

'Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God.'

No. 30, June 2008

# micah

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Catholic Social Services  
**Victoria**



# GOOD IDEAS

**"Ideas inspire, energise and  
direct our efforts"**

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*Micah* is the quarterly publication of Catholic Social Services Victoria. The purpose of the magazine is to communicate ideas and developments relating to Catholic social service work in Victoria. The Editor welcomes contributions from member agencies, associates and parishes.

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## CSSV ACTIVITIES & NEWS

The Council of Catholic Social Services Victoria at its May 2008 meeting endorsed a work program that is built around the following strategic themes:

**Advocacy** – providing a Catholic voice for the marginalised and for our member agencies with Government and the media

**Member services** – to assist agencies to better achieve their goals through productive networking and cooperation

**Fostering a Catholic ethos** – assisting members to deepen their understanding of the implications of their Catholic identity

**Research and policy** – working collectively to build our understanding of underlying issues affecting the marginalised and our programs, and to prepare public policy input.

Work is underway in all of these areas. Some recent activity in pursuing these directions is outlined below. Input from *Micah* readers on directions and priorities would also be welcome.

**Social inclusion:** A seminar for members in April deepened our understanding and capacity to feed into the national debate in this area of increasing focus. We also welcome the appointments to the Australian Social Inclusion Board, including Patricia Faulkner, a Board member at Jesuit Social Services; and Elleni Bereded-Samuel, part of whose work is with Centacare Catholic Family Services.

A continuing **program of visits** to agencies, dioceses, politicians etc provide opportunities to learn more about needs of the disadvantaged and marginalised; to appreciate better the work that agencies are doing; and to exchange ideas on where more needs to be done.

Work is underway with member agencies in some key areas of public policy:

- **Mental health:** development is underway of a sector response to a Victorian Government consultation on the provision of mental health services
- **Disability services:** a workshop of members in late May was an initial step to increase our impact on Government policy, and to increase cooperation within the sector as more agencies seek to respond to the disability needs of their communities
- **Refugee settlement:** a workshop in late June will involve member agencies and also parishes that are working to address the complex and pressing settlement needs of recently arrived communities
- **Other areas** flagged for attention include pressure on low income families, effects of poker machines, imprisonment issues, and child and family support policies.

**Homelessness:** Our April 2008 *Micah*, with its theme of 'Finding a Place', was well received. Its focus on some of the practical initiatives that member agencies are working on to impact on long-term homelessness was timely, and will be part of our response to the recently released Federal Government Green Paper on Homelessness.

Other **public comment:** A submission to the 2020 Summit and commentary on the 2008 Victorian Budget are available on the website. These attracted some media attention.

Our **World Youth Day** contribution includes a seminar on justice issues with Cardinal Napier on 18 July, and our members and staff are engaged on many other fronts.

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The 2008 **CSSV Annual Dinner** will be held on **Friday 15th August**, at the San Remo Ballroom, Carlton. This is an opportunity for the sector to come together and celebrate our work, with a focus on deepening relations and cooperation between member agencies. We anticipate a strong turn out from Bishops, leaders of agencies, staff and other supporters of the work done by Catholic social service agencies in Victoria.

# Ideas

## From the Editors

An environment that encourages openness to new ideas is energizing. One can't help but be caught up in the optimism, good vibes and high expectations that abound. This edition of *Micah* looks at ideas; how they develop, catch on and how they can be realised.

This edition includes reflections from agency people who attended the recent key ideas event, the 2020 Summit. In another article, a tribute to Archbishop Little, a TS Eliot quote captures the essence of ideas: "We shall never cease from exploration." We learn that as well as exceptional warmth and capacity for human connection, Archbishop Little was also a man of ideas. This and other articles also demonstrate how much of a role interpersonal skills and influence can play in getting a good idea over the line. Once over the line, it needs nurturing and encouragement.

Many good ideas are never realised for a variety of reasons including unpopularity and bad implementation. Sometimes, they just don't shine brightly enough in a field filled with many dazzlingly bright ideas. As we see in the article on the 2008 Victorian budget, we sometimes need to regroup after an idea is rejected, and renew our efforts to have it accepted. And our World Youth Day item focuses on the impact that ideas can have.

We feature Wellsprings, a wonderful project that developed – dare we say sprang? – from a good idea. Exemplifying the message of true welcome from the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, Wellsprings provides a gathering place for women from different backgrounds.

Ideas are important. They inspire, energise and direct our efforts. As John Maynard Keynes put it in 1935: "It is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil."

Developing and promulgating good ideas is hard work. They emerge and are understood from study and reflection, which takes time and effort. They are assessed and refined as they

are articulated and discussed. This can take us out of our comfort zone. And they need to be refreshed in light of experience and developments around us – there is no quick fix, no room for resting on laurels.

The work of Catholic social services is underpinned by fundamental ideas that derive from the teachings of Jesus and the biblical tradition that he built on:

- we are all made in the image and likeness of God
- God is love
- love of neighbour is inseparable from love of God.

The reflection and experience of the followers of Christ have built on these ideas, to formulate the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching: the ideas of the dignity of each human person; the importance of focusing Government and social endeavour on the common good; the power of solidarity with the whole of humanity; and the need to respect the proper role of each section of society.

We need to work hard to understand the implications of these ideas for our work and for the policies that are needed to promote a just and compassionate society. We hope that the articles in this edition of *Micah* help you in your reflection on the basic principles and ideas that underpin our work. **m**

# 2008 Victorian B

## Denis Fitzgerald

The budget addresses some key priorities, but justice and compassion indicate that more is needed.

### Underlying principles

At Catholic Social Services Victoria, we look to the budget to advance the common good, and to position government-supported programs in solidarity with the marginalised and disadvantaged. Only with such a balance will the budget help us move towards a more just and compassionate society.

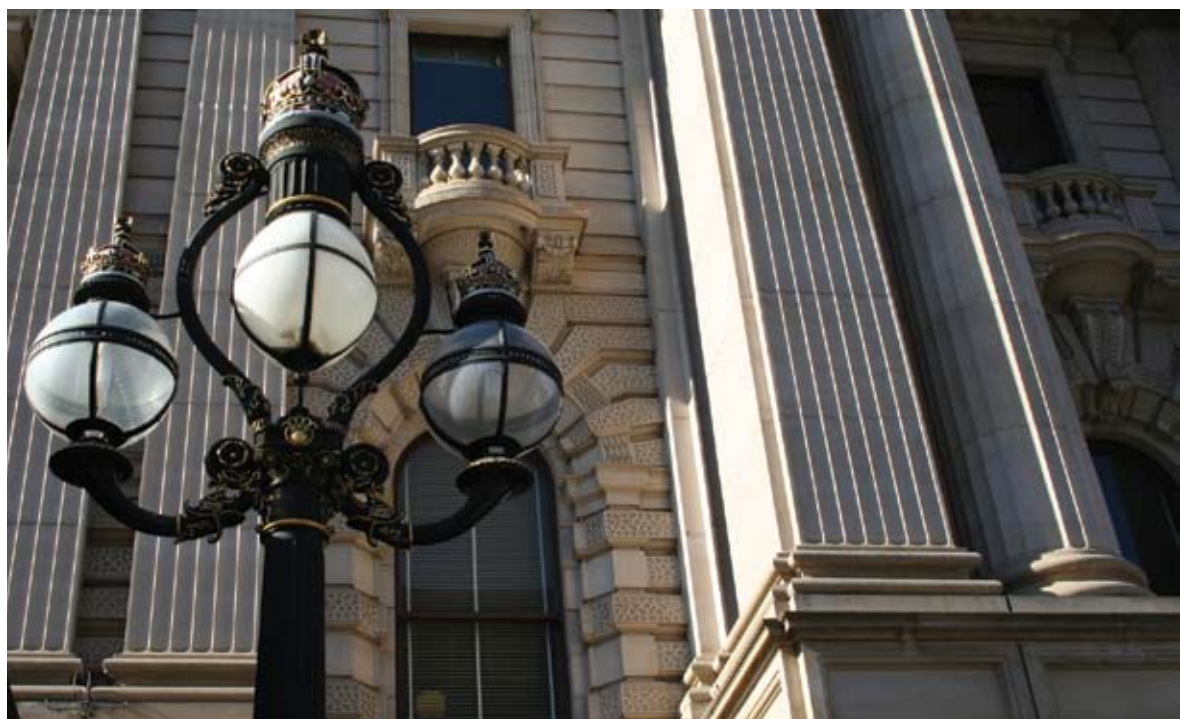
These general directions arise from central principles of Catholic social teaching. This teaching has developed over the centuries from reflection on the Gospel teachings and on the experience of the Church in working with the poor and disadvantaged.

These Catholic principles require that there be an effective balance between, on the one hand, promotion of a healthy economy providing employment and fair remuneration for as many Victorians as possible, and, on the other hand, expenditures providing services to the population as a whole, while adequately addressing the special needs of the marginalised.

### Overall expenditure levels

The 2008 Victorian budget provided \$37 billion for spending on services in 2008/09, the same real level as 2007/08. This is equivalent to 13% of economic output in Victoria (GSP). The budget also provided for investment expenditure totalling \$4.4 billion during 2008/09.

In 2008/09 a surplus of \$828m is targeted, equivalent to 2.2% of revenue. This is cautious fiscal management. A surplus of this size provides for less recurrent expenditure, and enables more investment in infrastructure than would otherwise be affordable. This and future surpluses will fund 64% of public investment over the coming four years, enabling a significantly expanded investment program while retaining a AAA rating from the credit rating agencies.



# udget

## Service delivery

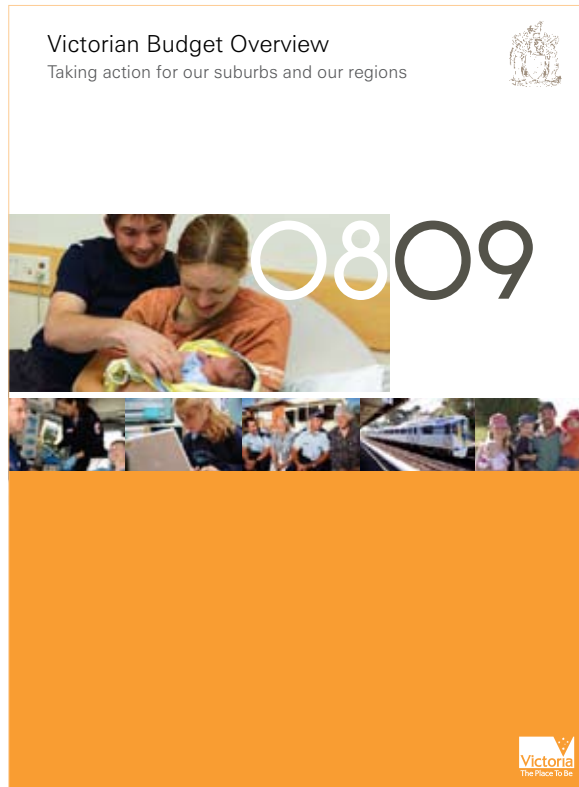
Within the budget, expenditure allocations to the various sectors largely followed the established pattern:

Sector	\$bn	%
health	9.8	26%
education	9.7	26%
public order	4.2	11%
welfare	2.9	8%
housing	2.0	5%
transport	3.9	11%
other	4.5	12%
<b>total</b>	<b>37.0</b>	<b>100%</b>

Real increases in spending on health and education were at a solid 2.5%. These increases, though, were in part at the expense of other social categories – welfare and housing.

Within each of these sectors there were initiatives that Catholic agencies applauded:

- additional housing combined with supporting services for chronically *homeless*
- increased spending on respite care for *families with disabled members*, and on accommodation for disabled young adults who now live in nursing homes
- kindergarten support for *disabled children*
- access to health, justice and education support for *refugee communities*
- doubling of funding for *youth mentoring programs*
- a very welcome increase in the budget for *concession payments*
- continued ongoing funding of *financial counselling*



- increases in starting salaries for *teachers*, and incentives to teachers to move to under-performing schools.

But there remain many areas where a greater government contribution is needed, including many of the areas where some additional effort has been made in the budget. Among the groups within our society with pressing unmet needs that can be met by additional expenditures are:

- Victorians with disabilities and their families
- the homeless
- problem gamblers
- the imprisoned and their families.

In the area of Catholic schools, the budget exacerbated existing under-funding by providing no additional funding to enable the Catholic sector to introduce the quality improvements announced for the government school sector, and by making no provision to meet the cost of any pay increases for Catholic school teachers.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

## Infrastructure investment

The budget provides for \$4 billion in infrastructure spending in 2008/09, and for an average of \$4.4 billion over each of the next four years. This is a much higher level than has been averaged over the past two decades. The following programs are among those identified in the budget documents for commencement in 2008/09.

Program/project	\$m
public transport expansion and upgrades	794
roads upgrading	770
irrigation modernisation	600
freight and port access	240
hospital expansions and upgrades	188
school modernisation	127
health information network	104
prison expansion	83

## Revenue

Taxation revenue is budgeted to increase by 3% in 2008/09, and total revenue by 2.8% to \$37.8 billion. Reductions in rates of land tax, payroll tax and stamp duty on property transfers have kept the increase in revenue levels below the rate of inflation. There are also tax reductions that make first-home purchases more affordable. Gambling revenue is budgeted to increase by 4% to \$1.652 billion.

## Comment

Judging by the principles outlined above, there is much to applaud in this budget: many of the expenditure initiatives, and the increased investment in infrastructure advance the goal of a more just and compassionate society.

But there are also significant areas of unmet need for general services and for special support for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. In this context, it is hard to justify that Victorian Government expenditure is budgeted to decrease as a proportion of economic activity during 2008/09, at a time when our society has never been wealthier.



**“Among the groups within our society with pressing unmet needs that can be met by additional expenditures are... the homeless”**

On taxation, we welcome the moves to make first-home purchases more affordable, but the broader tax measures are harder to justify in light of the pressing expenditure demands. In fact, the Real Estate Institute of Victoria points out that the stamp duty on a median home is now a smaller percentage of the purchase price than was the case ten years ago. And a more productive economy seems more likely to flow from a change in the structure of the gambling industry than from reductions in the rates of land tax and stamp duty.

We at Catholic Social Services Victoria look forward to continued dialogue with the Government on these matters in the lead up to the 2009 budget. **m**

An expanded version of this article is available at [www.css.org.au/news](http://www.css.org.au/news)

Denis Fitzgerald is Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria



Hair hygiene – including braiding – and henna painting

# Weaving a Web of Wellbeing

**Ann Halpin PBVM**

Auspiced by the Presentation Sisters, Victoria, Wellsprings for Women is a centre for women of the cities of Greater Dandenong and Casey who are isolated due to the traumatic effects of migration, mental illness, family violence or family break-up, disability, loss of employment, limited education or poor health. Wellsprings offers these women a range of personal support and referral as well as access to wholistic education and skill-based programs, respite care, home visiting and No Interest Loans and budgeting. Wellsprings also has a strong and well-trained base of volunteers who assist with administration and home visiting and respite care.

Wellsprings welcomes approximately 300 women from 58 different cultures, including newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Sudan and Burma.

In addition to computer classes and three levels of ESL English Classes, Wellsprings conducts conversation classes and Sudanese and Afghani women's friendship circles. These friendship circles provide the opportunity for newly-arrived refugee and asylum-seeker women to connect with other women from their own cultural group

to share stories, articulate their needs and learn English in a warm, safe, homely environment. Wellsprings has been very fortunate in attracting funding to employ Afghan and Sudanese workers to facilitate the learning of their participants in the friendship groups.

Yet another group of women who attend Wellsprings are women who are isolated in the local community due to the effects of mental illness. Many of these women are engaged in the wide variety of creative arts programs offered at Wellsprings. These include quilting groups, craft, Art for the Love of It, weaving, knitting and crocheting. On International Women's Day, Wellsprings launched a book of women's stories and their creative arts entitled "Threads to Freedom". This project was a partnership with the City of Greater Dandenong and VicHealth.

Wellsprings works in partnership with the local councils and local agencies to provide a wholistic program and is very dependent on its well-trained, generous and committed volunteers. The focus at Wellsprings is on creating a community of board members, staff, volunteers, Friends of Wellsprings and participants. "Weaving a Web of Wellbeing" is the theme of 2008. **m**

Ann Halpin is a Presentation Sister and is the Co-ordinator of Wellsprings for Women

# Reflection on participatio

## Julie Edwards

“By 2020 Australia should be known throughout the world for its diverse, fair, compassionate and respectful society... and...Australia should be an inclusive society with an economy, not the other way around.”

This key statement from the ‘Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion’ stream of the 2020 Summit resonates with the vision and values of Jesuit Social Services.

I was a member of this working group which was co-chaired by The Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Federal Minister for Housing and Rev. Tim Costello. The group had a real commitment to affirm the importance of inclusion for everyone and to define how social inclusion can be realised particularly for the marginalised and disadvantaged.

The shared commitment to tackling disadvantage meant that delegates made a real effort to think beyond their own individual or organisational interests. There was a real sense of openness to new ideas and a strong passion and commitment to building a more just society.

This vision got grounded as delegates thought through many of the practical ideas and recommendations that were generated. These



included a new Charter of Human Rights and a National Action Plan for Social Inclusion with the development of tools to track how, as a society, we’re progressing against these goals. There was a determination to tackle homelessness, to boost the real-life chances of people living in the most disadvantaged areas, to provide integrated services for people so they get the help they need, and to reform the way government engages with the community sector and the broader community. These are just a few of the ideas that emerged from our deliberations.



# on in the 2020 Summit



Images courtesy of the Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Summit created a space for people to discuss vision and values that underpin the ideal society we want to be – one that cares for and welcomes the contribution of everyone.

One thing that struck me at the Summit was the reality of Australia as an egalitarian society. People from across the community, from all walks of life, ages and perspectives shared the common space and the public floor. This broad level of consultation, participation and mobilisation engendered a tangible feeling of hope that we really can build a more inclusive and just society.

But with the vision comes responsibility - the work has just begun. The 2020 Summit was a conversation with a call to action – the weekend was only the beginning.

We eagerly await the government's response to the Summit's recommendations. Meanwhile Jesuit Social Services will continue to 'stand in solidarity with those in need' - the young people, families and communities we work with - and to advocate for the kind of society that gives everyone a fair go. **m**

Julie Edwards is CEO of Jesuit Social Services



# A Reflection on Archbishop Sir Frank Little

## Fr Kevin Mogg

I was asked to offer a few thoughts on behalf of the Catholic welfare sector and to say 'adieu' and 'thanks' to this great man after his recent death and funeral. I do this very gladly.

Archbishop Frank appointed me to be his Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare in 1980. Bishop Eric Perkins had been my sole predecessor. I was appointed for three years. I actually stepped down, with Archbishop Hart's agreement, in April 2007 – twenty-seven years later!

That position as Episcopal Vicar meant I had regular contact with Archbishop Frank. This afforded me an insight into the man. For this I will always be grateful.

The picture of the Archbishop kneeling beside a crippled child and his mother occupied the front cover of the funeral booklet at the Requiem Mass on 15th April. How perfectly appropriate that was! It captured his make-up and his values – his ability to be with people, to make them feel valued and significant – irrespective of their position in life. The high and the lowly, the young and the old – all were important to him. So whenever he paid a visit to one of the welfare agencies, people loved his company – he was their friend.

Many within the welfare sector find life's challenges almost too much to bear at times. His ability to identify with and share their struggles gave great encouragement to many. His own particular struggles were of course inevitably related to his responsibility as Archbishop. He agonised endlessly about the hurt suffered by victims of sexual abuse – and he worked constantly to find ways of healing and reconciliation. No doubt that deep sense of compassion came from his own spirituality, his great faith in a compassionate God.

Families influence us all in our faith. Archbishop Frank once said that one of his richest experiences was as a young man catching a glimpse of his father kneeling in prayer. Wounded in World War I, his father had lost a leg and here he was kneeling, lost in prayer, by his bed!

Archbishop Frank was really quite a shy man – almost private in some ways. Yet he was eminently human and was himself wherever he went. That groundedness came from the family



*Waiting for Oneness*, painted by James O'Brien. Presented for Archibald Prize. Photo by John Casamento.

to which he was deeply attached. He grew up in Moonee Ponds and that famed Essendon 'syndrome' shaped and moulded him in so many ways – including of course his great devotion to his beloved Bombers.

Though he was deeply connected to those familiar to him, he reached out to a wide network. He was extremely open to other Churches and faiths. Very ecumenical in outlook all his life, he was a great personal friend of many outside the Catholic field. He had for example a close personal friendship with former Anglican Archbishop Dr Frank Woods.

He had an extraordinary hunger for knowledge – always searching for new ideas and inspiration. TS Eliot must have had Sir Frank in mind when he wrote "we shall never cease from exploration".

The mood of that vast crowd at the Cathedral found its richest expression in the spontaneous applause that burst out as the coffin was lowered into the crypt for its final interment. Love, appreciation and thanks echoed through the place quite unmistakably.

May his gentle soul rest in peace. **m**

Fr Kevin Mogg AM PP is former Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare and Director of Catholic Social Services Victoria

# What Impact Does World Youth Day Have?

As anticipation builds in the lead up to World Youth Day (WYD), many in the church quietly nurture hopes that the event may lead to a renewal of faith among the young and the young at heart. There is hope too that the event may draw people back to involvement in church communities and agencies. Dr Richard Rymarz looks at the experience of previous World Youth Days and their influence on the faith life of young adults.



Dr Richard Rymarz is a visiting research professor at Australian Catholic University and holds the Peter and Doris Kule Chair in Catholic Religious Education, St Joseph's College, University of Alberta.

## Dr Richard Rymarz

While there is little quantitative research on the impact of previous World Youth Days, this is a situation we hope to rectify after WYD 2008. Nonetheless, the events held every two to three years since the first in Argentina in 1987 have given rise to sufficient data to draw some initial observations that we hope to test out in light of the experience in Sydney in July.

In my view, the major impact of WYD is that it provides a vehicle for many active Catholics to become more passionate, more committed and greater witnesses to their faith.

Let me tell you two Canadian stories. I was having coffee one morning with our newest staff member, 'Gerard'. I couldn't help but be impressed with him. In his 20s, articulate, half way through a doctorate in scripture, lecturing at the seminary as well as the University of Alberta, married with one child, involved in a variety of justice issues. I could go on. As I am interested in such things I asked him how he got to this point in his life. His answer, WYD 2002 - which was held in Toronto. As he put it, this inspired him to take his Catholicism seriously.

The Director of Youth Mission for the Edmonton Archdiocese recounted the following story. He was speaking to all the youth workers in the archdiocese in a specially convened seminar. At one point he asked how many of them were involved in youth ministry because of their experience of WYD. Every single person put their hand up. This underscores my view that the effect of WYD is best observed in the lives of individuals, rather than looking at wholesale trends - there were thirty or so people at the seminar not three thousand. One woman, 'Erica', spoke of how WYD led her to a personal relationship with Jesus. WYD helped make Jesus real for her.

Both Gerard and Erica went to WYD as what I would call active Catholics. They went to mass regularly, were identified by others as being religious but were lacking a strong personal conviction. This gels well with the literature that reports those most likely to develop strong religious commitment are those with some initial affiliation. A nice scriptural image here

is of people who move from hearing Jesus from a distance, at the back of the crowd, to the front lest they miss a word. This experience of closeness to Christ then empowers them to go out to others.

But what about those far removed from the tradition, what does WYD do for them? Ministry to this group is really hard. If anyone has a tested and foolproof plan for reaching out to these people, please let me know! WYD does, however, offer a way forward.

An important aspect of this way forward is perhaps once removed. To illustrate, imagine a student in her first year at university. For reasons even she finds hard to articulate she has always wanted to explore the transcendent dimension of life. She has never been to WYD as she is not part of a parish or any other group that encourages young people to attend. Not that she wants to go to WYD, the whole thing seems a little strange and impersonal to her. She is a Catholic but this has never had much influence on what she does or what she believes but she is not hostile or negative about her faith. At university she sees an ad for a meeting of Catholic students. She goes along a little nervous and hesitant. Imagine if she finds there a group of Gerard and Ericas; an inviting, friendly group of her peers who are happy to witness to the importance of faith in their lives.

If WYD forms a "human bridge" that allows others an entrée into a faith community, then it has provided a very valuable service.

Anything we can do to nurture young people and offer them such transformative experiences is worth a try. People with this experience are far more likely to be, amongst other things, effective peer ministers. Recent studies by Australian researchers<sup>1</sup> shows these are the same young adults who are also involved in social outreach on either a practical or conceptual level.

It's important that we do not put unrealistic expectations on WYD. A person once approached me and opined that WYD was a waste of time as it did nothing for the vast majority of Catholics who were estranged from the tradition. Leaving aside the obvious rejoinder about what his/her plan may have been to re-engage these people, I would argue having ten, fifty, maybe a hundred more Gerard and Ericas in a diocese is a good development which may have unexpected and long term consequences. **m**

1. Mason M, Webber R, Singleton A and Hughes P. *Spirit of Generation Y*, ACU Melbourne, 2006.

# 2020 – continue the conversation

## Frank Quinlan

The same day the *Micah* Editor requested this article reflecting on the 2020 Summit, I received a letter from the Prime Minister (along with the other 999 summit delegates) expressing thanks to those who participated in the 2020 Summit and exhorting delegates to continue discussion in our ‘workplaces, our communities and our families.’ This exhortation from the Prime Minister captures the main impression I have



The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, with Ms Elleni Bereded-Samuel, a program contributor at Centacare Catholic Family Services.

Image courtesy of the Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

from the 2020 Summit, including the lead-up and the aftermath, that the conversation is almost as important as the outcomes.

The lead-up to the Summit was a time of considerable excitement. I could not begin to count the number of conversations, emails and discussions I was involved in where people from all walks of life wanted to share their ideas for the 2020 Summit. We surveyed members of Catholic Social Services Australia, we discussed ideas with the National Office staff, we received submissions from the public, prison chaplains discussed ideas with inmates, my children discussed ideas at their schools, and my friends discussed ideas over dinner and while waiting to pick up children after netball practice. It seemed that somehow the Prime Minister’s invitation to share ideas captured at least something of the popular imagination. People wanted to be part of a conversation about the future of Australia.

At the Summit itself (once the glitz and glamour cleared a little) the conversation continued enthusiastically, sometimes vigorously! Any process to condense the views of 1000 relatively opinionated delegates into ten PowerPoint slides during roughly eight hours of formal discussion

was always going to be somewhat problematic. A very small number of delegates opted out of the process quite early, dismayed that their particular concern or idea was not going to achieve ascendancy – a disappointing outcome for them and for others. The vast majority of delegates, however, entered into the process with a remarkable degree of respect, collaboration and compromise. In this spirit a number of ideas grew as the discussion progressed. The germ of an idea was added to by others, common ideas were identified, complementary ideas were combined, and good ideas fell by the way – simply because there was limited time and space. In this way the process seemed to grow beyond what individual delegates could bring on their own.

The Prime Minister’s pre-Summit undertaking, repeated in his recent letter, is that the Government will respond to the ideas brought forward at the 2020 Summit before the end of 2008. We can only accept this undertaking in good faith and reserve our judgements about how well the Government might meet this objective when its report is handed down.

In the meantime we can reflect on what the process tells us about the economy of ideas, and it is hard not to be reminded of the parable of the sower. For ideas to take root the seed must be viable and it must fall on fertile soil. In Canberra, this has great relevance. Good ideas (in most respects viable) can fall on barren soil if the political, economic and social climate is not quite right. Lesser ideas, falling into happier political circumstances, will sometimes have better prospects for survival. Our challenge as a sector is to be ready with all manner of viable ideas, and to be alert to the changing political, economic and social circumstances, so that we can be ready to ‘sow’ our ideas in a time and place where they are likely to flourish. **m**

Frank Quinlan is Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia