

## mini MICAH - December 2008

*monthly update for members and friends of Catholic Social Services Victoria*

*with Christmas greetings to all our readers: may the peace and joy that Christmas promises continue to inspire us, and to deepen our compassion and our hunger for justice*

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- ✚ Thurs 11 Dec 2008: Centacare Forum on **strengthening newly arrived refugee communities**
- ✚ Wed 17 Dec 2008. **Breakfast: Implications of the financial crisis**, Prof Peter Sheehan
- ✚ Fri 19 Dec 2008. **Pre-Christmas nibbles and drinks** at CSSV
- ✚ Wed 25 Feb 2009. **Advocacy 101** - Overview of with workings of Government
- ✚ Thurs 12 March, 4.30 – 7.00pm 2009 **CSSV Commissioning Mass, AGM and gathering**
- ✚ Fri 28 August, 2009 **CSSV Annual Dinner**

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### Recent CSSV News & Developments

#### 📎 Visits to programs by Bishop Chris Prowse

One of the roles that Bishop Chris Prowse undertakes is that of Episcopal Vicar – or Archbishop's representative - for Social Services and Health in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. In that capacity, Bishop Chris has recently made pastoral visits to a number of member to meet and encourage clients and staff. Feedback from both Bishop Chris and agencies has been very positive. Agencies visited include Bethlehem Community, St Vincent's Health, Wellsprings for Women and MacKillop Community Services Barwon. Looking to 2009, agencies or programs that would welcome a pastoral visit by Bishop Chris should contact CSSV.

#### 📎 Other CSSV visits

CSSV staff have also visited a large number of programs over the month – among these are visits to Shepparton and Ballarat by Terry O'Shannassy. This brings us into contact with a wide range of inspiring people and programs. To single one out: the Marcellin Champagnet Project in Shepparton, an alternative education project managed by the regional Notre Dame College. The 70 young people who take part include a large number of indigenous students engaged in a very creative program.

CSSV is working with the Diocese of Sandhurst in north-east Victoria to bring together the wide range of people working in the general field of Catholic social services in that region, as a means of strengthening the overall reach and impact of that work. Exploration of opportunities with the other Dioceses is underway.

## **Advocacy**

**Protecting the vulnerable in times of economic downturn** is a major current issue – revenue for agencies is under pressure on a number of fronts, and demand for services is already rising. Building on work initiated by CSSA in Canberra, CSSV organised a letter to the Victorian Government and Parliament urging that the focus of Government remain on the needs of the vulnerable, which are likely to be greater in times of financial stress in the community. The leaders of Anglicare, UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania, and the Salvation Army were co-signatories to this letter – see [www.cssv.org.au](http://www.cssv.org.au) for a copy of the letter and the ACCESS Economics report that was attached to the letter.

The CSSV Council is monitoring the impact of the global financial crisis on our member agencies and their clients, and will have this on its agenda again at its meeting on 12 December. This was one of the inputs to an article by Denis Fitzgerald reflecting on causes and effects of the crisis, its impact on our member agencies, and its implications on each of us as consumers, appears in publications in each of the Victorian dioceses this month - *Human dignity and the financial crisis* <http://www.kairos.com.au/local-news/2.html>

It is nearly 10 years since the Productivity Commission reviewed gambling in Australia, and found that the net impact on the economy of **problem gambling** was probably negative, and that is before the unquantifiable human costs are factored in. Some 250,000 Australians were estimated to suffer from problem gambling, and 42.3% of the revenue from electronic gaming machines (pokies) was gained from problem gamblers. Current issues include the continued reliance by the Victorian Government on gambling taxes, and the concentration of problem gambling in areas where many socio economic indicators are adverse. Denis Fitzgerald, as a member of the inter-Church gambling task force, attended an initial Productivity Commission round table to identify issues that this report should address – one of them is to assess what is most effective in preventing problem gambling from arising. CSSV will be working with members on a submission to this enquiry over the coming months – please let us know if you would like to contribute.

 **Catholic Social Teaching project:** Shannon Donohoo, an intern with CSSV, is developing a resource set around Catholic social teaching that can be used for presentations and discussions in a number of settings. Building on the abundance of material and resources available from documents and websites, Shannon is developing an extensive set of slides, with accompanying text, and with links through to other resources. The material will be available early in 2009. CSSV staff would be happy to work with organisations in presenting a workshop on the principles of Catholic social teachings, and its implications for our work in the sector – feel free to contact us about this.

## **Media coverage**

In addition to the articles on the human dimension of the financial turmoil and economic downturn, recent CSSV media coverage included an article in Kairos on homelessness on 2 November – see [www.css.org.au](http://www.css.org.au) for copies of these items. Our media release on the call to the Victorian Government on protection of the vulnerable didn't get much traction, but it kept the journalists alerted to the issue.

## **CSSV Council**

Next Council meeting scheduled for Fri 12 December 2008

## **Around the Sector**

### **Wellsprings for Women**

CSSV offers thanks and congratulations on a job well done to **Sr. Anne Halpin PVBM** on the conclusion of an extraordinary period of 15 years at 'Wellsprings'. Anne has offered a professional yet wonderfully caring style of leadership which will be sorely missed, not least by the many women who have found compassion, inclusion, empowerment and refuge from the Centre. As Anne prepares to move to some well earned renewal time, we offer her sincere thanks for her commitment and the best wishes of the Catholic Social Services sector and wider church.

Welcome to the new manager, **Veronica Hassett**. Veronica brings a wide experience to the task, supported by dedication and boundless compassion. Qualifications in Education, Social Science and Business Management, with a wealth of experience of the Wellsprings operation, should ensure that the gift of the Presentation charism is kept alive and flourishing.

① **McAuley Community Services for Women** held their Commissioning of the Board and CEO Jocelyn Bignold on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008. Denis Fitzgerald and Terry O'Shannassy from CSSV joined clients, volunteers, staff and many from the Mercy Congregation and its agencies in celebrating the occasion at McAuley's offices in Parkville. Geraldine Doogue challenged all of us to focus on 'minding the gap', the areas where services are needed but not provided, and on applying competence to our work for the disadvantaged: Mercy founder Catherine McAuley would have wanted no less. (See interview with Jocelyn, below)

① **Annual Meetings season – a cornucopia of achievement**  
Many of our member organisations have held their Annual Meetings over recent weeks, and annual reports are now available on websites. CSSV has been able to attend a few of these events, and has thus been privileged to share in the richness of the achievements of the last year, and in the Gospel-inspired eagerness to be able to reach out even more to those that need current and as yet not developed services. Some links for annual reports:  
[www.goodshepvic.org.au](http://www.goodshepvic.org.au)  
[www.jss.org.au](http://www.jss.org.au)  
[www.centacaremelbourne.org.au](http://www.centacaremelbourne.org.au)

① **The first Victorian Homelessness conference**, conducted by the Council for Homeless Persons on 19 November, was booked out. Those in attendance included many who have worked for many years to serve the homeless, and to alter the social and economic structures that make it so easy to enter into homelessness and so difficult to move out. Chair Michael Perusco and CEO Deb Tsorbaris joined Government ministers and many others in a spirited commitment to achieving more for the 100,000 plus homeless in Australia.

The announcements of financial commitments last week from the Council of Australian Governments was a very positive response, and the Commonwealth Government White Paper on Homelessness, due this month, is eagerly awaited.

① Proposals for **portability of Long Service Leave within Community sector in Victoria** have been under consideration for some time, and the Department of Human Services is now commencing consultations with a view to the development in 2009 of legislation to introduce such a scheme. Details are not yet fleshed out. CSSV is monitoring the issue, and will consult with and keep members informed. Please feel free to contact Denis Fitzgerald with any comments or queries: 9287 5569, [dfitzgerald@css.org.au](mailto:dfitzgerald@css.org.au)

① **Fundraising update**  
A recent Australian Financial Review article announced the expansion to Melbourne of the Sydney based Property Industry Foundation. Raising in excess of \$1.5 million a year the charity has supported 20 building projects at children's organizations across Sydney. Open Family Australia will be the first Victorian recipient of a grant from the foundation. The website is: [www.pif.com.au](http://www.pif.com.au)

## For your diary

① **Breakfast briefing and discussion, Wednesday 17 December 2008, 7.30am-8.45am.** (please note change of date from previous *miniMicah*)

**Topic: Implications of the financial crisis, Presenter: Professor Peter Sheehan.**

Venue: Lansdowne Room, Ground Floor, Cardinal Knox Centre, 383 Albert St, East Melbourne  
Breakfast provided. RSVP to Chris Wade on 9287 5566 or [cwade@css.org.au](mailto:cwade@css.org.au).

① **Pre-Christmas nibbles and drinks Friday, 19 December 2008, 4:30pm**

All are welcome to join with CSSV and staff of the Archdiocese for a pre-Christmas and end of year celebration. 4:30pm at the Cardinal Knox Centre Staff Room, Ground Floor, 383 Albert St, East Melbourne. Please let Chris know if you are able to join us. (9287 5566 or [office@css.org.au](mailto:office@css.org.au))

- 📍 **Advocacy 101, Wednesday, 25th February 2009, 9:30-11:30am.** A workshop for those who are interested in an introduction to how Government works, and how you can influence it. RSVP to Chris Wade on 9287 5566 or [cwade@css.org.au](mailto:cwade@css.org.au).
- 📍 **2009 Commissioning Mass, CSSV Annual General Meeting, and light dinner**  
Thursday 12 March, 2009, 4.30 – 7.00pm, commencing with Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral  
For staff, leaders, volunteers and friends of CSSV members – to join as a community to celebrate the coming year.
- 📍 **2009 CSSV Dinner**  
Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2009, San Remo Ballroom. All welcome.

## Who am I?

*Each issue, we profile someone in the CSSV community. In this issue, we hear from Jocelyn Bignold, CEO, McAuley Community Services for Women.*

**Q: Tell us about where you work and your role.**

*My role is that of CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women, which is the newly established ministry of the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation and currently incorporates two existing programs: Regina Coeli and Mercy Care.*

*Regina Coeli accommodates and supports women who have experienced mental illness and homelessness and is unique in its ability to support women over time*

*Mercy Care accommodates and supports women and their children who are seeking refuge from family violence. This program offers a very real alternative to overnight motel accommodation which is often hopeless and lonely for women and children who arrive with nothing.*

**Q: Tell us something interesting or funny that has happened at your work recently?**

*I attended a briefing on the New Family Violence Act this week. It will be interesting to see how the Act will influence Victorian Society - the flow-on effect has the potential to significantly change community attitudes; particularly the expanded definition of family violence, both in what constitutes 'family' and what constitutes 'violence' and the introduction of 'Exclusion Orders', aimed at keeping perpetrators out of the family home.*

**Q: Have you a piece of advice or an encouragement that has helped you in life or work?**

*Given the context of establishing a new organization, yes: "Rome wasn't built in a day!"*

**Q: What do you do to wind down or relax?**

*Walk (fast!)*

**Q: Have you a particular role model?**

*Many - I try to emulate people who I see can respect and include diverse opinions; who can give credit and accept blame; who can not take themselves too seriously but be serious about what they are doing. (not saying I'm good at any of this!)*

**Q: Which footy team do you support and why?**

*Essendon (of course!) because they are such great supporters of us! (and, as my partner barracks for them, they're the only ones I've ever really gone to see!)*

## Contact us

*mini MICAH* thrives on news! Send your news, updates, and any items of interest to [admin@css.org.au](mailto:admin@css.org.au).

Please also let us know of any events, celebrations etc in your agency or program – we are keen to keep in touch with developments, and to assist with publicity etc where that is appropriate.

**Catholic Social Services Victoria**

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