



St Luke's

RESPECT | HOPE | FAIRNESS



intouch

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## Communities for Children

### *Children are Children for Children's Sake*

The Communities for Children (CfC) initiative, known locally as Joining Together for Bendigo Children, is working towards addressing the needs of children aged 0-5 years and their families. The aim is to give children the best possible start in life, directly assisting young children and influencing the contexts within which they live; their family, their community and the broader social, economic and cultural environments.

The approach is grounded in community development, collaborative action, building strong partnerships and making use of strong evidence of what works in early intervention. Our focus is on working towards a cultural shift in the way the whole community values the early years.

We have taken a whole-of-community approach to respecting and recognising children as equal citizens and not just adults in the making. Investing in the early years for Bendigo children has involved consultation with children, listening to what they have to say and considering their responses in planning and development. Ultimately it is about respecting their ideas and opinions.

Through embracing this process, Bendigo has been recognised (by UNICEF and UNESCO) as Australia's first Child Friendly City. This means a commitment by everyone to embrace the vision of children and to think more deeply about the rights of the child. As an example of innovative local-level policy development this is one outcome that the whole CfC initiative can collectively be proud of.

Creating opportunities for children and families to lead happier, healthier and more resilient lives has resulted in:

- more indigenous children attending pre-school than ever before
- mothers who have never cooked before attending cooking classes and exploring what that means to them and their families
- primary schools opening their doors to younger children and their families, improving transitions for children between home, early childhood settings and school
- 500 children (3-8 years old) across Bendigo being involved in a consultation process to find out what is important to them in our community, in order to inform the future directions of early childhood initiatives
- an increased number of child-friendly spaces in Bendigo including playgroups, support groups, sporting facilities, restaurants and services that have demonstrated a welcoming attitude and a safe and suitable environment for children.

**Naarah Dawes**  
Community Building Co-ordinator

The Communities for Children (CfC) Initiative, known locally as Joining Together for Bendigo Children, is a partnership of organisations, communities and families. It is this partnership model that has been the driving force behind the outcomes for young children and their families. The Partnership comprises of St Luke's, City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB), Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC), Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS), Consortium of Schools, State Government, and community members. CfC is an initiative funded by the Australian Government under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

# How Cheryl Beat the Pokies

*Cheryl (not her real name) is a 35-year-old woman who lives locally with her family. Cheryl has agreed to share her story with us. She hopes her story might inspire other people in our community to seek help.*

I love bushwalking or any outdoor activities. Before I started gambling I was always very active and really happy. I enjoyed spending time with my family and friends – life was great! I was just an ordinary happy-go-lucky person.

I guess the change in my life occurred when the company I worked for moved their office to a new location. I was not able to keep my job and for the first time in my adult life I was unemployed. I remember enjoying the first couple of weeks – it was like a holiday. But the novelty soon wore off. I started getting bored. I didn't know what to do with myself, which was not like me. I started going to the pokies a couple of days a week, which eventually turned into every day.

It wasn't that I even liked them much, but it was something to do. Over time it was as if the gambling took possession of me. I was convinced that certain machines had a certain time and day and week that they would pay out and I was planning my day around that. I remember one time putting \$1000 into my favourite machine. I was so convinced that it had to pay out soon, but of course it didn't.

Day after day I returned, even though I hated what it did to my life and hated myself for it. I felt so alone I didn't care about the rest of the world anymore, all I cared about was chasing

my losses on those machines. I couldn't pay the bills and I ended up having to sell my house and my car. My finances were in such a mess and my life felt totally out of control.

Earlier I had seen a notice in the paper about financial counselling. I had to do something, so I made an appointment. When I met with the financial counsellor one of the questions he asked me was if I have ever had a problem with gambling. I could hardly deny that. He was really helpful and asked me if I would like to see a counsellor who could help me with my gambling problem. I didn't know if I was ready or could stop, but I also knew that I had to do something. So I went along to my first appointment.

The counsellor made me feel so comfortable. I felt I could just talk. If my first experience of counselling hadn't been so positive, I don't think I would have gone back. It was such a relief.

Since I've stopped there have been urges to gamble, but I've managed to resist – and that has made me feel so good about myself. Seeking help to get back on track has lifted a big black cloud. I am starting to enjoy life again and all the things gambling took away from me.

*If you have or know of someone who has a problem with gambling please contact the Gambler's Help Program at St Luke's Anglicare on 5448 1000.*

*Bree Hayes*

Gambler's Help Program

# New Community choir for Bendigo

I am excited to be involved with the establishment of Bendigo's newest choir. This choir is going to be created for the benefit of people who might not normally be able to access other singing opportunities. Members will be recruited through St Luke's and other agencies that deliver services to people in social isolation, living with mental illness, or recovering from addiction.

This immediately begins to sound like an extension of The Choir Of Hard Knocks, but we are hoping to take some of the attributes that made that choir so successful and adapt it to the specific needs of the Bendigo community. The choir will invite people from the participants' families and support networks in the hope of creating an environment to build new relationships. The success of the choir will be measured by those relationships.

This is not to say that the music is unimportant. We will be choosing songs that reflect the lives and experiences of the members. It is through learning to make the music

strong and beautiful that the participants in the choir develop or refresh a whole set of community skills. It is also undeniable that singing a powerful piece of music in a group refreshes the soul and allows the spirit to soar.

*James Rigby is a well-respected multi-instrumentalist, singer and teacher, based in Maldon in Central Victoria. James is the co-director with his partner Jane Thompson, of Castlemaine's Peace Choir. This is a very successful choir formed in 2008 with participants recruited from a number of agencies dealing with disabilities and social isolation along with carers, family and associated professionals. They have performed at a number of community events providing a rich experience for both participants and audience.*



# Staff Profiles

## *Di Barker – Program Manager, Residential Care.*

I am the mother of 10 great kids (two girls and eight boys), have 12 grandchildren and one great grandchild who are all healthy and happy. I love being a mother and feel blessed to have my family.

I have worked in residential care for the past 27 years and still love working in this area as much as I did when I first commenced my career. My career started as a volunteer worker in a youth refuge in Melbourne, then I moved on to be employed as a casual Direct Care Worker, Senior Worker, Team Leader and currently Program Manager in Residential Care.

I contribute my success to the great staff, and managers that I have worked with over the years who have shared their wisdom and knowledge with me. The privilege of working with young adolescents has also increased my knowledge base immensely. In fact, I believe that most of my knowledge and understanding of young people has been given to me by them. I love to just sit and chat and have fun along with the young people. I believe there are many kinds of love we feel as humans. In saying this, I love and care for the young people I work with. .



**Di Barker**  
Residential Care,  
Program Manager

## *Kate Robinson - Therapeutic Residential Care Pilot Program 'Esperanza' (Hope)*

I started working in St Luke's Residential Care two years ago, initially to supplement my income while I studied teaching at Uni. Within a short period of time I was offered the opportunity to become a part of the leadership team.

I was undecided about a career in teaching and was thoroughly enjoying the challenges and relationships I had built with the clients in Residential Care. It was an easy decision for me to make and one I have never regretted.

I believe as 'resi workers' we are in a privileged position, working closely with young people and their families to assist and support them to rebuild connections in their lives. It's an exciting time to be a part of residential care with St Luke's being involved in the first Therapeutic Residential Pilot Program. This service will provide young people with resources and an environment that allows them to heal and grow from past traumas.

Workers will be specifically trained to use trauma-informed work practices based on the Sanctuary Model of care. We will be working closely with a case manager, a mental health clinician and educator to support young people to make effective changes in their lives. The aim is for every young person to leave Residential Care as an emotionally and socially responsible member of our community.



I look forward to the challenge!

**Kate Robinson**  
Team Leader  
Residential Unit



## Port to Port

Twenty extremely fit and generous cyclists from the Bendigo Cycling Network rode 400kms over two days in November 2008 to raise money for St Luke's.

The money raised (almost \$3000) will be used to create the new community choir that will bring so much joy and connection to many disadvantaged people and our broader community.

Special thanks to Eddie Barkla and Pam Kendrick for all the leg work!

# Charting life's Ups and Downs

We all know that sometimes words are not enough to express how we are feeling. For many years now, Innovative Resources, the publishing arm of St Luke's, has been developing materials that act as 'conversational prompts' inviting users to think about, and talk about, their strengths, feelings and life struggles from different view points.

The most successful of these prompts, such as *Strength Cards*, *The Bears* and *Cars'R'Us* demonstrate that at times a picture may be worth a thousand words and that the use of images and artifacts can take our conversations to places where words alone may not be sufficient.

The latest publication to join this list of vital, potentially life-changing resources is *Ups and Downs*. This poignantly illustrated resource, created by Ray Bowler, features an 'everyperson' character sailing on life's billowing ocean in an old bathtub.

Innovative Resources' Senior Editor, John Holton, believes this is the most versatile resource to come off the press since *The Bears* in 1992.

'*Ups and Downs* has the potential to be so many things to so many people,' he said. 'It's great for talking about strengths and feelings, and ideal for conversations about mental wellbeing and the struggles of day-to-day life. It has great scope for being used in relationship counselling and the illustration style will appeal to men and women alike. And like *The Bears* there is no text, making it a great cross-cultural resource as well as being accessible to both kids and adults. It really is an incredibly exciting and versatile resource.'



# No Interest Loans Scheme

The high costs and inequitable conditions of consumer credit for people living on low incomes have long been recognised as a poverty trap by welfare and consumer groups. For individuals and families living on low incomes wanting or needing to purchase essential household items, mainstream credit options can be costly, limited or denied.

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) is a micro finance program developed by Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services to increase financial inclusion and options for people living on low incomes. It's a community based program that enables people to access fair, safe and equitable credit for the purchase of essential household goods and services, with most NILS programs providing interest and fee free loans between \$800- \$1200. Adopting a 'circular community credit model', borrowers repay their loans over an extended period of time and then those funds are available for someone else in the community.

St Luke's employs three NILS Community Development Workers to support communities across the Loddon Mallee region to develop their own NILS program. By engaging with community stakeholders NILS programs are developed in response to local need. While new programs are designed to meet the needs of people on low incomes in our community, other programs support individuals and families from Indigenous communities, women leaving family violence, people leaving transitional housing and those wanting loans for environmentally sustainable goods and services. NILS are owned and operated by local communities for local people, with organisations often working in partnership with other local services to develop and deliver NILS programs, providing opportunities for collaboration and strengthening networking relationships.

For borrowers the benefits are many. Besides the obvious benefits of having access to money to purchase items they need (such as fridges, washing machines, furniture) and the improvement those items then make to their daily lives, research has shown that by offering real solutions to real needs NILS helps people experiencing real distress and hardship to feel respected, valued and trusted, restoring a sense of hope that someone cares. Additionally the NILS loan process helps strengthen money management skills therefore NILS recipients feel more in control of their finances and their lives, and will often recognise if they need additional financial support. Thus providing an opportunity for people to create change in their own lives.

Ultimately, NILS provides a holistic response to the needs of people living on low incomes by connecting individuals to other consumer and financial assistance, providing support to improve financial capabilities and enhancing community participation. This is achieved through a process which enhances the dignity and respect of the individual whilst helping them gain some form of financial control and empowerment in their lives.

**Carlene Egan.**

NILS - Regional Community Development Worker Community Services

*The most effective way to achieve right relations with  
any living thing is to look for the best in it, and then  
help that best into the fullest expression.*

**J Allen Boone**  
*Kinship with ALL life*



# Hope in adversity

I am writing this article from Mildura. It is the height of summer and with school returning and the fruit picking season in full swing, the city is full of young people, families, teenagers and children. They are everywhere. In fact the local media reports that with rising unemployment and more families chasing work, fruit picking, more than ever before, is a good money earner.

However, what is beginning to emerge in many parts of Australia, particularly in regional and rural Australia, are clear signs of recession. Unemployment is growing, industries are reducing expenditure and there is a growing uncertainty about the future.

Sadly, we know from past experience that the first people in the community to feel the crunch are the most vulnerable: people on fixed incomes, people with large debts, low-income families, children in a variety of circumstances, and people without permanent work. The looming recession will impact on the lives of most, but our communities across the Loddon Mallee region and in many other places around rural Australia are going to feel the pinch!

St Luke's is there to work with these communities and the people being impacted most severely – particularly families and children. Our staff are dedicated to making a difference to peoples' lives and no matter what the future brings we will be doing everything in our capacity to give people dignity and a hopeful outlook.



**Bishop Andrew Curnow**

President



## Bendigo a 'Child Friendly City'

In 2008, Bendigo was acknowledged as Australia's first city to be recognised by UNICEF as a 'Child Friendly City'. I believe the UNICEF framework for Child Friendly Cities has an enormous amount to offer children in Australian communities, particularly because we do have such a strong system of local government that can be the cornerstone of the initiative. This UNICEF approach says that a Child Friendly City is a place where:

1. Children participate in decision making
2. Laws and policies are considered in the light of children's needs and rights
3. There is a broad strategy to ensure children's rights are met
4. A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism exists
5. The community considers the impact on children for all major decisions eg. pedestrian access, public space and services for families
6. A children's budget exists to support initiatives for children
7. A regular State of the City's Children Report (monitoring data on children's wellbeing) is created
8. Children's rights are made known (educative approach)
9. Independent advocacy for Children exists.

While the initiative was originally intended to support children in 'at risk' countries and populations, the wellbeing of children is a priority for every community. The evidence in front of St Luke's everyday is that children's wellbeing cannot be taken for granted in our own community.

So many children are not safe at home, at school or in public spaces. So many children do not have a voice in the decisions

that affect them. So many children are not getting a good start in life through health (good food on the table, chronic illness), education and stable housing. Our children are the whole community's responsibility, not just the responsibility of the nuclear family, and as such, the model of the Child Friendly City has much to commend it.

Human rights, and children's rights in particular, are simply a specific articulation of the beliefs we hold dearly about the dignity of each person and the respect they are due by society. St Luke's Anglicare is committed to working with children and families to ensure each child has a good start in life. However we recognise we can't do this alone, therefore we must also work with the governments and communities to achieve our mission.

In 2009, our board and staff continue to strive to do two main things – provide effective services for vulnerable children and people, and to bring about a fairer society.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

**David**



**Pugh**

CEO St Luke's Anglicare

*child friendly*

# St Luke's and the bushfires

St Luke's Board and staff extend their heartfelt concerns, prayers and best wishes to all families and friends impacted on by the Victorian Bushfires. The pain and grief of so many deaths in a number of small communities is incomprehensible. The loss of family homes, livelihood, treasures and community history just pile sadness and grief on top of each other. Many of St Luke's staff are now involved in supporting and counselling people within the Bendigo area impacted mainly by the local fires. We all know that the immediate outpouring of support must be sustained into ongoing understanding, love and nurture. We all know well that the impacts of this week will reverberate in many lives for years to come. But we also know that people are amazingly generous and have great capacity for life and renewal - this we see every day.

*David Pugh*  
CEO



## St Luke's Mission

*We work within rural and regional communities to assist people to make positive changes, to be connected and to contribute to their communities. Our practices promote respect, hope and fairness and we challenge any actions that devalue, disadvantage and discriminate.*



## Come for Lunch 2009

A casual monthly event at Hargreaves Street Bendigo, hosted by a different team each month, profiling the many programmes and the work of St Luke's to the broader community.

RSVP Jenene Beames-O'Brien 5444 8100

25 March Youth Connection Team

29 April Youth Resource Team

27 May Residential Care Services