

## St Anthony's Family Preservation Services

St Anthony's Family Preservation Services provides family support and early intervention services for vulnerable families, and for families where children are at risk of being placed in protective services. Services are provided in the Western metropolitan region with outreach services in Melton and Werribee.

**Placement Prevention Service** provides a unique intensive in-home family support service for families where there are concerns about the care and safety of children. The service utilises a case manager and family support worker.

**Companion Family Project** to link isolated families with another family in the same community to provide supportive friendship and community connection.

**Substance Abuse Family Support Program** works intensively with families around the issues of substance misuse, including family support, substance related and personal counselling, crisis management, parenting, behaviour and anger management.

**Strengthening Families** provides short-term, crisis care and support for families at risk of involvement with protective services, and links the families in with community support services.

**Disability Services** provides support for families dealing with a child or young person with moderate to severe disability. The services are provided through **Making a Difference, Early Choices** and a Special Support Unit, and a new Continence Service.

**Pregnancy and Early Parenting Support** provides accommodation, and pre-natal support to young, homeless, single, pregnant women. An outreach service is also provided to help the young mothers settle into their community while caring for a young baby.

**Vietnamese Parenting Group** brings together socially isolated Vietnamese parents and their children to both socialise and develop their parenting skills.

**Program Manager:**  
Michael Girolami

**Staff:**  
36 staff including full-time and part-time social workers; family support workers; residential care workers; child-care workers, parent educator, volunteer co-ordinator.

**Volunteers:**  
60 volunteers linked with families; 15 volunteers undertaking support tasks, such as driving, and gardening, totalling more than 3600 hours of volunteer service.

**Expenditure:**  
\$1,910,823





## Highlights

In 2000/01, St Anthony's Family Preservation Services:

- Continued to provide family support and early-intervention services to 376 families and 980 children, despite severe funding and deficits in some services;
- Began the Companion Family Project with funding provided from the William Buckland Foundation;
- Received funding from the Mercy Foundation to run a Vietnamese Early Childhood Group to identify potential learning and development difficulties in pre-school age children;
- Increased its volunteer service to provide volunteer assistance to families with children with a disability;
- Began a Families and Schools Together (FAST) program with the assistance of the Wyndham City Council and Glen Orden Primary School in Werribee;
- Conducted a joint women's group from participants involved in the Placement Prevention Service and the SAFS programs;
- Ran a series of children's support groups for primary school age children from families where substance misuse is an issue;
- Launched the "In My Experience" booklet relating the experiences of fathers of children with disability;
- Provided a "Great Break" respite service to give families of children with disabilities a weekend break from their carer responsibilities.

## Small things make big things happen

A volunteer can make a big difference in the life of a family – we see it happen time and again at St Anthony's. "Judy" is 13 years old with a disability that has confined her to a wheelchair all her life. Her family has looked after her at home all those years, caring for her every need, and protecting her against the outside world that might be cruel to her. But because of their over-protectiveness, Judy has had little experience with the activities that other children take for granted.

Glenda is one of our most dedicated St Anthony's volunteers. She entered Judy's world not long ago, to provide some respite for the family. Since then, Glenda has taken Judy on adventures she had never experienced before. A shopping trip; a drive in the country, and just a few weeks ago, a big adventure. Glenda took Judy away for the weekend. Judy had the best of times, and one of the things she really loved was seeing a horse and being able to stroke and pat it.

Glenda's relationship with Judy had opened up a whole new world of possibilities for Judy and her family. Sometimes Judy has such a good time that she misbehaves when she gets home. But she's learning to deal with the expectations that come with freedom.

The experiences that Glenda is providing for Judy and her family make a significant difference to the quality of Judy's life. To be able to stroke a horse might not seem significant, but when it opens up possibilities, it's a contribution to someone's life that money can't buy. Small things make big things happen.