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CatholicCare
VICTORIA

A newsletter for you!

A new chapter in a remarkable tradition of caring

The New Year started with the birth of a powerful new vision for caring services in Victoria. On 1 January 2021, Centacare Ballarat, CatholicCare Melbourne/Gippsland and CatholicCare Sandhurst came together to form a new caring entity: CatholicCare Victoria.

This amalgamation of the social service agencies of the four Catholic dioceses in Victoria represents the coming together of three remarkable organisations with a combined 184 years of experience in delivering excellence across a broad range of child, family and community services.

The birth of CatholicCare Victoria heralds a new chapter in a notable tradition of community services that began when the then-Catholic Social Service Bureau was established in 1935. The CatholicCare footprint will extend to all corners of Victoria, from Mildura to Warnambool, and Wodonga to Orbost.

Bringing all social services of the Victorian Catholic dioceses under one entity will deliver enormous benefits to the vulnerable and marginalised by improving coordination and greater choice for clients. It will also enable programs to scale-up and respond to new and emerging communities. Critically, it will give CatholicCare Victoria additional resources to address the root causes of poverty and injustice.

Inaugural Chair, John Sheldon, said CatholicCare Victoria would become a model of high performing Catholic mission with an even more powerful outreach in the community.

"We are looking to expand our services to meet the unfulfilled demands of our clients and to reach those that we perhaps have not been able to in the past," Mr Sheldon said. "Whether that be through a stronger geographic reach or greater access to funds to allow us to expand our service offerings - as a larger and stronger organisation - we will use this strength to advocate for those most in need."

Mr Sheldon said CatholicCare Victoria will work with more than 50,000 people each year. This includes disadvantaged children and youth, individuals and families experiencing difficulty, people in prisons and hospitals, newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed and homeless.

Collective impact strengthens our capacity to provide works of mercy and justice to meet people's needs, in partnership with parishes and local communities. With this merger, your wonderful generosity will touch the lives of even more of the most vulnerable and marginalised in our community.

Our new logo is important in defining who we are:

The three petals symbolise the Holy Trinity and an interlocking design that represents unity of the dioceses and agencies that have come together to form CatholicCare Victoria. The overall flower motif signifies growth and transition - for the organisation, and for those we serve who flourish under our care.

It is a powerful visual reminder of how our staff and our supporters are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable people: by strengthening their relationships, increasing their resilience and improving their quality of life.

To learn more about how your support helps to change lives, please visit www.ccam.org.au/impact





Helping refugee families to Settle Well

Geelong is a priority location for the resettlement of refugees in regional Australia. It is also the site of CatholicCare's Settle Well program: an intensive, school-based support service for young refugees and asylum seekers and for refugee mothers.

Latifa has known great sorrow in her young life. The mother of five children first fled Afghanistan after her father died during the Afghanistan war. Later, she and her children would be forced to flee Pakistan after her husband passed away.

This young family was seeking a better and safer future in Australia. On the first day they arrived, Latifa says she couldn't believe that she had finally arrived in our country. Her first impressions of Australia, she says, were that: *"People were very social and very kind"*.

This grateful client of our Settle Well program says that connecting with CatholicCare has been important in helping her and her children to settle in their new country. *"Whenever we have a problem, CatholicCare come and have a discussion with us and help us solve our problem"*.

Our refugee mothers are very grateful that their children are also getting the support they need through other Settle Well outreach activities.

Latifa has also attended the new Mother's Job Readiness program, which provides a range of

practical supports including booking an interpreter for a GP appointment and assisting with Centrelink appointments and paperwork. This program is not just about finding jobs as it is very focused on fostering a sense of belonging among the women and their wider community.

Latifa is a vocal supporter of the program. After completing the Job Readiness program, she reported: *"We became more social, we can speak better and are able to meet and make new friends"*. Latifa now dreams of working in community services in the future.

Settle Well enables refugee families from across the globe to come together and share their knowledge to help others in similar situations to overcome their challenges.

We are grateful to the Give Where You Live Foundation for the grant they provided to commence the Settle Well Mothers' Job Readiness program. Your support for CatholicCare also helps refugee families settle well into their new lives in Australia.

Put yourself in Nyala's shoes

Without supported housing and a sense of security, asylum seekers can feel incredibly vulnerable and alone. When they first arrive on our shores, many have experienced terrible trauma and are battling poor mental health. The vast majority also face the challenge of language barriers and social isolation.

CatholicCare Victoria works with parishes to arrange supported housing, provide practical help, and advocate for families seeking asylum while they wait for a final decision on their claim for protection and asylum in Australia. **Nyala* is just one of the many Asylum Seekers who have been touched by your kind support in recent times.**

A single woman in her early 30s, Nyala was referred to CatholicCare more than 12 months ago via the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Support Program. She had arrived in Australia just months earlier from Ethiopia and had applied for a protection visa from the Australian government.

As a relatively recent arrival, Nyala had limited English and was living in a small room in a private house. She was unemployed, had no income, and as an Asylum Seeker, she did not qualify for government services or income. She would later describe how desperately lonely and isolated she felt in those early months in Australia.

When we first met Nyala, she was overwhelmed by her circumstances. Over the past 12 months, however, with the help of CatholicCare and support from our Parish housing partners, her life has improved beyond measure. She is now one step closer to achieving her goal of working as a Patient Services Assistant in a hospital or aged care service in Australia.

Nyala is immensely grateful for CatholicCare's support with housing, food and counselling. She has also worked very hard to follow up every opportunity to improve her English language skills through local English classes. She then went on to complete her Certificate III Community Services Assistant Course and placement, and she is now preparing to apply for positions she is qualified for, in hospitals and aged care settings.

Thank you for helping to change the world, one precious life at a time.



***At CatholicCare, we respect the dignity and privacy of all who reach out to us for support as they work towards a fresh start in life. While the client's name and image in this article have been changed for privacy purposes, their stories are as real as the gratitude they feel toward compassionate strangers like you.**

Bushfire recovery continues



Members of our Bushfire Community Recovery Mobile Service prepare to visit regional communities rebuilding in the wake of the bushfires. Pictured left to right: CatholicCare Counsellor, Thérèse Kearney, and Community Development Worker Madelaine Schumann

Following the trauma and devastation of the East Gippsland bushfires in late 2019 and early 2020, we knew that families and communities would need long-term recovery support.

Not only did people in the affected regions lose their precious belongings, their homes, and their livelihoods, some also lost loved ones. To varying degrees, they all experienced anxiety, fear and trauma, and their lives were turned upside down.

As the East Gippsland communities begin to heal and rebuild, CatholicCare continues to work with families to help them to recover from the bushfire disaster.

Our Bushfire Community Recovery Service provides an opportunity for people to discuss their fears and emotions. Through counselling, this service is helping them to build the skills and confidence they need to journey forward overcoming the trauma they experienced.

However, many communities in the more remote regions which were severely impacted struggle to access support at our regional centres.

To tackle this tyranny of distance, we have launched a mobile service that will be delivered via a Community Connection Van. This new van was purchased through a grant from Catholic Emergency Relief Australia and with support from Dwyers

Toyota and Coast to Country 4X4 and Outdoor in Bairnsdale. Our grateful thanks to these generous funders.

Through this new outreach service, our community development worker and counsellor will visit the many remote bushfire-affected regions on a regular basis. Madelaine Schumann, our newly-appointed community development coordinator explained: *"We are working closely with the Bushfire Recovery Hubs to support the people living in the remote areas who haven't been able to travel in to access support. We are taking our counselling service on the road, providing coffee and chat sessions at local events, emergency relief and therapeutic community activities such as art, meditation and music classes to bring joy and healing to the communities."*

This approach will also provide an opportunity for the residents of remote East Gippsland to work directly with CatholicCare regarding ways that we can best support their individual communities.

We are so grateful to all who donated to the CatholicCare Bushfire Recovery Appeal. Because of you, children, young people and families in the many bushfire-affected regions will have a brighter future.

Your Impact: at a glance

The impact of the devastating bushfires and fallout from COVID-19 was felt across all CatholicCare's services during 2020. In turn, your support during the past year touched a record number of Victorians in need.

Supporting Victorian's Mental health during COVID-19

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, we were able to offer telehealth counselling free of charge to more than 2,700 Victorians!

Emergency Relief

You helped provide 4,229 vulnerable people with groceries and fuel vouchers; financial assistance to pay utility bills, rent, medical and education expenses and through much-welcome gifts of food parcels and care packs.

Because
of you!

Clemente Program

Last year, 32 adults took their first brave steps toward a new life of promise by enrolling in studies through the Clemente Fitzroy Program.

Asylum Seeker Support Program

Thanks to significant partnerships between CatholicCare and Parishes, our five outreach houses last year provided safe and stable housing for 15 Asylum Seeker families.

Bushfire Community Recovery

Thanks to your help, we supported bushfire affected communities with over 200 bushfire recovery counselling sessions and 43 group sessions.

*Everyone deserves to live life to the full!
Thank you for helping bring our mission to life!*

You made Christmas so much brighter!

Last Christmas, 500 vulnerable individuals and families had a brighter Christmas... thanks to you.

Your generosity helped us exceed all expectation and raise over \$173,000 during our inaugural Giving Tree Appeal. Your amazing support allowed us to share some very welcome festive spirit with Victorians struggling in the lead up to Christmas. Between the bushfires, COVID-19 and the economic impact of both, 2020 was certainly a tough year for many.

Because people like you, cared enough to support our Giving Tree Appeal, we were able to distribute Christmas food hampers to a record number of disadvantaged and struggling families who find it hard to put food on the table.

Staff and volunteers who delivered the hampers reported that they were met with many tears of happiness, along with gratitude and appreciation.

On behalf of these families, a huge thank you to all who donated to CatholicCare Giving Tree Appeal. Your compassion makes this world a better place!



CatholicCare GIVING TREE APPEAL



We are not just a program, or even a series of programs: we're a safety net and a capacity builder. With your support, we continue to be there for vulnerable and marginalised Victorians. Strengthening families and communities when they need it most.

Honouring our wonderful volunteers

Volunteers play a critical role in the delivery of CatholicCare services. Around 10% of the services we provide to people in need would not be possible without the support of our volunteers.

In December our volunteer workforce was in the spotlight, with the announcement of the 2020 Richard Stone award. This Award reflects the legacy of Richard Stone, who was an invaluable volunteer and member of the CatholicCare Board.

All our 200+ volunteers perform remarkable works of service, and five volunteers were especially honoured when they were nominated for the 2020 Award.

Our congratulations to these outstanding nominees: **Ann Clark:** Volunteer tutor at Refugee Homework group **Matilda Hannah:** Youth Justice program volunteer **Robert Roseborough:** Prison Chaplaincy Support Volunteer **Olivia Shanahan:** English Conversation Group Volunteer, and **Rima Tuma:** Volunteer translator.

Rima Tuma was announced as the recipient of the Richard Stone Award 2020. It is well-deserved recognition for this dedicated CatholicCare volunteer of three years.

Rima, who once walked the path of the refugees and vulnerable migrants she now supports, is a volunteer at our Eltham Refugee program. She is passionate about helping refugees to integrate into our community, and she describes her volunteer work as 'incredibly rewarding'.

"I feel great when I have the opportunity to help someone, especially when I see their smile."

In the last financial year alone, CatholicCare had the support of 210 registered volunteers. These selfless individuals contribute around 10,000 hours of combined volunteer service across 16 programs.

To enquire about volunteering opportunities available through CatholicCare Victoria, please email our Volunteer Coordinator, Matthew Walton on volunteer@ccam.org.au

*Thank you
for your support!*

