

# brotherhood action

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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## A Lifetime of Practical Commitment

In 1951, Jessica Millott offered to spend one day a week at the Brotherhood's village settlement at Carrum Downs as a volunteer chiropodist because her father was a resident there. In 1981, Jess is once again a volunteer, following her retirement after 30 years with the Brotherhood.

'I was at Carrum Downs for two years, then Father Tucker asked me to come to the Coolibah Club for pensioners in Fitzroy because there was a greater need. And there certainly was. The Club was rough then, just bare boards, but it was home for those men. It was men only in those days,' said Jess.

'You had to be able to cope with all kinds of things that happened then. I had so many trips to the morgue. There was no such thing as a home help — we'd do all of that, cleaning and washing, often in our own time. On Saturdays I'd take four or five 'oldies' in the car with me while I went around doing feet.

'But there's been lots of fun too. One lady said she should pay entertainment tax when she came to get her feet done. And Dorothy Dix had nothing on me!'

Jess, known as 'Mum' to many of her pensioner friends, has been cook, hairdresser, chiropodist, dressmaker and Christmas pudding maker supreme to the



Jessica Millott (standing) pictured with Canon Peter Hollingworth and guests at the Coolibah Centre's 1980 Christmas dinner.

thousands of lonely people who have come to the Club. Her 1500th pudding was made for Christmas dinner last year. 'The oldies have already worked it out that I could make two puddings a night in my flat,' she said.

In 1962 Jess was appointed manageress of the Club. Since then, it has been rebuilt and its services extended, incorporating a Day Care Centre for patients referred from hospitals and doctors.

'Of course the Centre has changed and that's good,' she said. 'There's a lot more help available now and more is done for people who need it.

'I've been bowing out for a long time now. I think people should give up their work responsibilities when they retire, and then make more for themselves in other areas.'

One man said to her in the Club, years ago, 'I've been retired, I'm finished and that's the end of me'. 'Not if you're with me', said Jess, and promptly asked him to take charge of the Club when she was out visiting. He'd driven the first Yellow Cab, before they had number plates and he ended up staying about 15 years.

There has been a continual stream of letters of congratulations and farewell parties for Jess. Canon Peter Hollingworth, Executive Director of the Brotherhood, said on her retirement, 'She is a remarkable, unforgettable character, a person who has helped to make the Brotherhood what it is, and who has lived her life in service to others.'

When Jess was a child she wanted to be a nurse. 'I'd roll up bandages and follow people around to practise on them. But you had to have money to train then and we were too poor.' In her years at the Brotherhood, Jess has shown many student nurses what caring for, and about, people really means.

'I started with one day a week at Carrum Downs and now I'm back to square one again, doing the things I like to do. I'm spending one day sewing in the Coolibah Centre; I love sewing for people and making second-hand clothes nice for them. And on Thursdays I visit pensioners in their rooms to do their feet.

'Just making people happy has been my whole life,' says Jess. A lifetime of practical commitment to low income people.





Mr George Williamson and Mrs Margaret Brown enjoy their dinner cooked by Debbie Warren (Centre).

## Dear Friends of the Brotherhood

In the last edition of 'Action' we launched the Eighties Appeal and I talked about serious financial deficits being experienced in our four hostels for the aged. I hope to report later on some progress in our negotiations with the Federal Government, which might lead to an increase in the Personal Care Subsidy. It is difficult to say how long that will take, but we are convinced of the strength of our case.

At the close of the financial year, the figures revealed a mixture of good and bad news. The good news was that donations from our supporters reached a record figure of \$318,000 a hundred thousand dollars better than the previous year. This is a marvellous effort and I want to thank all those of you who have contributed so generously to the Brotherhood's work in 1980/81. Happily we kept our fundraising costs down to 9 per cent. Less encouraging is the overall financial problem of maintaining programmes in the current economic climate which has led to the erosion of our slender reserves.

We have begun the new financial year with an act of faith, based on a longstanding Brotherhood view that 'If the cause is right, the money will always be found'. Knowing that our essential services must be continued, the Board has accepted an operating deficit of \$125,000 to be reviewed in October.

I am reasonably confident that we can meet this challenge as we have done many times in the past. We have tightened our belts, we are operating with greater efficiency, and our welfare programs are all doing well. If the Government does the right thing by us with hostel subsidies, if the Donated Goods Division improves its profit level and our donors maintain their generosity, we will get through this next financial year without too much trouble.

Thank you once again for your support and confidence in the Brotherhood; we will need all the help you can offer in the difficult times ahead.

Canon Peter Hollingworth,  
Executive Director.

## Roast Dinner for 100 at 16

When Debbie Warren left school and was unsuccessfully looking for a job, she couldn't bear the thought of just sitting around home. Home is at Lara, near Geelong, close to St Laurence Park, the Brotherhood's village settlement for elderly people. So Debbie went to see Eric Hart, Executive Officer at the Park, offering to do some voluntary work.

She helped in the craft room at Hume Court for several months, helping frail aged people with their handicrafts. Then a part-time job came up as kitchen assistant. Debbie took the opportunity, working under catering manager Philip Williams for six months. Then just before her 17th birthday, she asked for, and was given, the job of 'Sunday cook', preparing a roast dinner for about 100 residents.

Debbie loves cooking and is keen to continue working in the catering field.

## From Our Donors

'In 1980 I was unemployed for the first eight months of the year, and that dreary experience, although inevitably receding into the realm of memory, has given me a sympathy for the plight of those left outside the mainstream of society.

Thus, I am thankful that there are bodies such as your organisation who work to relieve the plight of this unfortunate sector of the community, many of whom must lead a 'hand to mouth' existence.

In this bag you will find a few clothes which I no longer require. I do not pretend that they are much, for indeed they are not.

I hope every little gesture such as this is at least some small reassurance that they are not as forgotten as they must feel they are. The trousers are patched and what can one say — maybe in the future I will be able to do a bit better.'



## Minister Meets Hollingworth and Scott

The JOBS Scheme, the Brotherhood's proposal for a pilot project to provide work experience for 6-10 000 young unemployed people was discussed by Peter Hollingworth and David Scott with Mr Neil Brown, Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs.

Mr Brown acknowledged that there were gaps in existing manpower training programmes. Initially he expressed interest in the proposal but subsequently wrote to say it was not in keeping with government policy.

Australia is one of the few countries that has no community-based work experience program.

Meetings were also held with members of the Government's back bench Committees on Health and Welfare, Education and Employment and Training. The proposals were sent to Ministers and to Opposition Shadow Ministers. The Brotherhood will follow up with meetings with Federal Members of Parliament.

Note: At the end of May there were 95 000 young people aged between 15 and 19 unemployed. 35 000 of them were school leavers from the previous year. The average length of unemployment is 24 weeks.

## On the Move

The Action Resource Centre has moved from 116 Fitzroy Street Fitzroy to its new community house at 388 Queens Parade, Clifton Hill. ARC is now an autonomous organisation, funded by the Brotherhood. It is registered as a co-operative and has its own Board of Directors. As a co-operative for low income families, ARC will provide help in the legal area and activities for families and youth. Social action will also be an important part of their work.

The Material Aid Service will soon move into the Fitzroy Street building previously occupied by



*Some of the Victorian Housing Commission's new terrace homes in Fitzroy.*

## Housing Policy

The Brotherhood has prepared a submission to the Victorian Government review of housing in Victoria. The submission argues that the fastest possible expansion and diversification of Victoria's public rental stock must be recognised as the foundation of any serious attempt to improve Victoria's present housing crisis for low-income people. Specific recommendations include:

- immediate implementation of a program to build, purchase or lease 4 700 homes a year in Melbourne and 1 400 homes a year in non-metropolitan areas

for the next five years;

- development of new formulas for setting rents for individual tenants so that no household pays more than 20 per cent of its gross income in rent;
- adoption by the Ministry of Housing of a different policy in setting rents. Current policy is to set rents at a figure related to those in the private market. The Brotherhood recommends that rents should simply cover the cost which the Ministry incurs in providing the homes;
- introduction of a variety of new measures to assist low-income families buy their own homes.

ARC. This was originally St Mary's Mission, where the Brotherhood first began its work in Melbourne in 1933. The Service will then be able to house clothing and furniture in the same building.

Hume Court residents have moved back into their hostel at St Laurence Park, Lara, which was badly damaged in the January storms. Hume Court has been rebuilt at a cost of over \$300,000. A major part of this was covered by insurance. The move back home was very much a family affair, with staff, families, and friends, including Melbourne Rotaract Club, helping to make it a happy occasion.

## From Our Donors

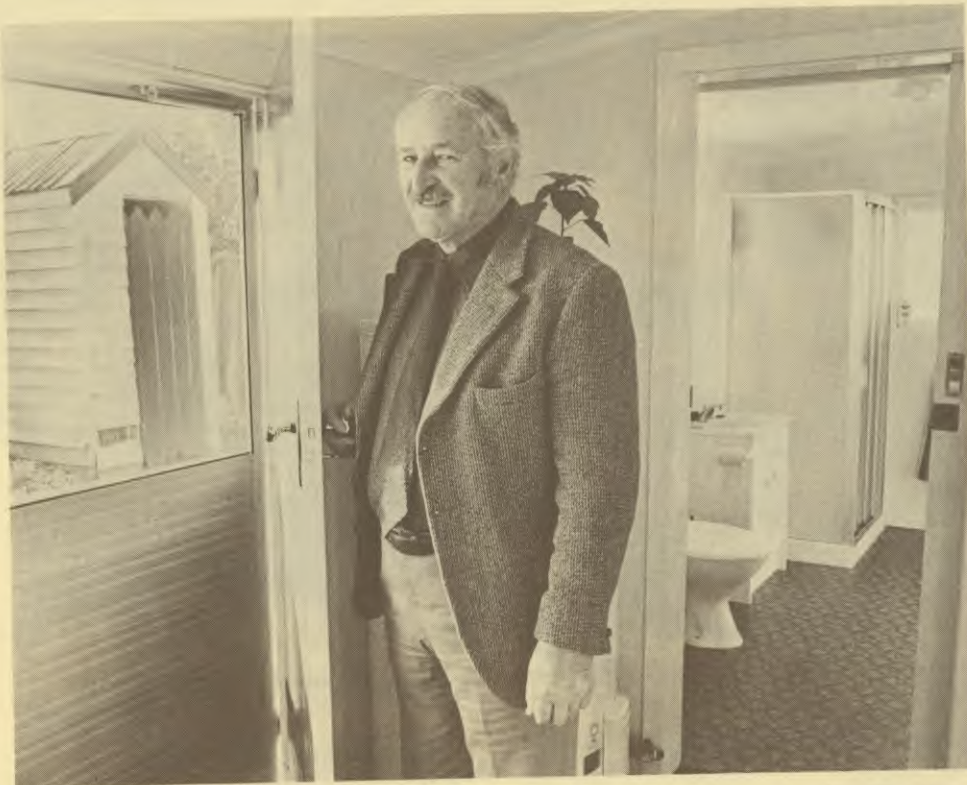
'I read in ACTION that Wong Pon Keung is being cared for at Summer House.

For many years he worked in my garden at Kew — regularly and faithfully — accepting only the smallest wage but allowing me to give him small presents from time to time.

I lost track of him later and am greatly relieved to know he is being cared for in his old age by the Brotherhood.

Thank you.'





Ken Lewis shows the old and new bathroom facilities in a West Geelong home.

## Home Renovations

The Victorian Ministry of Housing has started a Home Renovation Service, similar to the Brotherhood's Home Improvement Service.

The Ministry's Service provides help, advice and low interest loans for low income home owners in 12 inner suburbs.

Because of the similarity between the two services, the Ministry has allocated \$20 000 to the Brotherhood to continue the Home Improvement Service for the next year.

The Brotherhood's service was started in 1979 in West Geelong as an experiment to help older people to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

As one person described her reasons for using it, 'I was pretty sceptical about tradesmen and after my husband died I didn't have the money.'

Ken Lewis, co-ordinator of the Service, arranged for the necessary improvements, including an inside toilet and other bathroom facilities. The Brotherhood has made the money available at low interest to be repaid from the estate or if the house is sold.

Only a few people have taken advantage of the low interest loans as most are able, and in fact prefer, to pay the cost themselves.

The most common requests are for general repairs such as new window sashes, small plumbing jobs or new weatherboards. Other jobs done have included the removal of old, high sided baths which are difficult and dangerous for older people. They are replaced with a flexible handpiece.

Only qualified tradesmen are employed and three quotes are obtained for each job. This ensures that the best job is done at the best price. 'For one painting job I had three quotes of \$1 560, \$980 and \$960,' Ken Lewis said.

A Gardening Service is also popular with people who find they can no longer cope with keeping their garden under control.

# brotherhood gift

Send to Brotherhood of St Laurence, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, 3065.

I enclose my gift/subscription of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards

Family Services  Social issues and Research   
 Services for the Aged  General

Please tick here if you do not require a receipt.

Name (Mr. Mrs. Miss).....

Address.....

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