

## Heritage and Information Service

The Heritage and Information Service is located at the Office of the Chief Executive Officer in the former St Vincent's Boys' Home building at South Melbourne.

### Manager:

Jenny Glare

### Team:

1 social worker  
1 admin/search worker  
1 archivist  
1 support worker  
1 volunteer  
(all positions are part time)

### Highlights

- Holding on to Hope, a history of the founding agencies of MacKillop Family Services was launched
- The Archives housing more than 100,000 individual records and 10,000 photographs were officially opened
- More than 250 individual requests were made for access to information and as many enquiries for where and how to search for information were responded to
- Planning for the future heritage display centre was completed
- Reunions between separated family members were facilitated
- The Manager of Heritage and Information Service visited similar services in England, Scotland and Ireland to learn more about best practice
- Regular gatherings of groups of former residents for morning tea were held
- Finding your Story, a resource manual to the records of the Stolen generation in Victoria was launched. The Manager of Heritage and Information

Service was a member of the steering committee.

- The Heritage and Information Service participated in consultations with other organisations in the process of establishing services to former residents.

### Case Study

There are many stories to be told about the work of the Heritage and Information. Some of these stories involve searching for separated family members and of family reunification. Recently a very special meeting occurred between a man aged seventy-three years and his three nieces.

Peter spent his whole life in the care of several of the MacKillop Family Services founding agencies. A few years ago Peter contacted the Heritage and Information Service for his records. In the course of locating his records, it was discovered that he had a sister, who was also in care. Peter had never known of his sister's existence until then, and from the information on his records, it was unlikely that his sister would have known of Peter.

Peter decided that he would like to find his sister. A search was undertaken to try and locate her. This took quite some time but eventually a record of her death was located. This was not what Peter had been hoping for. A little more time elapsed and then Peter decided that he was ready to search for the children of his deceased sister. One of the children, Julia was located and she became the spokesperson for her two sisters and two brothers. She was both shocked and surprised to learn of Peter's existence.

At this point in time, the family was still grieving for their mother who had died unexpectedly. They were still trying to come to terms with the loss of a loving mother and grandmother. It was agreed that when they were ready, they would recontact our service and contact with Peter would be initiated.

The reunion between Peter and his nieces, Julia, Gaye and Michelle occurred in our Welcome Room over morning tea and many tears of joy. A lot of preparation had gone into planning the reunion in the months and weeks leading up to the actual day. Peter arrived early, he was nervous but very excited. His nieces brought with them a photograph of their mother and Peter also brought some photographs of himself when he was younger. There was a strong resemblance between Peter and one of his nieces in particular. The nieces could not believe the extent to which Peter reminded them of their mother in terms of the way he spoke and his mannerisms.

Being with Peter and his nieces was a very special moment and the fact that it had taken a few years to eventually get to this point did not matter as everyone knew that it was meant to be. The time was indeed right. Peter is a person of great faith and he is comfortable about talking about his life and how his faith and belief in God has sustained him. Peter and his nieces have continued to meet. He has been introduced to his nephews and his extended family. He feels very blessed but it is his nieces and nephews who feel that they have been given the greatest gift of all.