

Building better lives together



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Building better lives since 1930

A public service career blooms through a Brotherhood traineeship

What Johanna really wants to do in her career is help people; a Brotherhood traineeship is giving her that chance.

'I took a year off work for mental health reasons, and it was hard to even go for interviews after that,' says Johanna. She was affected by the rejection and sometimes negative feedback entailed in the job seeking process. When she came to the Brotherhood her sense of confidence was restored. She says the constant support has been 'amazing'.

In May this year we placed 23-year-old Johanna in an administrative role with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, as part of a Certificate III in Business undertaken through our Work and Learning Centre. In her role she supports a department director's executive assistant, which involves responding to queries to four ministers and department managers on a wide range of matters from a cross section of the community – refugees, aboriginal people, people with disability, sporting groups and those from the LGBTI community.

'It's a brilliant opportunity,' Johanna says. 'The reading is the most interesting thing because I get to find out what the Government is actually doing. It's a real insight.'

'One thing I've always wanted to do is help people. I'm training to be an executive assistant and in that role I would be helping someone who is helping the community, and that's really cool. I'm helping one person, but on another level, I'm helping all of these other people to do what they need to do.'



Johanna

Johanna also feels the Brotherhood Work and Learning traineeship has been an important boost to her mental health. The support of her Brotherhood field officer, through regular workplace visits, phone calls and emails, has been crucial in ensuring her commitment to the traineeship is maintained.

The approach of our Work and Learning team is to make sure trainees are settled in their roles in the first three months, helping with whatever is needed to stay in the placement. Next, a career plan is developed, and at the six month mark, trainees prepare for the transition to a job after the traineeship, with interview practice and resume writing.

'The Brotherhood has been awesome,' says Johanna. 'They presented me with opportunities and made me feel like, regardless of what I do, they will be there to back me up and help me find a role in the long term.'

For more visit bsl.org.au/workandlearning

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As the modern economy demands more from all workers, the Brotherhood of St Laurence is deeply concerned about levels of unemployment among 15 to 24 year olds.

The rate of youth unemployment is now at over 12 per cent nationally, and in some parts of Australia rates are surpassing 20 per cent.

Another way of understanding this generational challenge is that young people comprise 40 per cent of unemployed people in our nation.

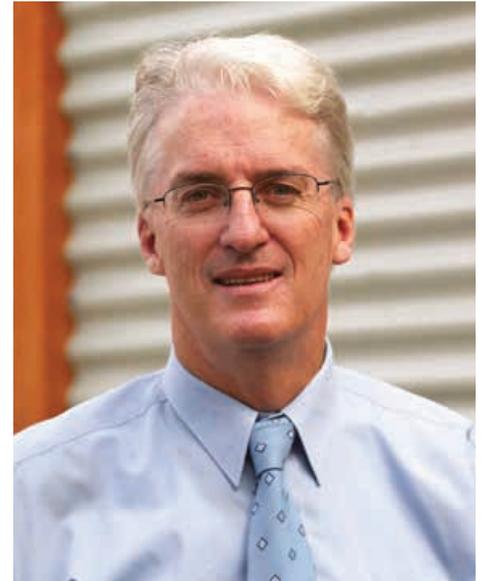
The young people we work with are in the eye of this storm. They are often early school leavers; some are experiencing homelessness, others are trying to overcome mental health problems, and yet others come from vulnerable migrant and refugee families. They don't have university degrees or other skills, or parents who can afford to help them out financially. They also tend to live in areas where entry level

jobs are scarce.

But with targeted interventions, and programs we run harnessing efforts of local communities – from employers, to service clubs to volunteers – we can create real opportunities and pathways into study and/or work.

In this edition, you'll meet Kerry Larkan, a semi-retired grandfather who volunteers with young people in our Education First Youth Foyer in Broadmeadows.

The people who support the Brotherhood, and our work for a fairer Australia and a more inclusive economy, make me optimistic about our ability to tackle complex social challenges. There are so many people who contribute what



Tony Nicholson

they can, and how they can, to help us build capacity and create opportunity where it's needed.

Best wishes,

Tony Nicholson

Learning from others to improve services

In recognition of the power of collaboration, the Brotherhood of St Laurence has established a national Transition to Work Community of Practice.

The initiative brings together eleven community organisations from around the country who will be implementing a consistent service model for the delivery of the Transition to Work service.

Together, the Community of Practice is going to test and refine this model to figure out what works for young people in this space, and to share their knowledge and experience in working with young people to achieve improved employment outcomes. In this way, community organisations can discuss how we harness effort and expertise at a national level to:

- share expertise to identify what works
- continuously improve what we do through action research
- leverage national partnerships with employers
- be a national voice to government about how we can work together to improve our offer to young people.

Keep informed about youth unemployment

The Brotherhood's *Youth Unemployment Monitor* is a regular e-newsletter that combines data and policy analysis with human stories of young people grappling with the challenges of entering the job market. It is a key tool in our ongoing advocacy campaign for youth employment, My Chance, Our Future, and is built on three elements:

- a compelling multimedia story of a young person in the community seeking work
- an incisive data analysis report
- a 'Wise Words' column featuring a leading Australian offering their perspective on the youth jobs crisis.

Sign up to receive the *Youth Unemployment Monitor* e-newsletter here: bsl.org.au/subscribe

Evening up the odds. Youth employment and economic security

Youth unemployment in Australia is twice as high as our overall unemployment rate.

A young person born behind the socio-economic eight ball is likely to find it more difficult to secure a decent job than one from a wealthier background.

Youth unemployment – the numbers

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the youth unemployment (15–24 year olds) rate was at 12.1 per cent in May, compared to an overall unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent. As we highlighted in our latest *Youth Unemployment Monitor*, some areas in Australia fare better than others. In South East Melbourne rates were as high as 16.2 per cent. In Queensland, rates were even higher, 25.2 per cent in Cairns and 34.2 per cent in outback Queensland. The ABS data are based on a nationally representative survey that provides valuable insights, but does not tell the whole story.

20+ year study and analysis

Qualitative research can provide insight into the experience of inequality. The Brotherhood's Life Chances is a unique longitudinal study that examines how family income, social class, ethnicity and gender affect individuals. The study began in inner Melbourne in 1990 with 167 babies and their parents, from a range of ethnic backgrounds and incomes. The current stage

of the study examines the impacts of advantage and disadvantage on young people's transition from education to regular or satisfactory employment.

Researchers highlight the impacts of social, economic and political changes on the lives of young people.

The Life Chances study shows the push and pull of advantage or disadvantage. Our analysis suggests that those from higher income families tended to have smoother transitions from education to employment. In contrast, the pathways from education to employment tended to be rockier for those from poorer family backgrounds, who tended to stress their luck. For example, Karen reflected on the support her parents provided, observing: 'there's so many people – they would be at school plus working trying to pay for their schooling, so I feel really lucky looking back on it now.'

For some, like Danny, who was unemployed at the time of the interview, luck was simultaneously important and elusive. He explained: 'I know plenty of people who have had no luck in their life and they're just been bloody beaten down. Yeah, I don't know. Luck seems to be a thing.'

In contrast, those from advantaged families with resources had 'luck on their side' as one young



Dr Dina Bowman

man put it. Another young man, Eddie, explained the advantages of growing up in a relatively privileged area:

'... so my two best friends from primary school are now doctors. My best friends from high school are lawyers, on the road to becoming academics. And you know, it's not an accident.'

While socio-economic background does not determine life chances, our analysis suggests that it has a strong and persistent effect, which highlights the importance of policies and programs that can even up the odds.

Our research and evaluation work informs and evaluates innovative policies and programs with the aim of creating conditions that enable all young people to build good lives, not just the lucky ones.

Supporting employment outcomes for young people

Semi-retired grandfather Kerry Larkan volunteers with students at the Education First Youth Foyer in Broadmeadows, where he builds relationships within the community to support employment outcomes for young people.

Our Youth Foyers provide assistance with both education and housing to young people who are homeless, or at risk of this.

'I do foyer work around other commitments and hobbies, often from home but going into the foyer for meetings and events,' says Kerry.

Over the past year and a half at the foyer, Kerry has worked with local Rotary Clubs, whose volunteers now assist with CV writing and employment skills workshops, and in turn young people volunteer at Rotary events. Kerry has also developed relationships with local businesses to develop employment opportunities for students.

Initially, Kerry volunteered for three years on the Brotherhood's Urban

Camps project, giving Year 9 and 10 students a chance to see social justice in action.

'Not everyone is born on the right side of the tracks,' says Kerry.

'Through Urban Camps, an initiative set up to educate and influence a new generation of young people to understand the issues facing disadvantaged Australians, some students became aware of how lucky they are and how birth and circumstances can often be like a lottery.'

While volunteering on Urban Camps, Kerry learned about the Brotherhood's story and the research we do.

'I didn't realise the degree to which research is used to identify (people



Kerry Larkan

falling through the) gaps in society before assisting or lobbying the government,' explains Kerry, 'that was an eye opener.'

Kerry believes this research makes a real difference; filling the gaps based on solid research and knowledge, before undertaking any intervention or assistance.

'The whole concept of foyer's model is looking for people's talents rather than case managing all their problems. Everyone has talents and skills; foyer highlights and builds on them.'

Get a head start on your spring clean!

With spring here it's time to clean out your wardrobe and declutter your cupboards. Imagine how good it will feel to create some space, and the sense of satisfaction from donating your excess goods to charity.

But wait, there's more! Not only are items donated to the Brotherhood sold at affordable prices through our community stores, all funds raised assist the Brotherhood deliver programs and services that make lasting change in the lives of disadvantaged Australians.

We accept donations of: clothing, furniture, homewares, electrical items, fridges and books.

You can donate goods in resalable condition by donating directly to one of our community stores during trading hours, or by contacting

our free collection service, which operates across greater Melbourne.

Arrange your free pick-up of quality donations today by calling **1300 DONATE (1300 366 283)** or booking online at **stores.bsl.org.au/donate**



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Building better lives since 1930

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