



mini MICAH – January 2011

Update for members and friends of Catholic Social Services Victoria

Contents

News & Developments

-  Support following floods
-  Vale Bishop Grech
-  CSSV Planning for 2011
-  Criminal Justice Activity
-  Accommodating asylum seekers in the community
-  Further action to minimise problem gambling
-  Centacare Director from western NSW moves to Melbourne to head Loreto Sisters

CSSV – Upcoming Events

-  Thursday 3 March – **Breakfast briefing** with Tony Nicholson, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence
-  Thursday 24 March – **Commissioning Mass and AGM** – commencing at 4.30pm at All Saints in Fitzroy
-  Friday and Saturday 27 and 28 May – Rescheduled **Women’s Retreat**
-  Friday 19 August – **Annual Dinner** at Leonda by the Yarra in Hawthorn

CSSV – Recent Activities

-  Breakfast briefing - **Out of Home Care** on 14 December 2010
-  Network of mission leaders

Around the Sector

-  **Australia Day awards:** Congratulation to Sr Maria Cunningham
-  22 - 23 March 2011: **Grampians Mental Health Conference**
-  2 April 2011: **Homework**, a fundraiser for Bethlehem Community
-  15-17 April 2011, **3rd National Family Gathering**



News & Developments

Support Following Floods

At the time of writing, flood waters are still rising in parts of northern Victoria, and communities in the west and north of the State are in the process of cleaning up after their homes were inundated. The hearts of all reach out to the communities and families who are affected. Those from St Vincent de Paul, parishes, Centacares and others who are active in these areas know that they can call on the broader sector for support.

We are also conscious that these sufferings and losses are much less than those faced as a result of flood in Queensland, and further afield in Sri Lanka and Brazil. As a modest contribution to recovery in the various areas, CSSV is currently working with Australian Catholic University to assemble findings from ACU's review over the past two years of work undertaken by the sector in Victoria to address the post-disaster needs of bushfire affected communities. This will be forwarded to CSSV and CSSA members across Australia who might benefit from these findings in their own work to promote longer term community healing and recovery from the recent floods.



St Vincent de Paul Society has launched the Victorian Flood Appeal, as financial donations to help people get back on their feet are their pressing need at the moment: To make a donation to the Victorian Flood Appeal visit www.vinnies.org.au, or call 13 18 12.

In his Australia Day reflection, national CEO John Falzon reflected on the experience of community response to these recent disasters: "It is our deepest wish that this spirit of solidarity remains alive well beyond this crisis period and that we all remember that it is compassion that creates a strong Australian community."

Centacare Ballarat is involved in regional relief and recovery responses for the western part of the state. They are in close contact with the recovery organizers and incident management teams to provide support to communities when and where requested. Some of their own offices have been evacuated, and they are monitoring the flood situation in all areas. Staff are ensuring that all clients are contacted and supported, and await the recovery phase to be able to fully evaluate their client's and communities' needs.

CentaCare Sandhurst has been monitoring developments on a daily basis, and have had staff active in a number of affected areas, including assisting at Recovery Centres. As with Centacare Ballarat, longer term support is being assessed as the situation develops, and help has been offered from other agencies, including the bushfire recovery team from Centacare Melbourne.

[Pope Benedict XVI expresses solidarity with flood victims](#)



Vale Bishop Joseph Grech

CSSV joined Centacare Sandhurst and many from our sector in mourning the passing of Bishop Joe Grech, on 28 December 2010, at the relatively young age of 62.

Bishop Joe was a strong supporter of the role of the Church in service to the community and in working for justice. This was evident in his support for the work undertaken by CentaCare, the St Vincent de Paul Society and many others in the Diocese of Sandhurst, and by his leadership on the national stage as the spokesman for the Church in Australia on migrant and refugee matters. That leadership was acknowledged and appreciated across the general community.

May Bishop Joe rest in peace, and may all of us be strengthened to continue the work that he was devoted to.



CSSV Planning for 2011

The final CSSV Council meeting for 2010 focused on forward priorities.

Three strategic priorities were endorsed for 2011, namely:

- Policy & advocacy
- Member support
- Catholic identity and ethos

The draft priorities for 2011 build on recent activity, and include the following changes:

- positive interaction with the newly-elected Baillieu Government will be a priority, in a number of areas
- criminal justice and housing are two policy areas that should be preeminent in our work
- a networking event for staff from our various member organisations
- a focus on models of effective collaboration between organisations
- a conference on the implications of the spirit of Mary MacKillop for Catholic social services

The CSSV Council will consider a workplan for the year when it meets on February 11.

Criminal Justice Advocacy

Criminal justice advocacy remains a priority for CSSV in 2011. One of the first acts of the recently elected Baillieu Government was to introduce a Bill to further restrict the use by the Courts of suspended sentences, as part of a series of measures intended to make the community safer.

We are currently consulting with members and experts in the field to assess whether these measures will in fact have their intended consequence, or whether they will simply add to the numbers of people in prison, with the negative effects that this entails. Our initial assessment is that further work on prevention, diversion and rehabilitation would have a much greater impact on community safety and would lead to more just outcomes than will the proposed legislative amendments.

(Visit www.vcc.org.au to access the brochure *Crimes, Prison and Community: A Christian Approach* that was prepared in the lead up to the recent Victorian election. The graphic, from the brochure, is from Filippo Lippi, 1457 – 1504, St Paul visiting St Peter in Prison)



Accommodating Asylum Seekers in the Community

The Australian Government policy announcement last year to release unaccompanied minors and vulnerable families from detention centres provides an opportunity for Catholic social service providers to contribute to this broader national priority.



In December 2010 Catholic Social Services Victoria convened a meeting of member agencies to look at the options for responses, and a number of activities are underway. A consortium comprising Centacare Catholic Family Services, MacKillop Family Services, Jesuit Social Services and St Vincent de Paul will share their individual skills and recourses with MacKillop being the lead agency. The Brigidine Sisters will also offer to expand their current asylum seeker accommodation services. Appeals have been made to Parishes and Religious Orders to identify housing options, and to date eight potential properties have been identified including

one from a parishioner. Two parishes have offered to rent a property to assist the process – this would, among



other things, make it possible for a parish to focus some efforts on welcoming and supporting an individual family.

In parallel with this, Sr Brigid Arthur has been part of an appeal to the High Court seeking the release into the community of some specific young people who Brigid is in contact with through her pastoral ministry – advocacy for change will continue to be needed, even as services and resources are developed in support of the Government initiative.

Further action to minimise problem gambling



The Victorian Interchurch Gambling Taskforce, of which CSSV is a member, in conjunction with the Victorian Local Government Association, has lodged a [submission](#) in support of the moves proposed by Andrew Wilkie MP to introduce a national 'pre-commitment' scheme, to assist problem gamblers to cope with the lure of electronic gambling machines. The Taskforce will present evidence next week to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform that is reviewing these proposals.

The submission emphasised that pre-commitment is just one of the measures that is needed to curb the harm gambling causes in the Australian community. Actions in the areas of consumer protection, product safety, staff training and restrictions on accessibility, within a public health framework, are also needed to effectively minimise harm. CSSV has also circulated copies to Catholic parishes of a [postcard](#) addressed to the Prime Minister urging support for a range of measures along these lines.

Centacare Director from western NSW moves to Melbourne to head Loreto Sisters



Margaret Mary Flynn ibvm, CEO of CentaCare in Western NSW, has been appointed as Provincial Leader, Loreto Sisters Australia. Margaret Mary established CentaCare in Wilcannia-Forbes, the largest and poorest diocese in NSW, in 1996 and is a vigorous champion of the rights of women and indigenous communities. She has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life in rural and indigenous communities and has been successful in lobbying government to provide significant funding for remote rural areas of NSW.

Margaret Mary moves to her new position in Melbourne in April 2011. In the meantime, they are seeking a replacement for her in [Wilcannia Forbes](#)

CSSV – Upcoming Events

Contact Emmy Silvius (esilvius@css.org.au 9287 5566) to register interest or for further information:

Breakfast Briefing: Thursday 3 March, 7.15 for 7.30 – 8.45 am

Speaker: Tony Nicholson, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence

Topic: GoodStart: a social enterprise alternative to ABC's corporate childcare

In late 2009 the Brotherhood of St Laurence was part of a consortium of community sector organisations that formed GoodStart Childcare Limited to purchase and operate 678 ABC Learning Centres, with the aim of improving the education and care of Australian children. The GoodStart motto is 'Just for kids, not for profit'. Tony Nicholson will speak about the GoodStart venture, reflecting on its impact on early childhood development, and on the implications of the initiative for social enterprise in Australia.





Venue: Cardinal Knox Centre, East Melbourne

RSVP: By Monday 28 February 2011 to Emmy on esilvius@css.org.au

[Click here for flyer](#)

Note: In 2011 breakfast briefings will alternate between Wednesdays and Thursdays so as to accommodate for those who are unavailable on Wednesdays

Commissioning Mass and AGM – Thursday 24 March

All are welcome to attend this annual gathering:



4.30pm – **Mass** at All Saints, 174 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy followed by cuppa

6.00 pm – **AGM** at All Saints Hall

Includes talk by Professor Ruth Webber, Director of Quality of Life & Social Justice Research Centre at the Australian Catholic University

Topic: Rebuilding communities after natural disasters

- lessons from community sector responses to the 2009 Victorian bushfires

7.00 pm – **Supper** at St Mary's House of Welcome, 165 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy

"Rest for your Soul" - Weekend of spiritual renewal for women

This retreat has been rescheduled for **27 and 28 May 2011**.

Come and take the time to rest from the business of 'doing' to the relaxation of 'being'. This will be special time in which our individual gifts are celebrated as well as exploring what underpins our inspiration for being women of courage and hope.

Please contact Emmy on esilvius@css.org.au or tel 9287 5566 if you have any queries or wish to express your interest in attending.



CSSV Annual Dinner – Friday 19 August at Leonda, Hawthorn

CSSV – Other recent Activities

Breakfast briefing – Out of Home Care

Our regular Breakfast gatherings looking at topical issues concluded for 2010 in December with a challenging presentation by Micaela Cronin, CEO of MacKillop Family Services. Out Of Home Care issues have been a constant concern in all states in recent years, with horrific media coverage, major staff issues and a system seemingly unable to manage the expanding demand. MacKillop's predecessor agencies have managed care services in Melbourne since the 1850's so there is a depth of accumulated wisdom to draw on. Micaela outlined some of the major concerns for Community agencies trying to interface with government departments to provide appropriate and timely care for abused and neglected children.

Network of Mission leaders

On 19 November 2010 around a dozen people attended a network meeting aimed at those in Catholic social services organisations who have a responsibility for advancing an understanding of and commitment to the mission of their organisation. Its aim was to support participants in their work through the sharing of ideas, resources etc, and through joint consideration of some current issues.

There was a good spirit in the room, of commitment, openness and support. The structure was free-flowing, which made for a very positive interaction, with floor time shared around the table. Discussion and comment



covered a range of issues, such as the role of the founders, addressing injustices within organisations and the withdrawal of Religious.

The next meeting is now scheduled for Thursday 3 February, from 2.00 – 4.00pm. Denis Fitzgerald, tel 9287 5569, dfitzgerald@css.org.au, would be happy to discuss any aspect of this.

Around the Sector

Australia Day awards: Congratulation to Sr Maria Cunningham

Congratulations to Sr Maria Cunningham RSC on her award of an OAM. Maria is a founding member of the Blake Cottage project in Castlemaine, which provides the families of prisoners with accommodation, allowing them to visit loved ones in Loddon and Tarrengower jails. [Click here](#) for an article on Maria in the Bendigo Advertiser.

Grampians Mental Health Conference, 22 - 23 March 2011 in Ballarat

See www.gmhc.org.au for conference program and registration, or call Kelvin Wilson at Centacare Ballarat on 03 53367900.

2 April 2011: Homework, a fundraiser for Bethlehem Community

HOMEWORK is a fundraising event to assist Bethlehem Community Inc. to support homeless women in Victoria. Women who come to Bethlehem have experienced long-term homelessness. The community provides accommodation and support to women, many of whom experience disabilities associated with abuse and/or mental ill-health. As a result, the women have lost contact with family and friends.

Date: Saturday 2 April 2011 at 7pm

Venue: Palladium Ballroom, Crown, Whiteman Street, Southbank

Dress: Formal

Price: \$220 single or \$2,090 for table of 10

Information/Bookings: homework@bethlehem.com.au



Contact us

Send your news, updates, and any items of interest. Please also let us know of any events, celebrations etc in your agency or program.

Catholic Social Services Victoria

383 Albert St (PO Box 146) East Melbourne Vic 3002

<p><i>Denis Fitzgerald</i> Executive Director dfitzgerald@css.org.au 9287 5569</p>	<p><i>Terry O'Shannassy</i> Member Support and Projects toshannassy@css.org.au 9287 5570</p>	<p><i>Emmy Silvius</i> Office Administrator esilvius@css.org.au 9287 5566</p>
--	--	--

To nominate new subscribers or to unsubscribe to mini MICAH, email esilvius@css.org.au