Brotherhood comment

Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

Doing things differently
Policies to end persistent poverty

On 31 March, the Brotherhood's Executive Director, Tony Nicholson, spoke at the opening plenary session of the Sustaining prosperity: new reform opportunities for Australia *conference at the University of Melbourne. This article is based on his speech.*

In the last two decades, after a shaky start, we've gained a better understanding about how to effectively manage a deregulated economy. The central bank and other policy makers are now better placed to keep interest rates and inflation down.

Whilst we are not yet as advanced in dealing with the social consequences of a deregulated economy, we are beginning to see more clearly how to prevent people from being excluded from participating in wealth creation.

How to include more people in mainstream economic and social life of the country—this is the debate we need to have, not the sterile argument that has dragged on over recent years about how we measure poverty.

The Brotherhood doesn't agree with published conclusions from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey that poverty in Australia is a short experience for most (Wooden 2005). To date the HILDA data is limited in measuring the extent to which poverty is persistent for individuals and families. At best it has identified that many people are caught up in a 'churn' between unemployment and a succession of low-paid, low-skilled, short-term jobs, insufficient to lift them permanently out of poverty and leaving them with no chance of building assets. Rather people are left teetering on the edge of poverty.

Like other measures, the HILDA data doesn't include the homeless. At the last census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics counted over 100,000 homeless. Most were in the first third of their working lives. About half were actively in the labour market. I challenge any one to suggest they are not experiencing persistent poverty. If we're to use HILDA data to measure the persistence of poverty it will at least need to be supplemented by other data sets.

Most importantly, the HILDA data is too short in duration. While we agree that short-term poverty is far preferable to long-term poverty, the HILDA data fails to measure the extent to which short-term poverty is intermittent. International evidence shows that although the proportion of the population that is continuously poor is low, the population with low average incomes over the long term is significantly higher. This is explained by repeat spells of poverty, suggesting that those in poverty may move into low-paid work but then lose their job and move back into poverty again.

That said, it highlights one important fact: our society is still producing a hard core of people in persistent poverty, and we need to direct much of our effort to helping them lift themselves out of it.

The Brotherhood believes the new economy demands a new approach to social policy. If we get it right, we will not only reduce poverty but also give a powerful boost to wealth creation. It requires all of us to do things differently.

We need to give people—those who are unemployed, underemployed, receiving non-activity tested benefits, or suffering chronic poverty due to substance abuse, disabilities or mental illness— the 'capacities' (as renowned Cambridge economist Amartya

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Sen would say) to cope with the new economy. These capacities will assist people to cope with a more flexible employment market and a changing society, which demand higher skills and in which people have different family responsibilities, and enable them to contribute to the nation's economic growth.

In concrete terms, the Brotherhood is arguing for people to have more access to the big passport to success in the employment market—education and life skills. We want people to move from welfare to a job and then on to an even better job—not from welfare to a succession of low-paid, low-skilled, short-term jobs.

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Reference
Wooden, M 2005, 'Poverty relatively transient', *Australian*, 19–20 February, p.30.

The full text of Tony Nicholson's speech is available on the Brotherhood's website.

Recent submissions

Submissions or statements made by the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the last year include:

- Submission to the Victorian Ophthalmology Service Planning Framework, April 2004

- *Helping local people get jobs: the Brotherhood of St Laurence experience in Fitzroy and Collingwood*, supplementary submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into employment: Increasing workforce participation, May 2004

- Joint submission to the Productivity Commission Review of National Competition Policy Arrangements, with VCOSS and Centre for Public Policy, June 2004

- Submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee Inquiry into student income support, June 2004

- BSL Response to *Australian Consumers and Money, A Discussion Paper by the Consumer and Financial Literacy Taskforce*, July 2004

- Submission to Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry Into Aged Care, August 2004

- Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the economic implications for an ageing Australia, September 2004

- Joint submission to Mental Health Community Consultations of Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Mental Health Council of Australia, with Catholic Social Services Victoria, September 2004.

- Response to Community Care Division, Department of Human Services, on the report, *Protecting children: Ten priorities for children's wellbeing and safety in Victoria*, December 2004

- Submission to Treasurer John Brumby on the development of the Victorian Government's 2005–06 Budget, December 2004

- Submission to DIMIA on Australia's Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program 2005–06, January 2005

- Response to the DEWR discussion paper on Disability Open Employment services, February 2005

- Response to Commonwealth of Australia Joint Committee on Public Works re Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre – Additional accommodation and related works, by BSL as a member of Justice for Asylum Seekers, February 2005.

From the General Manager, Social Action and Research

The year 2005 has begun with a bang for SAR. We were well represented at the *Transitions and Risk: New Directions for Social Policy* conference hosted by the Centre for Public Policy and our Executive Director Tony Nicholson addressed the *Sustaining Prosperity* conference conducted by the Melbourne Institute and the *Australian* newspaper. Both these events evidenced a new vigour in Australian social policy debate just as the federal government re-engages with welfare reform. In Nicholson's terms the 'new economy' needs a 'new social policy' (see p.1). In SAR we have been fleshing out the new social policy through our research themes relating to social investment, social inclusion and social governance.

Social investment
Last year we scoped the concept of a 'social investment state' in several papers in the new *Social Policy Working Papers* series which we are producing in collaboration with the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Melbourne. This understanding of welfare as investment continues to grow in policy relevance. In terms of welfare reform especially, it is increasingly apparent that in the knowledge economy, the prospects of some people getting established with real economic opportunities will depend on significant new investment in their education, training, child care and transport needs (see articles by Stephen Ziguras, pp.6–7 and Lucy Nelms, p.8). The same investment imperative also applies to place-based disadvantage.

SAR research this year will also have particular emphases on the long-term economic benefits of social investment, as well as on the costs of 'non-social' policy. Our ARC Linkage projects on transitional labour markets and low-paid work will inform this research. Serena Lillywhite's work in corporate social responsibility has led to exploration of protecting workers' rights under a potential China–Australia Free Trade Agreement (see page 14).

Social inclusion
Closely linked to the investment theme is our work on social inclusion as a new way of thinking about disadvantage. As Rosanna Scutella reports (pp.4–5) we are launched on two major research projects this year designed to deliver new indicators of deprivation not just of income but of the capacities required to flourish in today's very different economic and social environment. This research will deliver the basis of what we hope will be a new national conversation about the purposes of social policy. Janet Taylor's investigation of refugee regional settlement initiatives (p.13) explores dimensions of inclusion/exclusion affecting newer members of Australia's population, while Janet Stanley draws attention to the link between inadequate public transport and social exclusion (page 12).

Social governance
As Sara Bice (p.10) and Louise Coventry (p.11) show, exciting steps are also being taken (in conjunction with BSL services and with other agencies) in our third research area concerned with new forms of social governance. Bureaucrats have been talking for some years about 'joined up' services enabling more effective community engagement. However, the community sector has been less involved in considering how this might work. Our work this year will focus on the distinctive contribution the community sector brings to the emerging forms of social governance. We are convening with the Centre for Public Policy a national conference on 18 May to highlight these issues.

Continuous improvement
Internally 2005 has been busy. SAR has had significant input into research aspects of the strategic planning process. New processes have been established to better connect SAR research with BSL media and lobbying and services. A Student Unit has been set up in partnership with the University of Melbourne and Monash University and processes streamlined to optimise the experience of volunteer researchers. We have also welcomed Rosanna Scutella: formerly of the Melbourne Institute, Rosanna is an economist who has just submitted her doctoral thesis.

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Social Policy Working Papers
(online series, available on Brotherhood and Centre for Public Policy websites)

1. Fred Argy, *A social agenda for equity and efficiency*, August 2004

2. Catherine Jones Finer, *Putting a positive gloss on welfare state de-structuring: recent British experience*, September 2004

3. Daniel Perkins, Lucy Nelms & Paul Smyth, *Beyond neoliberalism: the social investment state?*, October 2004

4. Jo Barraket, *Putting people in the picture? The role of the arts in social inclusion*, February 2005

Who are the disadvantaged?
Poverty measurement 30 years after Henderson

Australians have enjoyed a long and sustained period of economic growth, over which overall standards of living have increased substantially. But have we all enjoyed the fruits of this growth? Are there people who have been left behind? How many and why? Are people's circumstances changing over time? These are the sorts of questions poverty researchers aim to address. However, debates about what being 'poor' actually means persist, particularly when it comes to assessing adequate levels of income and material well-being.

What is obvious from recent discussions surrounding poverty in Australia is that if we are to eradicate poverty, a new approach is needed in understanding its causes and what it means to be poor. Broader concepts of poverty, reflecting the multiple dimensions disadvantage can have, need to be investigated. Two such approaches currently examined by researchers at the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), social exclusion and capability deprivation, are introduced in this discussion. But first let us turn to the father of poverty measurement in Australia, Professor Ronald Henderson.

Henderson's poverty inquiry
This year marks the 30th anniversary of the first main report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1975). Commissioned by the Whitlam government, with Ronald Henderson as its chairman, the inquiry relied on methods devised by Henderson in Melbourne in the 1960s to develop a nationwide measure of income poverty. Any family with an income below what represented an 'austere' standard of living, widely known as the Henderson poverty line, was considered to be living in poverty. The poverty line was based on the value of the basic wage plus child endowment (an earlier version of family allowance) for a reference family of two adults with two children. Adjustments were then made for other household types.

Although never officially used by governments as a measure of poverty, the Henderson poverty line became the standard used by researchers to gauge progress in the community. However, issues such as the move away from the traditional male breadwinner model, the end of full employment and problems with updating the poverty line have all diminished its relevance. Alternative income and consumption-based poverty lines have been developed—for example, setting the poverty line at some fraction of median or mean incomes. Even then, while its intent is to reflect some minimum level of resources required to participate effectively in society—hence its relative nature—the setting of a poverty line is essentially arbitrary and open to scrutiny.

Where are we now?
Many would say that our perceptions of what poverty is for ordinary Australians have never been so polarised. There remains no formal measure of poverty in Australia, and discussion on income related poverty remains fraught with controversy. The highly publicised debate when writers from the Centre for Independent Studies (Tsumori, Saunders & Hughes 2002) attacked a report on poverty published by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling and The Smith Family (Harding, Lloyd & Greenwell 2001) highlights how difficult and contentious it is to arrive at a widely accepted income-based poverty line in the current economic and political climate.

Multi-dimensional indicators of disadvantage

Social exclusion
But perhaps we are closer to convergence on this issue than we think. It is now commonly understood that while income may provide one dimension of deprivation, other factors should also be considered. Access to quality and affordable housing, health, education and transport are are widely recognised as affecting living standards. Understanding these multiple dimensions of poverty or deprivation provides common ground for poverty researchers and policy makers with a range of viewpoints to promote sustainable economic development in a cohesive society.

One of the main approaches to disadvantage followed in Europe, and increasingly apparent in Australia, is to think of deprivation as social exclusion (Jones & Smyth 1999). Lack of resources and/or inadequate access to services makes it difficult for individuals or groups to participate in society. The formal concept of social exclusion originated in the 1970s in France, referring to the population unprotected by the French social security system, and was rooted in the tradition of social solidarity. The concept has since grown and been taken up by most of Europe, and is currently applied to the range of dimensions which marginalise people and reduce their opportunities to engage in social or political life.

Most countries in the European Union (EU) now produce indicators of social exclusion to gauge progress in improving the circumstances of disadvantaged groups. Indicators typically used relate to health, education, incomes, attachment to the labour market

A new approach is needed in understanding its causes and what it means to be poor.

and access to housing and other services. One set of indicators is the Laeken indicators, economic and social indicators endorsed by Heads of State and Government of countries in the EU as measuring tools in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The main indicators cover the areas of life expectancy, incomes, employment, education and health.

Capability deprivation

Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen's notion of capability deprivation is another increasingly popular multidimensional approach to conceptualising poverty (Sen 1999). Originating in the context of international development, Sen's ideas stem from a belief that deprivation should focus not on people's resources nor on their means to achieve, but on what they are able to do or be with these resources. Expanding people's capabilities and opportunities to enjoy long, healthy lives, to be literate and to participate freely in society is seen as the focus of human development.

While deprivation is very different in developed countries, the approach is relevant when one thinks of people's freedom to choose a particular life course. In practice, however, capabilities are difficult to measure. Thus indicators must be chosen that act as a proxy for capabilities and may rely at least partly on examining people's resources. Indicators commonly used to assess capability deprivation are life expectancy and other health-related outcomes, literacy and educational attainment, social relations, opportunities in the labour market, housing and economic resources.

While the origins of the social exclusion and capabilities approaches to poverty differ, the concepts have many similarities, particularly the emphasis on people's freedoms and opportunities to participate in society. Also, at a practical level, the types of indicators available overlap. Due to these overlaps, both approaches have been drawn on by the United Nations Development Programme to develop their conceptual framework on human development (for example, see the latest UNDP *Human Development Report*).

Developments at the BSL

Here at the BSL advances in the discourse around poverty and disadvantage have been embraced. BSL researchers are engaged in projects examining both social exclusion and capability deprivation. As an industry partner in an ARC linkages grant, the BSL is working with the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales to develop new indicators of social exclusion and material deprivation. This project, titled *Left out and missing out*, involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture public opinion on acceptable standards of living and necessary patterns of social interaction and participation.

Researchers including myself are also part of a project developing indicators to capture Sen's notion of capabilities. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with researchers at the Melbourne Institute at the University of Melbourne. Here information from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Survey and other sources will be used to measure people's capabilities to function in Australian society.

Being involved in both of these areas of research provides the BSL with an active voice in the broader discussion around poverty and disadvantage. This is an important opportunity to make real progress in developing an Australia free of poverty.

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Jones, A & Smyth, P 1999, 'Social exclusion: a new framework for social policy analysis?' Just Policy, No.17, pp. 11–20.

Sen, A 1999, *Development and freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Tsumori, K, Saunders, P & Hughes, H 2002, 'Poor arguments: A response to the Smith Family report on poverty in Australia', *Issue Analysis*, no. 21, pp. 1–12.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) 2004, *Human development report 2004*, viewed 21 March 2005, <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_complete.pdf>.

Advance notice
The BSL is planning a conference to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Ronald Henderson's report from the poverty inquiry later in 2005. Check <www.bsl.org.au> for updates.

The social exclusion and capabilities approaches to poverty have many similarities, particularly the emphasis on people's freedoms and opportunities to participate in society.

Welfare reform for better or worse
How are proposed changes likely to affect vulnerable Australians?

After the last federal election, the Prime Minister John Howard declared that welfare reform was a key priority for his re-elected government:

> Income support for those of working age will be linked to employment programmes and services to reduce welfare dependence and increase workforce participation.

Mr Howard announced that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations would be expanded to include programs previously run through Family and Community Services. The department:

> will focus on providing intensive assistance, training and work experience to those who receive welfare payments with the goal of enabling them to participate in the workforce to the full extent of their capacity and family responsibilities.

Importance of training and work experience
The emphasis on training and work experience in the PM's announcement is encouraging. The BSL has argued that over the last few years social security and employment policies have been too inflexible and not tailored to the particular circumstances of job seekers. In particular, while job search requirements and the Job Network 'work first' approach benefit many, they do little for people with the greatest barriers to employment. For this group, BSL experience suggests that greater provision of training and work experience is more effective.

We need, however, to ensure that what is provided is both real training and real work experience. Training has been interpreted by many employment services to mean short or refresher courses in computer use or interview

skills. While these are useful for some, they do not offer the level of skills development needed by more disadvantaged job seekers: accredited training through traineeships is much more relevant to this group.

Similarly, work experience for most is restricted to participation in Work for the Dole programs (WfD). While participants value the social contact they get from WfD, two major failings are that the experience is not directly connected to current vacancies in the labour market and that it is not linked to the training necessary for many jobs. WfD should be replaced with a paid work experience placement with private and public employers at award wages, subsidised by a payment to the employer. Using Group Training companies to employ those on work placements would remove both the administrative burden and risk from employers.

Increasing workforce participation
The other main Government priorities will be measures to move people with disabilities and sole parents into employment. The BSL supports initiatives to help these groups, since many would like to work but face a combination of barriers to employment. The Government has an opportunity to make a significant difference to the lives of people involuntarily excluded from employment. (See also Lucy Nelms' article concerning sole parents, p.8)

People with disabilities report great difficulty in being considered for jobs because employers are reluctant to hire someone with a disability. Many people with a disability become disabled as adults. They are likely to have some work experience, but many find it impossible to continue in their current jobs. A preventive approach

would encourage employers to find alternative duties or offer retraining for somebody who becomes disabled. The approach to welfare reform outlined by the McClure Report, which emphasises support, incentives and requirements, seems relevant to businesses and government policy as well as to individuals.

The main proposal flagged so far is that new applicants for Disability Support Pension (DSP) should meet the criterion that they are unable to work more than 15 hours per week (reduced from 30 hours per week). Those who do not qualify for DSP will have to apply for Newstart Allowance, paid at almost $50 per fortnight lower than DSP.

Unfortunately this is already an out-of-date approach: both the New Zealand and British governments have recognised that framing eligibility for disability benefits in terms of capacity to work only reinforces the message that people with disabilities cannot work—the opposite of what is required. It also means people become very worried about whether working will jeopardise their benefits, again likely to be counter-productive.

Some change is necessary to help people with disabilities gain employment. The current eligibility requirements for DSP relate to incapacity to work, but many people with disabilities can and do work. DSP should recognise that this group face much larger barriers to employment than most, but not assume inability to work as a condition for entitlement.

Reforming the Disability Support Pension
As well as more attention towards employer practices, an overall strategy could include reform of social security payments.

We need to ensure that what is provided is both real training and real work experience.

The DSP could be replaced with two new payments.

One income support payment at the level of the current DSP payments could be available to those without paid employment. It would have a graduated activity test reflecting a person's barriers to employment. This might overcome the 'all-or-nothing' activity tests which currently operate for people on Newstart Allowance and DSP. Capacity to work a certain number of hours would not disqualify people, except perhaps for full-time workers being ineligible, but could be part of the basis for a limited activity test (for example, attending an interview to discuss employment options). Eligibility could be based on the degree to which the disability made employment more difficult. Some people eligible for this payment might be completely unable to work, but most would have some capacity for employment.

The second benefit would be a cost of disability payment which reflects the additional costs (of transport, personal care, etc.) borne by people with disabilities. Like Rent Assistance, this would be a top-up payment based on an assessment of additional average costs. For people with severe disabilities, or high costs, there might be a higher rate. The income test could be set such that payments were only reduced at a fairly high income (perhaps similar to Family Tax Benefit).

Eligibility to go back onto benefits without re-claiming would be left open for up to two years. This situation applies currently, but only for those who lose their jobs because of their disability. The reality of the casualised workplace is that many people fear their jobs will not last even if they can meet the requirements. The two-year suspension period, regardless of the reason for the job finishing, would alleviate the anxiety that many people feel about losing eligibility for DSP and which may act as a disincentive to take up employment.

Reforms along similar lines have recently been announced by the New Zealand Government. One key issue which requires more work is what assessment should be used to replace the 'hours of work' criterion. The New Zealand approach proposes 'having a long-term medical condition or disability that is sufficiently severe it would not be reasonable to expect full-time work' (NZ Minister for Social Development and Employment 2005, p. 23). The government expects to spend the next year refining this criterion.

While reforming DSP along the lines suggested above may have some impact on employment opportunities, the Australian Government will also need to address the barriers faced by people with disabilities. These include employer attitudes and lack of knowledge about supports available (for example, for workplace modifications). A narrow focus on restricting eligibility for DSP will merely reduce government spending at the expense of some of the most disadvantaged members of the community.

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Insights from GAPCo
Pam Beaumont and Joy Anstey of the Brotherhood's Graduate and Professional Career Options work with clients who have various disabilities. They are cautious about the effects of possible changes to income support on these clients:

'For instance, we work with a number of people coping with psychiatric illnesses. For people with an episodic disability such as bipolar, the Disability Support Pension may be an important safety net, if they lose a job due to the disability and have to look for work again. That might take as long as two or three years, but currently they can go back on the DSP in the meantime. If they had to go on to Newstart, the pressure of meeting mutual obligation requirements would add to the difficulties they already face.

'People with disabilities like this (and conditions like MS or chronic fatigue) may be able to work more than 15 hours a week when they are well, but may suffer severe setbacks for months at a time, preventing them from working. For some, their capacity to work varies widely from day to day.

'The need to offer specialist employment services for people with disabilities, including ongoing support once a person commences a job, will continue. If the government is serious about increasing workforce participation by people with disabilities they need to pay attention to policies and incentives for employers to take on such people as workers, perhaps beginning with government departments.'

Provisions for DSP should recognise that this group face much larger barriers to employment than most, but not assume inability to work as a condition for entitlement.

Sole parents
Finding the right balance?

While the Government's welfare reform taskforce deliberates on the details, it is known that sole parents receiving Parenting Payment will be a focus of their reforms. Those recipients with primary school-age children may now be required to engage in part-time work or training. Underlying the welfare reform drive are the desire to increase the labour supply and cut the welfare bill as well as the belief that welfare recipients capable of work have a responsibility to look for work and that income from paid work is best for families.

There is virtue in seeking ways to raise the workforce participation of sole parents and reduce the financial disadvantage of their families. Sole parents, 83 per cent of whom are women, are overrepresented in lower income groups. In 2002, 73 per cent of sole parents were in the bottom 40 per cent of households by income (ABS 2004). Sole parents already understand the importance of paid work. They have the highest rates of paid employment among all welfare recipient groups (Saunders, Eardley & Brown 2003). Indeed, for almost half of sole parents welfare benefits are not the main income source (ABS 2004). But for many, there are obstacles to making a stable transition into work; and there is concern about how the proposed welfare reforms might affect this group.

Significant barriers

Policy must address the considerable demands of being a sole parent and the unique barriers to combining work and caring they experience. Many sole parents also face personal barriers to work, ranging from limited education to health issues. Butterworth (2003) found that 65 per cent of sole mothers receiving income support in his research sample had two or more barriers to taking up work, and sole mothers were four times more likely than partnered recipients to face multiple psychological, personal and social barriers.

Sole parents also face structural barriers to finding work. To 'negotiate a sustainable living' they need decent wages, work close to home, transport and affordable and accessible childcare (Howe & Pidwell 2002)—some or all of which may be lacking.

Beyond this, the interplay between income support and tax can create financial disincentives to paid work, through high effective marginal tax rates (EMTRs, the percentage of an increase in earnings that is 'lost' to income tax and income tests on government payments). Almost a quarter of sole parents face high EMTRs (rates over 60 per cent), compared with eight per cent of the population (Beer 2003).

A work-first obligation-style program for sole parents has been flagged. If the aim is to get people into work, however, the Government will need to help sole parents overcome the barriers they face and find a successful and productive balance between caring and work.

Indications that the government intends to improve child-care benefits and working arrangements and to maintain sole parents' concession cards for a period after finding work (McManus & Frenkel 2005) are positive. They do not, however, represent the comprehensive investment in the future capacity of sole parent families which the Brotherhood advocates.

Research

The Government's proposals undervalue the work of raising children, and limit sole parents' choices about caring. Stephen Ziguras and I are examining Transitional Labour Markets (see *Brotherhood Comment* November 2003) as a potential policy framework for sole parents balancing parental caring and paid work and minimising associated risks. This approach strongly values the work of caring but also asserts the importance of maintaining skills and connection to the labour market during transitions.

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Policy must consider the considerable demands of being a sole parent and the unique barriers to combining work and caring they experience.

A new welfare history agenda
Rethinking the role of the non-government sector

In February, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Australian Catholic University and La Trobe University convened the first welfare history conference in Australia. Historians Colin Holden and Richard Trembath spoke about the history of the Brotherhood from their research funded by the Australian Research Council. The Library provided a display of photographs from the BSL archive. Nineteen papers, largely by emerging scholars, demonstrated that welfare history is back but with new agendas.

Time for review

Welfare history was pioneered in Australia by J F Cairns and T H Kewley. In the 1970s and 80s contributors included Jill Roe, Brian Dickey, Ronald Mendelsohn, Stuart Macintyre, Richard Kennedy, Francis Castles and Stephen Garton. Indeed the distinctive development of Australia's system of welfare by 'other means' (i.e. the wage system) became a feature of the international comparative social policy literature. In the 1990s, however, the flow of historical writing dried up. By 2005, with major changes in contemporary Australian social policy, it was timely to find out what the historians were thinking.

As Professor Jill Roe of Macquarie University noted in her conference keynote address, earlier writers had typically been concerned with the rise of the welfare state. Now it is the role of non-government welfare, volunteers and religion which are themes of much current research. In the earlier histories, the 'age of charity' was typically associated with laissez-faire economics, Protestant work ethics and church-based charities sorting the deserving from the undeserving poor—an approach which was replaced by the social rights granted in the welfare state.

The free milk scheme established by the Brotherhood with community support in Fitzroy in 1948 was later adopted by the Victorian Government for all primary schools. Photo from the BSL archive.

Continuity and change

Some conference papers showed continuity with the earlier perspectives. Indeed, they showed how once discredited charitable practices designed to elicit good 'character' are very much with us again in a new welfare paternalism.

Others, however, showed discontinuities. Some charities were in fact highly non-judgmental and strong on solidarity with the disadvantaged. The contribution of religion in particular was shown to be much more diverse than allowed by the earlier historians. There were glimpses of mutualism and voluntary cooperation which resonate positively with much current concern to renovate Australia's 'social capital' through community renewal. It was the new scholars' determination to re-engage with this lost world of non-government welfare that gave the conference a most lively character.

Of particular interest was the impact of the rise of the welfare state in the 1960s and 70s, often seen as the climax of twentieth century social policy in Australia. Now its role seems more ambiguous, especially in relation to the non-government sector. Was the latter's role meant to be superseded as the age of charity gave way to the age of rights? Or was there to be a new form of partnership?

Overall it seems that a new welfare history agenda has begun to take shape. Its central concern is the role of charities in Australian welfare development and their relationship with the state. Such work is urgently needed as contemporary social policy seeks a new welfare mix of rights and obligations between the state, market and civil society.

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Innovative engagement
The Victorian Southern Region Citizens' Panel

Successfully engaging and consulting with communities is a major challenge for government and non-government organisations. In response to this challenge, Brotherhood of St Laurence invited public tenants to take part in a citizens' panel or jury in October 2004. One aim of the jury was to explore this deliberative method of consultation with public tenants in the Southern Region of Melbourne, many of whom do not live on estates and for whom the estate-based tenant group is not an effective method of consultation.

The citizens' jury is a pioneering method of community consultation previously used mainly by government. It is steeped in deliberative democratic theory, based upon ideals of citizens' participation in informed decision making. Deliberative democracy places a strong emphasis on 'active citizenship' and supports the capabilities of 'everyday people' to create rational and useful decisions (Woodward 2000).

Citizens' juries are founded on three main tenets: random selection to create fair and accurate community representation; provision of information to facilitate informed decision making; and movement toward consensus through facilitated deliberation. These tenets support consultations which include a broad cross-section of communities, affirm the ability of citizens to make rational and considered decisions, and strengthen individuals' abilities to work together.

The Victorian Southern Region Citizens' Panel, organised through BSL's Public Housing Advocacy Program (PHAP), brought together 15 public housing tenants to deliberate on tenant involvement. Over two and a half days, the panel heard from expert presenters, who provided a range of perspectives on many aspects of tenant involvement. The Panel's work was directed by a charge—a set of questions—and was guided by a professional, independent facilitator. Between presentations, panellists, like legal jurors, discussed the information received, took notes, developed questions for presenters and debated the issues. Finally, the Panel wrote a report which directly addressed the questions raised in the charge.

This report was formally presented to the Regional Housing Manager, Southern Metropolitan Region, Office of Housing (OoH) and to the PHAP Manager, Southern Metropolitan Region. Prior to the Panel, OoH and PHAP agreed to respond to the Panel's report. This provided crucial support for the Panel's work and helped to validate their efforts. The panel recommended improved access to community services through better information provision; increased communication between OoH, PHAP and tenants; the public promotion of tenant success stories; and the appointment of tenant advocates to liaise between local tenants and government and agencies.

To aid the replication of the citizens' jury both within BSL and in other agencies, a documentary of the Panel process was produced. *Seeing is believing!* provides a perceptive insight into deliberative decision making as a thorough and useful means of community consultation.

While the creation and presentation of the report were significant successes for all panellists, the benefits of participation in the Panel did not end there. Citizens' juries offer an amazingly effective means of developing individual and community capacity. Panellists stated they felt empowered, trusted, valued and respected. As one said, 'I learnt I could do things. I used to need my family to speak up for me. Now, I can speak for myself'. Another noted, 'Participation in the Panel has given me that confidence to get back into the workforce'.

The success of the Victorian Southern Region Citizens' Panel confirmed the BSL's belief that citizens' juries offer an effective and exciting means of community consultation. Additionally, the experience has provided significant insights into ways in which the model might be adapted in future by community service organisations.

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A full report of the Citizens' Panel will be available on the web. DVD copies of the Panel documentary *Seeing is believing!* are available from PHAP for $15 (includes postage within Australia).

Reference
Woodward, V 2000, 'Community engagement with the state: a case study of the Plymouth Hoe Citizens' Jury', *Community Development Journal*, vol.35, pp.233–44.

While the creation and presentation of the report was a significant success for all panellists, the benefits of participation in the Panel did not end there.

Introducing YP[4]
Piloting an integrated service for young homeless job seekers

YP[4] is a three-year trial which seeks to demonstrate that joining up programs and services in a client-centred manner will result in more sustainable employment and housing outcomes for young homeless job seekers. YP[4] is the result of extended research and developmental work by four key partner organisations: Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne Citymission, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Loddon Mallee Housing Services.

Earlier, YP[4] was known as the Young Homeless Jobseeker Trial. Our new name is intended to capture our purpose using language with less pejorative connotations. YP represents young people. The numeral four is in superscript, signifying 'to the power of four'. The four p's or powers are purpose (meaning a job), place (meaning a home), personal support (denoting the service being offered), and proof (acknowledging YP[4]'s status as a trial and the importance of the evaluation framework).

Single point of contact
YP[4] represents a new approach to assisting individuals who experience both homelessness and unemployment, in recognition that existing forms of housing and employment assistance are fragmented, linear, ineffective and inefficient for homeless job seekers. YP[4] will offer to homeless young people aged 18 to 35 years a single point of contact to address employment, housing, educational and personal support goals in an integrated manner over a two-year period.

The key components of YP[4] are:
- resourced case management
- access to a flexible pool of resources
- timely, individualised assistance
- negotiated pathways to employment, which could include mentoring, work experience, vocational training and/or subsidised employment
- commitment to secure housing and a living wage.

The evidence base for YP[4] is contained in the foundation paper, *A new approach to assisting young homeless job seekers*, (Campbell 2003). The trial proposal with matching title was published in March 2004 (Hanover Welfare Services 2004). Both can be downloaded from the 'current research' page at <www.hanover.org.au>.

Evaluating the model
YP[4] is a social experiment of the type rarely seen (or permitted) in Australian social policy circles. An Ethics and Evaluation Advisory Group has been set up, comprising two professors and representatives from all major stakeholders. A rigorous evaluation framework was formalised even before a single participant was recruited for the trial.

Balanced attention is being given to three types of evaluation: an outcome evaluation, an evaluation of the acts of joining up that occur in YP[4] and a financial evaluation.

The outcome evaluation methodology relies on the existence of a 'control' group whose (employment and housing) outcomes can be directly compared with the outcomes for the 'treatment' group (those who are receiving the service delivered by YP[4]). Importantly, young homeless job seekers are being allocated randomly (with a few exceptions) to the control or treatment group. This is possible because there are more young homeless job seekers in each of our catchment areas than there are places in YP[4]. The outcome evaluation is being overseen by a principal investigator,

Dr Marty Grace of Victoria University, who is independent of all of the partner organisations, including the five participating government departments.

The financial evaluation includes both a cost-benefit analysis and a cost-effectiveness analysis. The independent principal investigators are from the Department of Economics and the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne.

The evaluation of the 'joining up' process is participatory, organic and developmental. The trial manager doubles as the principal investigator.

YP[4] intends to publish emerging findings on a regular basis, and these may be included in later editions of *Brotherhood Comment*. The partner agencies believe that YP[4] has the potential to profoundly influence social program provision in the future, especially the design of housing and employment assistance.

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Hanover Welfare Services 2004, *A new approach to assisting young homeless job seekers: Trial proposal*, <http://www.hanover.org.au/fifthestate/archives/070.040/70/YP4Proposal%20Mar04.doc>.

> **Existing forms of housing and employment assistance are fragmented, linear, ineffective and inefficient for homeless job seekers.**

Public transport and social policy
Addressing social exclusion

Until recently, transport issues have largely been the domain of traffic planners and engineers. However, it is increasingly recognised that people who are transport-disadvantaged are commonly the same population groups as those who are at risk of being socially excluded; and these groups—the aged, young people, those with a disability, new migrant groups and those on a low income—are the main users of public transport.

Public transport is an important means of facilitating accessibility, the ease of obtaining goods and services and getting to work, school and recreation. Being mobile also enables people to form networks and engage with others, enhancing personal well-being and contributing to social capital. A community with high levels of social capital is one that is inclusive and strong.

Early work on transport and social policy was undertaken by Britain's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). The researchers identified five barriers which need to be addressed:

1. Improving the availability and physical accessibility of transport
2. Making travel more affordable
3. Reducing the need to travel by placing services in more accessible places
4. Reducing the fear of crime associated with travel
5. Widening travel horizons: people on low incomes were found to be less willing to travel to work than those on higher incomes.

The SEU argues that there is a need to understand how people access key activities, and to link this with planning and strategic policy initiatives, such as:

- reviewing restrictive transport regulations
- integrating transport planning with other services (such as education and health)
- forming partnerships between transport providers, local authorities and local service providers to work on transport solutions
- introducing initiatives (such as reducing cost) to make transport more accessible.

Two recent studies associated with the Brotherhood have examined the transport needs of people at risk of social isolation in Australia. Previous work has shown that people in outer metropolitan Melbourne devote a higher proportion of their household expenditure to transport than residents closer to the CBD (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research unpublished). Work in progress at the Victorian Government's Neighbourhood Renewal site of Doveton and Eumemmerring illustrates the association between multiple disadvantages. In that neighbourhood, 48 per cent of the 300 surveyed households had no-one in paid employment. While 58 per cent of those surveyed said a car or motor bike was their main form of transport, a high percentage (26 per cent) nominated their main transport as public transport.

In Warrnambool, a Victorian regional centre, researchers found that transport-disadvantaged groups made fewer trips per day than typical Melbourne outer suburban residents and fewer than people in Warrnambool who own a car. They often depended on public transport, particularly buses. Four out of five route bus passengers were pensioners or students. Older people retained a car licence for as long as possible, and car-sharing was common amongst both Indigenous people and those on a low income. People with a disability relied heavily on community buses, rather than route buses. The reasons for this were complex: for example, subsidised community buses were available and affordable, while route buses were either not considered or regarded as difficult to use. Children and youth, especially those in the rural areas studied, appeared to be the most transport-disadvantaged because they had few (and sometimes no) travel options.

As a result of the Warrnambool study, the State Government is trialling an Accessibility Planning Council, comprising representatives from government departments, including the Victorian Department of Communities, local councils, community transport providers, public transport operators and taxi operators, as well as advocates for disadvantaged groups and members of the general community. This Council will consult widely about local transport needs, identify priorities, work to improve and integrate current services and advise the state government on accessibility improvements.

Transport is an important part of social policy. Whether better coordinated, frequent and quality transport services are the key to addressing multiple disadvantages is a question to be further explored by the Brotherhood and its partners.

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Children and youth, especially those in the rural areas studied, appeared to be the most transport-disadvantaged because they had few (and sometimes no) travel options.

Refugee regional settlement
Romance and reality

Both the federal and the state governments have been developing policies to encourage migrants and refugees to settle in regional areas to assist the newcomers gain employment and to help build regional economies. While this sounds like a win-win scenario, the reality is more complex.

The debate about the regional settlement of refugees involves several policy objectives which are not necessarily congruent: humanitarian goals and obligations, population strategy and economic development of regional areas.

The Brotherhood has identified as matters of concern for regional settlement:

- the nature of the refugee experience and resulting special needs
- access to employment and support services
- the capacity of regional communities to build ties with newcomers of different backgrounds.

In this context 'refugees' are defined as people who have arrived in Australia under the Government's Humanitarian Program, in the Refugee stream or as Special Humanitarian entrants, and those who have been granted protection visas after arrival. They have been deemed in need of protection, having escaped persecution, war, or human rights violations. The Government's Humanitarian Program is accepting some 13,000 entrants in 2004/05 (Refugee and Special Humanitarian entrants), a very much smaller number than the annual 110,000 or so (business or skilled migrants and their families) who have chosen freely to come to Australia.

Refugee settlement processes
At present in Australia refugee regional settlement includes:

- 'secondary migration' or relocation when refugees who have first settled in a city decide to move to a regional area
- direct settlement when refugees come directly to regional areas to join compatriots who have sponsored them
- planned settlement when refugees are directed by DIMIA to regional areas on arrival.

The Review of Settlement Services (DIMIA 2003) recommended that the Department of Immigration Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs seek further opportunities to settle humanitarian entrants (refugees) in regional Australia. In the May 2004 Budget, the Federal Government announced $12.4 million in funding to support such settlement over four years (Hardgrave 2004). The aim was to double the number of refugees successfully settling in regional Australia by 2005/06. Four regional areas would be selected in 2004/05 for increased 'humanitarian' (refugee) settlement, taking into account factors such as housing affordability, prospects for early employment, levels of community support and access to infrastructure and services such as health and education. The four areas had not been announced at the time of writing.

Refugee needs
The Refugee Council of Australia (2004) has pointed to various characteristics of refugees which affect their settlement in regional areas: their pre-migration and migration experiences, their heterogeneity and their demographics (for example, single men as opposed to female headed families). The Council also emphasises the need for refugees to have sufficient information to make an informed choice; for inclusion of the receiving communities in the planning process; and for recognition of the difficulties of many regional and rural communities (including high unemployment, diminishing services and movement of young people to the city).

It is important that the refugees arriving, in relatively small numbers but with high needs for settlement support, are not seen to provide an easy solution to complex regional problems. For example, if regional communities want long-term settlers they need to be able to provide employment choices beyond fruitpicking or working in abattoirs.

Forthcoming Brotherhood study
In this policy context, the Brotherhood of St Laurence has studied the settlement experiences of two recent refugee groups (Iraqi and Sudanese) in selected areas of regional Victoria (Shepparton, Colac and Warrnambool) and examined factors that promote settlement in such areas. Interviews and consultations took place in mid 2004 with some 54 Iraqi and Sudanese refugees and 22 community leaders and service providers. The report *Refugees and regional settlement* by Janet Taylor and Dayane Stanovic will be released soon.

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Refugee Council of Australia unpublished [2004], Australia's Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program: current issues and future directions – views from the community sector, Submission to DIMIA (2004–2005).

It is important that the refugees, arriving in relatively small numbers but with high needs for settlement support, are not seen to provide an easy solution to complex regional problems.

Free trade agreements and workers' rights

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) is continuing its research and advocacy concerning labour rights and working conditions in manufacturing in both Australia (textile sector) and China (optical industry). Recently this has involved considerations for an Australia-China free trade agreement (FTA).

In February, Serena Lillywhite, Ethical Business Manager, participated in the symposium *China, trade liberalisation and labour: racing to the bottom or building a foundation for labour rights*, conducted by the ACTU, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU), and the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements. The symposium coincided with the current Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) feasibility study into a possible free trade agreement between Australia and China.

Despite DFAT's claim (2003) that the feasibility study will be as 'ambitious and comprehensive as possible', the terms of reference give no consideration to the working conditions under which goods and services will be made and delivered or the responsibilities of government and business alike to ensure decent working conditions. There is no reference to compliance with national and international labour standards, nor to appropriate mechanisms to ensure implementation.

Protecting workers

The BSL conference paper (Lillywhite 2005) asserted that labour rights, human rights and social clauses and appropriate enforcement mechanisms must be part of an Australia–China FTA. For these clauses to be effective, they must be accompanied by changes to implementation in China; to Australian trade, investment and business practices; and to the regulatory frameworks of both Australia and China.

This will involve institutional strengthening of China's trade union (ACFTU) and other 'mass organisations' to enable them to act more independently, to assist in implementing national laws and international standards, and to monitor labour rights and social clauses. There is also a need to ensure implementation of multilateral mechanisms such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises that promote corporate social responsibility (including responsible supply chain management and ethical trading practices); and encouragement to progressively ratify international conventions.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow proposed that an Australia–China FTA include a strong labour rights clause—spelling out the rights of workers in both countries—and a process for social dialogue with China, involving the International Labour Organization, to ensure 'corporate respect for the rights of working people' (Colebatch 2005). Further, a broader discussion is required on the recognition of China as a market economy and any subsequent disadvantage to Australian industry. Collaboration between all stakeholders is necessary to make Australia 'free trade ready' by boosting investment in infrastructure, research and development, skills development and industry. Sharan Burrow suggested that a debate about an Australia–China FTA is almost irrelevant: what is required is a broader debate on trade and labour rights and the role of corporate social responsibility in promoting fair and decent working conditions.

Contentious issues

There was heated discussion about whether Australia should be 'free trade ready', particularly from the industries with the most to lose, such as the textile, clothing and footwear sector, which has already experienced significant job losses linked to, among other things, the expiry of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement and Agreement on Textiles and Clothing.

There were differing views on the status of the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), including its capacity to oversee labour clauses in an FTA, given its inability to date to effectively implement China's own labour law.

The complexity of negotiating an FTA with China was acknowledged. Thomas Palley, Chief Economist with the US–China Economic and Security Commission, advised that trade policies are not just about free trade, but concern broad economic development and the type of global society which people want. Labour rights in China are not just an economic issue, but also—indeed primarily—a political one, and linked to potential social unrest. Long term initiatives are required to protect workers' rights—perhaps through corporate social responsibility mechanisms and sustainable development frameworks.

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> Labour rights, human rights and social clauses and appropriate enforcement mechanisms must be part of an Australia–China free trade agreement.

New information on poverty, unemployment and social justice

The following are recent acquisitions of the Brotherhood Library, whose catalogue can now be searched on line (see page 16):

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS
Flatau, P, McGrath, N & Tually, S 2004, *Indigenous access to mainstream public and community housing*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, [Perth?].

AGED
Bond, J & Corner, L 2004, *Quality of life and older people*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK.

Wallace, P 2001, *Agequake: riding the demographic rollercoaster shaking business, finance and our world*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Brown, K, Boulet, J & Connors, P (eds) 2004, *Community development, human rights and the grassroots*, proceedings of a conference held in Melbourne, 14–18 April 2004, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University, Geelong, Vic.

Burns, D, Heywood, F, Wilde, P &Wilson, M 2004, *What works in assessing community participation?*, Policy Press, Bristol, UK.

CREDIT
Kliger, B 2004, *Road to debt: consumer choice in the 21st century: a study of low-income consumers' use of credit*, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, Collingwood, Vic.

ECONOMICS
Dawkins, P & Steketee M (eds) 2004, *Reforming Australia: new policies for a new generation*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic.

EDUCATION
Weaving, M, Lloyd, G & Atkins, C 2004, *The rising cost of 'free' education: a survey of emergency relief clients presenting at Victorian Community Information Centres: January–February 2004*, Emergency Relief Victoria, Melbourne.

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT
Brewer, M & Shephard, A 2004, *Has Labour made work pay?*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

Carlson, E (ed.) 2004, *A future that works: economics, employment and the environment: proceedings of the 6th Path to Full Employment Conference and 11th National Conference on Unemployment, 8–10 December 2004*, Centre of Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, N.S.W.

Howell, D (ed.) 2005, *Fighting unemployment: the limits of free market orthodoxy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

FAMILY
De Vaus, D 2004, *Diversity and change in Australian families: statistical profiles*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

GLOBALISATION
Singer, P & Gregg, T 2004, *How ethical is Australia? An examination of Australia's record as a global citizen*, Australian Collaboration, with Black Inc., Melbourne.

HEALTH
Griggs, D & Atkins, C 2004, *The bulk billing crisis: a Victorian perspective*, Victorian Council of Social Service, Melbourne.

HOUSING
Berry, M, Whitehead, C & Williams, P 2004, *Financing affordable housing: a critical comparative review of the United Kingdom and Australia*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

Nissim, R & Lowe, S (eds) 2004, *Little piece of heaven: thoughts from Victorians on housing as a human right*, Victorian Council of Social Service, Melbourne.

HUMAN SERVICES
Leadbeater, C 2004, *Personalisation through participation: a new script for public services*, Demos, London.

Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision 2005, *Report on government services 2005: volume 2: health, community services, housing*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

MIGRATION ISSUES
Cahill, D, Bouma, G & Hass, D 2004, *Religion, cultural diversity and safeguarding Australia*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

Kelly, E 2004, *A new country – but no place to call home: the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in housing crisis and strategies for improved housing outcomes*, Hanover Welfare Services, South Melbourne, Vic.

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 2004, *School's in for refugees: whole-school guide to refugee readiness*, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Parkville, Vic.

POVERTY
Social Exclusion Unit 2004, *Breaking the cycle: taking stock of progress and priorities for the future*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.

Kemp, P, Bradshaw, J & Dornan, P 2004, *Routes out of poverty: a research review*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

Lloyd, R, Harding, A & Payne, A 2004, *Australians in poverty in the 21st century*, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, University of Canberra.

Watt, P 2000, *Social investment and economic growth: a strategy to eradicate poverty*, Oxfam, Oxford.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Davies, H, Nutley, S & Smith, P (eds) 2000, *What works? Evidence-based policy and practice in public services*, Policy Press, Bristol, U.K.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT
Stanley, J & Stanley, J unpublished [2004], Improving public transport to meet community needs: a Warrnambool case-study.

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TAXATION
Smith, J 2004, *Taxing popularity: the story of taxation in Australia*, Australian Tax Research Foundation, Sydney.

YOUTH
Mission Australia 2004, *National youth survey 2004: key and emerging issues*, Mission Australia Sydney.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria 2004, *Consulting young people about their ideas and opinions: a handbook for organisations working with young people*, Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities, Melbourne.

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).

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Further information including the online library catalogue can be found at <www.bsl.org.au>.

Brotherhood comment

Research update: investigating low-paid work

Work has commenced on the study of low pay services employment, a project funded by an ARC Linkage grant and involving a partnership between the Brotherhood of St Laurence, University of Adelaide, ACIRRT at the University of Sydney, RMIT University, the LHMU and Trades and Labor Councils in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne.

For the purposes of the study, low-paid work is understood as work for which the individual worker's pay is inadequate to maintain themselves at a socially accepted standard, due to a low hourly rate, insufficient hours, or intermittent work. In monetary terms, low pay is defined as an hourly rate, weekly wage or annual wage which is below two-thirds of the median earnings for the same time period. Some restrictions will be placed on this definition to exclude workers who choose to work a small number of hours at high pay rates, yet could have a low annual wage.

The project team proposes that case studies of low-paid industries will include hospitality in Sydney, cleaning in Melbourne, and child and disability care in Adelaide. The study will explore the effect of low pay not only on individual workers but also their families and, it is hoped, the wider community.

Foundation work includes a literature review and industry analysis, being undertaken at the University of Adelaide. Quantitative analysis will be performed at ACIRRT using Australian Bureau of Statistics data and the longitudinal HILDA (Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia) database, while in-depth interviews will be conducted in all states with low-paid workers and their families to explore the experience of living on low pay.

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Brotherhood library catalogue on line

The Brotherhood of St Laurence library catalogue is now accessible via the internet. *Brotherhood Comment* readers can search our extensive collection of resources (both print and electronic) from home or office.

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