



parenting 

When things go awry in families, children are left confused, angry and desolate.

THE one thing shared by many of the young people helped by Four Flats and the Brosnan Centre has been their troubled beginnings. As David Murray has said, when young people engage in self-destructive and antisocial behaviour, this often points to what was going on in their families. So when Jesuit Social Services brought into the organisation a number of already existing programs, the decision to include Parenting Adolescents Australia made sense.

Parenting skills are not something we are born with. They are learnt. We watch our own parents. We watch parents in our extended family and circle of friends and we learn how to be parents. When that opportunity to learn is missed, raising children becomes overwhelming. In the process

children are damaged, and so are their parents. Their grief and rage that they cannot get it right is a destructive force which goes on being played out as their children grow to become adolescents and adults.

We now know that when parents are unresponsive or confused, the child's development gets side tracked. We now know also that family life offers the opportunity to experience the positive effects of depending on and interacting co-operatively with others.

The work of providing training workshops was new activity for the organisation. It is not at the coalface of need. It is preventative work. And it is part of working to change the things that lead to disadvantage.

Constance Jenkin has been co-ordinating this program since it became part of Jesuit Social Services in 1995. Rather than teaching parents directly, the main focus of this program is offering workshops and training sessions for those in a position to work directly with parents.

Parenting Australia became part of Jesuit Social Services because there was an acute awareness that many of the adolescents and young adults who came to the Brosnan Centre had experienced trauma and broken attachments.

Parenting Australia provided programs across Victoria and beyond. Not headline making, but vital work in breaking the cycle that creates desperate, broken young people.



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