

J Doing Justice



REFLECTIONS FROM THIRTY YEARS



JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES 1977 – 2007



DOING JUSTICE

REFLECTIONS FROM THIRTY YEARS - JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES 1977-2007

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Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and communities.

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Preface



ANNIVERSARIES are traditionally times for recording histories. At the thirtieth anniversary of Jesuit Social Services we sought the advice of Greg Denning, then Emeritus Professor of History at Melbourne University about writing our history. “Don’t write a history which records the events of the last thirty years. Such histories are a bore”, he said. Instead he urged us to capture the memories of those who experienced the spirit and ideals of Jesuit Social Services. What we wrote, he suggested, must come out of reflections we made about ourselves. That is what we have tried to do in this little book.

We came together on four occasions to remember and reflect on our thirty years. Organisations need to weep and laugh a little, to share stories. Greg suggested that our conversations be an exchange of the gifts of our experiences. Through that exchange we might all be enriched. From those conversations came

memories and stories that have contributed to this book.

Greg died on 13 March 2008 while on holiday in Tasmania. He had set us well on our way in bringing the story of Jesuit Social Services into the form it has now taken. In encouraging us to write this story, Greg repeated his often-quoted phrase: “the gamble is being yourself”. For Jesuit Social Services the gamble has been: to reflect on who we are and what we have become though the successes and the disappointments of our thirty years and to express that without fear or apology; to celebrate how we have gone to some of the darkest and most desperate places in our community and dared to come face to face with the experiences of those living there; to rejoice that we have kept faith with our commitment to making a difference, even when the going has been hard; to proclaim our continued commitment to go into places where there is injustice.

This book does not tell of every area of our work, of every event in the evolution of this organisation. But it is a record of some of the experiences of those who have worked at Jesuit Social Services and, to a lesser extent, some of the stories of those we have supported.

In transforming these memories into text we bind the past to the present and ourselves to all those who have been a part of the story of Jesuit Social Services. Greg Denning also urged us to say something which would make the world a better place. This is the most important reason for writing the story of Jesuit Social Services.

As the stories in this book testify, Jesuit Social Services has come face to face with the experiences of those whose lives have been affected by the structural injustices in our community. With that comes a responsibility not only to support those in need but also to advocate

for structural change. Policy development and advocacy have been a core part of the work of Jesuit Social Services since 1977.

From the early days of Four Flats, advocating for those whom many believe have forfeited their rights has been a hallmark of the organisation. It has not always been popular. But underpinning this work is the recognition of the dignity and worth of all human beings, regardless of their circumstances and the pain they may have inflicted on others.

The wisdom gained over the years through our practice has informed the policy and advocacy work undertaken. But it is not enough to advocate on the basis of what we know anecdotally. Jesuit Social Services has sought to underpin its activity with robust research that provides the intellectual rigour to support its service delivery and advocacy efforts. This work has had an impact that extends far

beyond the people we serve on a daily basis. The three research projects that investigated locational disadvantage, for example, helped shape social policy at the state and federal level and made a significant contribution to the social inclusion debate.

But more than achievements, activities or formal events, what is important in remembering the past is the spirit of the place and the spirit that existed between the people at Jesuit Social Services. At the first conversation David Green reflected

The memories that stay with me are about distinctive kinds of emotions, engagements and pictures rather than things you analyse and dissect.

That spirit will continue to drive the way Jesuit Social Services will be shaped in the future.

Jo Dunin

1977 January

Four Flats opened in Hawthorn as a hostel for young people, 17 – 21 years, released from custody.

1981

Four Flats moved to Collingwood and developed as an outreach and supported accommodation model.

1984

Youth Grow Garden Project established in the grounds of the Abbotsford Convent.

1987

A Rooming House opened in Carlton to accommodate young men upon their release.

Brosnan Centre (formerly Four Flats) opened in Sydney Road Brunswick.

1989

Accommodation for intellectually disabled young people in the justice system begins.

1992

Vietnamese program at Brosnan Centre established.

1995

The organisation officially incorporated as **Jesuit Social Services**.

The purchase of property in **Langridge Street Collingwood** to house **Connexions**, a program for young people with dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance misuse.

1996

New services coming under the umbrella of **Jesuit Social Services**:

- Parenting Australia
- The Outdoor Experience (TOE)
- Richmond Community Care
- Vietnamese Welfare Resource Centre
- Big Brothers Big Sisters (moved to independence in 2002)

1997

Arts & Culture program established.

Perry House, a purpose built supported residence in Reservoir for young people with intellectual disabilities involved with the justice system.

1998

The **Ignatius Centre** for research, policy and advocacy established in Richmond.

Domestic Violence Prevention Program – a national program working with young people to prevent domestic violence.

1999

Program for Parents established to provide parent education training to over 3000 parents in schools across Australia.

Published *Unequal in Life: the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales* by Tony Vinson.

2000

Brosnan Centre moved to **Dawson Street Brunswick**.



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2000

Brosnan Centre began **Bridging the Gap** – providing transitional support to young adults exiting prison.

Men & Family Relationships

working with men in prison and their families to strengthen relationships.

2001

Communities Together

established to encompass the community development work in the public housing estates of Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy.

2002

Gateway established for young people with multiple and complex problems providing them access to education, training and employment.

2002

Brosnan Centre provides **Pathways Juvenile Justice Housing Program** in Dandenong.

Brosnan Centre provides

Correctional Services

Employment Pilot Program for men (CSEPP) in Morwell.

2003

Community Justice Group

Conferencing program established based on restorative justice principles.

Inside Families program

established to work with prisoners with drug problems and their families.

2003

Education and Professional Services Unit established to facilitate the sharing of the organisation's unique body of program and practice knowledge.

2004

Support After Suicide established.

XLR8 Mentoring program for young people in the justice system established.

Published *Community Adversity & Resilience: the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and NSW and the mediating role of social cohesion* by Tony Vinson.

2005

African Program established in Flemington housing estate.

Leaving Care Mentoring program for young people exiting out of home care.

2005

'**Abbotsford Biscuits**' launched to provide training and a real work environment for unemployed young people.

Strong Bonds – website to provide resources for workers and families with young people struggling with mental illness, substance abuse and other complex problems.

2007

Start Over Crime Prevention

program based in the City of Yarra and City of Darebin established with the aim of diverting 12-18 year old young people from involvement in the youth justice system.

Link Out providing pre and post release support to men.

Women's Integrated Supported Program (WISP) providing pre and post release support to women.

Published *Dropping off the Edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia* by Tony Vinson – a research project into locational disadvantage Australia wide (with Catholic Social Services Australia).

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