

Building better lives together



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Building better lives since 1930

A life rebuilt, with a helping hand from the Brotherhood

Rose Sawarose, a former school teacher from Thailand, moved to Australia in 2009 and settled in Whittlesea, in northern Melbourne. 'At first I thought I wouldn't live here permanently,' says Rose. 'I didn't feel like I fully belonged and I experienced racial discrimination and verbal abuse. I then met my partner Bruce and things changed for the better.' Sadly, in 2013 Bruce was diagnosed with cancer, which he battled for 13 months before passing away last year.

While grieving the loss of Bruce, Rose felt isolated and decided to move to the suburb of Mernda for a fresh start. As part of her new life, Rose decided to enrol in a Brotherhood-run course. 'I wanted to do something that would encourage me to get out of the house and meet people in my local community,' explains Rose. 'A short course run by the Brotherhood seemed like a good first step.' It was while doing the Work Ready course at our hub in Epping that Rose met Inotoli Zhimomi, an Economic Participation Worker at the Jindi Family and Community Centre. 'Inotoli is my angel,' says Rose. 'I can always confide in her and rely on her for support.'

With Rose expressing an interest in volunteering, Inotoli pointed her in the direction of the Jindi Centre, where an opportunity to serve the Centre's monthly morning tea arose. 'I was interested straight away,' says Rose. 'The Work Ready course really boosted my self-confidence and I felt inspired to learn more. I now come to the Centre for three Saturdays out of the month to learn more about volunteering, as well as about diversity and culture in the community.'



Rose Sawarose serving morning tea at the Jindi Centre.

The Jindi Centre provides Rose with a place where she always feels welcome. 'I feel like I'm not alone anymore,' says Rose. 'I've made some really good friends at the Centre and we all support each other. This the beauty of Jindi and the Brotherhood: it's a strong, supportive community.'

Rose has recently started a full-time administrative role at Jindi. 'It's unbelievable,' laughs Rose. 'It's my dream job! I'm so thankful for this gift life has given me. I'll obtain a Certificate III in Business once I've finished the contract, which makes me feel so positive about the future. On the day I received my Australian citizenship, I promised myself – and Bruce – that I'd be a very good Aussie. I now feel that I've fulfilled that promise. I feel I belong here now.'

Invest today, be a part of lasting change.

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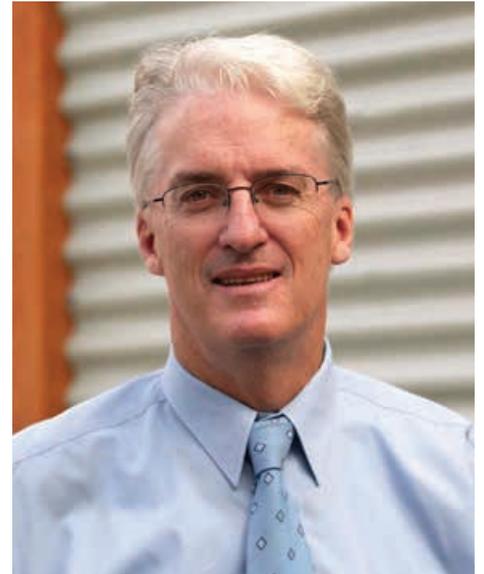
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In recent times we have been re-orientating much of our work so that it gives more emphasis to the issue of the 'community' and the 'place' in which people live. This arises out of a concern that all too often public policies designed to arrest poverty and exclusion are solely directed at individuals or households. They tend to ignore the reality that we live in a place or community in which the underlying economic circumstances and the prevailing ethos create opportunities or throw up barriers to being able to set mainstream goals and pursue them.

This understanding has led us to two conclusions. Firstly, we need to pay more attention to engaging with and fully understanding the communities in which we work.

This involves ensuring local people are heard in deciding what type of services are needed and that local community networks are fostered and volunteer contributions are fostered. Secondly, we can only be successful if we work in close collaboration with those who share our objectives. This involves finding ways to work in a complementary fashion with colleague organisations rather than competing with them, and in doing so, driving efficiencies, eliminating duplication and providing an integrated service offer in communities.

I trust you will find the themes of 'community' and 'collaboration' are evident throughout our work reported in this edition of Building better lives together.



Tony Nicholson

Best wishes,

Tony Nicholson

From Fitzroy to growth corridors – out on the ground

Ms Hutch Hussein, Senior Manager, Refugees, Immigration and Multiculturalism



Ms Hutch Hussein

In the lead up to our 60th anniversary this year, it was timely for the former Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC), now called the Multicultural Communities Team, to reconsider its location as well as its name. The pattern of settlement by refugees and displaced persons has changed dramatically in recent times with housing costs causing them to increasingly locate in the new suburbs on the urban outskirts. To better reflect these realities we have moved the base for this aspect of our work to Epping in the City of Whittlesea in Melbourne's outer north.

We're proud to be partners with both the community and community agencies to meet the challenges faced in these new communities that hold great promise but which suffer from a lack of community service infrastructure and public transport and are often a long way from where there is a density of employment opportunities – all vital to the successful settlement of newly arrived families. Having a presence in these communities allows us to respond immediately to the needs EMC was established 60 years ago to meet.

How can we make sure children get the best start in life?

Dr Anita Kochanoff, developmental psychologist specialising in research in early childhood and parenting.

Education is meant to be the great equaliser; however, in Australia when a child starts school developmentally vulnerable, that child is three times more likely to perform poorly on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. Children from the poorest 20% of households are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those from the richest 20%. This gap at school entry can lead to poor educational achievement and low participation in higher education. Ultimately this affects career prospects, perpetuating the cycle of children from disadvantaged backgrounds becoming disadvantaged adults.

The Brotherhood's Research and Policy Centre (RPC) is committed to interrupting this cycle of poverty. We are joining researchers and experts around the world who believe that intervening in the earliest years of a child's life is the best way to make a long-term impact. RPC has increased its focus on supporting families and their children before they enter school. We are bringing the importance of the early years into our policy advice and research projects, and are partnering with the Brotherhood's Child and Family Service to develop new service models based on solid evidence.

Informing policy

Victoria's Department of Education and Training has a goal of increasing support for vulnerable children during the often difficult transition to school. Our researchers are contributing to this effort by partnering with the Australian Council for Education Research to provide a review of current research on how to support vulnerable children. We will continue to inform policy formation affecting children in their preschool years.

Evaluating intervention programs

Research confirms that high-quality early learning experiences improve children's life chances. However, children's early learning environments differ profoundly in and outside the home. This is why the Brotherhood has been committed to providing a program that addresses the home learning environment through the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters



Dr. Anita Kochanoff

(HIPPY) since 1998. This year we have started a long-term evaluation of this important program, which has expanded to 100 sites across Australia, with half of these sites in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Developing evidence-informed service models and responding to needs

We are playing an important role in supporting the expansion of services to children and their families in the growth corridors of Melbourne's north. New community hubs in Epping and Mernda are offering two-generation intervention programs, which focus on the child and the parents together. We aim to help shape these new and innovative interventions by providing evidence-based best practice for working with families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

Much more to come ...

Our research into the areas of early childhood and parenting has been expanding. Given what we now know about rapid brain development in the earliest stages of life, this expansion is certainly warranted. Our key aim is to engage parents in the education of their young children long before they enter the primary school doors. This is the best way to bring children experiencing disadvantage to equal ground with their peers when they begin school.

Historical snapshot – school milk

The Brotherhood has a long and proud history of developing successful and innovative programs for children. In 1947, when Fitzroy was one of the worst slums in Victoria, the Brotherhood, with the help of local businesses, started a free milk program at the Fitzroy Primary School. This was the first free milk program in Australia. Milk was given to improve pupils' nutrition and general health. Between 1951 and 1973 the Commonwealth Schools' Free Milk Scheme provided one third of a pint (150mls) of whole milk each day to primary school children throughout Australia. The scheme ceased in 1973, but was reintroduced in 1994. The milk cost the equivalent of \$72,000 in 1951. By 1969 this cost had grown to just

 1947 Brotherhood of St Laurence pioneered free milk for school children.	 1948 The Brotherhood, with the help of local businessmen, set up a free milk scheme at the George Street Primary School in Fitzroy.	 1950 Commonwealth Government (Menzies) centralised the scheme so that (in theory) no child under the age of 13 would miss out.	 1951 All states except Queensland rolled out the scheme.	 1953 Scheme implemented in Queensland.
 1960 Scheme extended another ten years.	 1969 Milk for School Children government report tabled.	 1973 The scheme was scaled back by the Whitlam government's 1973 expenditure review.	 1974 Milk for School Children Program abandoned due to a cost blow out and lack of evidence of nutritional benefits.	

over \$10 million. In 1970 the government decided the program wasn't providing any benefit, rather turning children off milk, as it was served warm.

Shonna's star continues to shine

You may remember Shonna, who featured in our 2016 Winter Appeal. Here we offer an update on her work as a Home Tutor with the Brotherhood's HIPPY program.



Shonna

'Everything's going really well and on target,' she told us over the phone from her home in Port Stephens in the Hunter region of New South Wales.

HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters), is run by the Brotherhood in partnership with local organisations across the country. Drawing on local expertise and local staff, HIPPY supports disadvantaged parents to become their child's first teacher. More than that, the program helps parents to upgrade their skills in order to improve job prospects once they leave the program.

Shonna's two years as a HIPPY Home Tutor comes to an end in a

few months, and she can attest to the positive influence the program has had on her life.

'I hadn't worked for about six years prior to HIPPY, so it's increased my confidence a lot,' she says.

Now, Shonna is applying for a range of different jobs in preparation for next year. She also plans to enrol in a childcare course to build her professional expertise. In time – and with more skills up her sleeve – she hopes to convince the local council to build a childcare centre in Port Stephens.

'This will help a lot of parents in their search for work,' explains Shonna.

Tens of thousands pick up the savings habit with Saver Plus

Many struggling families find the cost of the essentials for their children's education difficult to meet. This is where Saver Plus helps. Developed by the Brotherhood and ANZ in 2003, it is now offered in 60 locations across the nation in partnership with other community agencies and the Australian Government.

The program assists individuals and families on lower incomes by giving them the skills and tools to save, and then matching their savings up to \$500 towards education costs including uniforms, text books, laptops, sports equipment, and music tuition.

Almost 33,000 people have taken part in Saver Plus since 2004, according to a 'snapshot' report on the program launched in October 2016.

'Saver Plus is one of the largest and longest-running matched-saving scheme in the world,' said the Brotherhood's Executive Director Tony Nicholson, who launched

the snapshot Saver Plus Report 2016 with Fred Ohlsson, Group Executive Australia, ANZ, at the bank's headquarters in Melbourne's Docklands.

'It has consistently produced outstanding results, with 80 per cent of participants continuing to save at the same level – or more – two years after the program has finished,' he said.

One of the participants is Makoura, whose story is featured in the new report. She came to Australia with her four children in 2006 and settled in Adelaide. Last year, Makoura went to her ANZ branch where she heard about Saver Plus. 'Before the

program I was not good at saving,' she said. 'Now, I'm much better.'

Find out more at:
bsl.org.au/saver-plus



Executive Director Tony Nicholson (right) and Fred Ohlsson, Group Executive Australia, ANZ, launch the Saver Plus Report 2016.

'We're stronger when we're working together'

Partnership is a key element of the work of the Brotherhood. This fact was highlighted at the recent Anglicare National Awards in Darwin, where the Brotherhood's collaboration with aged care agency Benetas in our Given the Chance program received high commendation from the judging panel.

Brotherhood General Manager Chaplaincy and Diocesan Partnerships, Debra Saffrey-Collins, attended the awards and says that Given the Chance is the perfect example of how partnerships between organisations can be beneficial for everyone – 'We're stronger when we're working together,' says Debra.

Given the Chance is one of the Brotherhood's longest running programs, operating for over seven years with the help of a variety of partners including Benetas, ANZ, bus company CDC Victoria, City of Yarra Council, City of Melbourne Council, Monash University and Parks Victoria. The program assists marginalised jobseekers into employment and supports employers to grow and diversify their workforce.

This partnership model works, with 86 per cent of participants completing the program and 91 per cent of these gaining subsequent employment.

During 2016, three jobseekers have been placed with Benetas Aged Care as personal care workers – Richard Kabera, Immaculee Ntakirutimana and Unity Omaregie. The employment was for six months, with the potential for ongoing work. Another three jobseekers have been approved for work experience with Benetas. Ms Saffrey-Collins says that 'through this partnership, Benetas can be assured they're working with a program that provides them with candidates of the highest calibre'.

Jindi – a community hub striving for change across two generations

The new communities on the urban fringes of our major cities are expected to grow rapidly over the next twenty years. For example, in the City of Whittlesea, a major growth corridor in Melbourne's north, 60 babies on average are born each week and 7,000 additional people move to the area each year.

Whilst these communities hold great promise their lack of community service and transport infrastructure and a relative sparsity of jobs often result in families struggling. Already they experience high rates of youth unemployment, family violence, child protection reports and low rates of school completion. With the Brotherhood of St Laurence as interested in prevention of poverty as in its alleviation, we are keen to contribute to strengthening these communities.

A unique partnership between the Brotherhood, Goodstart Early Learning and the City of Whittlesea has led to the development of the Jindi Family and Community Centre, a hub in Mernda.

The term 'hub' can cover a number of different facilities where diverse

services are co-located. It can also indicate a centre where there is a focus on a particular issue, such as children and their families. Hubs are usually designed to support the local community through a range of different services co-locating and agreeing to work together around a common focus, integrating their approach and collaborating for the best possible outcomes.

The amenities located at Jindi include an early learning centre and kindergarten, maternal and child health services, playgroups and community activities. This collaborative model is ideal for families who come with multiple and complex issues.

The Brotherhood has developed two programs to address the needs of families in the area. The first is

the Growing Learners program, which is designed to assist parents to be their child's first teacher through a series of group programs for parents, home visits and an online app. The 2 Generation intervention program is designed to work closely with both parents and children in order to provide a high quality early education for the child, while assisting the parent to improve their economic and civic participation through education and/or employment.

As a result, Jindi provides the full spectrum of early interventions designed to help parents build strong relationships with their children. The partnership with Goodstart will see the Brotherhood develop five similar centres in growth corridors over the next four years.

Jindi wins a Victoria Early Years Award 2016

Jindi has been recognised for its contribution to children and families' services, winning a Victorian Early Years Award. The awards were established in 2006 to honour the leadership, dedication and innovation of early childhood professionals and partnerships designed to improve the health, learning, development and wellbeing of young children.

The Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, presented the awards at the National Gallery of Victoria on 18 October. In her speech, the Minister praised the

work of early childhood services and acknowledged the importance of quality early childhood education on the direction of a person's life. 'The finalists embody the hard work, dedication and energy that is being harnessed every day to boost learning and development outcomes for Victorian children and support families,' she said.

The team at Jindi won the award for the Promoting Children's Health and Wellbeing category, commended for their holistic approach to improving community health outcomes at Jindi Kindergarten.

Growing a community

The Brotherhood is becoming increasingly involved in a number of multi-service hubs in the growth corridors of Melbourne. These hubs offer services to the community, such as kindergartens, but also offer families a wide range of other services, support and opportunities. Mother and keen gardener, Bincy Phillips, is just one example of the effectiveness of this approach.

Once her son Ethan had started at kindergarten at the Jindi Family and Community Centre in Mernda, Bincy decided she wanted to do something valuable with her newly acquired free time. 'I wanted to meet people from my local community and spend my spare time doing something helpful,' says Bincy. 'The manager of the Centre told me about an opportunity to volunteer in the children's garden. I love gardening, so I jumped at the chance.'

Bincy now assists the head gardener and helps out in the kitchen, cooking with the children using fresh produce from the garden. 'It's chaotic but lots of fun,' laughs Bincy. 'Right now we have radishes, a variety of lettuces, beetroot, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbages and peas all coming into season. The children help out with watering and I enjoy answering all their questions about plants and flowers.'

Bincy's passion for all things green-thumbed has opened up other opportunities, too. 'I've been running a Facebook gardening group,' says Bincy. 'I like helping people and passing on knowledge, so I've completed a short horticultural course through Nillumbik Council and I'm keen to learn more. I'm also starting a Facebook gardening forum at Jindi, which I'm really excited about. It's for members of the local community here in Mernda



Bincy with her son at the Jindi Centre.

and will offer gardening advice and a place for people to share their stories and flag up any relevant events.'

Originally from Kerala in India, Bincy has lived in Australia for six years now and enjoys living in Mernda. 'It's a good community, very friendly and green. As we don't have any family here it can be difficult sometimes, but I've made some good friends thanks to the Centre and we know most of our neighbours here, too. It's nice to get to know people face to face.'

Working with young children

The Brotherhood's Schools Engagement Program connects high school students from all over Victoria with children and their families on the Atherton Gardens Housing Estate in Fitzroy.

Our Urban Camp helps those from a privileged background to understand the challenges faced by children often experiencing disadvantage. Our aim is to break down social divides and engage students so that they are inspired to give back to those in need.

Through observation, discussion

and practical activities, students explore the issues of social inequality, injustice and social exclusion. Over the six years that the program has been running, Urban Camp students have participated in a wide range of activities working with children from the estate.

Urban Camp students go into

school with the children where they join them in their classroom for a morning and assist teachers as learning aides. Students also help out at our Breakfast Club by providing a healthy breakfast to children, which ensures all children who need it have access to a nutritious first meal of the day.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MENTOR A YOUNG PERSON?

The Brotherhood of St Laurence's ReSource Youth Program works with young people of refugee, migrant and asylum seeker backgrounds in the Hume and Whittlesea local government areas, empowering them to make informed decisions about education, training, employment and volunteering pathways.

ReSource is currently looking for mentors who:

- have trade or professional experience, particularly in the following industries – human resources, IT, engineering, retail, hospitality, sport and recreation, health and community services
- can mentoring a young person or group of young people at fortnightly meetings in Epping or Broadmeadows
- are able to commit to 6–12 months' involvement, with some availability during business hours.

Is this you?

You can apply to become a mentor by:

- emailing your application with a current resume to **volunteer@bsl.org.au**
- or
- submitting an online expression of interest at: **bsl.org.au/mentoreoi**

For further information, please call one of our Youth Development Officers on **9422 5650** or visit **bsl.org.au/mentorpd**

Hope Prize winner and anthology announced

Catherine Moffat is the winner of the Brotherhood's inaugural Hope Prize. The prize is given for short stories that show resilience in the face of poverty, and received over 900 entries.

The judges of the competition were author Kate Grenville, actor Cate Blanchett and former Governor General Quentin Bryce. They were impressed with the high standard of writing, and reported that all the authors displayed unique, unpretentious and authentic voices.

Catherine's winning story, 'Better Homes and Gardens', contrasts the daily life of a homeless family living in a car, who deal with 'the practicalities of living in a difficult situation', with the aspirational television show which they watch at the laundromat where they wash their clothes.

While Catherine does not know where the idea for the story came from, social justice underlines a lot of her work. 'I'm interested in people who ... might be outsiders or loners due to poverty or another reason.'

She says The Hope Prize is a 'fantastic' idea. 'It's beyond your normal short story competition,' she said.



Governor General Quentin Bryce and Cate Blanchett, two of the judges of the Hope Prize.

The *Hope* anthology is available in bookstores, including the Brotherhood's online bookstore – **www.brotherhoodbooks.com.au** – and as an e-book via **www.simonandschuster.com.au**.



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