



MacKillop Family Services, Barwon, has continued to expand, consolidate and redevelop services over this past year to better address community needs. Quality service improvement has underpinned the redevelopments whilst achieving financial sustainability.

Foster Care and Specialised Home Based Care again greatly exceeded the negotiated Department of Human Services placement targets with over 75 placements each day. This level of service could not have been achieved without the generosity and commitment of our volunteer caregivers in the Geelong and Colac community. My sincere appreciation for their wonderful support this past year.

Bayview Disability Services similarly experienced unprecedented growth, now supporting sixty families caring for children with disabilities, and has successfully implemented a new Continence Scheme. Collaboration with regional disability agencies led to a Department of Human Services Disability Services Best Practice Grant to develop a Survival Kit for Families of Children with Disabilities during school holidays. The kit has proved to be a valuable resource for families and disability agencies.

The redevelopment of our residential services for high needs adolescents has been an enormous task. It has achieved some remarkable successes, and further change will occur in the coming year. Our rostered residential services for high needs adolescents with challenging behaviours have been redeveloped to care for small groups of adolescents. Department of Human Services residential care funding will be improving next year and should overcome the serious financial deficit issues we were incurring in the delivery of these services.

Our specialist education and training services continue to provide valued and responsive services for children and young people disconnected or at risk in mainstream education. The Youth Ed-venture Program (YEP) received a Department of Human Services Best Practice Award in 2000 for its innovative response to young people, frequently in out-of-home care and disconnected from mainstream education. The pilot Second Chance Program funded by School Focused Youth Services brokerage to two Geelong school districts in school terms 3 and 4, 2000 was able to re-engage students who were non school attending back into education. Funding constraints led to a reduced service at St Helen's School and its relocation to our Whittington site with our other specialist education services at the beginning of 2001.

In Barwon the strength of partnership with government, health, education and welfare agencies, and volunteers has been an essential ingredient in all our endeavours. In 2000 the Australian Catholic University, in partnership with MacKillop Family Services and the Catholic Education Office, received a Linkage Grant to undertake research and evaluation of our specialist education services over the next two years. The Reconnect Program, a Commonwealth funded initiative between MacKillop Family Services, BAYSA Youth Services and BYAS Barwon Youth Accommodation Service in Geelong, has been achieving outstanding results in reducing youth homelessness, and has been selected as one of three Victorian services for a Reconnect longitudinal study.

I am indebted to many organisations for the positive partnerships we have been fortunate to forge during the year. To the Trustees of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust for the generous funding of \$100,000 towards the purchase of a house to care for high needs adolescents; to the Geelong Region Group Training who have provided a traineeship to MacKillop Youth Services (Barwon) for 2001/02; and to Geelong Community Foundation who provided funds to establish a Homework Centre for Young People in Care. Our gratitude must also be expressed for the continued support from United Way, Mercy's Angels, the Ocean Grove Opportunity Shop, St Augustine's Clothing and Collectibles, and the Geelong community who support our works in so many ways.

My appreciation also goes to the Department of Human Services, Department of Education Employment and Training, the three Geelong School Districts, Office for Youth, School Focused Youth Service, and Catholic Education Office, who have been so supportive of our new initiatives and redevelopments.

Late in the year Brother Russell Peters, Program Manager, St Augustine's Education and Training was awarded a Brother Hugh Loftus visiting professorship to America for a year, so we welcome Amanda McMahon to our management team.

All the above could not be achieved without the strong commitment, versatility and talents of our staff, and the Barwon management team. They have managed excessive workloads, redevelopments and program expansion with enormous goodwill and perseverance.

We look forward to the coming year continuing our work with Geelong families, providing developmental opportunities to children and young people, continuing quality service improvements and research to ensure service effectiveness.

Anne Condon
Regional Director Barwon