



Brigid Henley, Coordinator,  
Justice Special Projects

## On a pathway to an improved future

Navigating day to day life after leaving prison can be extremely challenging for anyone – let alone somebody with an acquired brain injury (ABI).

For Amber (not her real name), this was the case.

"We met Amber after she had left prison and it was clear that her acquired brain injury impacted her in many ways, including severely affecting her short-term memory," says Brigid Henley, Coordinator – Justice Special Projects at Jesuit Social Services.

"Amber was a victim of family violence, had not finished school which limited her employment prospects and had found the process of dealing with police, lawyers and judges extremely overwhelming."

Sadly, Amber's story is not uncommon. Although just two per cent of the general population has an ABI, in the Victorian prison system, the figure is 33 per cent for women and 42 per cent for men.

Some people, like Amber, sustain their ABI as a result of family violence while others are linked to substance abuse problems or head trauma such as road accidents.

Amber says her ABI impacts her on a daily basis.

"I feel like a different person – I don't feel as alert and on the ball," she says.

"There are daily things that are difficult [for me], which didn't used to be difficult."

Amber participated in the Enabling Justice Project, run by

Jesuit Social Services and RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice, which aims to address the overrepresentation of people with ABI in the justice system.

Jesuit Social Services' work for 40 years has revolved around forming deep and respectful relationships, to help people realise their potential. Amber's relationship with Brigid helped her feel validated for the first time in years and ensured she is on a positive pathway.

"We have helped her obtain a Working With Children's Check and look for volunteer work in a local op shop," says Brigid.

"We also supported Amber to complete a barista course through our Jesuit Community College, which gives her a qualification and can help open doors to work in the hospitality industry."

"Amber's outlook on life has significantly improved since we began working with her – for the first time in years she can see a future where she is a contributing member of society."

*\*name has been changed to protect privacy*

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## Helping people on a productive pathway



As Jesuit Social Services' 40th year draws to a close, we have an opportunity to stop and reflect on what has been a rewarding time for the organisation.

Marking this important milestone has given us an opportunity to celebrate our achievements and provide platforms for our participants to share their stories.

It has also been a year in which we have expanded our work, such as launching our Youth Justice Group Conferencing model in the Northern Territory and establishing The Men's Project to help men and boys live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives free from violence.

We are grateful for your support in helping us continue to work with those on the margins. However as we approach the festive season, we know that for many people we work with, Christmas is a time of an increased sense of isolation.

This is particularly true for many people we work with through our mental health and wellbeing programs, which this edition of our newsletter focuses on.

This year we launched a report with RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice to address the over-representation of people with acquired brain injuries (ABI) in the criminal justice system.

While just two per cent of the general population has an ABI, this figure is a staggering 33 per cent of women and 42 per cent of men in the Victorian prison system.

The lived experiences of the people we work with have been vital in shaping this work. Our Adult Justice team have assisted participants in securing housing, finding voluntary work and provided regular ongoing outreach support – to help these men and women become productive members of society.

This work is challenging but extremely rewarding, and your support is vital in allowing us to continue to form deep and genuine relationships with people as we work towards our vision of building a just society.

On behalf of everybody at Jesuit Social Services, I warmly wish you a safe and happy festive season.

**Julie Edwards** CEO, Jesuit Social Services

## Generosity supports Perry House upgrades

This summer, residents at Jesuit Social Services' Perry House will be able to enjoy a new BBQ deck made possible by long-term supporters - The Peninsula Support Group.

Perry House is a residential facility for young people with intellectual disabilities who have involvement with the youth justice system.

Participants can reside at the house for up to 12 months while they are supported to develop independent living skills and to engage with activities.

The deck and BBQ area, including a new outdoor setting was used and enjoyed as part of a launch event to mark Homelessness Week in July.

A generous donation by the Peninsula Support Group contributed to the design. The community fundraising group, comprised of families from the Mornington Peninsula region, has raised funds for Jesuit Social Services' youth justice work for more than 30 years.

Leanne Acreman, General Manager – Housing and Complex Needs at Jesuit Social Services, says the Peninsula Support Group's long-standing support for our work with young people is invaluable.

"The generosity of the Peninsula Support Group has enabled us to build a deck at Perry House, which provides a welcome outdoor space that promotes wellbeing and encourages positive relationships and healing," she says.

"The Peninsula Support Group's ongoing support is appreciated by everybody at Jesuit Social Services including our participants."



Peter Royal from the Peninsula Support Group and Jesuit Social Services' Leanne Acreman

## Bereavement support like a lifeline

When Ian Maurer's son, Tim, took his own life in 2006, Jesuit Social Services' Support After Suicide program became "like a lifeline" for Ian.

He participated in an eight-week early bereavement program but once it finished he felt there was "nothing to connect to".

Some time later, Ian was contacted by staff from the program asking if he was interested in helping to establish a monthly Men's Program, for men bereaved by suicide. He jumped at the opportunity to be part of the program's steering committee and together with Colin Charles, Bereavement Support Worker at Support After Suicide and convener of the Men's Program, the group has grown considerably.

Seven years later, Ian still attends the program on a regular basis.

"To me, it's still as relevant as the first one I went to. The objective is to give a place where men can feel comfortable and whatever they say or do is within the walls of confidentiality," says Ian.

Colin says the program plays a crucial role in helping men feel connected to one another and sharing their experiences.

"Basically the fact that the program exists helps people's grief," he says.

**"Some men come along every session and others might come along and then you don't see them for a year or two, but they know they are always part of the community".**

Ian now volunteers with and fundraises for Support After Suicide, which Colin says is deeply appreciated.

"You get to the process where part of your healing is about giving back to others, and we are grateful for Ian's support," says Colin.



Support After Suicide participant Ian Maurer (top right and below) and Colin Charles, Bereavement Support Worker at Support After Suicide

## Enabling justice for people affected by ABI

Jesuit Social Services recently released a report, in partnership with RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice, addressing the drastic overrepresentation of people affected by an acquired brain injury (ABI) in Victoria's prison system. The report, *Recognition, respect, support: Enabling justice for people with an Acquired Brain Injury* marked the culmination of a three-year collaborative study working with people with ABI engaged in the justice system and seeking to identify practical solutions to better support their needs.

The study came about in response to a 2011 Corrections Victoria research paper which found that, while ABI affects only two per cent of the Victorian population, around 42 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women in Victorian prisons have been diagnosed with ABI. Such a stark statistic should compel our justice system to better accommodate some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

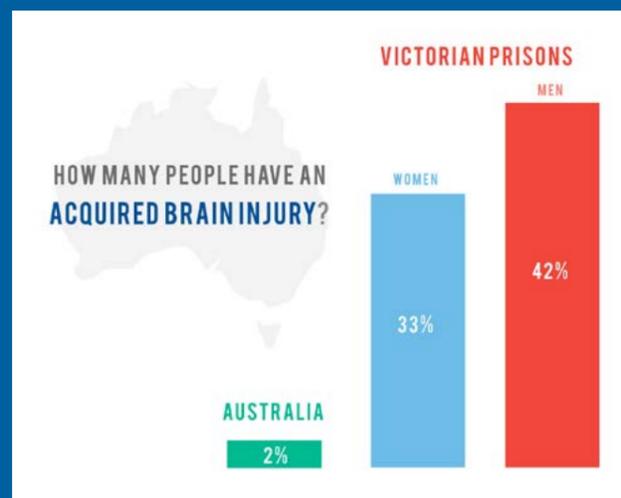
ABI refers to a disability arising from any damage to the brain acquired after birth, regardless of its cause. It may result in cognitive problems, reduced personal capacity as well as any number of emotional problems. The report outlines how having an ABI can severely impair a person's capacity to undertake everyday tasks, let alone their ability to engage effectively with an already complex and intimidating legal system. It can limit a person's ability to comply with sentencing orders and even exacerbate their offending behaviour. In the course of this study, people with ABI reported feeling unrecognised, confused, unsupported, disrespected and fearful in their encounters with the justice system.

**This means the system must adjust to better support their needs, promote their effective engagement and ultimately, prevent offending behaviour.**

Over two years, Jesuit Social Services' staff facilitated and supported a group of people with a lived experience of ABI and the justice system. The group met regularly to discuss their

experiences, explore their challenges and workshop solutions to improve the system. In this way, the study gave voice to some of the most vulnerable and disempowered people in our justice system, empowering them to identify the alternative approaches they know can work for them and help shape a new policy approach.

The group helped formulate a wide range of recommendations calling for greater recognition, respect and support for people with ABI engaged in the justice system. These recommendations seek to equip the Victorian justice system to better recognise and respond to the needs of people with ABI. Such improvements can only serve to ultimately make our communities safer.



The final report was launched on 24 August by Rob Hulls, Director of RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice, together with our CEO, Julie Edwards, during brain injury awareness week.

*The full report and a video can be found on our website at: <https://jss.org.au/recognition-respect-and-support-enabling-justice-for-people-with-acquired-brain-injuries/>.*

## The Men's Project

Jesuit Social Services has worked with boys and men for 40 years, particularly through our work in the criminal justice system and around issues of health and wellbeing.

As we approached our 40th anniversary, we took time to reflect – on our work and its place in modern society.

During this process of discernment something that we kept returning to was the sense that some (not all) boys and men are in trouble – and they are causing trouble.

We know that they are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour – reflected in higher rates of road accident fatalities, accidental drug-induced deaths, and higher rates of smoking tobacco.

They have high rates of suicide – six Australian men suicide each day.

Many have poor attitudes, particularly towards women. A number of high profile cases in recent times has led to much needed public debate on the issue of toxic forms of masculinity.

**Boys and men are almost always the perpetrators of violence. 95 per cent of victims - whether women or men - report experiencing violence at the hands of a man.**

While we have seen welcome progress in identifying and responding to violence against women in recent times, many boys and men are struggling to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

We need to do more. We need to address the root causes. And we need to support boys and men to be their best selves.

That is why in our 40th year we are establishing The Men's Project. Our vision is for good men, respectful relationships and safe communities.

The Men's Project is the result of several years of reflection and discussions with our own staff and program participants as well as with friends and supporters in business, government, academia, and the community sector. All agree that more must be done.

Through this work we will seek to change attitudes about what it means to be a good man today. It may involve research



into the issues facing boys and men, and new interventions in schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, community groups and at home.

We will build respectful relationships and improve the wellbeing of boys and men. In particular, we will learn from and expand programs that build positive relationship skills among vulnerable boys and men.

And we will focus on building safe communities by finding new ways to intervene early and stop the cycle of violence that too many boys get caught up in.

The Men's Project builds on our 40-years engagement with boys and men in trouble, but it will also involve us leading new work to reduce violence, to improve the wellbeing of boys and men, and to keep families and communities safe.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors we are now in a position to begin the work of The Men's Project and look forward to keeping supporters informed of our next steps.

## A passion for making a difference

I come from a middle class background and live in a comfortable suburb of Melbourne with my wife Janet. We both come from close knit families and we are very lucky to have two children, Madeleine and Tom, who now are late 20s and pursuing their own lives in family and careers.

I am an Ophthalmologist (eye specialist surgeon) working at the Hawthorn Eye Clinic since the early 90s. For the last 14 years, I have been involved in eye health provision in the less resourced countries of East Timor and as Director of the Sumba Eye Program in Eastern Indonesia. This is all voluntary work involving six monthly eye camps, particularly in the last couple of years concentrating on the Sumba Eye Program (SEP).

Through family values from my parents and my Jesuit upbringing, it has always been instilled in me that social justice is important and assisting those less well off is a basic Christian principle.

Unless you look for it, poverty is much more hidden in our society than the obvious poverty I see in my overseas work. A society should be judged on how it looks after its less privileged citizens. It seemed a natural consequence of my St Patrick's College, East Melbourne and then Xavier upbringing that I should embrace Jesuit Social Services. I am impressed with the commitment and the results achieved.

Janet and myself were originally donating in sporadic intervals and being so preoccupied with my work and family, we would forget to continue the commitment to Jesuit Social Services financially. By becoming a Community Partner, I was able to be happy with the knowledge that our monthly donation would be made on time.

Being actively involved in fundraising for the SEP and when I was on school associations, I know how hard it is to constantly be asking for money just to keep afloat.

I would encourage you all not just to think about it but join now.

**To join Mark Ellis AM as a Community Partner, please call us on 03 9421 7600.**



Mark Ellis AM, Community Partner

**In my mind, making a commitment - no matter how small - gives Jesuit Social Services a chance to predict budgets and plan for future developments.**

## Save the date Annual Dinner 17 March 2018

Many of you helped us celebrate 40 years of Jesuit Social Services at our most recent Annual Dinner in March 2017. We ask that you Save the Date for our 2018 Annual Dinner! The event will be held at the Members Dining Room, MCG. Special guest speaker will be announced soon. Stay tuned to our website for more information [www.jss.org.au](http://www.jss.org.au)

## Fundraiser has Artful Dodgers Studios rocking

Twenty years ago Jesuit Social Services established the Artful Dodgers Studios as a way to use music, art and culture to engage with marginalised young people.

One of the longest running Community Cultural Development programs in Victoria, the Artful Dodgers Studios provides a flexible and welcoming space where young people can collaborate with experienced artists and musicians to increase social connectedness, self-esteem and employability skills – as well as re-engage with the learning process.

The Victorian Government provides about a third of the annual ongoing costs of operating the studios, with grants and donations vital in meeting the shortfall.

To help raise funds for the Artful Dodgers Studios, The Gertrude Players, a non-profit organisation that raises funds for local projects recently held a trivia night at Collingwood Town Hall.

James Haines from The Gertrude Players says the partnership is "unreal".

"We're currently working with the Artful Dodgers Studios to provide youth with opportunities to pursue artistic endeavours, while being mentored by established Australian artists."

James, a lawyer by day, and his mother Margot visit the studios monthly to provide lunch to participants, staff and volunteers at the Artful Dodgers' regular Megaphone concerts.

The sold-out trivia night featured performances by the Artful Dodgers participants including The Travellers and The Desolates, live and silent auctions and plenty of prizes and giveaways.

The Artful Dodgers Studios' Coordinator Angeliki Androutsopoulos says the ongoing support of The Gertrude Players is a gift.

"It's not only the money they raise for us but their belief in what we do which is so encouraging, not only for our participants but for our staff."



Clement of The Travellers performs at the fundraising event

## Great Australians Gala Dinner 2017



Speakers at the Great Australians Gala Dinner

Jesuit Social Services was proud to welcome guests to the Great Australians Gala Dinner, held at Melbourne's Grand Hyatt on October 14, 2017.

Guests enjoyed interviews with Great Australians by event MC Ray Martin, as well as live entertainment from artists including Normie Rowe, The Chantoozies, Wilbur Wilde and Mahalia Barnes.

Soprano singer and composer, Deborah Cheetham AO, world champion and Olympic gold medallist James Tomkins and media personality Denis Walter OAM were some of the Great Australians in attendance.

A participant from our Support After Suicide program shared her story of how her family overcame grief, following her husband's suicide in 2010.

"Looking back I can't believe the extent of the support my daughters and I have been given from Support After Suicide. It truly makes a huge difference to the lives of people from all walks of life impacted by suicide," she said.

The evening also featured live and silent auctions, with money raised going towards our mental health initiatives.

We thank all the Great Australians, guests, speakers and event partner Incognitus for their generosity and support.

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**Growing up disadvantaged can make it extremely difficult for young people to improve their situation. Amber is just one of the many people we work with who has had her life turned around with the support of our programs.**

**Counselling and training has helped many of our participants change the direction of their lives. With your support, we can continue to be there for those who need us the most this Christmas.**



**Please give generously this Christmas so that more people like Amber can get on a pathway to a better future**

#### **Want to help Jesuit Social Services?**

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

#### **I would like to make a donation of:**

**\$75**       **\$150**

**\$500**       **\$1000**

**\$**

#### **Contact and payment details**

Surname

First name

Address

Telephone

Email

Cheque enclosed    OR     VISA     Mastercard

Card number

Expiry

Signature