

Chief Executive Officer's Report

I am pleased to report on the activities of MacKillop Family Services for the 2005/2006 year. The five key areas of MacKillop's work today are: supporting vulnerable families; supporting families raising a child with a disability; education and training services for children and young people; services for children and young people who are unable to live with their family; and the support of women and men who, as children, were in the care of our founding agencies. This year's Report is structured around these five key areas, and highlights the nature of the work and the notable achievements during the period. The voice of children is powerfully conveyed throughout the report in their art work, recently on display at Melbourne Central at the successful Soul Art exhibition.

ORGANISATION

The new Strategic Plan, 2005 – 2010, framed our actions for the year. With the theme "...people are our priority..." we have pursued a number of measures across the organisation that enable us, over a five year period, to achieve a vision characterized by partnership, participation, advocacy; staff, carers and volunteers being valued, informed, supported and connected; promoting strategies which build and strengthen communities and ensuring that our work is characterized by professional standards, accountability, research and innovation.

What became clear as the year unfolded was that the organisational management structure was not sufficient to take forward the new vision. Minor changes had been made some twelve months earlier, but there was a general consensus that we needed to move forward in a new way that enabled a more concentrated focus upon service delivery. The structure (shown on the inside back cover) came into effect at the conclusion of the financial year, but represents the culmination of review and discussions during the second half of that year.

The significant changes were firstly, the creation of the position of Director of Services. Ms Helen Burt was appointed to this key role with a brief to co-ordinate program review and evaluation, service innovation and strategic positioning of our work. In this task she is to be assisted by Ms Anne Condon, as Deputy Director of Services and General Manager for Barwon. Brenda Strudwick, General Manager, Alternate Care, continued responsibility for all of MacKillop Family Services out of home care in the Metropolitan area, and Ms Maureen Dawson-Smith was appointed to the new position of General Manager, Community Programs. This structure ensures that the three divisions of Barwon, Community Programs and Alternate Care have an appropriate level of resourcing and oversight.

A further change saw our Heritage & Information Service established as a Program in its own right; and, with the retirement prior to Christmas in 2005 of the inaugural Director of Practice and Policy, Dr John Honner, the former Practice and Policy Unit was re-shaped with the senior position being re-titled, Director, Research and Advocacy. John's great contribution has been sorely missed across the organization. We were unsuccessful in recruiting to the previous position part way through the period, but remain hopeful of a successful appointment prior to the Annual Meeting. The sustained vacancy in this key role has limited the organisation's achievement in some areas for the period.

SECTOR

Organisations such as MacKillop Family Services operate in a wider context and a myriad of partnerships and networks which together form part of the social infrastructure of our State. Whilst changes were taking place within the organization, significant debate and policy formulation was also being driven by Government. Of particular impact on our work were the policy reform

directions of the Bracks Government in both disability and child and family welfare. Both processes resulted in new legislation during the period, being the Disability Act 2006, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. Each of the pieces of legislation is part of a larger policy and practice reform program.

We have been pleased to be engaged in both processes in a variety of ways. Our concern in the disability reforms has been for the circumstances of children with a disability and the importance of affirming and supporting families in the critical role of their care of these children. Unmet needs in disability services, both for children and adults, and the circumstances of ageing carers, highlights the significant investment which must be made in disability services. Within this we remain concerned that there must be a comparable growth of services for children. This concern is driven by our experience of growing waiting lists for our services in both Melbourne and Geelong.

Whilst the direction of the child welfare reform has been widely embraced by the sector, there remains some concern regarding the implementation. The success of the Innovations Projects across the State has been critical to the positive momentum within the sector and it is important in the further roll-out of these reforms that these successes are not compromised or complicated in any way. Nonetheless the strong financial commitment to the reform process by the State is matched by wide support for the focus on the best interest of the child, stability and the strengthening of capacity and scope of aboriginal community controlled organisations.

MacKillop has always sought to contribute to the wider sector and policy development through active participation in a number of sector-wide forums. I have been a member of the Board of the Victorian Council for Social Services (VCOSS), the Victorian

Children's Council, the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families and Co-Chair of the Family Support and Placement Sector Development Plan. I am also pleased to have Ms Helen Burt representing us on the Board of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, and Ms Karyn Hobday representing us on the Committee of Management of the State Branch of ACROD. As I write we have also agreed to the secondment of Ms Suzy McManus to Catholic Social Services Victoria and Ms Jenny Glare to Catholic Social Services Australia.

PARTNERSHIPS & JUSTICE

Two significant issues require particular comment at this point, both of which arise out of our historical and current work. The first involves the support of women and men who were in the care of the founding agencies as children. In the last year MacKillop has entered into Memorandums of Understanding with both Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN) and VANISH outlining the commitment of our organisation to these important advocacy and support groups and the way in which we will work together.

The disappointment of the year has been the mixed progress with the recommendations arising from the Forgotten Australian's Report. We have been pleased to second Jenny Glare, the Manager of our Heritage & Information Service to work on behalf of Catholic Social Services Australia and consult across the Church with regard to developing best practice in the access of records and support of former residents in keeping with the recommendations of the Forgotten Australians Report. It was also pleasing to learn of the Victorian State Government's commitment and subsequent apology to former Wards of State and children who were in the State's care. However, the response across Australia remains inconsistent and at a Federal level, little has emerged from the thousands of hours of advocacy,



Andrew* - Hope

Andrew has used a profile motif of himself with radiating dots which signifies his personal growth and expanding confidence. He is a student at one of our schools and he loves going to school. He has been able to learn new skills and make all sorts of things in technology and art. He has six teachers and he gets on with them all. All of his teachers really care about him in everything that he does.

the many, many personal stories which were the genesis of the Forgotten Australian's Report, and the subsequent representations.

The second issue relates to our engagement with the Aboriginal community and its organizations. One of the key elements of the State Government's reform process is the commitment of all parties to the strengthening of Aboriginal controlled services and improved cultural awareness by mainstream organizations. We have been guided on our journey in this regard, and greatly encouraged, by the MacKillop Indigenous Issues Steering Committee. The Committee includes representatives from the Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, the Wathaurong Co-operative, together with Koorie Early Childhood Field Officers and the Koorie Education Development Officers in the regions in which we work. The Committee's guidance of our initiatives and the work of our Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Ms Joleen Ryan, is invaluable. It is a journey of

change which is really only just beginning and one we are committed to pursue.

FINANCIAL

The strong financial result for the period masks some underlying problems. With income of some \$29.2 million and a surplus after expenses of \$3.7 million, the organisation presents as having had a strong financial performance for the year. Closer examination of "Other Income", that is income received outside of our normal operating activities, being of a capital and non-recurring nature, shows a different picture. This income is used to fund capital works, or is invested to fund the ongoing works of the organisation. Had we not received this income over the last two financial years we would have recorded significant losses. A total of \$4.7 million of 'Other Income' is received from a combination of bequests (\$279,000) and transfers to the organisation from the Christian Brothers (\$1.9 million) and transfer of land from the Sisters of St Joseph

(\$1.26 million). A further \$1.2 million was raised through our Capital Appeal.

The principal area of financial concern remains that of out of home care (residential care and foster care), where the costs of maintaining service provision, not at the optimal level, but at a reasonable level, continue to outstrip available Government funding. Notwithstanding new funding formulae for home based care to apply from the 2006/2007 year, fundamental reform is still required in residential care, both to the service model funded by Government and the funding levels associated with the required models. This is in the context of a workforce that experiences increasing challenges and demands and an area where we continue to experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

PROPERTY

The rebuilding of the St Anthony's Family Centre at Commercial Road is an exciting and consuming project. Staff moved to alternate premises in Victoria Street, Footscray, whilst the old buildings were razed and new offices and community facilities are constructed. It is hoped that we will be able to return to the new premises by the middle of 2007. This project will cost some \$4.5 million and it is pleasing to report that \$4.0 million has been raised to date. We are conscious of the difficulty in raising the remaining \$500,000 but remain hopeful that this will be achieved by Christmas 2006.

Whilst this Appeal continues in its final phase, we have also initiated a further Appeal for the refurbishment of St Augustine's Education and Training at Whittington. Work is expected to commence in the second half of 2006 and the project will amount to some \$1.5 million. At the same time planning is underway to identify more appropriate premises in Melton, and an alternative site for both our Flemington and Glenroy offices. The Board, at the end of the period, also agreed to the further



Sally* - Rushing Waters

When things seem dark, there is always hope. Sally is into alternative stuff. She likes all her carers, she has no favourites.

refurbishment of the Shoreham campsite with the construction of a new ablutions block. It is hoped that this project will be completed prior to Christmas 2006 and that the site will be open to a wide range of groups and activities through 2007.

CHANGING CHURCH

The community and the Church continue to experience change in profound ways. MacKillop Family Services is very much a creature of these changes, as in the early 1990s the Josephites, Mercy Sisters and Christian Brothers joined together to ensure a way of continuing important

ministries that might not otherwise have been able to have been sustained. Increasingly we find similar discussions happening in many quarters of the Church. MacKillop is pleased to be able to support other ministries and programs in a range of ways as they wrestle with the issue of organizational form for a new millennia.

In January 2006 we were approached by the Christian Brothers of St Mary's Province (NSW) regarding the circumstance of the local agency Edmund Rice Community Services. The Board was open to supporting this work and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with St Mary's Province whereby management

support and services from MacKillop could be offered to our New South Wales counterpart. Eventually MacKillop Family Services Board Member Mr Brian Lawrence and I were appointed to the Edmund Rice Community Services Board and a redevelopment process, particularly of the Mount Druitt operations, has enabled a stronger organizational, programmatic and financial position. The Brothers and MacKillop will continue to explore the nature of our relationship into the future, in the context of the Brothers' working towards the formation of the new Oceania Province by late 2007.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, can I thank my colleagues on the Senior Management Team who have been patient through the changes of the last year, and generous in their support, and as always in their time and commitment to the organization. Our wider group of Program Managers displays a similar level of skill and commitment. These two traits are also evidenced every day in the wider community of MacKillop

through the work of some 380 staff and 400 volunteers – these people are MacKillop Family Services and it is to them that we owe our greatest thanks.

I am very appreciative of the Board and their continuing leadership and commitment to our Strategic Plan. In particular, the introduction by the Board of the Staff and Volunteer Excellence Awards, to be awarded for the first time at the 2006 Annual Public Meeting, is a great initiative.

The next year takes us to the tenth anniversary of our refounding as an organization. Reflection must always be part of our learning pattern. Through the coming months we will engage in a process of values exploration - an opportunity to reflect on the core aspects of the identity of our organisation and our mission, and to reaffirm the elements that will take us into our second decade.

We will do so in the context of increasing but not inappropriate scrutiny of charitable organizations. Our standing as an expression of Church, as an expression



of community, as a trusted place for the delivery of services to disadvantaged people and as a vehicle which gives voice to such people must not be lost. We have to listen to our critics, reflect on our purposes and renew our resolve to make a difference.

Echoes of Mary, and Catherine and Edmund will be heard in these discussions. And to these echoes will be added the voices of the people of today, be they volunteers, staff, carers or the people who use the services. In turn a contemporary expression of our call for care and justice will be renewed.

Paul Linossier
Chief Executive Officer



Wendy* - Let me go home

Wendy's painting is about everything. "It's hard being somewhere when you want to be with family. Everything gets on top of you and one day I just snapped." Wendy says that she came into care so she could settle down and get control of her anger before she was able to move back with Mum. Wendy thinks that all her carers are pretty cool and that they have lots of fun together and that talking to them, having long chats has made her feel better afterwards.