

Southern and Specialist Services

Regional Director's Report



MacKillop Family Services' recent development of a Southern Metropolitan Region and attached Specialist Services has resulted in good outcomes this year.

The scope of Regional Director responsibilities has been reduced to two programs: McAuley Child and Family Services and Rice Education and Youth Services and associated specialist services. This development has brought about closer and more intensive work with the programs, specialist services and the Department of Human Services (DHS).

In this context McAuley Child and Family Services has now established itself as a good professional service in the Southern Metropolitan Region. Service provision, staffing stability and financial viability have been improved and consolidated. The redevelopment and improvement of the program's structure and service provision has been realised through additional DHS funding. Increased case management and residential care worker support now make possible the goal of service excellence.

The year has also seen the continuing excellent support given to McAuley Child and Family Services by Kids Under Cover and the Rotary Club of Brighton in the planning, and soon to be built, new group home for children in McAuley's care.

For Rice Education and Youth Services the planning and building of a new St Vincent's School (Transitional Learning Centre) at Maidstone has been a major achievement this year. The school is a component of the Transitional Integrated Education Residential Services (TIERS) – a service for at risk children and young people (mixed genders) jointly developed by DHS and MacKillop. The new school and administration centre is a radical departure from the current services at South Melbourne. The building design, facilities and school curriculum are at the cutting edge of education and welfare support services for children and young people with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The new St Vincent's school will be fully operational on 29 January 2002.

The residential and case management components of TIERS have produced outstanding results during the year. The staff's commitment, creativity and professionalism have achieved excellent service integration and outcomes for children and young people. The service has been commended for its excellence by DHS and other organisations throughout the year. The Premier, the Hon. Steve Bracks, experienced some aspects of service quality during his visit to the TIERS North Carlton residential unit on 14 March 2001.

The Children in Residential Care Education Support Service jointly auspiced by Westcare (Salvation Army) and MacKillop continued its well-acclaimed work in facilitating the provision of education services for children and young people in residential care throughout the Western Metropolitan Region. Recognition of the value of this service was expressed by DHS providing significant additional funding for staffing and brokerage funds this year.

The Behavioural Support Service continued to provide education support services to 10 Catholic primary schools in the Western Metropolitan Region this year. The service assisted the schools to manage educationally at risk children by adopting a whole-of-school systemic approach. Each school was assisted to develop student welfare groups and to develop linkages with community organisations able to help the children and their families.

Effective community work was also achieved by the School Focused Youth Service. The service conducted a number of projects with African communities in the Flemington area to bring about a better understanding and usage of school structures and services by those communities.

The work of the Western Education Centre completed its 26th year of service to educationally at risk primary school children throughout the Western Metropolitan Region. Providing educational learning and support services for children from St Anthony's Family Preservation Service, the Centre has time and again demonstrated the importance of education in the task of assisting marginalised children and their families. The enthusiasm of the children's attendance at the Centre, the parental support, the remediation of learning difficulties and integration back into normal classroom settings are testimony to the service's effectiveness.

Cedar Works continued to provide vocational training skills to a group of unemployed people aiming to establish their own furniture restoration businesses. A wider group of 14 young unemployed people from the Dandenong area were also assisted in gaining skills in basic woodworking and work place social and productivity skills. Cedar Works was successful in obtaining funding to manage a Community Jobs Project for 24 participants in 2001-02.

My thanks to the Program Managers and staff who have all accomplished a great deal this year. My appreciation also to members of the DHS Project Control Group and St Vincent's School Curriculum Review committee, both of which have played such an important role in developing the new St Vincent's school at Maidstone this year.

Brian Mitchell
Regional Director, Southern and Specialist Services