

BUILDING BETTER LIVES TOGETHER

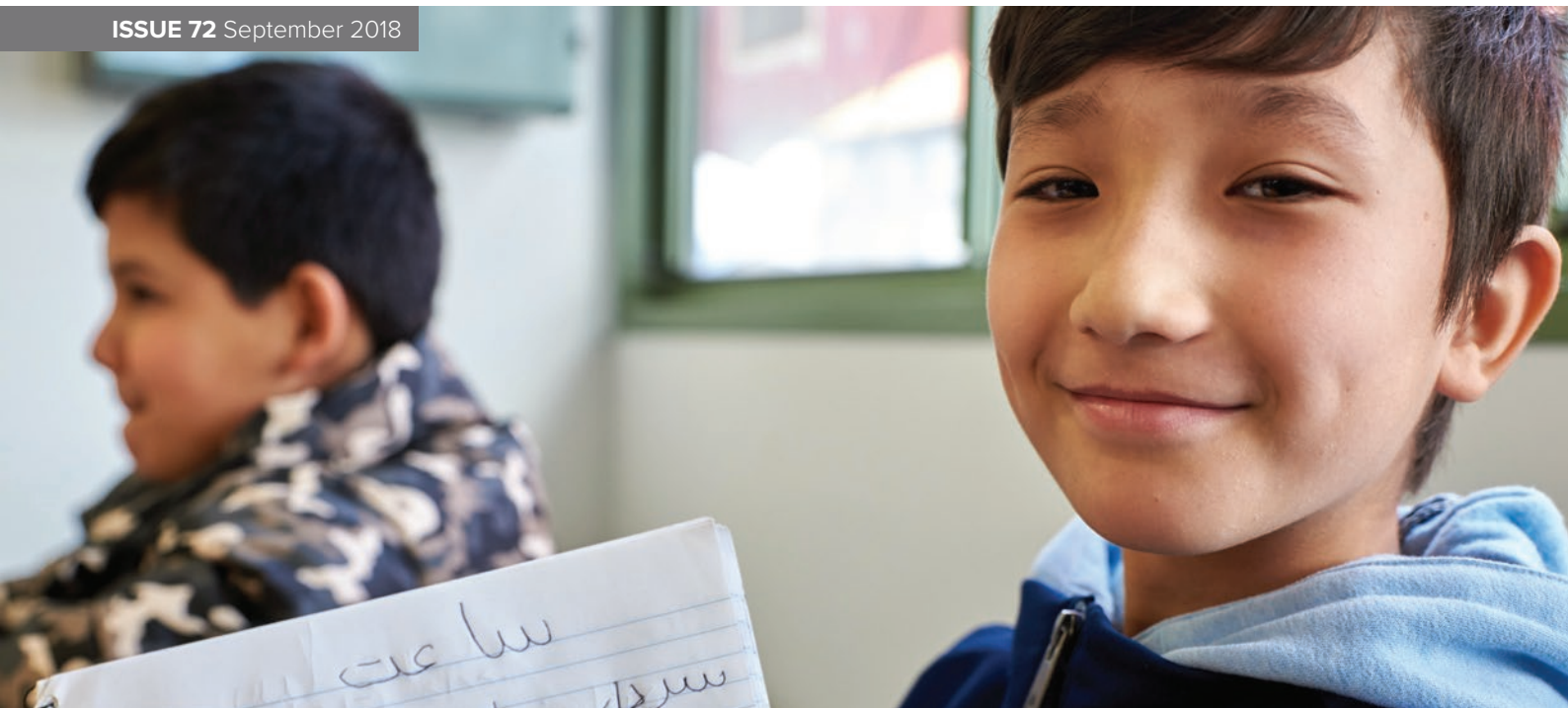
A newsletter for our valued friends and supporters



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

ISSUE 72 September 2018



Above Nafisa's son, Behzad, shows his Dari writing practice.

Hume Afghan Association is a driving force for the community

We have been supporting the association since 2016 as part of our Refugee Action Program which empowers refugee community groups to lead themselves and provides funding for activities, education and training.

The Hume Afghan Association (HAA) connects over 50 refugee families and individuals who are waiting for their families to arrive in Australia. The group's aims are to ensure access to services, opportunities for education and employment, foster community engagement and provide support to families while preserving Afghan culture and language.

Nafisa, who began as a volunteer, is now the Vice President of HAA and has lived in Australia for seven years. She says the Brotherhood's

support has been vital to improving the group's leadership, administration and communication skills. In 2017 the Brotherhood organised an intensive leadership training course for board members. 'It was very helpful', Nafisa says. 'We have meetings every month and every two weeks the board members meet.' The board promotes gender equality and consists of four men and four women. The Brotherhood also connects members with representatives of other refugee groups through the 1000 Voices community so they can share and learn from one another's experiences.

The group is very proud of the successful establishment of a Dari language school which means children can learn about Afghan language and culture. The Brotherhood helped locate a space for the school and provided advice on governance, protocols and administration. 'Now we are doing good marketing in the community', Nafisa says. 'Everyone sends their kids to the school and the people are happy. Last year we had two classes in Dari languages, and this

year we have three classes with four teachers.' Nafisa puts the success of the project down to good team work and communication.

In Afghanistan, Nafisa was Secretary to the Minister of Women's Affairs – and here in Melbourne she ensures the HAA pushes the empowerment of women in the community. Women's English language and literacy classes are available, and there are plans to offer driving lessons in the future. 'The group is focusing on women's driving classes to empower Afghan women who can't drive', she says. These measures help to tackle isolation often experienced by members of refugee groups. The association also links Afghan fathers to a men's parenting program so the whole family can benefit.

Nafisa's own family are now safe and happy in Australia and she is proud of the association's achievements. 'Although our community is very new, we try our best!'

Visit bsl.org.au/refugeeactionprogram to read more about our Refugee Action Program.

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Visit bsl.org.au/donate to donate online or
call us on (03) 9483 1301



Above Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg.

Executive Director's message

The range of the Brotherhood's programs is such a source of strength. Our footprint in the community includes transformative programs for children, employment preparation for jobseekers of all ages, family support, aged care and, of course, much needed refugee settlement services.

I am delighted to share with you the practical outcomes of this vital work in the stories featured on these pages – and I hope you will be inspired.

Since I began as Executive Director in January, I have been visiting many of our program sites and meeting our staff, dedicated volunteers and listening to the people we work with in the community. From those conversations, I feel inspired and

confident about the potential our work has to change lives, build resilience and seed opportunity in places where it is most needed.

I have also been learning more about the history of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. I feel uplifted by the consistency of our mission, since 1930, for a shared goal of an Australia free of poverty.

The world we live in today is ever more complex and our organisation has grown in ambition and size, but the deep connection to a community of supporters runs as a consistent theme from our founder Father Gerard Tucker's day to today.

It is a source of strength to know that we can draw on this kind of enduring support as we tackle poverty and disadvantage in one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

Best regards,

Conny Lenneberg
Executive Director



Sambell Lodge Update

Sambell Lodge fills a much-needed gap in local aged care.

We are excited to announce that our Sambell Lodge redevelopment has commenced construction. The current facility provides welcoming care for residents, but sadly the building is falling behind community expectations for accommodation. The contemporary designs for the new building mean we can focus on creating indoor and outdoor spaces that support people living with dementia and other cognitive disabilities into the future. The new building will include communal areas, individualised dining areas and light-filled spaces to create a more homely

atmosphere. There are also big plans to enhance community engagement by running intergenerational programs and working closely with our young neighbours at Clifton Hill Primary School. Plans for a café will create further opportunities to involve the community, and residents can enjoy being part of their vibrant inner-city neighbourhood. The project will create additional employment opportunities and provide care for 113 residents, many of whom will have been homeless. Currently Sambell Lodge can accommodate 43 residents. We are all looking forward to the grand opening in March 2020.

Left An artist's impression of the exterior and shared space at the new Sambell Lodge.

Given the chance
for Asylum Seekers
5 year milestone
statistics



521 people got
a job as a result



99% were in jobs
of more than
8 hours a week



We worked with
311 employers to
source vacancies



Above Heikma took part in Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers and now works as a recruitment and field officer at the Flemington branch of Given the Chance Jobs Victoria.

Celebrating a milestone program for refugees and asylum seekers

This year we celebrate the significant impact and success of an important program, Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers. The Brotherhood will now continue to support people seeking asylum through the Given the Chance Jobs Victoria program.

Thanks to generous funding from a private philanthropist, Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers assisted 521 people seeking asylum who had work rights to get a job – often their first in Australia. The family of the philanthropist who funded the program originally came to Australia as refugees in the 1950s. Their intent was for the program to demonstrate the positive impact people seeking asylum can have, and to encourage policy change for similar approaches to be taken.

Our research illustrated the lack of resources available to asylum seekers in participating in employment. Constrained by visa conditions and often dealing with trauma relating to migration, and lacking connections to employers, they were severely disadvantaged.

Based in Melbourne and delivered over five years, Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers worked with participants and employers to create effective employment solutions. The program assessed participants' individual needs and provided pre-employment guidance, assisting them to navigate the Australian recruitment process. Participants were taught about the norms and expectations of the workplace, and were given ongoing support once employed. They were also linked with other services and training opportunities where required.

Advocacy was a significant component of the program and, through its delivery, the Brotherhood has been able to influence key policy changes relating to work rights and subsidised training opportunities. We have successfully advocated for people seeking asylum to be eligible for state government employment support programs. Although the five-year funded period has ended, the Brotherhood continues to deliver services to people seeking asylum through Given the Chance Jobs Victoria, supported by the state government. It is delivered by the Brotherhood at sites in Flemington, Dandenong and Epping. We're excited that the work started by Given the Chance for Asylum Seekers program will continue.



Above Aaron has been part of the Creating Futures for Youth program since 2015.

New Futures looking bright

Our Creating Futures for Youth program has set Aaron, 21, on a path to a promising career in business administration. But before he came to the Brotherhood in 2015, his future was not so certain.

He had made the brave decision to move back to Melbourne after finishing high school in the United States, where his family had moved, as his prospects there were limited. Uni was not an option due to immigration restrictions. 'There isn't much opportunity if you aren't a citizen', explains Aaron. Without family support or connections he tried to find work here, but after three months, it was a struggle. He faced a common barrier for young jobseekers.

'It is really hard to find anything if you don't have any experience.'

Without any support Aaron found this time uncertain and scary. 'I was pretty down on my luck. I ended up at a community centre asking for a food voucher and there was a poster on the wall for Creating Futures for Youth. I called the number on the poster and it all went pretty quickly from there.'

Creating Futures for Youth assists young people like Aaron who are not currently studying or working, aged 15 to 24, living in Frankston and on the Mornington Peninsula, south-east of Melbourne, where youth unemployment rates are very high. The transformative program offers individualised career planning, workshops that focus on practical training, work experience, volunteering

opportunities and, importantly, ongoing support after graduating the program for six months or more.

Through the program Aaron gained a three-month internship at a local company. 'It was a really good experience. I got to work in various parts of the business.' Once he completed the traineeship, his skills and experience made him an ideal candidate for a role with our David Scott School, which provides Year 10, 11 and 12 to young people disengaged from mainstream schooling. The twelve-month paid traineeship was rewarding and Aaron really enjoyed the experience it gave him.

'I had a really good management team. They tried to incorporate as much responsibility into my role as possible. I was producing marketing materials, managing attendance systems – I was an all-rounder.' One of the projects he worked on was designing a new logo for the school, and among many proposed designs, Aaron's was selected. 'It was pretty crazy seeing the logo go up on the building!' says Aaron.

Now in a permanent business administration job at the school, Aaron is enjoying life. He says things could have been quite different without help from the Brotherhood: 'The road would have been much longer. I probably wouldn't have had so many opportunities and such a supportive team', he says.

Visit bsl.org.au/creatingfutures to read more about our Creating Futures for Youth program.



Thank you!

We are extremely grateful for the incredible commitment you continue to show towards our work to alleviate and prevent poverty. Your generous response to our 2018 Winter Appeal exceeded all our expectations and is deeply encouraging for Brotherhood staff and those we support.

Donations enable us to pilot innovative responses to poverty, to make a difference to individuals experiencing deep disadvantage while also working towards policy change. This work cannot be done without your contributions and kindness. Thank you.

'The Brotherhood has helped me to learn how to look after my health and wellbeing, to be positive and to make friends.' – Selwyn

Left Selwyn is a member of the Brotherhood's Coolibah social connections hub in Fitzroy.



Above Father Tucker's work inspires generosity.

Father Tucker's legacy continues to inspire support

The Brotherhood's many important and life-changing services can only continue if supported by the generosity of people like Andrew who has been involved with the Brotherhood his whole life.

Thanks to his parents' involvement with the Brotherhood, Andrew, 28, has been closely linked with the organisation for many years.

His strong connection with the Brotherhood and his involvement with his church has given him a deep understanding of the wide ranging and positive impact of the Brotherhood's work. 'I like the idea that the Brotherhood tends to cover so many things. It deals with everyone from the very young to the very old, refugee programs, those who are newly arrived to those who have been here for a very long time. It's constantly submitting law reforms and conducting social research – and is really quite unique and Victorian as well.' Andrew also describes his admiration for the legacy left by Father Tucker: 'He was there linking arms on balconies to stop people being evicted and that continues through lobbying governments and people who are in positions of power.'

Andrew felt that he wanted to do something special to support the work of the Brotherhood and says: 'I have chosen to leave a gift in my Will, essentially because of the good that the Brotherhood does. Not only putting practical methods into practice, but ensuring that those practices are well researched and that people who can benefit from them are advocated for in wider society.' It is the kindness of people like Andrew, who choose to leave a legacy to the Brotherhood, that ensures our work can continue to improve the lives of all Australians.

If you would like further information on leaving a gift in your Will to the Brotherhood of St Laurence to help our work towards a future free from poverty, please contact Laura Clarke on **03 9483 1332** or email: **laura.clarke@bsl.org.au**.

Giving parents a helping hand

ParentsNext which supports parents going back into the workforce by the time their youngest child reaches school age, is increasing its reach.

Being a parent to young children is challenging, and for families that are doing it tough it's even harder. Many parents struggle to rejoin or enter the workforce after having children, and face barriers to securing employment. Lacking education or work experience can place some parents at a real disadvantage, while others compete with health concerns, housing instability or family issues. The ParentsNext program supports their return to work or study by helping parents obtain qualifications and develop practical skills.

The Brotherhood started delivering ParentsNext in 2016 in the Hume local government area, in one of 10 national pilot sites. We are pleased to announce that an expansion has been funded for July 2018 and the Brotherhood will be delivering the program to six new areas across Melbourne.

The program works closely with participants to help them achieve their goals. Parents are linked with services including English language classes, literacy and numeracy classes and vocational training. Work experience and volunteering opportunities are provided, aiming to build skills and confidence levels. The program also helps to find appropriate childcare services and any funding that may be available.

Importantly, this is a holistic service for families that, in addition to helping parents generally, provides guidance on other aspects of parenthood including early childhood checks and kinder referrals. This allows parents to feel confident in their parenting skills, an essential element to their future in employment and education.

'Working with ParentsNext participants and their families in the Hume local government area since April 2016 has been a privilege,' says Victoria Haggerston, program manager in Broadmeadows. 'We look forward to continuing to assist our Participants across Hume as well our new sites in Epping, Preston, Fitzroy, Dandenong, Pakenham and Frankston North.'

Find out about ParentsNext at **bsl.org.au/parentsnext**

Below A community BBQ held for ParentsNext participants in Craigieburn.



Michael's Story

Last year we shared with you a story about Michael who took part in two of the Brotherhood's programs which help refugees to get skills for work and make links with employers.

Michael arrived from war-torn Syria four years ago with no local knowledge or connections and limited English. With help from the Brotherhood, Michael tackled his initial barriers and is pursuing his dream of becoming an engineer. He is now making great leaps to get there and has almost finished his diploma. 'I have done well so far in the engineering program and I have finished my first three semesters at RMIT. My goal is to finish this course and go into the bachelor level.' Michael keeps in touch with us at the Brotherhood to get advice or support when needed. He has also applied to become a Brotherhood volunteer so he can pass on the knowledge he has gained since arriving in Australia. 'A new goal of mine is to become a volunteer at the Brotherhood and help others like me to achieve their goals and dreams.'

Your generosity allows us to help more young people with their education and to build better lives for themselves.

Below Michael has used the skills he learned through Brotherhood programs to pursue training as an engineer.



Research and Policy Centre update



Above Dina Bowman and Seuwandi Wickramasinghe are researchers in mature-age employment.

Enhancing employment services or older jobseekers.

With the pension age due to rise to 67 by July 2023, people are encouraged to keep working. Yet while the mature-age unemployment rate is low compared to youth unemployment, older people are more likely to remain unemployed. This, along with the stunted Newstart Allowance, means mature-age jobseekers are doing it tough.

In the past 40 years there has been a shift towards fewer low-skilled manual jobs, increased requirements for educational qualifications, and more casual, contract, labour hire and part-time jobs. Technological change, with automation; increased global market competition and the offshoring of jobs; and social change, with more women in the workforce, have combined to dramatically change the labour market.

The current version of government-funded employment services, jobactive, is delivered by for-profit and not-for-profit providers under contract to the federal Department of Employment.

The Brotherhood's two-year study, *Enhancing employment services for mature age*

jobseekers, suggests that jobactive is not working well for mature-age jobseekers, jobactive staff or employers.

Mature-age jobseekers need help from jobactive providers to identify transferable skills, and training linked to job opportunities.

Jobactive employment services staff want to assist mature-age jobseekers, but told us that they do not have enough time or resources because they are burdened by contractual compliance and high caseloads.

The employers we interviewed had little awareness or understanding of jobactive as a public employment service. The limited awareness also reflects the low use of employment services by employers.

Few of the employers we interviewed currently use jobactive. Some said they were reluctant to use jobactive (if they knew about it at all) because of concern 'about the type of candidate they're going to get'. They were cautious about recruiting any age group through publicly funded employment services, because they were peppered with unsuitable job applicants.

Tackling the challenges of mature-age unemployment requires better matching of candidates with vacancies. A skills assessment should be undertaken with all mature-age jobseekers to identify transferable skills and enable better matching with vacancies and with training.

Staff also need training, especially in identification of transferable skills and career guidance. But broader policy change is needed, in particular to foster local economic development that creates jobs.

For more information about our research and policy work visit bsl.org.au/research



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Working for an Australia free of poverty

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