

BUILDING BETTER LIVES TOGETHER

A newsletter for our valued friends and supporters



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

ISSUE 76 September 2019



Above Mina (left) with EPPSA volunteer, Noura (right), who volunteers for the program twice a week.

Using lived experience to help others

Mina is a Career Project Officer at our Employment Pathways for People Seeking Asylum (EPPSA) program. The program helps people seeking asylum become job-ready for the Australian workforce.

“This service is for people who haven’t been able to get a job because of the barriers of networks, language – and sometimes mental health issues,” explains Mina.

Mina meets new clients to talk through their situation and the process of getting job ready. The people she works with have very different backgrounds, but almost all of them have experienced trauma, which means their needs are much more complex than other job seekers.

“We go through what they have done before, what their barriers are, why they couldn’t find a job and what they want to do in the future,” says Mina. “Some people who arrive are job-ready, but some people have been left behind and don’t fit anywhere.”

Some just need someone to talk to, and Mina says that is fine, too. “They

have been living in limbo,” she says, so building community connections through EPPSA is a positive first step.

Mina came to Australia as an asylum seeker, so she understands firsthand some of the hurdles faced by new migrants.

Like the people she works with, Mina was forced to abandon her home very suddenly. “I was the top sales person in Iran. I was really successful and was making good money,” she explains. A few years ago, due to her spiritual beliefs, Mina found herself a target and in imminent danger of imprisonment. She fled her hometown,

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Throughout her life, Dorothy Kingston actively supported the Brotherhood. She was especially interested in assisting refugees and people seeking asylum and she volunteered at our former Napier Street community playgroup, linked to new migrant communities living in Fitzroy’s Atherton Flats.

Dorothy kindly left a gift to the Brotherhood in her Will. Through her generosity, we have been able to extend our EPPSA program, which helps prepare people living across Melbourne who are seeking asylum to gain employment.

Giving through your Will can make an enormous difference to our programs and the people we support.

Please call our Gifts in Wills team on 03 9483 1301 to find out more.

Invest
today



Be a part of
lasting change



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



Above Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg.

Executive Director's message

Welcome to our Spring edition of the Building Better Lives Together newsletter.

These stories illustrate how complex poverty can be, but also how much

hope can be found when people are open to creating a better community for all.

This lovely statement by Brotherhood's staff member, Mina, "Come to us, and we can figure out what to do," encapsulates what we do every day at the Brotherhood of St Laurence — kindly and comprehensively supporting someone on a pathway out of disadvantage, especially when they are newly arrived in Australia or facing a big life transition.

For young people, the transition to adulthood can be a fraught time. Kris is doing much better now and is back at school thanks to our Transition to Work team.

Philip is now healthier and happier due to the care and case management of our Aged Care services in Frankston — a few years back it was a different story. "If I didn't have the Brotherhood I would be living under a bridge," he says.

When you read Mina, Kris and Phillip's stories, it's easy to see how a series of changes in life circumstances can quickly cause hardship. But with resilience and support, lives can be transformed. This is only a part of what your help provides to the most vulnerable in the community. It is people like you who make this transformation possible.

We use our experience in working with individuals to influence how services are designed and delivered, and to influence social policy more broadly.

Drawing strength from stories of hope and generosity is something that unites all of us. We greatly appreciate all you do to create lasting change in Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conny Lenneberg". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Conny Lenneberg
Executive Director

Continued...

Tehran, so fast, Mina didn't have time to say goodbye to her close friends.

She travelled to Indonesia, where she waited for weeks before experiencing a terrifying boat journey in the middle of the night to Australia. When Mina lost contact with her family in Iran that night, they thought she was dead. "When I called my mum, she was just crying," she says.

Her experience brings a level of support that adds meaning for people traumatised by their forced migration experiences. "When they hear that I am an asylum seeker as well it brings hope into their lives."

Once a participant is job ready, Mina's team refers them to our Given the Chance Jobs Victoria program. There, they get further assistance to find a job.

Everyone's welcome. "Come to us, and we can figure out what to do."



Above Megha with her son, Yogi

Thank you

My name is Megha. You may remember me through the Brotherhood's Winter Appeal when I told my story.

I am happy to hear how many generous people in the community, just like you, donated to this campaign. Your generous donation will support people, like me, to build a better life for my children. This work cannot be done without your commitment and kindness.

The Brotherhood's Growing Learners program helped me build new social relationships, go back to study and get a job that I only dreamt of before.

Your gift means that I can now be independent and have financial security for myself and my children. Before joining this program, I didn't have much support. The Growing Learners program helped my son become confident and improved his social and communication skills. Thanks to you, he's now doing really well.

Your support is really encouraging and greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Megha

Proof that our Education First Youth Foyer model works

We're excited to be able to share with you the results of a five-year longitudinal study by our Research and Policy Centre showing the benefits of our 'education first' model approach to youth homelessness.

The study gives proof that the model greatly improves participants' education, employment, housing, and health and wellbeing outcomes, and these improvements are largely sustained a year after exit.

We know that Australians who leave school early are three times more likely to face deep social exclusion than others of the same age. Developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Hanover Welfare Services (now Launch Housing) with funding from the Victorian Government, Education First Youth Foyers expand upon the original concept of youth foyers by prioritising education as key to a sustainable livelihood. They are best known as a form of supported student accommodation rather than a crisis housing response.

The report shows that:

- young people remain committed to an education, training and employment pathway after foyer
- young people have and keep better housing outcomes after their time at foyer
- through our community of practice, we combine research and practice to build an evolving and effective program model.

A KPMG independent financial evaluation of the research also found several benefits:

- Avoided housing support alone makes up for the difference in cost between foyers and transitional housing management services.
- Improved educational attainment and employment outcomes give students increased earnings, reduce use of unemployment benefits and add taxation revenue for government.
- Savings through reduced emergency department presentations and unplanned hospital admissions.

We're delighted to have these results to reinforce the anecdotal experience of participants. It proves that early, integrated investment in young people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, supports sustained improved outcomes.

You can read the report here: bsl.org.au/research

What are they doing now?

Many participants in the Education First Youth Foyers have shared their stories with our supporters over the years. Here are updates on two of our most recent profiles:



Now living in UniLodge in Footscray, **Jess** is in her third and final year of studying a Bachelor of Sports Science. Her studies are going really well. She has been working part time at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre for 18 months and has been working at home.one café (a social enterprise) for four months. Jess is keen to continue study in the field of science and wants to begin a Bachelor of Exercise Science (clinical practice) next year.



Paul has completed a Certificate IV in Youth Work. He won Box Hill Indigenous student of the year in May this year at Box Hill Institute TAFE. He is working at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and is currently applying for a role as a Youth Justice Worker.

These are just a couple of success stories we wanted to share with you from young people who entered our Education First Youth Foyer with a need for support, but also the ambition to achieve their goals. Well done!



Above Kris is excited to finish Year 12 VCAL and attend university next year.

Getting help with growing up

It's been a tough few years for Kris. In 2017, escaping a difficult home life at 17 left him couch surfing and short on basic life skills. He was juggling the need for work, accommodation and food, which made staying at school impossible. Last year, he enrolled in a VCE course at Dandenong TAFE, but the instability of his daily life made it too difficult to keep up attendance, and he dropped out. Work was also hard to maintain. "When your living conditions are unstable, trying to get a job is very stressful," says Kris. "You're worrying about how to eat, and getting a job would fix that, but it's a cycle."

Three months ago, Kris got in touch with the Brotherhood through a friend. He's now working with our Transition to Work team to iron out bits of life admin — such as getting a copy of his birth certificate and gaining driving hours towards his P licence. Even in this short time, Kris's outlook has changed a lot and he's feeling much more positive. The support he's receiving means he's able to fill in some gaps that will help him gain more independence. "I'm getting on top of my issues," he says. He's catching up on "All the stuff you need to be shown when you're growing up".

Recently, he has grabbed the opportunity to finish school through our David Scott School Year 12 VCAL program. He's so motivated that he's on track to finish the year-long qualification in only six months. When he enrolled this time, he thought, "If I go back, I'm going to finish it."

Getting his Year 12 pass will mean Kris is able to meet his ambitions for the future. Next year, he plans to study sound engineering and audio production at university. "Now I'm in a stable situation, I'm able to think about my long-term goals," he says. He has also recently been given a place in funded accommodation, which provides added stability.

Without the youth programs at our Frankston High Street Centre, Kris says he'd still be able to make it, but it'd be a lot more of a struggle. His future is looking bright.

Our youth programs support the most vulnerable in the community who might otherwise fall through the cracks. By supporting the Brotherhood, you can enable young people to get on track to the world of work.

Find out more at bsl.org.au



Above Philip at home (Bosun, at his feet, not pictured).

From high and dry to safe and supported

Philip worked as an engineer and was a keen yachtsman in his younger days.

He sailed solo to Canada and to Tasmania many times. Now, anchored in Frankston South with his faithful dog, Bosun, Philip can still smell the ocean if the wind is blowing in the right direction. He remembers his Canadian trip, explaining clearly how to use Meridian Passage when navigating without GPS.

Eight years ago, Philip's life took a turn for the worse. He had a stroke,

followed by two lots of surgery for a brain tumour. This has left him with problems with mobility, balance and memory. At the same time his health failed, he suffered a relationship breakdown and lost most of his life savings. He worked as an engineer and was financially well off, but the illness forced him into early retirement.

With just a few big changes to wellbeing and financial circumstances, it's easy to see how anyone can find themselves in need of assistance.

"I know about nuclear physics, but it doesn't help me with the weekly shopping," Philip smiles.

Because of his high care needs, his case manager, Rachel, helped him move from a Level 2 Home Care Package to a Level 4 one. This allows him to draw on more intensive support. He now gets help with activities of daily living including cooking, gardening, shopping and cleaning, and he has access to physiotherapy, so he can work on improving his mobility.

"Rachel is my heroine. She is a very capable person who doesn't forget a thing," says Philip.

Along the way, Philip also ended up in rental accommodation which he can't afford, and a case manager has recently found him more affordable housing. Plus, our Your Energy Broker team have switched him to a cheaper energy deal. When the Brotherhood called his energy company, we found that the money he had been paying back had not been subtracted from his debt, and we arranged to have this fixed.

"If I didn't have the Brotherhood I would be living under a bridge. I couldn't live without them," says Phillip.

We are looking for volunteers to support older people across our Aged Care services. You can find out more about the roles available at bsl.org.au/volunteer



HIPPY Age 3 extension trial

We are proud to announce that, through the generous support of a local philanthropic foundation, HIPPY Australia has begun work on the development of a new HIPPY Age 3 curriculum.

HIPPY is currently run for families with children aged four and five only. The trial of HIPPY Age 3 will be implemented at HIPPY Frankston North over three years starting in 2020.

The project is being led by Dr Anne Kennedy and HIPPY Australia's Kiara Tallboy and will draw on lessons learned from the successful HIPPY Inala Age 3 pilot.

The development of new curriculum materials and teaching framework will provide us with a valuable means of advocating with government for future funding of Age 3 delivery across our network of 100 sites.

If you're interested in supporting our Frankston children's programs, **contact our Major Gifts Manager on 03 9483 2442.**



Will you join us this Anti-Poverty Week?

Poverty exists. Poverty hurts us all. We can all do something about it.

Anti-Poverty Week supports the Australian community to have an increased understanding of poverty and to take action to collectively end it.

Each year, Brotherhood staff and supporters join together at the Melbourne Marathon, to mark the start of Anti-Poverty Week and to raise funds. This year, money raised will go to our programs that support children and families.

By moving together this Anti-Poverty Week, you will be able to help us help more children and families build a brighter future. Let's make sure no child falls behind.

Rally your friends and family together to start fundraising and take part. Great incentives and prizes will be up for grabs.



Above Brotherhood staff at last year's Melbourne Marathon event.

There's a race to suit everyone's ability

3km walk (family friendly), 5km, 10km, Half Marathon, Wheelchair Marathon, Full Marathon

Date
Sunday 13 October

Time
7am – 12pm
(dependent on race start time)

Register
at bsl.org.au/letsmovetogether

For more info, email events@bsl.org.au

Anti-Poverty Week 2019 falls on the week of 13–19 October.



Above Former federal minister, Jenny Macklin

Sambell Oration to focus on a just future in insecure times

This year's Sambell Oration is to be delivered by former federal minister Jenny Macklin, who has been at the frontline of social policy debates for more than three decades.

First held in 1981, the oration is a forum for community leaders to discuss social justice issues.

Ms Macklin, now a Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne, will offer a frank perspective on social and economic policy trends in Australia. What are the challenges ahead to enable economic security for all? How do we rebuild declining trust in our institutions in an era of remarkable – yet stubbornly uneven – prosperity?

The oration will take place at a dinner at the Melbourne Museum on 21 November. For more information please contact events@bsl.org.au



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