

# Western Region

## Regional Director's Report

The MacKillop Family Services' Western and Northern Regions encompass the St Anthony's Family Centre and St Joseph's Child and Youth Services programs. The St Anthony's program focuses on support to families in the region, particularly those who are affected by significant social, emotional and economic factors and/or the support needs associated with a child with a disability. The St Joseph's program focuses largely on out-of-home care for children and young people who are unable to live with their families.

It has been a year of significant change for services within the region. A difficult issue at the beginning of the financial year was the reduction in funding to the Placement Prevention Service, which in turn resulted in a reduced service to the Melton Shire. On a more positive note, we have seen our services expanded in a number of areas. St Anthony's Family Centre was successful in its submission to the Department of Human Services to operate the Regional Parenting Service in the Western Region. This service provides a broad range of parenting information and support to families, including those who face significant challenges in caring for their children. This service has been very successful in reaching and providing support to a wide range of groups within the community. St Anthony's was also successful in obtaining funding to significantly expand its Strengthening Families service, increasing the support provided in the inner part of the region and establishing a substantial service within the Shire of Melton.

Early this year, St Joseph's Child and Youth Services began the operation of three residential units in the Northern Region. It has been a significant move, which has built on the work of the Sisters of St Joseph and MacKillop Family Services' provision of foster care within the region. We have also seen significant expansion in a number of other areas, including disability services at St Anthony's, the Substance Abuse Family Support Service and the Group Homes Service, which has expanded its work into educational options for young people.

This expansion has been achieved through the enthusiasm and dedication of staff members who have been committed to responding to the needs of young people and families. Approximately 120 staff work in the region in a broad range of roles. Volunteers are also integral to our work in the region. Our Home Based Care Service – Specialised Home Based Care in the Western Region, Respite Care, Pre-Adoptive Foster Care, and Foster Care in the Northern Region – are all based on the commitment of carers who provide support

to children and young people in their own homes. At the present time, we have 45 active carers within the Northern and Western Regions. Our Lead Tenant Service, which operates three houses in the Western Region, is also based on the work of six volunteer Lead Tenants who take on the demanding task of being role models and providers of day-to-day support to six young people. The Companion Families Service has also been successful in recruiting a number of families as role models and supports to other families, and the Volunteer Service at St Anthony's facilitated the involvement of volunteers in providing substantial support to clients of other services.

The coming year will bring many challenges. The consolidation of our work in the Northern Region will be a major focus. This will include the establishment of a new program in the region over the first six months of the coming year. We will also be seeking to extend our networks and connection with local communities and to participate in the task of strengthening these communities' capacity to care for their own needs. This will be a particular focus in the Shire of Melton where a number of our services currently operate and propose to further develop their work in the wider community with enthusiasm. We are also looking forward to working with MacKillop Family Services' Practice and Policy Unit, to further enhance the quality of our work through the Excellence Framework.

I would like to thank all of the Western Region staff and volunteers – those who work directly with our clients, coordinators, managers and support staff. Their teamwork and willingness to take on additional responsibilities when necessary, has enabled us to consolidate our current work, take on new initiatives and plan for our future work. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of our partnerships with other community organisations, local, state and federal government and funding bodies.

### Staff:

66 Full time, 39 Part time and 25 Casual



**Expenditure:**  
\$6,811,938

**Helen Burt**  
**Regional**  
**Director**  
**Western Region**