

## On Caring

We probably all know someone who, as they get older, is becoming confused. Some are cared for in institutions but many live with their families or friends. Most confusion, or dementia, is caused by Alzheimer's disease which is a degenerative brain disease, although some people also become confused after a stroke. People begin with losing their short term memory for names or places. They often lose their sense of time and place and the confusion moves to wandering at night and doing dangerous things like forgetting to turn off the gas. Finally they are unable to recognize even their own reflection and lose control of their bodily functions.

It has been estimated that six percent of Australians over the age of 65 have moderate or severe dementia. This rate is expected to increase over the next two decades as Australia's population ages.

The Brotherhood believes that there should be a range of options available for the care of a confused elderly person, including care provided by a relative at home with the aid of community support services. Caring at home for the confused elderly was the focus of a recently completed Brotherhood study, "Caring: The commitment and the cost."

The researcher, Jenny Trethewey, interviewed the carers of twenty-one confused elderly people about their experience of caring.

She found that in each family caring for a confused relative, one person, usually a woman, takes on the job of carer. The study documents this carer's experiences of their role: the labour involved in caring for highly dependent person; the emotional strain of caring for a confused spouse or parent; and the contraction of the carer's social world to their immediate family, house, and their confused relative. Most carers maintain a commitment to care for their relative at home for as long as is practically possible.

The study therefore concludes that the carer of a confused elderly person needs breaks from their caring role. It suggests that such

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# The Brotherhood of St Laurence

# action

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breaks are essential to their capacity to continue to care for their relative at home and for their own quality of life.

It also emphasises that equal attention should be given to the needs of the confused elderly, the most important being a warm, stable and supportive environment, and a structured activities program. This can use and maintain remaining

skills and memory and help maintain small amounts of independence and self-sufficiency.

These findings led to the study's recommendation that the Brotherhood establish a respite care service, based in a community house, for confused elderly persons and their carers. It is suggested that the service offer a day program designed for the confused elderly and occasional

day, night, weekend and week-long care. Such a project would pilot a new model of care and service for the confused aged and their carers.

The Brotherhood is currently considering this proposal.

"Caring: the commitment and the cost" is available from the publications section, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, price \$3.50 plus \$1.20 postage.

## Dear Friends of the Brotherhood,

The Prime Minister has extended an invitation to me to attend the forthcoming tax summit on July 1st representing the Brotherhood. Some might ask, why should a welfare organisation assisting low income people be invited to the national tax summit? For that matter, why should the Brotherhood be expressing views about taxation in the first place?

The answer is very simple. Several years ago, many people put the view that organisations like the Brotherhood would be irresponsible if they simply called for more reforms to deal with poverty, without also indicating where the money would come from to pay for those reforms. Arising out of this need to look at revenue raising as well as proposing additional expenditure, the Brotherhood employed a policy officer, Alison McClelland, to undertake detailed studies in the area of taxation.

Behind the scenes, there has been a long process of exchanging views and consulting with a range of different groups including universities, trade unions, welfare organisations, and various individuals with particular expertise in economics and taxation policy. The Brotherhood has adopted three objectives in tax reform. First, the tax system should be progressive, so that low income earners pay a lower portion of their income in taxes and higher income earners pay a higher proportion. Second, tax reform should lead to an improvement in the overall position of low income people and be structurally related to the social security system, in order to avoid the present poverty traps. Third, the tax system should have a positive influence on economic growth and

employment growth. Our general strategy has therefore been to broaden the tax base, maintain the major emphasis on direct rather than indirect taxation, reduce avoidance and evasion, and reduce marginal tax rates especially for low income people.

Sometimes people become cynical about exercises like tax summits, but the fact remains that the Prime Minister's intention to have a summit has done a great deal to lift the level of public debate and improve many people's understanding of the issues. We hope that this will lead to more just outcomes in reforming the tax system.

Inevitably, different groups in the community will adopt different stances. Indeed I would not expect all of our supporters to go along with

everything we have proposed. However, I do want to assure you that we have not undertaken these matters lightly, nor have we developed our policies naively without consulting others. As a result, we now have a package of policies which offer a serious alternative to the approach being taken by government and there are signs at this stage that there is a considerable amount of support for our general approach, both within major sections of government and the wider community. The Brotherhood's two submissions are available from 67 Brunswick St., Fitzroy, price \$2 and \$3, plus postage \$1.20.

*Paul Heenan*

## Can You Help?

Volunteers are urgently needed at the Brotherhood's shops in Malvern, Ormond, Glenhuntly, Waverley, Box Hill, Watsonia, Ivanhoe, Eltham, Greensborough, Parkdale, Preston, Fitzroy and Bentleigh.

People who would like to be involved in a friendly group running their own shop, and to learn new skills, are warmly invited to join an auxiliary. If you have a day or half day to spare and would like to know more about shops, please ring Thelma Tuxen on 419 7055.



Ormond Shop Auxiliary members (L to R) Mrs Lillian McLean, Mrs Jean Shillinglaw and Mrs Ada Edmonds, help one of their regular customers, Mrs Rose Wilkinson.



## New Publications

**'Half a Chance'** The evaluation of a Youth Accommodation Project. Justin McDermott. \$3.50. Brotherhood of St Laurence.

The Northcote Accommodation Project was set up by the Brotherhood as a joint project with the Melbourne Diocese of the Anglican Church, who provided most of the funding, and a community management committee, with the aim of providing a medium-term housing service for homeless, disadvantaged young people.

It was a difficult project to run, with problems related to management, staffing, and to the high expectations of the project. In 'Half a Chance', those involved describe these difficulties, as well as the positive aspects:

'There were glaring contradictions in the proposal or its implementation, but when you really look at it, NAP has done as well as any other such project. Kids have been housed, fed, clothed and given some measure of support. It has been part of their growth.'

**"... But you'd sooner live at home"**. Justin McDermott. Footscray Home Care Project for Elderly People. \$4.95.

The Brotherhood was approached by the Board of the Footscray Home Care Project for Elderly People to undertake the evaluation of the project, which has operated in Footscray since May 1982. Justin McDermott has worked closely with the co-ordinator, Val Nicholls, and the team of young people on the project. The aim has been to assist older people retain their independence in the community, and as a job creation project, it has also had the aim of exploring a new career option for disadvantaged young people.

The report shows that disadvantaged young people (early school leavers) can be successfully employed in domiciliary services; it shows the advantages of good on the job training; that young women can work very well in traditional male occupations like home maintenance; and that some young people enjoy working with older people.

**"... But you'd sooner live at home"** is available from the Footscray Council's Community

Services Department or from the Brotherhood.

**"SPAN — The Who, What, When, Where and Why:** Establishing a development programme for older people.'" Department of Health, Canberra 1984.

"Nothing succeeds in life like a good idea." That's how Bishop Peter Hollingworth summed up the SPAN project for older and retired people when he launched the SPAN manual earlier this year.

SPAN was begun by the Brotherhood in 1978, with guarantee of support for three years to get the project off the ground. The Spanners (members of SPAN) then had to decide their future. SPAN was incorporated as a co-operative and employed a full-time co-ordinator.

At the launch, Bishop Hollingworth described SPAN as one of the Brotherhood's greatest success stories. SPAN's basic premise is that older people should be able to contribute to the community in a positive way during their years of retirement by sharing the skills accrued over a life-time of living. Older people are then seen as useful, active and important, rather than passive and dependent.

SPAN fulfils its aims through a variety of programmes, most of which happen at the SPAN House of Thornbury. They include craft sharing with four school groups, including a group of newly arrived migrant teenagers; an adult literacy programme; a reading programme with special needs students from Northcote Tech.; a home handy person and mending service; a craft group for adults of all ages; an exercise class for the over 50's, as well as learning activities and social occasions.

Spanners see the publication of the manual as an important milestone in the history of SPAN. The book traces the steps required to establish and maintain a community project for older people, and uses SPAN's experience to illustrate how this can be achieved. It is intended for use by groups of older people themselves and is written in uncomplicated language. Workers in the aged field will also find it valuable.

SPAN's early success was certainly due to the Brotherhood's initial support. However, Spanners feel that

other groups wanting to start a similar project can do it themselves, provided there is the commitment to the idea and a lot of dedicated work.

The SPAN Manual is available from the Brotherhood or from SPAN, 298 Victoria Road, Thornbury. \$2.00 plus \$1.20 postage.

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## Brotherhood Film

A 20 minute documentary film on the Brotherhood has been made by Erwin Rado, with Keith and Alison Head.

Erwin Rado was for many years Director of the Melbourne Film Festival and has recently worked on a number of films, including 'Lonely Hearts' and 'My First Wife'.

Keith and Alison Head made a film called 'The SPAN Project', about the Brotherhood's project in Northcote, at Swinburne Film School in 1981. Their particular interest is in making films with a social awareness for non-profit organisations.

Erwin, Keith and Alison have given generously of their time to make this very beautiful and moving study of the Brotherhood.

It will be launched at The Glasshouse Theatre, 360 Swanston St., Melbourne on Monday, 8th July at 6 p.m. Readers of 'Action' are warmly invited to attend. If you would like to, please ring Bonnie Turnbull on 419 7055.

The film will be available for loan, on 1/2 inch and VHS video in July and may be booked through the Brotherhood's Public Relations Department, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy 3065.



A scene from the Brotherhood's 1946 film 'Beautiful Melbourne', showing housing conditions for families in Fitzroy.





The Archbishop of Melbourne, The Most Revd. David Penman, is pictured with Mrs Jessica Millott at the dedication of Millott House.

## Millott House Opening

The historic St. Mary's Mission House in Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy, was re-named Millott House and dedicated by the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Revd. David Penman, on 9 May.

The Mission House building has undergone many changes before its name change and conversion to a rooming house. (See 'Action' December 1983).

Millott House has been named after Mrs. Jessica Millott, a former Manageress of the Brotherhood's

Coolibah Club who worked with the Brotherhood, both as a volunteer and a staff member for 29 years. This forms a fitting tribute to someone who dedicated so much of her life to the care of the frail, the sick and the elderly.

Millott House now provides accommodation for 22 people who have developed a sense of community instead of the isolation and loneliness which marked their former lives. It is fitting that this fine old building has been put to such an appropriate use at a time when there is a serious shortage of inner city rooming house accommodation.

## Recital

Cellist Otti Veit and pianist May Clifford will give a recital for the Brotherhood on Sunday 16 June at 8 p.m. at the home of Mrs. L. Spivakovsky, 76 St Georges Road, Toorak. Tickets are available from Bonnie Turnbull, telephone 419 7055, \$10. Students \$4.

## Schools Programme

This year the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Aid Abroad are together offering a poverty education programme for Year 11 and 12 students. Poverty can be chosen as an elective subject in English and economics and many schools contact the Brotherhood for information.

The programme looks at poverty in Australia, or poverty in the Third World, or both. Students can visit the Brotherhood's headquarters in Fitzroy in groups of up to 30, choosing from videos, discussion groups, audio-visuals, a simulation game, as well as written material and a photographic exhibition.

We hope that these visits stimulate students in their studies, and that they help create an awareness and an understanding of the issues these two organisations are concerned with.

If you would like to know more about the programme, please ring Mark Sawers on 419 7055.

# brotherhood gift

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

I am pleased to be able to share in the work of the Brotherhood and enclose my gift of \$.....

Name (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms).....

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Postcode.....

Yes, I require a receipt.  No, I do not require a receipt.

Please send me some information about making a bequest to the Brotherhood in my will.

Donations of \$2 and over are deductible for income tax purposes

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If you have not given for a year or longer and would like to continue to receive Action, please send your donation now.

ACTION is published bi-monthly and contains information on Brotherhood activities, including all new publications. Editorial responsibility is accepted by Dyranda Prevost, 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.