

# Building better lives



Brotherhood of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

*Building better lives since 1930*

## Executive Director's message



Tony Nicholson

Over the past 80 years, the Brotherhood has responded to the changing needs in our community. But while our programs have evolved, our belief has prevailed that education and training are powerful tools that can assist young people to transform their lives.

The Brotherhood provides programs to help young people achieve their best in early childhood, through the school years, and then in their transition to employment. The Brotherhood's work in this area is vital, as there are currently more than 300,000 young people who,

having left school without qualifications, are at risk of a lifetime of insecure employment. As demonstrated in our Winter Appeal, there are many barriers that prevent disadvantaged young people from completing their education, including family breakdown, poverty, homelessness and lack of social and mentoring support. Young people and children facing these barriers are some of

the most vulnerable in our community. The Brotherhood has been successful in breaking down these barriers by providing alternative learning programs for teens who are disengaged from school. The Community Learning program has made a profound difference in the lives of many of these young people. While they were once at risk of slipping through the net, they can now look forward to a more secure future.

The focus on education and training is an important part of the process to assist disadvantaged people enter the world of work and to join the mainstream life of our community. Our research shows that most people – including those living on the margins of our society – aspire to similar things: to have a secure home, a good job and to enjoy the support of family and friends.

Continued on page 2

## Brotherhood leads the pack in helping people find work

**James is 29 years old. He's married and has two beautiful children. Like many Melbournians, James has struggled to find work. However, James had more hurdles to overcome than most: arriving from South Sudan in 2008, James had to conquer language and cultural barriers to find employment.**

After two years of searching, without success, for a job, James visited the Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning (CWL), which had just opened in the inner-Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. The Brotherhood's Centre for Work and Learning is an innovative project that promotes work and learning opportunities in public housing neighbourhoods with high concentrations of unemployment.

At the centre, James was appointed to a Work and Learning Advisor, who coordinated his participation in the centre's programs, and who tailored the assistance offered to suit James' particular needs. With guidance from specially trained staff, James improved his computer skills and gained work experience.

Continued on page 2



James (fourth from left) and the CWL team who helped him find employment

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.BSL.ORG.AU](http://WWW.BSL.ORG.AU)

## Executive Director's message

Continued from page 1

The Brotherhood is committed to working for an Australia where everyone shares in the prosperity of our nation. Through our Line of Sight program, and our Centre for Work and Learning, we assist those who struggle to gain work. We help these disadvantaged jobseekers access training, gain work experience and, most importantly, to develop a clear line of sight to a permanent job.

In this issue of *Building Better Lives*, we introduce you to James, who we assisted to enter the workforce despite the many challenges he experienced.

Also in this issue, we are proud to announce that Dr Peter Hollingworth – former Brotherhood Executive Director, and current life member and long-term supporter – has graciously accepted our invitation to become a Brotherhood Ambassador, and to represent our bequest program. Bequests provide crucial funding for many of our innovative programs, and so we are delighted that Dr Hollingworth has become engaged in this important work.

In closing, please let me say again how grateful we are for your interest and support. Thank you for joining us in working towards an Australia free of poverty.

Tony Nicholson

## Brotherhood leads the pack in helping people find work

Continued from page 1

He also attended English conversation groups that have a workplace focus, where he practised giving, receiving and clarifying instructions.

James also participated in a training program that was tailored to the needs of a particular employer. This program covered the company's recruitment process and helped James improve the communication and customer service skills that the company was looking for.

Programs have been run for Woolworths, Victoria Police, the Melbourne Fire Brigade, the National Australia Bank, the Department of Transport, among others.

# The Brotherhood recruits Dr Peter Hollingworth as new Ambassador

**Dr Hollingworth has been a long time friend and supporter of the Brotherhood, having worked with the organisation since 1960, including being Executive Director from 1980 to 1990.**

Recently, Dr Hollingworth graciously accepted the role of Brotherhood Ambassador, to speak about the importance of bequest giving.

'During my time at the Brotherhood, I was constantly encouraged by the generous bequests left to the organisation. A bequest is very valuable as it allows the Brotherhood to begin a new program or service that it may not otherwise be able to undertake,' says Dr Hollingworth.

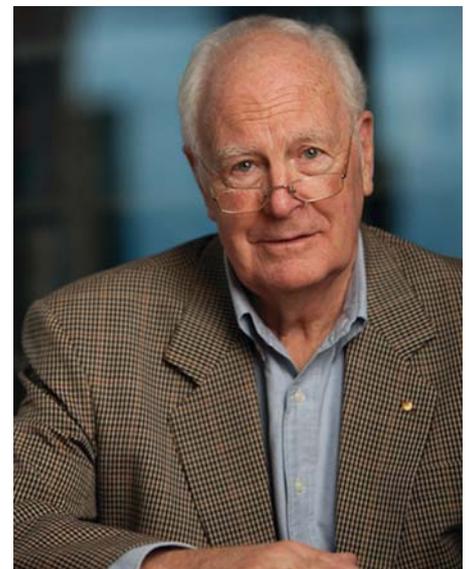
Dr Hollingworth has remained closely involved with the Brotherhood, and he and his wife have chosen to remember the Brotherhood in their wills.

'I feel strongly that the work undertaken by the organisation, to relieve suffering and poverty, and to help disadvantaged people join the mainstream life of our society, continues to be critically important. There is a saying from our rural past: "Always try to leave the wood heap a little higher than you found it"', says Dr Hollingworth.

Leaving a bequest to the Brotherhood helps us to establish a sound financial

base to secure our future. It enables long-term planning and funding for innovative projects that are the Brotherhood's specialty.

For more information about the Brotherhood's bequest program, please telephone Lavinia Podolak, Support Relations Officer, on (03) 9483 1399.



Dr Peter Hollingworth



At the CWL, people are helped to improve their computer skills

Finally, James realised his dream of supporting his family and he secured a permanent job.

'Thanks to the help from the Brotherhood, I can now smile as I walk down the street, knowing I have earned the coin in my pocket.'

Since opening its doors in July 2009, the Centre for Work and Learning has grown in leaps and bounds. To date, the centre has assisted more than 1100 people.

The State Government of Victoria has recently recognised the outstanding

success of the Centre for Work and Learning, and has partnered with the Brotherhood to create five more Work and Learning centres in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The Centre for Work and Learning is a beacon of hope for the thousands of Melbournians who are struggling to find work.

## Volunteer's voice: Fiona Rigg



Fiona Rigg is a renowned Melbourne food stylist and chef who has worked for *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Coles Magazine* and *Woman's Day*.

Inspired by the assistance the Brotherhood gave her own father – who was a resident at Sumner House, one of the Brotherhood's aged-care facilities – Fiona joined the ranks of the Brotherhood's valued volunteers.

For over a year, Fiona has generously donated her time and expertise to give regular cooking classes at Sumner House.

The 'cooking ladies', as Fiona's class members are known, love taking a trip down memory lane by making classic dishes like scones and muffins.

Fiona's muffin recipe is a favourite with the residents of Sumner House, so they were keen to share the recipe with Brotherhood supporters.

Fiona's love of food and cooking has been a great gift to many elderly residents.

### Sumner House banana and honey muffins

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes  
**Cooking time:** 15 minutes  
**Makes:** 12

#### INGREDIENTS

1 cup castor sugar  
 90g melted butter  
 2 eggs  
 2 tbsp honey  
 2 large ripe bananas, mashed  
 2 cups self-raising flour  
 1/4 cup milk

#### Icing:

250g cream cheese  
 1/2 cup icing sugar  
 Grated zest of 1 lemon

#### METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Cream sugar and melted butter until the mixture thickens slightly. Add eggs one at a time. Add the honey and mashed banana, then fold in the flour and the milk.

While the muffins are cooking, prepare the icing by combining the cream cheese, icing sugar and lemon zest.



Jo (second from left) with some of her students at the Brotherhood's Frankston centre

## Q&A: Jo and Emily, Brotherhood Community Learning teachers

Jo and Emily work with young people who are disengaged from mainstream school and are at risk of heading down the wrong path. When they come to work at the Brotherhood's High Street Centre in Frankston each day, they know they are making a difference.

### What is Community Learning and how is it different to mainstream schooling?

The Community Learning program is a Year 12 equivalent that focuses on practical, vocational learning. This program is really different to mainstream schooling. We offer the same qualification as schools – the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning – but that's where the similarities end. The students have two teachers in each class and it's an adult learning program so they are treated like adults without the types of 'rules' you find at mainstream schools.

### Why do kids come to the Brotherhood Community Learning program?

There are a lot of reasons. We only take students who are disengaged from school and face multiple (and complex barriers). Two of the students have children of their own, others have experienced issues at home, financial problems, homelessness, substance abuse or really negative relationships with teachers and other students.

### What changes have you seen in the students you've taught?

The students develop more positive relationships and an increased ability to learn at school, as well as in the workplace and at home. Generally, the kids are

happier after a term or so – there is a lot of laughter and fun, which is a big success for us.

### What's the best thing about teaching the Community Learning program?

Relationships with the young people – being able to learn from them, about their world. It is easy to judge or make assumptions about young people, especially those in programs like ours.

The students overcome so much in the time we teach them. They are an inspiration to us.

### What does a typical day at work involve?

There is no typical day! It can begin with picking a student up for school, or collecting supplies for Breakfast Club. We then teach for the majority of the day (9.30 am – 3.00 pm), sometimes in the classroom and sometimes outside in the garden. We finish the day with reflective sessions and student wellbeing meetings.

### What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Being part of a team that shares similar values and working with young people and seeing them turn around their lives. That is really rewarding and a privilege.

For more information about the programs run at the Brotherhood's High St Centre in Frankston, please phone (03) 8781 5900 or visit [www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au).

# Celebrating 80 years of building better lives

## Stay up-to-date with research and policy news

This month we launch Brotherhood Update, an newsletter of research and policy news from the Brotherhood.

Recent reports and submissions are featured on a range of topics, from money matters for the financially vulnerable to better tailored employment services for highly disadvantaged job seekers.

Employment and financial vulnerability are always important issues for the Brotherhood and this recent research presents our latest recommendations on how improvements could be made for disadvantaged people in these areas.

You can download the latest issue and subscribe to the next issue on the Brotherhood's website ([www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)). The next issue will be released in May.

## Winter appeal – thank you!

We would like to warmly thank everyone who has so generously supported our Winter Appeal.



Funds raised through this appeal directly assist many individuals and families. Much of the support offered is only possible through your assistance.

If you have not yet made a contribution we urge you to assist us and donate now by calling (03) 9483 1301 or emailing [donate@bsl.org.au](mailto:donate@bsl.org.au).

As many of you know, the Brotherhood recently celebrated its 80th anniversary. To pay tribute to this special milestone, in each *Building Better Lives* newsletter this year, we will look back to a piece of Brotherhood history.

80 Years of Building better lives

1960

### Brotherhood's Youth Club provides a haven for disadvantaged teens in swinging sixties

The sixties was an era when the Beatles inspired teenage hysteria, man took his first steps on the moon, and women were sporting beehive hair-dos. It was an era of social upheaval; but while many eyes were firmly fixed on the big issues of Communism, feminism and civil rights, the Brotherhood didn't lose sight of its focus on helping local people – poor and struggling Melburnians – in need.

Of particular concern was helping teenagers who didn't fit into the formal educational and recreational structures of the sixties. So the Brotherhood set up an informal, casual Youth Club for teenagers who had unsettled backgrounds, personal problems, or had been in trouble with the authorities.

Located in Fitzroy, the club provided a safe place for teenagers to hang out, socialise, and do groovy activities: they could chat in the coffee lounge, listen to records, practise their rock 'n' roll dance moves, challenge each other at table tennis and play footy outside. The kids also held rock 'n' roll dances every Friday night, went on camps to the Mornington Peninsula, and ran their own radio station.

The club also helped the teenagers with whatever they were struggling with in their lives: if they needed a job, employment assistance was provided; if a girl was pregnant,



Youth Club members at one of the Friday night rock 'n' roll dances, 1960s

access to pre-natal classes was arranged; if they needed to talk, the Brotherhood's Chaplain or a social worker was available.

As well as providing activities and a supportive social network, the Youth Club helped its young members to increase their skills and confidence. Through the club, members undertook courses in Film Projection and honed these skills by screening feature films for young offenders at Pentridge Jail, for residents of the Coolibah Centre, and for patients of a mental hygiene clinic.

So now, when you think of the swinging sixties, don't just imagine a man on the moon or four boys with mop-tops, but remember the dozens of teenagers who were given purpose, direction and happiness in a small club in Fitzroy at the Brotherhood of St Laurence.



Teenagers hanging out at the Youth Club, 1960s

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Please send me information about the Brotherhood's regular monthly giving program  Please send me information about leaving a gift to the Brotherhood in my will  
We respect the privacy of your personal details. The Brotherhood of St Laurence will not disclose your details to any other party. See our Privacy Policy on our website.

Donations to the Brotherhood of St Laurence of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

