasible in Australia...' (p. 27).

At the BSL we are currently working on a research program which might allow us to best contribute to the emerging reform agenda. Provisionally, three themes have been identified:

Creating a sustainable economy

This theme promotes an active economic role for social policy. Social policy is not just about picking up the pieces left by the market. It is concerned with the kinds of strategy needed for a society which creates optimum economic opportunities for all citizens.

Social policy is not a passive response to social exclusion through welfare spending, important as that must be when economies fail to provide for all. Rather it is about production and distribution as well as redistribution – a whole of society

effort to create a productive and sustainable economy in which all citizens can take their fair and rightful place.

Ending poverty in an inclusive society

We understand that lack of income is a primary cause of social exclusion, but also want to emphasise that disadvantage is compounded by lack of access to a range of resources including health care, education, housing, transport and community care. Disadvantage cannot be adequately understood in terms of individual behaviour, but must be considered in relation to local, national and global forces, and structural inequalities.

Social governance and democratic processes

Traditional approaches to social policy development and service delivery based on hierarchies and/or markets failed to deliver community outcomes. Networks and partnerships provide a more effective pathway to deliver services and promote democratic renewal in local communities. An open, accessible 'whole of government' approach will enable services to be more client-focused and accessible to citizens who have to date been excluded.

We also seek to build new forms of partnerships and networks with civil society organisations and we will engage with business and corporations around a social enterprise approach. We will forge new alliances with environment groups in recognition that economic and social policies cannot be separated from their environmental consequences.

Our challenge is to pursue social inclusion with justice. The research team invites dialogue concerning our new directions. We are also looking at projects which can best advance research in these three areas. We would welcome expressions of interest from potential research partners.

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Reference

Dawkins, P & Kelly, P (eds) 2003, *Hard heads, soft hearts: a new reform agenda for Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.

Contents

The cost of education.	3
Eleven plus: Life Chances Study stage 6.	4
Disadvantaged job seekers and mutual obligation.	6
Administering policy: Youth Allowance and young job seekers.	8
Breaking Cycles, Building Futures project: towards inclusive early childhood services.	10
Re-Igniting Community.	12
Equipping parents for transition support.	13
Workforce age social security payments.	14
Recent library acquisitions.	15
Innovation Hub.	16

In this issue

Paul Smyth's introduction to this issue outlines new directions for the Brotherhood of St Laurence's research and policy agenda, focusing on a sustainable economy, social inclusion and social governance. Seminars are already being planned to explore topics under these broad themes.

Please send us your email address if you would like to be advised about upcoming seminars.

Stephen Ziguras (focusing on the long-term unemployed) and Sally Jope (focusing on young job seekers) report recent investigations of the impact of mutual obligation requirements. The BSL's submission (made jointly with the Welfare Rights Unit (Vic)) about simplifying workforce age social security payments is summarised.

Janet Taylor reports key findings of the Life Chances Study Stage 6

about 11 and 12 year olds, while Michelle Wakeford's article describes low-income families' struggle with the cost of education. Stephen Carbone reports progress on research to identify strategies for more inclusive services for younger children.

Gareth Williamson outlines the new Innovation Hub, designed to foster creative staff initiatives in social enterprise.

Projects to involve people in community building (Re-Igniting Community – The Torch) and to assist parents to help their teenage children choose career pathways (CATS) are also profiled.

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Diary dates

Thursday 16 October 2003
Sambell Oration, the BSL's annual public lecture to celebrate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Speaker: Rosalind Copisarow, a pioneer in microfinance who bolstered job creation in Poland and the UK.

Venue: Zinc, Birrarung Marr Federation Square, Melbourne, 3000. (Melway ref. 2F H6)

Time: 6.45 – 8.45 p.m.

Free entry. Supper will be served.

RSVP by 9 October:

phone (03) 9483 1122

or e-mail rsvp@bsl.org.au.

Tuesday 18 November 2003

Brotherhood of St Laurence Annual General Meeting

Featuring a short documentary video on BSL job creation programs.

Venue: Dallas Brooks Centre, 300 Albert Street, East Melbourne 3002. (Melway ref. 2G C1)

Time: 7.00 – 9.00 p.m.

Free entry. Supper will be served.

RSVP by 11 November:

phone (03) 9483 1109

or e-mail rsvp@bsl.org.au.

Recent submissions

The Brotherhood puts forward its views when it believes that it can make a considered contribution to a better understanding of the needs of low-income Australians based on its research or policy analysis or its experience in providing services.

Submissions or statements made in the last 12 months include:

- Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into participation requirements and penalties, July 2002
- Response to Retirement Villages Act 1986 discussion paper, September 2002
- Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Poverty and Financial Hardship, March 2003
- Submission to the Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, March 2003
- Submission to the Working Age Task Force in response to the discussion paper: 'Building a simpler system to help jobless families and individuals', (with the Welfare Rights Unit (Vic)), June 2003
- Submission to the Commonwealth Task Force on Child Development, Health and Wellbeing, June 2003.

2003 subscriptions are now due – see cover sheet

Brotherhood Comment is published three times a year by the Social Action and Research Division of the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence works for the well-being of Australians on low incomes to improve their economic, social and personal circumstances. It does this by providing a wide range of services and activities for families, the unemployed and the aged. It also researches the causes of poverty, undertakes community education and lobbies government for a better deal for people on low incomes.

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The cost of education

A study by The Smith Family (1999) estimated the cost of primary education for one child in 1998 at \$2800 per year, and of secondary education at \$3500. A survey commissioned in December 2002 by the Brotherhood of St Laurence provides evidence from 115 low-income families about their struggle to afford education for their children. Researcher Helen MacDonald completed the report.

Value of education

The families valued highly a 'good education' but were upset at the costs of obtaining it and the effect of unequal access. One respondent is typical:

Free education – ha ha!! I think education costs are spiraling out of control even in the government schools. It is getting so expensive they're forcing children from low-income families to miss out on education, creating a bigger rift/gap between so called middle class/middle-income families and low-income families.

Many families had made sacrifices to provide the best education they considered was available to them:

I have to pay \$3000 plus for my children's education. Every year we have to miss things because we cannot afford [them].

Meeting education costs

The great majority of families had some difficulty paying for books, uniforms and excursions and a considerable number of children missed out due to cost (see Figure 1). In addition 22 per cent of respondents said their children were unable to take some subjects due to the cost.

One-third reported that their children had sometimes stayed at home – because there was not enough money for an excursion or swimming lessons, for lunches, for petrol or bus fares, or for correct uniform; or because school levies were overdue.

I have spent \$254 to uniform my 12-year old this year and that's only one set! Plus I need to find approximately \$300 for textbooks

and then stationery on top of this. Our only income is from Centrelink, and it is very difficult to meet costs of both high and primary school.

Most respondents stated that there were things that they could not afford that would improve their children's education experience. The most 'popular' item (mentioned by 27 per cent of respondents) was computer and Internet access at home:

My child is in Year 9 next year. Even though she's at a government school there is one class for the children with laptop computers and a different class for those without. How can they say the system is fair? In my opinion the children with the laptops will be far more computer literate than my child who does not even have a computer system to work on at home.

Education Maintenance Allowance

Most (83 per cent) of the families who responded were receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a state government annual payment of \$254 for secondary and \$127 for primary students.

Respondents found the EMA did not cover all or even most of their costs:

After the school receives their share of the EMA cheque for so called 'school fees', it doesn't leave much. Then the school asks for extra money for expensive excursions, e.g. swimming.

Parents were dissatisfied that they received only half the EMA while the school directly received the balance:

The EMA should be paid fully to parents as the school do not use their

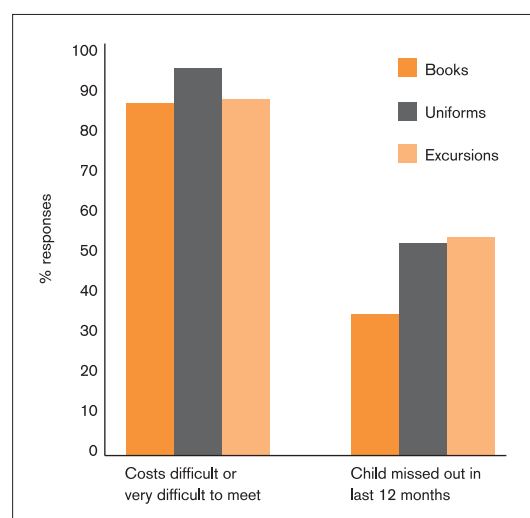


Figure 1. Difficulty meeting education expenses

half for extra books etc. I was told that the half of the EMA the schools receive goes to their schooling costs (mainly referring to secondary schools). The school my oldest daughter goes to does not use it for those costs. I feel the EMA should revert back to the parents so that they know what the other half of the EMA is being used for.

Conclusion

The Brotherhood's survey indicates that, in spite of the EMA, some Victorian children are effectively excluded from full participation by the costs of education. This is a matter of concern given the importance of education in increasing access to better-paid employment and other opportunities.

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References

MacDonald H 2003 (unpublished), *Education costs survey results*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne.
The Smith Family 1999 (unpublished), *Free education: still a myth*, The Smith Family, Sydney.

Eleven plus: Stage 6 of the Life Chances Study

The Brotherhood's new report *Eleven plus: life chances and family income* presents the findings of the sixth stage of the Life Chances Study. The longitudinal study, which commenced with 167 children born in inner Melbourne in 1990, explores the impacts of family income and associated factors on children over time. For stage 6, in 2002 when the children were aged 11 and 12, data were collected from 142 children, their parents and teachers. The children were also asked, for the first time, about their lives. Selected findings are presented below.

The changing family context

A key finding is that three-quarters (74 per cent) of children who when aged 6 months were in low-income families (that is, with incomes below 120 per cent of the Henderson poverty line) were still in low-income families when aged 11 and 12. While some families were able to improve their income levels, many children were living their entire childhood in financial hardship. The long-term low-income families included a high proportion of sole parent families, immigrant and refugee parents with limited English, parents with little formal education, and families with large numbers of children.

When the children were aged 11 and 12:

- Only one-third of the families still lived in the same inner area where their child had been born, while the majority had moved elsewhere in Melbourne.
- One-third of the children had lived in a sole parent family at some stage of their lives.
- There had been a slight decrease in families on low incomes (from 30 per cent in earlier years) and an increase in high-income families.

While most of the low-income families had no employment, there were some who were still on low incomes in spite of paid employment (see Figure 1).

Educational outcomes

Teachers assessed the children's progress at school in their last year of primary school. The results showed considerable diversity but on average the children who were doing better were those with tertiary-educated parents and those who were not on low incomes. Doing well at age 6 was also a strong predictor of doing well at ages 11 and 12. Being in a low-income family meant children were less likely to be among the top performers; however higher family income did not protect children from low performance.

Social exclusion

The experiences of the children point to the relevance of the concept of social exclusion as a means of considering and explaining some of the impacts of low family income. The children's own accounts of their lives demonstrate the way that low family income can lead to their social exclusion both in the wider world and within their schools.

Children in low-income families often had much more limited contact with the world beyond school and family than did children in more affluent families. They were significantly less likely than others to:

- spend time with friends away from school
- participate in sport, music or dance away from school

- have been on holidays in the past year
- think where they live is a good place to grow up.

Within their schools, some children could not fully participate because of unaffordable costs. School costs were a problem for half the families on low incomes (including half the low-income families with children at government schools), in spite of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and 'free' state education. Parents reported problems affording school fees and levies, books, uniforms, excursions and camps. Over one-quarter (28 per cent) of children in low-income families had missed out on school activities because of costs in the past year. School costs were an even greater problem for those who had commenced secondary school.

The digital divide

Lack of access to home computers was a major educational issue for children in low-income families. Only 31 per cent had access to the Internet at home (compared with 88 per cent of medium-income families and 100 per cent of high-income families), highlighting 'the digital divide'.

Although most schools had computers, access to these was often limited and so they did not necessarily compensate for lack of access at home (or for some

Three-quarters of children who when aged 6 months were in low-income families were still in low-income families when aged 11 and 12.

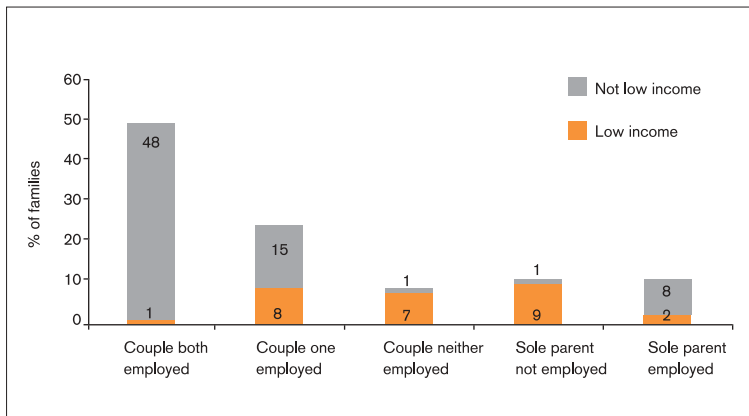


Figure 1. Life Chances families in 2002: employment, income and family type.

children at the local library). As one girl in a low-income family commented:

Sometimes I feel jealous because some other people ... they're like on the Internet and they buy something and like they get a better result for their project because they've got more information or something. (Can you get the information from the other resources?) Yeah, from books, yeah. (In the library?) Yeah. (Or maybe you could stay in at school at the computer room?) Yeah, but they close, at 4 o'clock. (How about at lunchtime?) Yeah, because they've got these terms, what days, which house or form goes to use the computer so I can't always use it. (But you can use it sometimes still?) Yeah, on Tuesdays.

Implications for policy and practice

While this relatively small-scale study is not necessarily representative of all Australian children, it highlights issues that are faced by many families and raises implications for government policy.

The family context: income and employment

For the benefit of children growing up in families with persistently low incomes, policies need to ensure:

- adequate family income – both adequate social security payments and adequate

minimum wages – to reduce the stresses of financial hardship and to meet rising costs

- welfare-to-work policies which recognise not only parents' barriers to employment, but also children's needs to have support from parents at home.

The school context

At the federal and state government levels there needs to be:

- clear leadership and resourcing of an education policy that aims to reduce educational disadvantage
- resourcing to reduce the cost of 'free' public education – by expanding the Education Maintenance Allowance and/or by increasing funding for school-related costs.

Each school also needs to ask:

Are the children in low-income families being fully included within the school? Are they being assisted to excel at school?

The Life Chances study suggests that as children in low-income families approach adolescence, with increasing costs of social activities and of education, they and their parents become increasingly aware of their own family's disadvantages compared with others. Policies which enhance

children's opportunity to participate fully can make a timely and lasting difference to their future.

Acknowledgment:

Stage 6 of the Life Chances Study has been generously supported by the H & L Hecht Trust, the Kingston Sedgefield (Australia) Charitable Trust, the Bokhara Foundation and through the Family Relationships Services Program of the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

The full report, *Eleven plus: life chances and family income*, by Janet Taylor and Alex Fraser (246 pages), may be purchased for \$20 plus p&p (e-mail publications@bsl.org.au or phone (03) 9483 1386).

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Disadvantaged job seekers' experiences of the mutual obligation regime

The requirements of job seekers claiming unemployment benefits have increased substantially over the last decade. These changes in Australian policy reflect new thinking more generally in the OECD, that income support programs should use carrots and sticks to maximise people's participation in work.

How do disadvantaged job seekers experience the mutual obligation regime which is the current expression of active labour market policy in Australia? Can this system respond to their individual needs? Are the new requirements a source of motivation and empowerment, or just a new imposition on job seekers' time and morale?

The Brotherhood of St Laurence, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne conducted a joint research project to better understand the impact of the new world of activities and compliance demands.

Method

Forty-five people, recruited through the St Vincent de Paul Society and Brotherhood of St Laurence services, were interviewed. These people could be considered very disadvantaged in the labour market. They had been on benefits for an average of two and a half years, and many had a history of homelessness, mental health problems and/or drug use. Many spoke of their desire to find work and the demoralisation associated with long-term unemployment.

We asked about people's experiences of Job Network employment services, Centrelink staff and processes, and activity test requirements (see Figure 1). We developed rating scales of the perceived helpfulness of the 'welfare to work' system and

of barriers to employment, and investigated opinions of the system through both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Perceived helpfulness

Around 60 per cent of job seekers found employment services helpful and a similar proportion thought the services improved their job prospects, although many also said they had been to some which 'did nothing'. The most useful aspects were personal support and encouragement, assistance with applications and resumes and access to equipment (such as faxes and computers).

Many satisfied job seekers mentioned feeling they were not alone in their job search efforts:

You feel like someone is helping you out, somebody cares ... encouragement goes a long way. (55 years, female, 0.1 years on Centrelink payments)

They're the ones who put me back on track ... she rings me every fortnight to see if I need anything. If you give the unemployed the option to move up and feel good about themselves, you'll never see their face again at Centrelink. (35 years, male, 2 years)

Most people felt that Centrelink staff were understanding and helpful, although this varied between individuals and between offices:

I've dealt with some really good, professional people at Centrelink who have helped me through understanding how the system works, the problems that I've encountered with my health and the referral. (38 years, female, 5 years)

Common observations were that Centrelink staff had a very difficult job dealing with numerous clients and that problems were often due to systems and rules rather than staff:

With the numbers they're dealing with ... they must have one of the worst jobs going. (51 years, male, 1 year)

There's a lot of people ... makes it hard when you're following the system. (35 years, male, 2 years)

Those who felt Centrelink staff were less understanding commented on the rule-driven approach of some staff and negative attitudes towards job seekers, particularly those with mental health and drug problems:

Because my illness isn't visible, a lot of them don't believe you ... [about] mental illness and drug addiction ... even if you're desperate they won't help you. I've had fights with the supervisors and managers ... they hadn't paid me and they should have. (27 years, female, 7 years)

More compassion required from Centrelink staff for those clients with medical conditions. They need to show a lot more compassion and not be too hard on people who are genuinely unwell and unable to go through the normal process. (48 years, male, 1.5 years)

Activity test requirements such as Preparing for Work Agreements, Job Search Diaries, Employer Contact Certificates were seen as much less helpful. For some, these requirements were just tedious red tape, but for others they presented major hurdles to be surmounted simply to continue payments. People with the greatest barriers to employment felt the system was least helpful. Already struggling with other difficulties in their lives, they were so engaged in meeting their activity requirements that these seemed to have replaced actual job search. Many expressed great dissatisfaction with – even hostility towards – Centrelink:

[They need] to have a better attitude. My experience of being serviced by them seems to be that they're not there to help ... they're there to take

People with the greatest barriers to employment felt the system was least helpful.

*your benefits away from you.
(25 years, male, 2.5 years)*

*Did you feel under pressure to agree with what the Centrelink staff member said? Yes, not by any particular member of Centrelink staff but by the system ... It will cut me off and watch me die – and laugh.
(32 years, male, 8 months)*

Just over a quarter of the people interviewed had been breached during the previous year (2001–02). Breach penalties caused severe financial hardship for them and for their families. People had to turn to relatives and welfare agencies or go into debt. As well as the financial difficulty, interviewees spoke of the experience as extremely stressful and frustrating. Three-quarters of those breached felt the penalties were too harsh.

Assessment

The aim of placing Centrelink as the centre of the support system, and the first point to which job seekers will turn for assistance, is undermined by the emphasis on compulsory requirements and punishment. The ‘rule-driven’ (and computerised) approach to potentially useful activities such as Preparing for Work Agreements also makes them less helpful than they could be. (See also the study of Youth Allowance activity test requirements, pages 8–9)

This study and other research suggest that the mutual obligation regime is failing the most disadvantaged job seekers. Contrary to the aims of active labour market policy, the emphasis on compulsory activities appears to generate avoidance and resentment. While people may comply, these requirements are in practice not a means to finding work, but rather a necessity for remaining eligible for benefits.

In effect, the system operates for

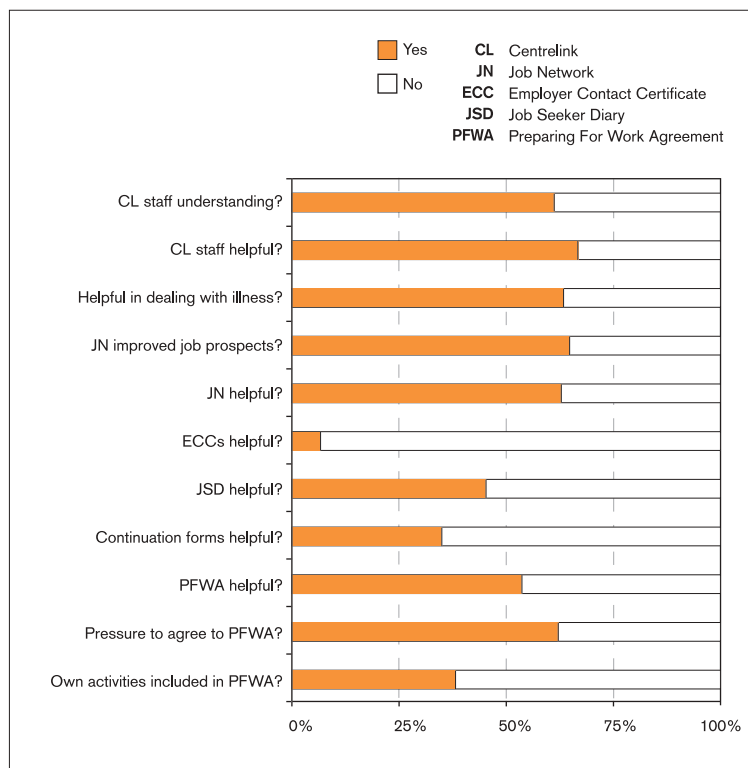


Figure 1. Disadvantaged job seekers’ views of Centrelink services and activity test requirements

many disadvantaged job seekers not as ‘welfare to work’ but ‘welfare as work’. This is a poor outcome for all: job seekers fail to find work, and taxpayers bear the continued cost of social security payments and an ineffective service system.

The way forward

More effective active labour market policy would:

- emphasise personal engagement and fostering an individual’s own goals rather than mere compliance with requirements
- devote more attention to disadvantaged job seekers’ barriers to employment through better assessment processes at Centrelink and training for Centrelink staff
- increase resources for programs which target disadvantaged job seekers, to improve access to training, work experience and personal support

- address the limited rewards for some forms of paid employment
- acknowledge that as long as there is a structural shortfall in jobs, those least able to compete will always be at risk of unemployment.

A possible future direction is to explore a new program model which combines personal support, access to health or mental health services, assistance with housing and greater employment support. Given the formidable difficulties which confront long-term unemployed people, more intensive and sustained support is necessary.

The research report *Much obliged* is available at <www.bsl.org.au> or for purchase through the bookshop (e-mail publications@bsl.org.au or phone (03) 9483 1386).

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Administering policy: the delivery of Youth Allowance to young job seekers

Youth Allowance (YA) was developed to assist the transition between dependence and independence, school and work, in response to a changed youth labour market. There were fewer young people in full-time employment and more – mostly full-time students – in casual and part-time employment. In addition, increased demand for high-skilled jobs meant younger people required better qualifications to be competitive in the labour market. Therefore, the activity test for Youth Allowance was intended to encourage participation in post-compulsory education and training for long-term employment outcomes.

To that end, the YA activity test is more flexible than that applied to older job seekers. A young job seeker may have reduced job search requirements or be required to search for fewer hours of employment, and may undertake a combination of part-time work and study. The activities young unemployed people have to undertake to remain eligible for Youth Allowance are listed on a Preparing for Work Agreement (PFWA), so that:

... from the first day that they claim payment, job seekers will understand what they will need to do to meet the activity test and the help Centrelink will provide them with to get back to work. (FaCS 2002)

The Brotherhood of St Laurence, in partnership with Centrelink's Youth and Student Community Segment, conducted a small-scale study into the administration of PFWAs to job seekers (18–20 years), to consider how well the agreements were tailored to their individual needs. While the study results cannot be generalised to the wider YA population, the problems identified do require further attention. Many of the issues raised by young job seekers were echoed by youth workers and Centrelink officers.

Examination of PFWAs

Some significant indicators of disadvantage (barriers to employment) existed amongst the study sample of young job seekers: one-third had not

completed Year 10, two-thirds had not completed Year 12 and one-third had neither parent employed at the time of the study. These could suggest a need for extra assistance to improve employment outcomes. Yet an analysis of their PFWAs found no young person was expected to undertake a combination of study and work, only four young people (out of 21) were in part-time employment and all were required to undertake the standard combination of job search activities usually applied to older job seekers.

The key findings from the study interviews go some way to explaining why this was so.

Young job seekers' experiences

Many young people found Centrelink paperwork and systems confusing and Centrelink's role as a referral gateway to the participation support system was not well understood:

After the interview, I didn't really know how to fill out the forms, like they went through the form and that, but I don't know, it was still pretty complicated – like the job seeker member [Job Network provider], I didn't know what that was, and I don't think I'm still even involved with a job seeker member yet. (18-year-old, inner metro)

The attitudes of Centrelink officers towards young people were perceived to vary, from accepting and helpful on the one

hand, to judgmental and unhelpful on the other:

Some people were really nice, really helpful. Other people, they did not want to help you, they were unfriendly, they were rude, they treated me like junkie scum, all the rest of it. So I got like one extreme from the other. (20-year-old, inner metro)

It is likely that negative attitudes and poor communication skills of some Centrelink staff made it difficult to establish rapport. As a result, some young people's reluctance to disclose relevant information may have contributed to inaccurate assessments of their job readiness.

Negative experiences and long waiting times meant that some young people were reluctant to deal with Centrelink directly. Instead, they would go to friends or to workers in youth agencies:

The forms are the hardest things to fill out. I just signed it and went through it with a mate and he was all right, and the diary, I didn't actually fill out a proper diary yet. I will now though – and I've got another mate who's done a diary before so he's going to show me how to do it. (18-year-old, inner metro)

Youth agency workers and some Centrelink officers perceived the loss of designated youth staff at the Centrelink sites included in this study to have had negative impacts on the delivery of Youth Allowance.

Young people in the study generally did not understand the purpose of PFWAs and were not equipped to negotiate the activities included within them.

Impact on Preparing For Work Agreements

As a result of a lack of accessible information and confusion about the system, the young people in the study generally did not understand the purpose of PFWAs and were not equipped to negotiate the activities included within them:

I actually went in there with no clue as to what I had to do, what was involved in this appointment. I knew I had to bring (personal) details and that, but I didn't actually know that I'd be filling out a Preparing For Work Agreement or anything like that. (20-year-old, inner metro)

The process of completing the PFWA during the first interview (when eligibility to YA is also determined) meant that Centrelink staff had little time to establish rapport, and to identify barriers to employment, especially of those young people who did not readily disclose personal information relevant to their job readiness. Some PFWAs were therefore not based on an accurate assessment of the job readiness of each claimant.

While all the young people had been referred to Job Network providers for job matching, few had ongoing contact with them; few were confident that their vocational barriers were being addressed or that they were being connected to appropriate job vacancies.

Given this lack of understanding, the PFWA was often considered by both YA customers and youth workers to be simply a list of required job search activities that provided the basis of a possible breach, if the job seeker failed to comply:

(Activities are) the things that you can get breached by! No! Just sort of a set-up to ... guidelines to go by to look for work and make sure that

no-one's ripping off the government, I guess. (18-year-old, rural)

In addition, the computer-based processing of YA applications appeared to contribute to the generation of a standard model of PFWA that primarily included job search activities:

The problem with it is that it does tend to be a very automated ... The standard package is 10 jobs per fortnight, job seeker diary, employer contact certificates; any deviation from that requires some other sort of assessment. (Centrelink officer)

As a result, PFWAs appeared to encourage young people to look for work but did not increase their capacity to get work or develop work-related skills.

Issues to address

These findings suggested that:

- Centrelink needs to do more to ensure disadvantaged young job seekers understand its assessment and referral role and its relationship with the Job Network.
- Some Centrelink officers require better interpersonal skills to develop rapport with YA job seekers that is essential for accurate assessments of job readiness.
- Some Centrelink officers require better knowledge of the youth labour market and youth services necessary for the design of effective YA PFWAs.
- The computer-based 'Preparing for work' format can result in overlooking of barriers to employment and the generation of 'standard model' PFWAs that are not tailored to individual needs.
- Young job seekers often lack the information, skills and/or confidence to negotiate activities better suited to their needs.

- The time available to process YA applications and to negotiate PFWAs is not sufficient to design a PFWA that adequately reflects the employment barriers and long-term goals of the marginalised YA job seeker.

Staff in Centrelink's Youth and Community Segment are already trialing strategies to address some of the issues raised by this study and have indicated an interest to pilot others with the Brotherhood of St Laurence to improve the administration of Preparing for Work Agreements to young, disadvantaged job seekers.

The full report is soon to be published by the BSL and Centrelink.

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References

FaCS 2002, *Guide to social security law: Guidelines for negotiating Preparing For Work Agreements*, viewed 26 March 2003, <www.facs.gov.au/guide/ssguide/32740.htm>.

The computer-based processing of YA applications appeared to contribute to the generation of a standard model of PFWA that primarily included job search activities.

The Breaking Cycles, Building Futures project: towards inclusive early childhood services

Investing in services and supports for children and parents through pregnancy and in the early years of life makes a lot of sense. Early childhood is a crucial period in human development during which the foundations for future wellbeing are established. A well-structured service system can support healthy development and minimise negative outcomes through active prevention or early intervention strategies. To be successful, such services need to address the needs of all children and parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The Breaking Cycles, Building Futures (BCBF) Project currently being undertaken by the Brotherhood of St Laurence is an initiative of the Victorian State Government and forms part of its Best Start Strategy. The project's major aim is to identify, implement and evaluate strategies which promote more accessible, engaging and inclusive antenatal and universal early childhood services (ECS) (i.e. maternal and child health, preschool, primary schools).

Definitions

Defining 'accessible', 'engaging' and 'inclusive' is not an easy task. They mean different things to different people and within different fields. For the sake of simplicity, we argue that the word 'inclusive' could be used as an umbrella term that encompasses the other two and that inclusive services are accessible, engage their client group and promote a sense of acceptance, belonging and active involvement both within the service and in the broader community.

Assessing inclusion

Given the complex nature of the concept, it is difficult to provide a simple measure of 'how inclusive' existing services are. Presuming

that inclusive services will be well utilised, patterns of service use offer some indication. Unfortunately, identifying such patterns is not easy, due to limitations in the information collected by many services.

Although imperfect, the available data does suggest that the majority of children and parents make good use of antenatal and universal ECS. However there is a small but significant minority of families who underutilise some, or all, of these services. In most cases, it appears that 'retention' rather than initial 'access' is the problem, particularly within MCH and preschool services. Parents make contact, but then quickly cease attendance, or attend infrequently. While some degree of underutilisation occurs across all areas of the state, the pattern is not uniform, with some neighbourhoods having unusually high rates of underutilisation.

Barriers to inclusion

A review of the literature and extensive consultation (with more than 70 parents, 100 service providers and 20 government department staff) suggest that there are numerous barriers that impact on inclusion. These can be broadly grouped into service level barriers and barriers specific to parents and their situation.

Service level barriers may include: lack of publicity about services, high cost of services, inaccessible location, lack of public transport, limited hours of operation, rigid appointment systems, limited availability (e.g. of child-care and preschools), limited access to specialist supports for children with additional needs, poor coordination between services, lack of attention to multiculturalism and insensitive or judgmental staff attitudes and behaviours.

Barriers specific to parents and their situation may include: limited income, lack of private transport, lack of social support, low literacy levels, large family size, unstable housing or homelessness, personal preferences and beliefs about the necessity and value of services, lack of trust in services, fear of losing one's children, and the impact of day-to-day stress and physical or mental health issues.

While a few barriers appear to be particularly relevant to one service type, or to certain groups within the community, the majority are common across the population and across services. The most important finding is that many vulnerable families experience several concurrent barriers that impact on their service use and inclusion.

Promoting more inclusive services

Unfortunately there is very limited good-quality empirical evidence in relation to strategies that could be effective in promoting more inclusive antenatal and universal ECS, relevant to the Victorian context. However, there is a significant amount of 'practice wisdom' regarding 'what works'.

Drawing on this practice wisdom, it is suggested that inclusive services are affordable and well publicised; are geographically accessible; provide outreach or support with transport; provide a family-friendly and culturally inclusive physical environment; employ skilled and responsive staff working from a family-centred, culturally sensitive perspective; promote social connectedness through informal supports; and seek to establish strong reciprocal links with other relevant services (universal and specialist).

Many vulnerable families experience several concurrent barriers that impact on their service use and inclusion.

Parents want empathetic, empowering help and are wary of criticism, interference or surveillance.

Amongst the most critical factors is workers' ability:

- to establish a positive, non-judgmental relationship with all children and parents
- to 'proactively' follow-up and engage vulnerable children and parents.

It is often the little 'personal' touches that count the most. Parents want empathetic, empowering help and are wary of criticism, interference or surveillance. They also want prompt information, advice and support. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not always useful. Truly inclusive services are holistic and flexible, matching assistance to each child's and/or family's needs and offering choice to their clientele.

Furthermore, given the importance of social connections and the distrust some parents have of professionals, inclusive services include a blend of 'professional' and 'informal' assistance, involving volunteers or peer providers. Parents also welcome the opportunity to meet with other parents, particularly those in similar circumstances. The physical environment of the service can play a role in facilitating or inhibiting these connections.

Inclusive services accept people as they are and work to assist and involve all-comers. They acknowledge people's shared humanity, but also recognise their differences, in particular unequal levels of power and control over resources, and attempt to counteract these inequalities.

The way forward

Promoting more inclusive antenatal and universal ECS will inevitably require the introduction of multiple, simultaneous strategies within each service. Strategies which focus on removing only one potential barrier in isolation from the others are unlikely to be sufficient.

Overall, services will be more or less inclusive depending on how well they:

- minimise the 'practical' access barriers and support parents to overcome their knowledge, financial, transport and time difficulties to maintain attendance
- build positive relationships with parents, counteracting distrust and stigma, and assist parents to build positive relationships with other service users
- promote and explain their services and offer culturally sensitive services with perceived benefits for the child and for their parents, both in the short term and the long term.

In stage four of the Breaking Cycles Building Futures project, the Brotherhood of St Laurence will be working in collaboration with the Maribyrnong, Whittlesea and Shepparton Best Start partnerships to implement strategies based on these initial findings. Stage four is scheduled to commence in September 2003 and will continue until late 2004.

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Manager Rennie Gay notes that inclusion is important at the Cottage

The Brotherhood's Cottage Centre for Families and Children provides a service in the City of Yarra for low-income families who have children in the pre-school years. Where parents' capacity is impaired by circumstance, or by their child's overwhelming needs, the support and respite that the Cottage provides can strengthen the family, while it promotes the child's healthy development. Where a child has, or is at risk of, developmental delay, or where a child's behaviour is limiting his development, the Cottage can provide a program designed to address specific concerns while supporting the parent in their care for the child.

The Cottage targets those children and families least likely to access and benefit from 'universal services'. It operates at a secondary level, between primary services and tertiary treatment services – thus we work with those who fall between two stools. We aim to promote the young children's development to a level that they can successfully take their place in mainstream preschool or primary school. Where this is not possible, the necessary links are made so that each child will have the greatest opportunity to develop according to their abilities and their family's preferences.

We are currently reviewing how can we provide the best possible service for the most children and families with additional needs, in a sustainable way. We believe that the answer involves the development of a much stronger links and exchange with primary and universal services for local children and families.

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Re-Igniting Community: The Torch Project in regional Victoria

Re-Igniting Community is becoming known as a best practice model for community building and social capital enhancement. The Torch Project and Re-Igniting Community team push the boundaries of community development believing that cultural projects can create positive change in a community and initiate community action around key issues of concern.



In the Warrnambool and Bairnsdale regions last year, Re-Igniting Community sowed the seeds of long-term change through the creation of a community-relevant touring show entitled *The Torch*, drawing on local interpretations of the issues of history, identity, culture and belonging. This project aimed to assist the two regional communities to examine problems associated with the cultural and socio-economic divides that exist within Australian society.

It provided an accessible, arts-based forum targeted at participants, including Indigenous Australians and unemployed youth, who experience marginalisation or who have restricted access to cultural development opportunities. Re-Igniting Community 2002 was supported by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria, Community Support Fund, Australia Council for the Arts, The Myer Foundation, VicHealth, Besen Family Foundation and Caritas.

Evaluation in progress

The project was evaluated by a team from the University of Technology's Centre for Popular Education who examined:

- the Re-Igniting Community Project as a community development strategy
- The Torch production as theatre
- collaborative theatre-making for community capacity building, as devised and performed by the Torch Project.

The interim evaluation indicates that the Re-Igniting Community

project rated well on the indicator of community engagement. Not only were local people consulted but also they collaborated in script development, acting and music. The project also had a significant impact in fostering cultural identity and pride, by highlighting local histories that have been under-represented in published records. Audience members claimed they had gained new and deeper understanding of local history, especially Aboriginal history.

In particular, the project effectively engaged with individuals and groups who otherwise were excluded or marginalised. Several individuals gained skills and knowledge that enabled them to go on to further study and work in the arts.

As one group of musicians commented:

You brought us truth, pain, hope, connection and healing ... The Torch's presence had and will continue to have a multi-layered, ripple effect. It enabled us to contribute to Reconciliation in such an expansive and pleasurable way. (The Red Tent Singers (Warrnambool), November 2002)

The Torch project team is currently in the development phase for Re-Igniting Community North West Victoria, with four steering committees in operation and over 80 community groups and organisations involved. Visits have been made to Kerang, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Mildura.

Partnerships are being formed with the Mildura Aboriginal

Corporation, Vic Health, Mallee Family Care, RMIT's Globalism Institute and several community organisations. Thus far the project has received assistance from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, VicHealth, Regional Arts Victoria, Arts Victoria, Besen Family Foundation and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

Hopes are high for this next stage:

For our kids it could be the beginning of a pathway that enables them to blaze a trail, speak with strong voice and be proud. It may also start to heal the generational divide before too much more is lost forever with the passing of our elders. (Karen Modoo, Principal, Mildura KODE school, February, 2003)

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I have never seen or been part of something that has this level of capacity to draw in such a wide range of people to examine and challenge their own issues relating to racism. It gave the communities the opportunity for the truth to be told. (Rose Solomon, Manager, Statewide Indigenous Family Violence Service, January 2003)

Transition support networks: strengthening the role of parents

The successful transition of young people from school to work, or to further study, is an important social and economic issue, being a significant factor in both the equitable distribution of wealth in society and intergenerational poverty. Young people leaving school early, without alternative career paths, face long-term disadvantages in terms of higher levels of unemployment, lower incomes, and an increased likelihood of ending up in low-skilled jobs with poor conditions and few opportunities for advancement.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence recognises the importance of achieving better outcomes, and has been working with 'at risk' young people on the Mornington Peninsula through the Transition Project for six years. This model has extended support by employing dedicated transition workers to provide long-term case management to young people in both school and community settings.

However, the need for better linkages with other stakeholders has also become apparent. It is confirmed by research (McIntyre 1999) pointing to the benefits of a more integrated approach that brings together support services, schools, employers, parents and local communities.

Involving parents

In particular, the role of parents and families is starting to receive increased attention. The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Taskforce (2001) recognised that supporting families is one of the best ways to help young people in their transitions. Other research has shown that:

- Parents guide many of the decisions taken by young people

in their transition pathways (Youth Pathways Taskforce 2001).

- Parents are one of young people's primary sources of information on transition options (Whiteley 2001).
- Parents are more likely to have discussed printed careers information with their children than are careers teachers or advisers (Russell & Wardman 1998).

Studies in Australia and the UK also indicate widespread parental dissatisfaction with the quality of information provided, as well as a desire to make a greater contribution to their children's transition decisions.

Despite this research, education policy has been slow to respond, and parents are almost completely neglected in current school-to-work transition projects.

The PACTS project

The Brotherhood's PACTS (Parents as Career and Transition Supports) program has been developed to address this gap, and aims to empower parents to make a positive contribution to their child's transition choices. It is based on the recognition that many parents do not have up to date information or knowledge about career and transition options, and that there are few resources available to assist them.

Funded by the Department of Education Science and Technology as one of 22 Career and Transition pilot projects throughout Australia, the program works with groups of parents to provide information, skills, and support on an on-going basis. These services are provided through the project coordinator and by parent facilitators who have completed the program's training module. Parents are also provided

with a resource pack suggesting how to discuss career options with their children and outlining relevant local services; and they have access to further information through the PACTS web site.

The project is currently operating in nine schools on the Mornington Peninsula but will soon be offered to all 25 government, private and Catholic schools in the area.

The Brotherhood's Social Action and Research Unit is evaluating the project and a report will be available next year. Initial survey results show that 100 per cent of parents think it is important to be involved in their child's transition and 80 per cent of young people say they would like help from their parents in making decisions. However, only 20 per cent of parents feel they currently have sufficient knowledge of employment and training options to help their child make a decision about what to do after finishing school.

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Parents are one of young people's primary sources of information on transition options.

Many parents do not have up-to-date information or knowledge about career and transition options.

Simplifying workforce age social security payments

The federal government recently called for submissions in response to a discussion paper on simplifying workforce age social security payments. The Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Welfare Rights Unit tendered a joint submission, which is summarised here.

Relevance of labour market policy

Although the government's background paper canvassed some changes in the labour market, we noted it did not adequately consider the shortage of full-time jobs and the fact that there are at least six people unemployed for every job vacancy. It also overlooked the growth of 'precarious' work—part-time, temporary or casual jobs with low pay, low skill and poor conditions – which means that people taking up these jobs often do not earn sufficient income to make ends meet, and therefore continue to receive social security payments.

The number of people currently receiving income support is a direct result of the inability of the labour market to provide adequate employment. Simply reforming the social security system will not address this issue. There was no discussion of labour market policy, which was surprising given that the minister responsible for that area co-sponsored the paper. If the government wishes to increase the number of people in employment and reduce social security spending as a result, the current focus needs to be complemented by changes to employment policy.

Social security reforms

There are, however, still important gains to be made from reforming social security payments. We argued that the inadequate rates of payment for those on allowances (as opposed to pensions) is the biggest problem with the current system. The most urgent issue is to increase the basic payment level to the pension rate in order to provide an adequate safety net. We argued against any

move to reduce the rates for pensioners to the allowance rate, as this would simply move more people into poverty.

Other priorities should be to resolve the difference between Austudy and Newstart for those over 25 years of age, and to address the large drop in benefits faced by those on Parenting Payment when their youngest child turns 16.

As older people are encouraged to work longer, yet others face premature redundancy or long-term unemployment, the age of retirement will become increasingly blurred. It is important that the design of the working age payment resolves existing disparities between the Age Pension and working age payments, especially in relation to payment rates and withdrawal rates, and does not create new 'blockages'.

We do not believe that full-time workers on minimum wages should be subsidised either by income support payments or by a tax credit (although temporary continued eligibility for additional allowances or concession cards might be a useful way of easing the transition to work). Such subsidies would effectively mean that government replaced regulation with business welfare as a means of protecting low-paid workers. It would also provide a subsidy regardless of employers' capacity to pay better wages, and possibly result in a longer term effect on employer expectations, with government seen to have primary responsibility for the adequacy of workers' incomes.

Penalties and exemptions

The high level of breach penalties remains of concern. Despite some welcome recent changes in the breach penalty system, it remains too punitive and continues to create 'unnecessary and unjustifiable hardship'. Further reduction of breach penalty amounts is required.

Anyone who is unable to work full-time due to caring responsibilities (for children, partners, parents or others) or physical or psychological ill-health should be exempted from activity testing, but they should have access to support to gain employment if they choose.

Conclusion

While changes towards a more equitable and less complex system are to be encouraged, no-one should be worse off under new arrangements, and social security reforms should be complemented by constructive attention to the labour market.

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Copies of BSL submissions, once made public, are available from the Library for \$9.00 or on the web at <www.bsl.org.au/research_and_library/submission.html>.

New information on poverty, unemployment and social justice

The following are among the latest significant acquisitions of the Brotherhood Library:

ABORIGINES, AUSTRALIAN

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2003, *Native title report 2002*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney.

Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce 2003, *Victorian Stolen Generations Taskforce: report to Victorian Government April 2003*, Department for Victorian Communities, [Melbourne].

AGED

Jamieson, A & Victor, C (eds) 2002, *Researching ageing and later life: the practice of social gerontology*, Open University Press, Buckingham, England.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Latham, M 2003, *From the suburbs: building a nation from our neighbourhoods*, Pluto Press Annandale, N.S.W.

Weeks, W, Hoatson, L, & Dixon, J (eds) 2003, *Community practices in Australia*, Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.

ECONOMICS

Kumar, R 2002, *The Australian banking industry: retail transaction services and vulnerable consumers: an economic analysis*, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, Collingwood, Vic.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2003, *OECD economic surveys: Australia, 2002-2003*, OECD, Paris.

Stilwell, F 2002, *Political economy: the contest of economic ideas*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Vic.

EDUCATION

Teese, R & Polese, J 2003, *Undemocratic schooling: equity and quality in mass secondary education in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

Alcock, P, Beatty, C, & Fothergill, S 2002, *Work to welfare: how men become detached from the labour market*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Asia Monitor Resource Center 2003, *Asia Pacific labour law review: workers' rights for the new century*, Asia Monitor Resource Center, Hong Kong.

Carlson, E & Mitchell, W (eds) 2002, *The urgency of full employment*, Centre for Applied Economic Research, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Loos, R 2002, *Innovations for the integration of low-skilled workers into lifelong learning and the labour market: case studies from six European countries*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

Madden, K 2003, *Blue collared: the shrinking world of work in Tasmania*, Anglicare Tasmania, Hobart, Tas.

Madden, K 2003, *Proposal for programs to assist long-term unemployed Tasmanians*, Anglicare Tasmania, Hobart, Tas.

Mitchell, W & Carlson, E (eds) 2001, *Unemployment: the tip of the iceberg*, University of New South Wales, Centre for Applied Economic Research, Sydney.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2003, *Entrepreneurship and local economic development: programme and policy recommendations*, OECD, Paris.

GLOBALISATION

Fairbrother, P, Paddon, M & Teicher, J (eds) 2002, *Privatisation, globalisation and labour: studies from Australia*, Federation Press, Annandale, N.S.W.

Mandle, J R 2001, *Globalization and the poor*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Rieger, E & Leibfried, S 2003, *Limits to globalization: welfare states and the world economy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Torres, R 2001, *Towards a socially sustainable world economy: an analysis of the social pillars of globalization*, International Labour Office, Geneva.

HEALTH

Holden, J, Howland, L & Jones, D S (eds) 2002, *Foodstuff: living in an age of feast and famine*, DEMOS, London.

Wood, B & Burns, C 2002, *Multi-site evaluation: Food insecurity; Community demonstration projects: report of stakeholder interviews in the City of Yarra*, School of Health Sciences, Deakin University, Burwood, Vic.

HOMELESSNESS

MacKenzie, D & Chamberlain, C 2003, *Homeless careers: pathways in and out of homelessness*, Swinburne and RMIT Universities [Melbourne].

MANAGEMENT

Fishel, D 2003, *The book of the board: effective governance for non-profit organisations*, Federation Press, Annandale, N.S.W.

MIGRATION ISSUES

Amor, M & Austin, J (eds) 2003, *From nothing to zero: letters from refugees in Australia's detention centres*, Lonely Planet, Melbourne.

SOCIAL POLICY

Alcock, P, Glennerster, H & Oakley, A (eds) 2001, *Welfare and wellbeing: Richard Titmuss's contribution to social policy*, Policy Press, Bristol.

SOCIAL RESEARCH

Hawtin, M, Hughes, G & Percy-Smith, J 1994, *Community profiling: auditing social needs*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, England.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2003, *Welfare expenditure Australia 2000-01*, AIHW, Canberra, A.C.T.

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Meagher, G 2002, *The politics of knowledge in social service evaluation*, Uniting Care Burnside, Parramatta, N.S.W.

Sennett, R 2003, *Respect: the formation of character in an age of inequality*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London.

TAXATION

Pope, J F & Prafula Le, V 2003, *The hidden costs of the superannuation surcharge tax*, Australian Tax Research Foundation, Sydney.

WORK AND FAMILY

Johnson, J 2002, *Getting by on the minimum: the lives of working-class women*, Routledge Press, New York.

Yeandle, S, Wigfield, A & Crompton, R 2002, *Employed carers and family-friendly employment policies*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Bristol.

Information services for the public

The Brotherhood of St Laurence library offers a specialist focus on issues such as poverty, unemployment, aged care, social policy and welfare, taxation and housing. It can also provide, for the cost of copying and mailing, up-to-date information sheets on poverty and unemployment as well as information on the Brotherhood, its services and its publications.

The library is open to students, community groups and members of the public from 9am to 5pm, Tuesday to Thursday. Books can be borrowed by the public through the inter-library loan system (enquire at your regular library).

To find out whether we can help you with the information you require, ring the Library on (03) 9483 1387 or (03) 9483 1388, or e-mail library@bsl.org.au. Further information can be found at www.bsl.org.au.

Innovation Hub fosters initiative



The Brotherhood of St Laurence recently launched an Innovation Hub to encourage innovation within the organisation. The aim is to create more social enterprises and jobs for disadvantaged people under a 'hand up' or enterprise model of service delivery and also help to create more efficient or expanded services.

The Innovations Hub will support BSL staff to develop enterprise projects which contribute to an Australia free of poverty. Innovators will be provided with funding and support to deliver on the organisation's goal to demonstrate advocacy, innovation and sustainability in all programs.

A cross-departmental staff team will support innovators to get their projects off the ground. A dedicated Innovation Coach will offer assistance in shaping ideas and developing funding applications. Training will also be given to develop skills and find the resources to move a project through the early stages.

Already the Innovation Hub has contributed some of the funding for projects such as the following:

Carrum Downs Settlement Job Creation

This project will provide jobs for local unemployed people in the outer suburban settlement where the BSL provides accommodation for some 150 older people living on low incomes. The Settlement will offer work in grounds maintenance, cleaning and painting, which has been previously outsourced to private contractors. The employees will undertake an intensive pre-vocational course provided by Furniture Works Training Centre and then be employed by STEP (BSL Group Training Company) on traineeships.

Furniture Works New Product Development

Furniture Works, the Brotherhood's furniture manufacturing and training centre at Frankston, is currently developing a new product range with the vision of generating extra revenue streams to create further work for trainees after their initial training period. In partnership with a prominent furniture designer, it has already produced prototype high-quality tables, successfully marketed to retailers at the Furnitex Exhibition in July.

Pipsqueaks

As a result of the BSL's involvement in a retail store in West Heidelberg shopping centre, a feasibility study is being undertaken on the creation of a children's play centre within the Philip's Gate complex in West Heidelberg. Philip's Gate was established in 2003 as a social enterprise, offering a worship space shared by seven churches, a gateway for a variety of welfare services and an Internet cafe. The Pipsqueaks venture will comprise a children's play centre on the lower level, with a cafe and facilities to hold birthday celebrations. The upper level will provide a community space with a focus on youth services, including a theatre/function room with stage, sound and cinema equipment.

We hope that the Innovation Hub will help the BSL to develop new ways to tackle poverty, that these can be replicated by others, and that they will provide new ideas for government policy.

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