

# STATE OF THE FAMILY 2003

Dr Ann Neville

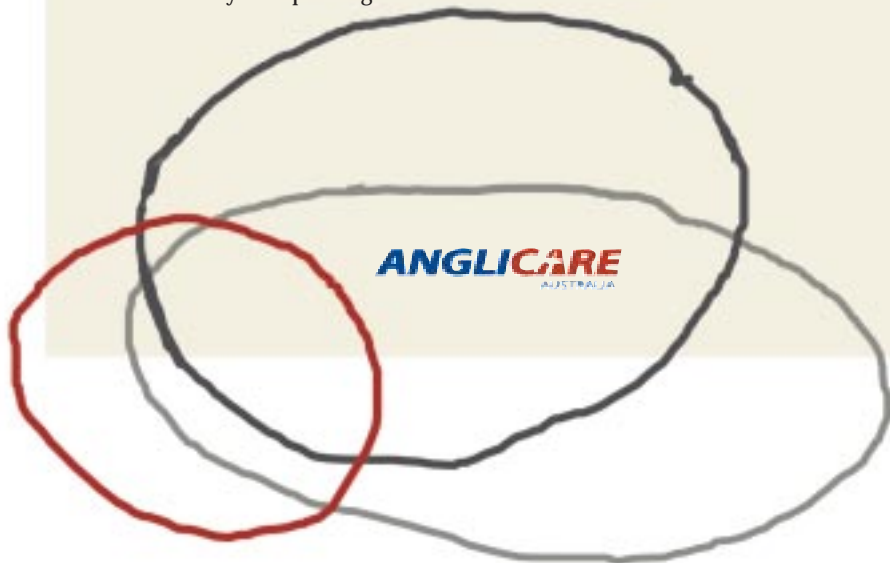
**In Australia disadvantage is increasingly taking on a regional or locational aspect. Some areas grow and prosper while others are left behind.**

The increasing inequality between job rich and job poor areas has led to calls for governments to adopt regional strategies to target inequality. But tackling inequality is not just a job for governments, it is also a task that must involve local communities and it requires cooperation across all sorts of barriers.

The State of the Family 2003 contributes to this debate by looking at nine different localities across Australia, painting a picture of what life is like in these localities, particularly for the more disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community, and exploring what Anglicare agencies are doing in these areas in terms of community development.

**The report highlights** the lack of access to affordable housing as a major consequence and reinforcing cause of poverty. It calls for current underfunding of public housing to be reversed.

To break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, State of the Family 2003 calls for a radical realignment of government priorities and ways of operating.



# STATE OF THE FAMILY 2003

Dr Ann Neville



ANGLICARE  
AUSTRALIA

# STATE OF THE FAMILY 2003

*Dr Ann Neville*

"Children are kept in poverty not by a padlock to which there is a single key but by a combination lock that requires an alignment of factors if it is to be released"

*Child Poverty in Rich Nations  
United Nations Children's Fund, 2000*

Copyright 2003 Anglicare Australia  
ISBN 0 9579756 4 3

*Anglicare Australia is the national network of care and social justice agencies of the Anglican Church of Australia.*

*Anglicare member agencies invest in excess of \$500 million each year in assistance to needy families, children and youth, the aged, unemployed and homeless Australians, as well as working with Indigenous Australians to overcome disadvantage.*

**ANGLICARE**  
AUSTRALIA

The Anglican Centre  
209 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne. VIC 3000  
Tel: 03 9653 4220

Email: [anglicare@anglicare.asn.au](mailto:anglicare@anglicare.asn.au)  
Website: [www.anglicare.asn.au](http://www.anglicare.asn.au)

# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	I
Executive Summary.....	II
1. Locational Disadvantage.....	1
2. Queensland: Cooloola Shire.....	3
3. Queensland: Caboolture/Redcliffe/Kilcoy.....	8
4. Tasmania: North-West Region .....	11
5. New South Wales: Eden/Bega Valley Shire .....	16
6. New South Wales: Newcastle/Hunter Valley .....	20
7. Victoria: Craigieburn/Northern region of Melbourne .....	24
8. Western Australia: Albany/Great Southern Region .....	30
9. South Australia: Elizabeth/northern suburbs of Adelaide.....	35
10. Australian Capital Territory.....	40
11. Conclusion.....	46
References.....	49
Names and positions of those interviewed.....	53

# INTRODUCTION

Within God's providence, Anglicare Australia is campaigning to significantly reduce the number of children growing up in poverty. Informed analysis and practical policy options are essential prerequisites for any campaign and the annual State of the Family report seeks to provide these necessary resources.

This fourth State of the Family Report looks at why some areas in Australia grow and prosper while others are left behind. In nine different localities across Australia, the report paints a picture of what life is like in these areas, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community. Affordable housing is a particular issue for many.

Last year's report highlighted the plight of the more than 676,000 children growing up in families where no adult has a job. At root cause of the problem was the growth in Australia of job rich and job poor regions or localities. Interestingly, the problem is not just one for rural Australia it also is occurring in our large cities and so the term localities is used in the report.

This report explores the issue of regional disadvantage from the perspective of Anglicare workers in regional services around Australia. The highly skilled and compassionate staff of Anglicare have an intimate understanding

of the communities in which they live and work. This report draws on their perspective to provide a unique snapshot of disadvantaged communities.

In recent months, various events from Bali terrorism to bushfires and drought, have united us as a nation. Adversity has that effect. Though less vivid than these recent events, our national task is to be united as we create a fairer society. One in which children are not scarred by poverty but rather have the opportunity to grow up free, able to contribute to our common well being. Overcoming regional and local disadvantages by targeted strategies is critical to this outcome.

We are grateful to Dr Ann Nevile for excellent work in bringing together research and numerous interviews with Anglicare staff around Australia into a readable and challenging report.

With every blessing,

*Bishop Philip Huggins*  
*Chair*  
*Anglicare Australia.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Australia disadvantage is increasingly taking on a locational aspect as some areas grow and prosper while others are left behind. The increasing inequality between job rich and job poor areas has led to calls for governments to adopt a regional response to targeting inequality. At the same time, there is growing interest among academics, bureaucrats and non-government agencies in the idea of governments working more closely with each other and the local community to tackle local problems. State of the Family 2003 contributes to this on-going debate by looking at nine different localities across Australia, painting a picture of what life is like in these localities, particularly for the more disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community, and exploring what Anglicare agencies are doing in these areas in terms of community development.

The most important lesson to emerge from the nine case studies is that the nature of government assistance needs to be changed. The targeting of services to those with "the highest need" has reached a point where it has become counter-productive.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the area of housing. Young people trying to establish a life outside residential care, women trying to move beyond an abusive relationship, families trying to deal with the effects of unemployment and

financial crisis, individuals struggling to overcome depression, alcohol or drug abuse, all are held back by their inability to access safe, affordable and secure accommodation. Children who spend two years moving between friend's lounge rooms, caravan parks and crisis accommodation while waiting for the family to move into public housing have their schooling disrupted, making it more likely that they will not succeed in the school system and leave school early, thereby planting the seeds for the continuation of disadvantage across generations.

Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement funding has declined in real and nominal terms since 1991/92 (ACOSS, 2002:3) and public housing in every State and Territory (with the exception of Tasmania) is housing less people every year (ACOSS, 2002:2). Less than 10,000 properties were added to public housing stock between June 1992 and June 2000 despite the fact that more than 200,000 people have been on the waiting list for public housing throughout this period (ACOSS, 2002:2). The Commonwealth government's policy of looking to the private rental market to make up the short-fall in public housing is clearly failing. Many low-income Australians cannot access the private rental market because of very low vacancy rates, discrimination on the part of landlords or

because private rental is too expensive even with Commonwealth Rent Assistance. The fact that almost 90,000 low-income Australians receiving the maximum rent assistance from the government still spend more than half their income on rent (ACOSS, 2002:4) is another clear indication of policy failure.

Anglicare staff consistently identified trying to find accommodation for their clients as the most frustrating part of their job, a situation which looks likely to get worse as the Commonwealth government's forward estimates for 2003/04 show a withdrawal of GST compensation money (which compensates States and Territories for the higher costs borne by housing authorities as a result of the GST) and a further reduction of \$100 million in Commonwealth funding (ACOSS, 2002:3).

Therefore, in order to "break the cycle" there needs to be a radical realignment of government priorities and ways of operating, beginning with a recognition of the inter-connected nature of the issues facing communities across Australia.

Firstly, current underfunding of public housing has to be reversed.

Secondly, more resources need to be put into early intervention strategies and resources need to be made available beyond the pilot phase if a pilot proves to be successful.

Thirdly, all levels of government need to develop ways of working co-operatively with each other and with local communities to achieve community development objectives,

which may mean that governments commit themselves to supporting the direction of change rather than controlling it. Funding needs to be for a minimum of three years to enable effective implementation of programs designed to improve community participation and local empowerment and decision-making.

Two of these three elements are found in the Western Australian Supported Housing Assistance Program. SHAP can be seen as an early intervention strategy in that the purpose of the program is to help public housing (Homeswest) tenants maintain their tenancies. In other words, to prevent the crisis of eviction. In funding the program, Homeswest has moved away from a narrow definition of its responsibility, to one which recognizes the wider needs of its tenants. Furthermore, while Homeswest provides the funds through non-government agencies, the department does not attempt to control all aspects of the SHAP workers' interaction with their clients. All the department is concerned about is achieving a positive outcome for the client and the department. However, while SHAP is an example of a successful partnership between the government and non-government sectors, it does not address the critical lack of public housing: an issue which demands the attention of State, Territory and Commonwealth governments.

# 1. LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Because Australia has the third highest rate of children growing up in jobless households of all OECD countries, last year's State of the Family report explored the way unemployment and low income impact on the lives of children and their families. The report showed how poverty has a negative impact on the physical and mental health of both children and adults; how poverty strains family relationships as financial insecurity generates stress and conflict, making it harder for families to stay together.

The report also noted that where someone lives affects their chance of finding a job if they are unemployed. In Australia, disadvantage is increasingly taking on a locational aspect as some areas grow and prosper while others are left behind. As late as 1971 the socio-economic status of where one lived only had a small influence on the likelihood of being employed. By 1991 it was very important. Gregory and Hunter (1996) have documented this for urban areas. Taking data for all Australian cities with a population of at least 100,000, they arrange neighbourhoods according to socio-economic status. They then show the proportion of the population aged

between 15 and 64 employed in each neighbourhood (Gregory & Hunter,1996:310). In 1971 average employment in each neighbourhood was between 56 and 61 per cent. Fifteen years later average employment was 41 per cent for the bottom 10 per cent of neighbourhoods. Employment then increased steadily until it reached 60 per cent for the top 10 per cent of neighbourhoods. As young people are more likely to stay longer in full-time education in higher socio-economic neighbourhoods, this gives a conservative picture of changes in unemployment. For example, in 1976, male unemployment was only 4 percentage points higher in the bottom 10 per cent of neighbourhoods than in the top 10 per cent. By 1991 this had blown out to 18 percentage points. Furthermore, in the bottom one per cent of neighbourhoods, unemployment was over 36 per cent in 1991 (Gregory & Hunter,1996:313).

While unemployment is the most important single cause of poverty in Australian families (Saunders,2002b:181), it is not the only cause. Lack of housing security interacts with unemployment and worsens the poverty it creates in



families in which no-one is employed. State of the Family 2002 showed how many low income families struggle to access secure and appropriate housing. The search for affordable housing is another reason why locational disadvantage in Australia is increasing. For example in 2001, 16,000 people living on government benefits left Sydney to move to an area with lower employment prospects because housing was more affordable than in Sydney (Horin, 2002).

The increasing inequality between job rich and job poor areas has led to calls for governments to adopt a regional response to targeting inequality (Marriner, 2002). At the same time, there has been a growing interest among academics, bureaucrats and non-government agencies in notions of place management (Walsh, 2001), area-based partnerships (Curtain, 2002) and community capacity building (James, 2002:8) as people recognize the difficulties faced by traditional government departments organized along program lines to respond to multi-faceted problems such as poverty. For example, a recent study by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and the Australian National University found that the number of homes robbed each year could be reduced by 11,000 (that is, by 16%) if all the teenagers and young men who had been out of work for more than 12 months returned to school and completed Year 12. This demonstrates that "reducing crime is not just about apprehending and punishing offenders... It is also about getting young men through school and into a decent job" (Mercer, 2003).

Some governments have taken initial steps towards developing a "whole of government" approach to complex, multi-faceted problems such as crime, homelessness, and youth suicide. For example, the South Australian government has established a Social Inclusion Board in an attempt to develop a service delivery model where services are focused on the needs of individual communities which form their own solutions in partnership with government (Cappo, 2002). Clearly the concept of community is becoming "a publicly powerful idea" (Adams & Hess, 2001:20), but most governments do not yet have a clear idea of the role of community in public policy (Adams & Hess, 2001:14).

State of the Family 2003 will contribute to this on-going debate by looking at nine localities across Australia, painting a picture of what life is like in these localities, particularly for the more disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community, and exploring what Anglicare agencies are doing in these areas in terms of community development in its widest sense. While the nine localities vary a great deal, some common themes emerge. This makes it possible to recommend specific policies and pathways which will enable governments and the community to respond more effectively to the challenges presented by locational disadvantage.



## 2. QUEENSLAND: COOLOOLA SHIRE

In 1996 Cooloolola Shire had a population of 32,068 spread over 3,000 square kilometres from the coastal communities of Rainbow Beach, Tin Can Bay and Cooloolola Cove, to the inland town of Gympie and surrounding rural communities. Cooloolola Shire is classified as the southern-most part of the Wide Bay-Burnett region of Queensland by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as the northern boundary of South-East Queensland by the Queensland Department of Local Government and Planning, and as part of the Sunshine Coast by the Queensland Department of Health. While the population is growing at an average of 2.7 per year, most of this growth is occurring in the coastal and rural communities rather than the service centre of Gympie (Cooloolola Shire Council, 2001:2).

In the past, agriculture, forestry and fishing provided the majority of employment opportunities, but employment in these three industries has declined from 20.1 per cent in 1986 to 14.2 per cent in 1996 (Cooloolola Shire Council, 2001:12). Employment in the service and manufacturing sectors has increased (for example, 15.4% of jobs are in the retail sector, 8.3% in community services, 7.6% in education and 12.2% in manufacturing), but unemployment remains high (Cooloolola Shire Council,

2001:2). In March 2000, Cooloolola Shire had an unemployment rate of 13.9 per cent, with youth unemployment rates even higher at 22.4 per cent for those aged 15 to 19 and 21.5 per cent for those aged 20 to 24 (Cooloolola Shire Council, 2001:4&22). However many young people are only able to find part-time casual work, so while they are classified as employed according to official government statistics, they do not earn enough money to live on (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Income levels across the Shire are relatively low, with 46.3 per cent of residents having a weekly household income of \$200 or less. Consequently 47.7 per cent of residents live below the poverty line (Cooloolola Shire Council, 2001:4).

The deregulation of the dairy industry has had a negative impact on dairy farmers and the local economy (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Prior to deregulation, dairy farmers could use their milk quotas as equity and borrow money against this asset. With deregulation the value of milk quotas has dropped from around \$420 per litre of milk to about \$50 per litre of milk and banks are therefore asking farmers for additional equity, thereby increasing the financial strain dairy farmers are under (Cooloolola Shire Council, 2001:15). Converting their dairy farms to sugar cane is not an economic

proposition given the current price of cane and the lack of infrastructure to transport the cane to the sugar mills at Nambour and Isis (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:15).

The population of Cooloolo Shire is a mix of old-time residents, families from "down south" who moved into the area about twenty years ago attracted by the availability of beautiful blocks of land and idea of a rural lifestyle (many of whom ended up working in the community services sector), and more recent arrivals, some of whom are retirees from Brisbane who move into the area because land on the coast is cheaper than the nearby Sunshine Coast and others who just want to "get away from it all" (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Some low-income families are attracted by the relatively low cost of housing, but end up living in sub-standard housing in areas with no public infrastructure such as electricity or sewage. Consequently, "there are lots of social problems" (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Social services in the rural parts of the Shire are limited, if they exist at all, which creates problems for people with high support needs such as the 25 year old single mother of six who bought a house over the internet and moved up from Sydney, or those whose circumstances have changed (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).

*I know a few families that moved to the coast as a couple and then the relationship broke down and they found themselves isolated. They don't have any family and they are 80 kilometres from any services (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).*

For example, there are no child care services or services for older people or

people with a disability in the rural area south of Gympie (the Mary Valley area) and health services and specialist services (such as the women's health centre, emergency accommodation, a sexual assault support group, a male health support service and a lifeline service for men and their families) are located in Gympie (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:21).

The population of Cooloolo Shire remains predominantly Anglo-Celtic with 95.6 per cent of residents speaking only English at home, the majority of non-Australian born residents coming from the United Kingdom or New Zealand (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:35). There is a Filipino community in the Shire as a number of Filipino women moved into the area when they married Australian men. Employment opportunities for non-English speakers are even more limited than for the general population with most employment concentrated in low paid seasonal work such as fruit picking (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). A small number of refugees have been re-settled in the area and while existing residents have welcomed them, none of the refugees have been able to find employment (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Because they constitute such a small proportion of the population, services for non-English speakers are limited. For example, the Gympie TAFE only offers eight hours of English language classes a week (Collins & Entwistle, 2002) and there is no interpreter service available in the Shire other than the Telephone Interpreter Service based in Sydney which is difficult to use because the number of voice prompts and dialling which users

are required to do before they can get through to an interpreter (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:36).

Indigenous Australians make up 1.4 per cent of the population and have been identified as the worst serviced group in the community. The indigenous population experience poor health outcomes, low self-esteem, high unemployment, poor housing, drug abuse, domestic violence and there are limited services specifically designed for indigenous Australians (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:37-38).

While the proportion of older residents (those aged over 55) is slightly higher in Cooloolo Shire (23.1%) than the State average of 20.4 per cent, the proportion of young people (15-24 year olds) is slightly lower (11.9%) than the State average of 14.8 per cent (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:22&28). A high percentage (72.2%) of young people in the Shire leave school before the age of 17 (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:22). The lower than average number of residents who do have a degree or diploma (9.3% compared to 13.8% for the whole of Queensland) may be due to the fact that the only tertiary institution in the region is the Gympie TAFE which offers a very limited range of courses. Young people wanting to pursue a wider range of options than those offered at the Gympie TAFE leave the area and very few return after gaining their degree because of limited employment opportunities. Many professional positions in the community services sector are part-time or temporary. When positions such as the Manager of the Youth Service are advertised there are very few applicants, a reflection of the

difficulty the Shire has in attracting qualified people into the area (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). This problem is by no means confined to Cooloolo Shire, but the fact that Cooloolo is treated as the northern or southern boundary of a larger region tends to exacerbate the problem. While service ratios across the larger region are adequate, services tend to be concentrated in the middle of the larger region rather than at the northern or southern boundaries. Consequently, the hours available within Cooloolo Shire are limited and positions are part-time (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:18) with residents forced to wait weeks for access to counselling services or those provided by the women's health centre (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).

Limited hours and a high demand for the services provided in Gympie makes it difficult for service providers to maintain a presence in the rural and coastal communities outside Gympie.

*One of the problems we have had in establishing a centre in all these [outlying] areas is the demands placed on services in Gympie. Even if there is a place for them to operate once a month, that is the first thing they will drop if they get busy in Gympie (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).*

Services in Gympie are also used by residents of neighbouring Shires (such as Kilkivan) because of the lack of similar services within their Shire (Cooloolo Shire Council, 2001:18) or because their children go to school in Gympie and they come into town to go shopping and see the doctor (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).

The isolation experienced by many people living in the coastal and rural

communities and by refugee families and indigenous Australians, is exacerbated by the lack of public transport within the Shire as well as the cost of what little public transport there is. For example, a return bus trip to Gympie from outlying areas costs \$18 and services are limited to one bus per day (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). The extensive school bus network can be used by members of the general public, but many older people do not like using the school bus (Collins & Entwistle, 2002) and its restricted operating hours means it is not an option for TAFE students, those in the workforce, or those who want to access social and recreational activities in Gympie on Friday and Saturday nights (Cooloola Shire Council, 2001:9-10).

The work being done by Caroline Collins, Anglicare's Community Development Officer is particularly important in breaking down the isolation experienced by many Shire residents. Caroline's approach to her work is to act as a facilitator and resource person for groups or individuals who want to improve the quality of life in their local community.

*I've been involved in setting up community centres and information and referral centres in those outlying areas so at least families have a point of contact in a crisis (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).*

When Caroline first started working at Rainbow Beach, the local council paid for a shop front so Caroline had a place she could go every week or every fortnight and...

*I'd just sit there and meet people in the area. Usually you get to meet a few key people who are interested in working on*

*other things (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).*

Now there is a Rainbow Beach Community Information and Resource Service staffed by volunteers which provides a one stop shop for local information, information about community services and groups, referrals to services in Gympie and a place where Centrelink forms can be faxed through. Local residents can access the internet through computers at the centre which also acts as a base for outreach services from Gympie. A similar service has also been established at Tin Can Bay which has taken on the role of managing Emergency Relief funds for the area.

Gympie has a tradition of the community working co-operatively together, particularly when there are significant floods and the main street is under water, and that sense of community sharing and the desire to do something to help the community also exists in the isolated rural and coastal communities (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). For example, in Imbil (in the rural Mary Valley area south of Gympie), Caroline has helped to establish three new community groups in the last six months and the local residents who are running them have all moved into the area in the last 12 months (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Residents in very small towns like Imbil have a vision of what they want to achieve in their community, but "the whole funding process can be quite horrendous" (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). The assistance Caroline provides in writing funding applications and working with management committees on organizational, policy and planning issues, empowers local residents and acts

as a catalyst for on-going community development. For example, Cooloola Cove is a residential development located between Rainbow Beach and Tin Can Bay. It is isolated with no community infrastructure and many of the residents are unemployed. The local Veterans Group wanted to do something to address the problems caused by isolation, low-income and lack of basic services.

*It didn't take long to identify that people felt that a community building where meetings, functions and activities could take place would be of great benefit. We approached Cooloola Shire Council and were allocated a large block of land next to the General Store. A broad working group was formed consisting of the Veterans Group, Cooloola Shire Council, Youth Development and other local residents (Collins, 2001).*

As a member of the working group Caroline helped them write an application for funds to build the community centre.

While there are common problems caused by isolation and lack of services, the needs of individual communities within Cooloola Shire differ. For example, children living in Gympie have access to a range of after-school, recreational and sporting activities. Children in the Mary Valley area have chores to do on the family farm after school, but for children

living in Cooloola Cove there is nothing to do after school except perhaps for feeding their hamster or watching TV (Collins & Entwistle, 2002). Even within a local community, individual needs and aspirations differ. For example, at a community consultation meeting at Rainbow Beach a man got up and said:

*'one thing about Rainbow Beach is that we all moved here because we want to be here.'* The woman sitting next to him said, *'well I didn't move here because I wanted to live here. I'm here because my husband wanted to be here, to fish and walk along the beach'* (Collins & Entwistle, 2002).

Therefore, to be effective, "solutions" to the problems faced by local communities must come from within. The model of community development work used by Caroline Collins is effective in responding to locally identified needs and creating sustainable outcomes, even in small isolated communities with very little existing infrastructure or support, because local residents are given assistance to achieve specific projects they have identified as being important and in so doing "empowered" or "skilled up" so that the community group reaches the point where it can function without the assistance of the community development worker.



### 3. QUEENSLAND: CABOOLTURE/REDCLIFFE/KILCOY

Anglicare's Strengthening Families Program provides foster care and family support to families in Caboolture Shire, Redcliffe and Kilcoy Shire, an area to the north of Brisbane which is a mixture of urban centres (Caboolture and Redcliffe), farming land, acreage blocks and small townships (Kilcoy Shire) and isolated urban areas such as Bribie Island.

The area is pre-dominantly working class as reflected in the higher than average number of people with skilled or basic vocational qualifications and a lower than average number of people with tertiary qualifications (Department of Families, 2002:3). Caboolture, Redcliffe and Kilcoy are located in the South-East Queensland growth corridor which has experienced increases in population double that of the rest of the State over the last ten years.

Most of this growth is occurring as young families move into the Caboolture area. For example, 29 per cent of the population in the Caboolture area is aged between 0 and 17 years as compared with the Queensland average of 25.7 per cent (Department of Families, 2002:17).

Redcliffe used to be a holiday and retirement destination for people from Brisbane. Now the city is trying to attract young families into the area by promoting itself as a friendly place for families which is within commuting distance from Brisbane (Gration et al, 2002). The city has

put a lot of work into developing parks and recreational facilities, but remains an area with large numbers of low-income families including single parent families. For example, 27.3 per cent of families in Redcliffe are single parent families compared with 20.8 per cent for Queensland as a whole (Department of Families, 2002:23).

Unemployment levels in Caboolture and Redcliffe are above State averages. For example, in December 2000, unemployment in Caboolture and Redcliffe was 10.9 per cent and 11 per cent respectively compared with the State average of 7.6 per cent (Department of Families, 2002:19&25). Of those who are employed, many can only find part-time or casual work. Employment opportunities in the rural areas are limited and people have moved into Caboolture looking for work, particularly after the meatworks closed down (Gration et al, 2002). The higher than average levels of part-time employment is of concern in a area with large numbers of families with dependent children who are in the process of buying their own home (Department of Families, 2002:3).

For those who can't afford a mortgage, housing is a problem with waiting lists of up to four or five years for public housing and a very tight private rental market.

*That is one of the main issues that our families talk about. [Private rental] is not cheap. We have families paying \$200 a week in rent (Gration et al, 2002).*

Until recently there was no youth crisis accommodation in Caboolture with young people having to go to the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane or Redcliffe (half an hours drive away). Even when an accommodation service for Caboolture was established it was located in Narangba (20 minutes south of Caboolture) because...

*no-one in Caboolture was prepared to rent them a building and...the Housing Department wasn't prepared to come to the party and provide an appropriate site (Gration et al, 2002).*

Access to services is often difficult because of the region's proximity to Brisbane.

*The planners think we are only 30 minutes from Brisbane and [therefore residents] can access services in Brisbane. But there is a transport problem. Low-income families don't have access to a car - or at least a car they would willingly drive on the highway! If they go by train it is an hour - if you've dropped your children at school you are pushing it to travel to Brisbane, see the specialist and get back by the time school finishes (Gration et al, 2002).*

Public transport within the region is focused on getting to Brisbane rather than travelling across Shires. For example, to travel from Caboolture to Woodford and Kilcoy, residents are limited to a bus service which only runs twice a day. Even the taxi service is unreliable with some taxis refusing to travel beyond Woodford (Gration et al, 2002). Lack of transport options causes significant difficulties for

families who live west of Woodford and need to access services (such as the special education unit) in Caboolture (Gration et al, 2002).

The work done by Anglicare's Strengthening Families Program is not labelled "community development work" and does not result in visible signs of community such as a community centre or an information or referral service. Nevertheless, the work done by staff and volunteers contributes to building stronger communities by enhancing the capacity of families and young people under stress to function. For example, the Family Support worker co-ordinates a group of 21 volunteers who visit families once or twice a week over a period of time. The aim of the program is to help these families...

*feel powerful and gain a sense of hopefulness and achieve the goals they identify for themselves... [The volunteers] do a whole range of different things to achieve that... sometimes linking with other services, sometimes providing assistance to get out in the community and find out about recreational services, sometimes it is just listening to their own life stories of isolation and finding the pointers of hope and strength that each parent has to contribute to their children (Gration et al, 2002).*

Some of the families in the program are struggling with drug and alcohol issues, domestic violence, post-natal depression or the needs of children with attention deficit disorder. Some have lived in the area for many years, others are more recent arrivals, but...

*every family we work with is feeling very isolated... They feel overwhelmed and without any support (Gration et al, 2002).*



Two foster care workers co-ordinate a team of 44 volunteer foster carers who provide care for children and teenagers, from short-term care during a crisis through to long-term care and respite care. Most of the families who find themselves unable to care for their children are struggling financially, trying to cope with unemployment or a combination of mental health issues, drug abuse or domestic violence.

*There are very few services in the community able to assist families with mental health and drug abuse issues... The intervention offered by mental health services doesn't meet the needs of families. For instance, if they are a mental health service, that's what they do. They don't do child protection as well or parenting. What is needed is more of a holistic service which is family based, rather than a service based on a medical model for treating mental health because that doesn't help kids (Gration et al, 2002).*

Two years ago the foster care and family support programs were brought together so that they could operate as an integrated service. Family support volunteers now have regular meetings with foster carers and "there are lots of discussions on how we will work together with different families where a volunteer might be supporting children in a foster placement or we might have children that are with a natural parent who requires family support" (Gration et al, 2002). Staff would like to continue developing the service so that they are able to offer a more holistic, family based service, linking family support volunteers with foster carers to help the children in care with their

homework, for example. One of the areas where foster children lose out is with their education and a program where trained volunteers help children with their reading and mathematics would have significant benefits in terms of improving the child's self-esteem and self-development (Gration et al, 2002).

*It is also a great time for foster carers to have another adult in the house between 3.30 and 5pm! (Gration et al, 2002).*

Volunteers helping children with their homework can act as role models for the child's natural parents, an important benefit of such a program given that most children return to their family of origin after foster care placements of one to three months (Gration et al, 2002).

Given the complex issues facing some of the families they work with, staff would also like to extend the service by offering more intensive professional therapy, for example 14-16 hours a week over a three month period (Gration et al, 2002). At the other end of the spectrum, staff would like to offer respite care for families who are not yet at crisis point, but need a break so that they can continue to cope. For example, a single mother with four children, two of whom were diagnosed with ADHD and a third who has severe physical disabilities was exhausted but was told that she could not access respite care unless she put her children into care.

*That is a terrible thing to say to a mother - that you have to put your children into care just so you can have a rest! It would be great if we could provide respite care for these sorts of kids every three months...give them a holiday for a weekend or a week and give the parents a break (Gration et al, 2002).*



## 4. TASMANIA: NORTH-WEST REGION

North-West Tasmania is typical of areas in regional Australia which have declined dramatically in recent decades. It is a network of small towns economically dependent on primary industry, agricultural commodities and mining. This region highlights the growing gap between the rich and poor in Australia, with widespread disadvantage and small pockets of high income. Shifting global markets over the past decade has had a devastating effect on its industries resulting in high levels of unemployment, entrenched long-term unemployment, downward population spirals and an increased dependence on service industries. Significantly, the traditional life-course patterns and expectations of those communities have altered dramatically. As this region contained industries which were once large-scale employers, many Tasmanian families have historical connections with this area. It holds a special place in the State psyche, as being synonymous with close-knit, supportive communities and a solid working "working class" ethos. However it is also noted for its conservative social values (Anglicare Tasmania, 2003).

In 1996, 106,026 people lived in the North-West region of Tasmania, which covers King Island in the north-west corner, the Circular Head and West Coast local government areas, across to

Waratah/Wynyard, Burnie and Devonport and the Central Coast as well as Latrobe and Kentish. The population of the North-West region is overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic. 98 per cent of residents (aged over 5) only speak English at home with the majority of those not born in Australia coming from Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the USA (DH&HS, 2000:2).

The region is a mixture of urban centres and rural areas and contains considerable variation in terms of the socio-economic status of its residents. For example, in 1996 over half of the population (58.5%) earned less than \$300 per week, with almost one-third of the population earning less than \$159 per week (DH&HS, 2000:17). At the same time, in the 1998 Healthy Communities Survey, parts of the North-West region recorded the highest levels of economic well-being in the State (DH&HS, 2001:9). The urban areas of Burnie and Devonport had high levels of economic well-being but also contained pockets of people experiencing very low levels of economic well-being (DH&HS, 2001:9). Unlike the rest of Tasmania, in the North-West, rural areas recorded high levels of economic well-being (DH&HS, 2001:9). Many farmers in the North-West have a high asset base as farms have been in the family for generations. Furthermore, there

is a substantial infrastructure supporting the agricultural industry providing employment opportunities for non-farmers and well-paid professionals who live in the rural areas close to the urban centres of Devonport, Latrobe or Burnie (DH&HS, 2001:46). Dairy processing plants have raised incomes on King Island and high incomes on the West Coast are the result of mining and tourism developments (DH&HS, 2000:17).

Unemployment rates follow the same pattern with higher rates experienced in urban centres than rural areas except for the Waratah/Wynyard area and the

Central Coast area in terms of youth unemployment (see Table 1).

School retention rates for Tasmania are much lower than for the rest of Australia; 56.9 per cent compared to the average for the rest of Australia of 80.2 per cent. Again there is considerable variation in school retention rates within the North-West region with extremely low school retention rates (22.2%) in the rural areas of Latrobe to retention rates of 63.9 per cent on the West Coast which is higher than the State average (DH&HS, 2000:19). Given the generally lower than average school retention rates across the region, it

Local Government Area	Unemployed rate for all those aged over 15 years (%)	Unemployment rate for all those aged 15-24 years (%)
Burnie (urban)	13.4	20.9
Burnie (rural)	9.4	14.0
Central Coast (urban)	13.3	22.9
Central Coast (rural)	12.7	23.7
Circular Head	8.2	14.7
Devonport	13.9	21.8
Kentish	16.4	20.6
King Island	4.0	8.0
Latrobe (urban)	12.3	22.2
Latrobe (rural)	7.5	16.1
Waratah/Wynyard (urban)	12.1	22.3
Waratah/Wynyard (rural)	13.6	16.8
West Coast	9.9	14.9
<b>North-West region</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>20.4</b>

**Table 1: Total and Youth Unemployment, North-West region 1996**

Source: DH&HS, 2000, *Demographic and Health Analysis of the North-West Region*, p. 18.

is not surprising that only 4.7 per cent of the population have a tertiary qualification compared to 7.9 per cent for Tasmania as a whole (DH&HS, 2000:20).

Over the years the North-West region has experienced fluctuations in population growth. After the demise of the West Coast and the advertising of cheap accommodation, there was an influx of people aspiring to home ownership. At the same time, a lot of people left the area, particularly those with marketable skills (McDonald, 2002). While there is a mixture of people in the region, some who have never left and some more recent arrivals, there remains a very strong suspicion of anyone who is different.

*Some of our colleagues talked about what it was like in the hinterland area...how they moved to that area and were ostracised by the local community...because they were newcomers or because they were different. They might be greenies as well of course. People who appear different are treated with suspicion. And yet you go to King Island and everyone says "g'day" to you. But if you act differently...then that ostracism is apparent (McDonald, 2002).*

Gordon McDonald, (Anglicare North-West region) describes the North-West as "an indoors community". Because of the climate people spend a lot of time indoors and become rather insular, a situation compounded by the isolation experienced by those living in the more remote rural areas. In those communities, community sanctioning or ostracism is very easy to implement if anyone acts outside the norm (McDonald, 2002). These communities pride themselves on

"looking after their own", but "their own" can be narrowly defined to exclude certain stigmatized families, even though those families are long-time residents.

*I have a friend who is a good footballer and is part of a well-known local family. He experienced a house fire and the community response was unbelievable.. He told me that he [received] about \$60,000 worth of donations from the community. Another [local resident], a single female who has battled all her life, who milks cows to make a living because she doesn't want to be a dole bludger, her house burnt down and after a public call for donations [which was co-ordinated by the local council], she ended up with \$100 (McDonald, 2002).*

Similar views are expressed by people living in Circular Head, with some residents describing the area as "one of the best in the State for getting behind people when there is a disaster", a place where "people still provide practical help to each other" (cited in Flanagan, 1999:31-32), while others see a divided community.

*It's a critical community. It doesn't reach out, only criticises.*

*It's people's attitudes. The 'haves' put the 'have-nots' down.*

*It's hard to get accepted because communities in Circular Head are old, old families and*

*wealthy and with strong religious ties.*

*You don't get in (cited in Flanagan, 1999:33-34).*

There is evidence emerging through action research that families in the North-West are becoming more isolated, not just in terms of the community, but also internally. Families are not problem-

solving in the ways they did in the past. Instead, they are less likely to respond to early warning signs (McDonald, 2002). Gordon McDonald believes this tendency is so prevalent it can be described as a "cultural resistance to the notion of early intervention".

*The identification of problems within the family framework is not acknowledged until a crisis. You don't talk about it, you avoid conflict, you don't raise the unmentionable until it is too late (McDonald, 2002).*

Anglicare Tasmania is in the process of exploring some of these issues with families across Tasmania through a six month action research project conducted through Rural Remote Tasmania Reconnect, of which Anglicare Tasmania is the lead agency. The research project will identify the issues, circumstances, networks, resources and suggested solutions for each locality with particular emphasis on:

- identifying the signals that precede the early leaving of home by young people;
- the ways in which each community responds to these signals;
- the experience of young people (and their families) who are in the process of leaving home, particularly in pursuit of further education; and
- the issues and influences facing young people and their families who decide not to access further education and who may or may not leave their home location (McDonald, 2002).

Those living in the North-West have also identified boredom and loneliness as major problems (McDonald, 2002). Work being done by Anglicare Tasmania through its Good Beginnings project has

the potential to address the issues of boredom, loneliness and isolation and in so doing empower individuals to take control of the process of ensuring that their needs are met. In some ways the approach used in the Good Beginnings project is similar to that taken by Caroline Collins in Gympie; that is, sitting, listening, talking to people about what they want to do, but because the North-West is an "indoors community", rather than sitting in the main street, the process starts within the home with someone knocking on the door and saying "g'day".

*Bernadette was wonderful. She would go and sit on the floor and play with the baby and chat. 'What do you like doing? What's your life like?' Just showing an interest, getting them to talk and then saying, 'you know so and so, she likes doing that...she was talking about how lonely she is too.' Bernadette would just mention it and then expand on what they could do if there was a group of people who were interested in doing this (McDonald, 2002).*

This approach does not focus on whatever problems may be occurring within the home. In a sense the worker ignores the deficits they may encounter when they knock on the door and concentrates on the strengths, encouraging the individual to get away from the problem for a while by doing something different, something from which they will gain social self-esteem. Gordon McDonald believes this approach delivers effective outcomes because "people are involved right from the very initial stages of any decision-making process about what development needs to take place", and notes that self-identified

needs often contradict assumptions held by Anglicare Tasmania staff as to the needs of particular groups (McDonald, 2002). For example, nine or ten mothers who met each other through the door knocking process described above decided they wanted to do a TAFE course together and "the capacity and strength they have gained from that [has meant that] they have become a politically active group in the community" (McDonald, 2002). A program which started with the problem of family conflict ended up taking participants in a very different direction from that envisaged when the program

was designed, but through that process, participants became self-determining which meant their families now have "a healthy mum, a fully-functioning mum" (McDonald, 2002). The cost of this type of early intervention program is minimal compared to the large amount of money put into youth shelters, child protection services and family therapy programs and what has happened in the North-West region to date demonstrates that "there is such a thing as community capacity, once the door is opened" (McDonald, 2002).



## 5. NSW: EDEN/BEGA VALLEY SHIRE

The Bega Valley Shire covers an area of 6,052 square kilometres on the far south coast of NSW. In June 2000, it was estimated that 29,423 people lived in the 27 per cent of the Shire available for settlement; State forests cover 43 per cent of the Shire and National Parks and Reserves another 30 per cent (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:viii). The region has experienced growth rates of 7.9 per cent over the last decade with most of that growth occurring amongst older age groups who retire to the towns along the coast (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:203). There is also considerable migration out of the Shire with the majority of young people leaving the area once they have completed high school (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:160). Consequently, the Shire has a higher proportion of residents aged 65 or over (15.7%) than the State average of 12.6 per cent and a lower proportion of 20-29 year olds (9%) compared to the NSW average of 15 per cent (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:ix).

As in other parts of regional Australia, the Bega Valley Shire has very few recently arrived migrants or refugees. 93.8 per cent of residents only speak English at home, with the majority of those from a non-English speaking background being children of migrants or migrants who have lived in Australia for more than 20 years (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:247). Unemployment rates in the Shire are

double the NSW and national rates (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:ix) with factory closures (such as the Heinz factory which used to employ 140 people) and industry restructuring reducing employment opportunities. For example, in the past, fishing and forestry provided significant employment in the region, but fishing quotas and reductions in logging because of environmental concerns have reduced employment opportunities in both those industries (Rice, 2002).

There is also a high level of casual and under-employment in the region with a lot of people moving in and out of casual employment in the forestry and fishing industries. For example, people may be hired by the Forestry Department to plant trees and then laid off once the planting is finished (Rice, 2002). Many people are only able to find work for a few hours a day (Rice, 2002). Tourism has the potential to provide new employment opportunities and some towns in the Shire have embraced tourism. However, Eden, a working town with a strong ethos of self-reliance, has tended to resent the fact that they should be doing more with tourism.

*[Eden] has been very reluctant to get into full-time tourism. It's like a typical village where people know each other...and suddenly there are lots of foreigners, people from down south (Rice, 2002).*

Unemployment rates among young people are even higher at 20.6 per cent for 15-19 year olds and 20.3 per cent for 20-24 year olds (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:161). The lack of employment opportunities for young people is compounded by negative community attitudes about those who choose to stay.

*The prevailing community attitude... is that "good kids" leave the Shire and "bad kids" stay. This message is constantly reinforced by adults in the community who question the value of young people who choose to stay, the assumption being that no-one would stay if they had an alternative (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:162).*

Young people have internalized this negative stereotype, describing young people who stay in the area as "drop kicks" or "dole bludgers" (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:162).

The high levels of unemployment, the structure of the labour market and industry restructuring combine to make poverty a fact of life for a substantial proportion of Shire residents (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:88). For example, 41.3 per cent of Shire residents earn less than \$200 per week (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:ix). Although residents of towns like Eden go fishing to supplement their income, families do struggle to cope with unemployment and poverty with service providers identifying financial stress as a trigger for family conflict (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:145). The impact of financial stress can be ameliorated by financial counsellors who can assist with budgeting, managing or re-financing debt and undertaking advocacy work on behalf of their clients with Centrelink or financial institutions (Bega Valley Shire,

2001:101). However, despite the obvious need for financial counselling services, there is only one part-time financial counsellor in the Shire and the service, run by Anglicare South-East, also accepts clients from outside the Shire (Rice, 2002). Funding for the part-time financial counselling service comes from the NSW State government, but it is insufficient to meet the level of need in the area and "it is not enough to do the job well" (Rice, 2002).

While the Bega Valley Shire offers many outdoor recreational opportunities, gambling is becoming an increasingly popular recreational activity with some clubs providing free child care and free transport (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:101). The demand for services for problem gamblers is growing and from 2 December 2002 clubs and pubs are obliged to refer anyone who is gambling excessively to organizations providing services for problem gamblers. While Anglicare's financial counsellor is also qualified to provide assistance to problem gamblers and the organization runs a gambling support group, "our problem gambling services exist on a few thousand dollars. When we run out, we run out" (Rice, 2002).

The lack of financial counselling and problem gambling services is reflected across the whole spectrum of social welfare services with distance and the high cost of transport making it difficult for many low-income residents to access what few services are available (Rice, 2002). For example, a return trip from Eden to Bega, where many of the services are located, costs \$20. The realities of providing services to a population of



30,000 spread over 6,000 square kilometres is often poorly understood by bureaucrats in Sydney or Canberra who do not provide sufficient money to cover the costs of travelling around the Shire or cut what funding is available. The Southern Area Health Service, for example, relies on transport but...

*funding was cut back and they lost seven or eight cars. It is inconceivable that these decisions are taken. It is almost saying that [the local community] has to pay for what they get. Well that just isn't possible down here. Services have to be funded by other means than local fundraising (Rice, 2002).*

Anglicare South-East is considering whether to continue operating some of their services because the funding is not keeping up with the cost of operating the service (Rice, 2002). Inadequate funding also makes it difficult to attract well-qualified professionals into the area because...

*you can get half a job in Eden and half a job in Bega, but this is not very attractive to a well-qualified social worker or psychologist (Rice, 2002).*

The lack of services and the problem of attracting well-qualified professionals are multiplied in the case of services for indigenous residents. There are very few Aboriginal organizations providing services by and for Aboriginal people in the Shire (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:192). Access to mainstream services is poor, putting further pressure on the poorly resourced Aboriginal organizations and compounding the disadvantage experienced by the indigenous population (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:194).

Although renting or purchasing a house

remains relatively affordable across the Shire, the supply of public housing is low and in the private rental market much of the housing stock is set aside for holiday rental accommodation with many landlords preferring to leave their properties empty for extended periods of time so they can take advantage of the high rents during holiday seasons, rather than offering long-term leases to local families (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:94). In towns such as Eden which has less tourist development there is limited land available for residential development, with the result that...

*there are no houses to buy and no houses to rent in Eden. There would probably be two or three houses that are barely habitable that people go in and out of, but basically good housing of any kind is not available (Rice, 2002).*

Consequently, many low-income residents are unable to find anywhere to live in the coastal towns and are forced to move to the more isolated inland villages where there is less pressure on the existing housing stock (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:94).

Youth homelessness is a problem in some parts of the Shire, but the nearest youth crisis accommodation service is either Moruya or Canberra (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:165). Homeless young people therefore tend to stay with friends or are placed in unsupervised environments such as caravan parks or hotels (Bega Valley Shire, 2001:165). In Eden, where there are four or five big extended families, young people move in with another branch of the family (Rice, 2002).

Since the 1987 recession, social welfare agencies such as Anglicare South-East

which runs an Emergency Relief program, have seen a lot of people travelling through the area, some looking for work, some just travelling, who need food, overnight accommodation or money to get them through to the next town (Rice, 2002).

Towns like Eden still have a very strong system of informal social supports.

*If there is a calamity and they lose money, usually an older person in the family will come forward and say, 'well I've got a few bob, pay me back when you can' (Rice, 2002).*

Members of the community do what they can to support street stalls or raffles (Rice, 2002), but the community does not

have the resources to bring service levels to acceptable standards on their own. More funding is needed so that well-qualified professionals and administrative staff can be employed to provide services to all residents in the Shire. This means providing sufficient resources so that workers can travel to the smaller communities as well as providing adequate resources to cover the cost of employing administrative staff who have the skills and expertise needed to manage the increasingly complex business of applying for and running government programs.



## 6. NSW: NEWCASTLE/HUNTER VALLEY

The Hunter region of NSW runs north from Lake Macquarie on the Central Coast and up the valley to Muswellbrook, Scone and Murrundi. In 1996 the majority of the 540,499 residents (83%) lived in the Lower Hunter which covers the Lake Macquarie area, Newcastle and the smaller inland towns of Maitland and Cessnock. The region's population has grown steadily (at about 1.2 per cent per year) over the last 30 years (Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2002a). 28.7 per cent of residents are aged 0-19 years, with a further 28 per cent aged 20-39 years. 87.4 per cent of residents were born in Australia, with a further 3.7 per cent born in the United Kingdom (Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2002a).

In the past, manufacturing, the steelworks and the clothing and footwear industry were the main employers, but employment in all of those industries has fallen over the last 10 years and the retail sector is now the largest employer with employment increasing in the education, health care and service sectors (Shevels, 2002). Not surprisingly, given the structure of the labour market, the region has a lower percentage of the population with a degree (6.8%) than the NSW average of 8.5 per cent and a higher proportion with a diploma (6.2 % compared to 5.1%) and skilled vocational qualifications (13.3% compared to 8.5%)

(Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2002b). Unemployment has remained constant at around 10 per cent over the last decade (Shevels, 2002). While the region's proximity to Sydney and its natural beauty means the future is positive, the region is in a period of transition. Some sections of the population are doing well, but low-skilled and semi-skilled workers and their families are being left out.

*A couple of years ago I had to go to speak to BHP workers (all blokes) about the welfare system prior to closure. I couldn't see those men getting new jobs as retailers or hospitality workers (Shevels, 2002).*

As discussed in State of the Family 2002, long-term unemployment can affect the attitudes of children living in jobless households towards education. This is certainly the case in the Hunter where school retention rates are falling because unemployed fathers say school is a waste of time, so the kids leave school.

*They don't even aspire to get a job because they think it is impossible, so they are giving up at 14. It's a real challenge for our youth workers trying to instil hope and optimism in groups of people that feel very excluded (Shevels, 2002).*

Young people dropping out of school don't aspire to marriage and family

because they feel they have nothing to contribute. The problem is particularly acute for young men because the culture was for men to work with their hands. "Their strength was their job and the fact they could work physically" (Shevels, 2002).

What hasn't disappeared over the last ten years is people's sense of identity - "Hunter Valley people are Hunter Valley people" - and, particularly in union towns like Newcastle, a certain resilience, a knowledge that "we have battled in the past and will continue to battle" (Shevels, 2002). Cec Shevels, Executive Director, Samaritans Foundation, believes that community development means asking what is best for the region and working collectively, in business and welfare, to support the people living in the region. For example, the Samaritans have joined a network of local agencies each with their own area of expertise who work together, believing that co-operation rather than competition will deliver the best outcomes for the people of the Hunter (Shevels, 2002). With the increasing centralization of services and functions in the major capital cities, Cec Shevels believes it is time to reverse this trend and buy local, even if it means goods cost a little more.

*If Anglicare buys all of its cars in Melbourne, what does that do for our local suppliers? [It means] we are now losing service sector jobs as well... How strong can we be trying to maintain a regional identity when the financial thrust is to centralize?... We [need to be] pig headedly and stubbornly loyal to our region (Shevels, 2002).*

Community development also encompasses engaging with people at the

level of the individual, a philosophy which guides the work of the Two Bishop's Trust, a partnership between the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses. The Two Bishop's Trust provides personalised assistance to individuals so that they have a greater chance of finding employment. Training opportunities have decreased in the Upper Hunter over the years as a result of restructuring and cost saving, so the Two Bishop's Trust at Muswellbrook identified areas where industries needed particular skills and then, working with industry and TAFE, organized specific training packages such as riggers and doggers training which hadn't happened in the area for eleven years. Most of the participants ended up with a job after they finished their training (Begg, 2002). A similar program was run with the indigenous community which was equally successful in terms of client outcomes (Begg, 2002). Training is important because most of the Two Bishop's Trust's 300 clients left school at Year 9 or 10, but the program also offers other types of assistance appropriate to the needs of each individual client. Some clients need training opportunities and some clients need practical help, for example, in getting their driver's licence re-instated.

*We spend a lot of time arguing with the State Debt Recovery Service trying to get people who have failed to pay their fines their licence back. A licence is pretty essential in a country town (Begg, 2002).*

Some people need assistance with developing their small business plans. For example, there are five clients who want to start their own small business and they are linked to mentors in the community, including an accountant.

*[The accountant] has been invaluable because many people are prevented from moving forward because they don't have the money to get professional help (Begg, 2002).*

Similar support was provided to a group of Aboriginal artists and craftsmen who were interested in starting their own small business. On completion of the Commonwealth government's New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, the men were supported with a no-interest loan, a vehicle and marketing mentors (Kenbrey, 2002).

Much of the work done by Pheobe Begg, the Co-ordinator of the Two Bishop's Trust at Muswellbrook, involves networking and liaising with local business organizations to identify or open up employment opportunities. For example, Pheobe is talking to Woolworths about the sort of assistance people need to get positions in Big W and Woolworths (Begg, 2002). The sort of personalised service provided by the Two Bishop's Trust is suited to smaller country towns because "you can't have too many people on your books" and because the program provides an avenue into employment for people whom the town has labelled "unemployable".

*In many country towns there is a network of people who get jobs and no-one else gets a look-in. But you can't put someone in a hole and leave them there for the rest of their lives, which often happens in country towns (Begg, 2002).*

The strength of the Two Bishop's Trust model lies in its flexibility, its ability to respond not just to local, but to individual needs. This contrasts with the often inflexible funding parameters of

government programs. For example, the Samaritans run a Vacation Care program in Windale, a 1950s/60s Housing Commission area. As the number of children using the service grows, it is harder to attract government funding because, with that many children, government funding parameters assume the service can survive on the fees paid by the families who use the service. In disadvantaged areas like Windale, this assumption does not hold true (Kenbrey, 2002). A silo approach to service provision whereby a government program will fund one particular activity, but not another type of activity, makes it difficult to develop holistic service models as does constantly changing priorities which means a particular service will be funded one year but not the next because that type of service is no longer a priority (Kenbrey, 2002).

The Samaritans continues to "fill the gaps" developing programs to meet community needs. Transport is a big issue in the region, particularly in towns like Cessnock and Muswellbrook with a large elderly population and poor transport links to Newcastle and other service centres. For example, residents in the Hunter region spend \$144.73 per week on transport compared to the NSW average of \$133.74 (Hunter Valley Research Foundation, 2002b). The Samaritans would like to set up a volunteer driver program so that older people can access services in Newcastle or young people can get to job interviews. If funding is found for a transport worker, the Samaritans would also like to conduct a transport audit which would look at when people need transport and what transport is

available to see if better use can be made of existing transport assets (Kenbrey, 2002).

Sam Gasse, a Community Development worker with the Samaritans who works with people living in Windale and other communities in the Western area of Newcastle, is in the process of establishing a support group for grandparents who are left to raise their young grandchildren because of the parents' alcohol or drug

issues. While there are significant numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren in Windale and other areas, the grandparents are often reluctant to seek help because they feel they have failed twice; once with their children and now with their grandchildren (Gasse, 2002). Consequently, there is a lack of awareness of the needs of this particular group in the community (Gasse, 2002).



## 7. VICTORIA: CRAIGIEBURN/NORTHERN REGION OF MELBOURNE

Craigieburn, a suburb on the north-western fringe of Melbourne lies 10 kilometres north of Broadmeadows. In 2002 approximately 16,000 people lived in Craigieburn (Kelly et al, 2002:33) and the relatively high population growth experienced over the last 10 years is expected to continue (Kelly et al, 2002:10). Much of this growth has come as young families looking for the opportunity to buy their own home move into the area. Unemployment is around the national average with most people engaged in process work or trade work (Buckley & Webb, 2002). Under-employment is prevalent with many of the young mothers in the area only able to find part-time, casual positions.

*One of the things that has cropped up amongst some of the young mums that we see is this notion of permanent casual. They are so over-joyed to become a permanent casual. I said, 'what does it mean? Does it mean you get holiday pay or sick leave?' They said, 'no'. There is nothing permanent about it, except that they are going to remain casual (Buckley & Webb, 2002).*

In 1996, 77.8 per cent of residents were born in Australia. Since then the number of residents born outside Australia has increased with Sri Lankan, Maori, Turkish, Somali and Arabic speaking families moving into the area.

The number of single parent families is also increasing, from 8.8 per cent in 1991 to 13.6 per cent in 1996 and the number continues to rise. Those working at the Brotherhood of St Laurence Centre at Craigieburn have noticed a significant increase in the number of family breakdowns over the last three years (Buckley & Webb, 2002). When family break-downs occur, most of the single mothers try to look for work rather than remain on the sole parent benefit.

*We don't see this notional idea that people like to be sole parent mothers on benefits. What they like to do is go out and earn an income which is going to give them a decent standard of living (Buckley & Webb, 2002).*

The single mothers try and get whatever job they can, which often means casual work or on-call work which makes life difficult because they can't book any form of permanent child care.

*They may think they are working Tuesday and Wednesday, but on Friday their employer will ring up and say, 'we need you in now'. If we can't meet their demand for child care on that day, it can mean the difference between retaining that position (Buckley & Webb, 2002).*

The increasing amount of shift work, rotating rosters, split shifts and 12 hour shifts also puts a strain on child care requirements (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

Because of the high number of young families in the area, Craigieburn supports four primary schools (each with 500-600 children), four kindergartens which are operating at capacity, three private child care centres, one government child care centre and the Family Day Care program which is run by the Brotherhood's Craigieburn Centre. The Family Day Care program has 73 providers caring for 493 children from 321 families with 50-60 families waiting for a place (Kelly et al, 2002:21).

With its relatively low level of unemployment and high level of home ownership, Craigieburn does not fit the profile of a "typical" disadvantaged neighbourhood. However many of the young families who moved into the area and bought a house did so with minimal financial resources of their own, leaving them vulnerable to interest rate rises or changes in their employment status. For example, one of the developers in the area estimated that 60 per cent of people purchasing their property would not have been able to do so without the Commonwealth government's new Home Owners Grant (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

In the mid-1970s when Eileen Buckley moved to Craigieburn, the area was promoted as offering a rural lifestyle close to the city with the extension of the electric train service promised within the next few years (Buckley & Webb, 2002). 25 years later Craigieburn residents are still waiting. Electric train services stop at Broadmeadows. The V-line country train provides a very limited service during the week (and even fewer services on the weekend) and bus routes are circuitous. For example, the bus trip from

Craigieburn to Roxburgh Park (the next suburb) takes about 40 minutes (Kelly et al, 2002:35). Using taxis is expensive, with a one-way fare into the city costing \$50-\$60 (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

The lack of an adequate transport system is echoed in the lack of specialist services within the area. For example, none of the four GPs in the area are available after 7 pm on weekdays and there are no specialist health services, particularly mental health services (Kelly et al, 2002:13). Even retail development has not kept pace with the population growth. For example, since the mid-1970s the population of Craigieburn has grown from 1,000 to 16,000 but the local shopping area has only doubled in size. Consequently, most residents tend to use the larger shopping areas in Broadmeadows, Epping or Maribyrnong (Buckley & Webb, 2002). Therefore, in order to get to work, to get to the shops, to access recreational activities as well as specialist health and social services, families living in Craigieburn are forced to buy two cars, further stretching already strained financial resources.

*People are massively financially committed and they extend the mortgage to get two cars. These financial commitments tend to prohibit spending on educational and medical services (Kelly et al, 2002:12).*

The financial vulnerability of many families may be a contributing factor to the increasing incidence of family breakdown (Kelly et al, 2002:12). Certainly service providers in Craigieburn (and the neighbouring suburb of Roxburgh Park) report increasing requests for emergency assistance and financial counselling and



sometimes assistance with housing (Kelly et al, 2002:13). Because of the high proportion of home ownership there is very little rental accommodation in the area which, when a family breakdown occurs, means both parties are forced to leave the area or considerable financial pressure is put on the family member who remains in the family home (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

One-quarter of Craigieburn residents are aged between 10 and 24 years, but the suburb offers little in the way of recreational or social activities apart from sporting activities (Buckley & Webb, 2002). The nearest cinema complex is at Broadmeadows or Epping and again limited public transport makes it difficult for young people to get there unless a parent or an older sibling is prepared to drive them. Community consultations have identified a sense of alienation amongst young people in relation to their local area, a problem brought about by the lack of services for young people, including educational services. Although Craigieburn has four primary schools, it only has one government high school and many young people attend schools in other parts of Melbourne which "leads to displaced communities of interest because their school communities are outside the area" (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

Isolated from other parts of Melbourne because of poor public transport links, the design of the newer areas of Craigieburn reinforces this sense of isolation. For example, the oldest part of Craigieburn was built on a grid system so residents had to walk past other people's houses to get to the local shops. Consequently, residents tended to

get to know one another (Buckley & Webb, 2002). The new developments consist of courts or "dead end worms" where people don't have to walk down someone else's street to get to the local shops.

*The courts became exclusive and whilst in some instances have become an extended yard for children to play in, if you are one of those people who leave in the morning and come back in the evening, you don't have any connection with your neighbours in the court and you feel doubly isolated (Buckley & Webb, 2002).*

Houses in the newer developments are built on smaller blocks which means the children don't have a big backyard they can invite their friends into. While there are open park areas, many of these areas have small lakes and water features, a design feature which makes the park areas less safe for young children. Eileen Buckley therefore wonders how much use the big open spaces are going to get and "whether the practicality of having smaller blocks and bigger open spaces has in fact back-fired as far as building [a sense of] community" (Buckley & Webb, 2002). The design of Craigieburn also fails to provide places where local residents can "sit and watch and [feel] part of the action" (Kelly et al, 2002:14).

The strength of the connection built up amongst the older residents who live in the grid system of interconnected streets is seen in the fact that it is those older residents who form the backbone of any interest or community groups that are established (Buckley & Webb, 2002).

*The Ambulance service, the emergency response team... the local network of*

*different sporting groups, the steering committee who sold honey, ran silver circles and did everything to raise the money to buy the land on which the community health centre now sits. All of those people are still here and they... are often looked upon as role models... [their] knowledge and experience guiding... the enthusiasm of the new residents (Buckley & Webb, 2002).*

As part of a review of the Craigieburn Centre, the Brotherhood of St Laurence asked local residents what community development means for an area like Craigieburn. Community development was primarily seen as a process of establishing networks and linkages, with local residents linked to existing services and to each other, and local organizations working more closely together so that they could more effectively lobby or advocate on behalf of local residents (Kelly et al, 2002:19). The Brotherhood's Family Day Care program which has been operating in the area for over 20 years has an important role to play in such a process because it is so well-known in the area and as a non-stigmatized service it can provide an entry point for those in the area who need to access other services.

Engaging with local communities, particularly through early intervention service delivery, is also a priority for Anglicare Victoria. For example, in Anglicare Victoria's Northern Region, which runs from inner city Fitzroy to Craigieburn, Family Services and Youth Services will be combined under one Regional Manager to facilitate a more integrated model of service delivery. In theory it is the Department of Human

Services' responsibility to facilitate family support and refer the families of the young people on protective orders to agencies such as Anglicare to maximize the chances of the young person being able to return to their family of origin. However, in practice this does not always happen. Protective workers are in short supply and existing departmental workers are "flat out" (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).

*We have a protective worker who's looking at an unallocated list of young people and there has to be 50 young people on that list...I can't imagine how they provide an [adequate] service (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).*

Restructuring is also taking place within Youth Services. From October 2002 a case management team comprising three case managers, a drug and alcohol worker, a housing worker and a counsellor will take formal responsibility for the young people on protective orders whose cases are contracted to Anglicare (Anglicare Victoria, 2002). The case management team will not have to manage the accommodation side of the service which will give them time to work more pro-actively with the young person, particularly on long-term goals helping the young person make the transition from supported accommodation to independent living (Anglicare Victoria, 2002). Working pro-actively is important because, under current government policy, the protective order expires when the young person turns 18 and Anglicare is not funded to provide any further support.

*The department has removed these children from their families and says, 'we*

*will look after you and give you accommodation and other assistance [from counsellors and drug and alcohol workers etc] but when you turn 18, you're supposed to be immediately cured of any issues... you're out on your own. I personally believe that is not good enough (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).*

This is not an isolated view. Staff working in Anglicare's Strengthening Families Program in Caboolture also believe it is unrealistic to expect young people who have experienced abuse and neglect (which is why they were removed from their families in the first place) to be able to live independently the minute they turn 18 when most young people today live with their parents until they are well into their twenties (Gration et al, 2002).

The problems involved in living independently are exacerbated by the fact that there is very little accommodation for these young people in their local area. The young people do not want to move away from their established social networks and, after years of living in shared residential accommodation, often do not want to live in a group house (Anglicare Victoria, 2002). However house prices have dramatically increased throughout the whole northern region. 10 years ago Preston (a suburb in the middle of the northern region) was a working class suburb but, as house prices rise in inner city suburbs, there is a domino effect with middle class professional couples moving into what were previously working class suburbs (Anglicare Victoria, 2002). Housing options for young people leaving the program are therefore limited to caravan parks or the high rise Housing Commission flats in Fitzroy.

*Some move out to Morwell, that sort of area, so they can find a place they can afford to rent. Its a different area for them, they are so isolated having to move to an area they don't know and an area of high unemployment (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).*

The waiting list for low density public housing in the Preston area is about two years (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).

*We start public housing applications when they are 16 at the latest because we know the waiting period. Usually they just go and sleep at friend's houses... We had a young person that exited [the program] about six months ago come back needing food and a shower. We always get kids coming back and we give them assistance because there is no accommodation. That's probably the most frustrating part of my job (Anglicare Victoria, 2002).*

Isolation is also a problem for many of the migrant families who have moved into the Broadmeadows area looking for work and affordable housing (Anglicare Victoria, 2003). Many are refugees who arrive with limited language skills and almost no financial resources. For the women in these families, loss of informal social supports and familiar coping strategies can lead to parenting problems. Anglicare Victoria's Community Women's House at Broadmeadows supports these women by providing a safe place where they can share common experiences, make new friends and gain information about resources and services within the community. By fostering a sense of respect for self and others, the self-esteem and self-confidence of women attending the Community House increases which,

in turn, strengthens family relationships and community interaction (Anglicare Victoria, 2003). The Community House offers free child care so that mothers do not have to worry about finding and paying for childcare while participating in the activities offered at the Community House. The children also benefit from their interaction with other children which reduces the isolation some experience, helping them to grow as individuals (Anglicare Victoria, 2003).

Recognizing the importance of responding to the range of needs experienced by women in the local community, Broadmeadows Community House provides child care workers who speak the same language as the children

in their care, a bus driven by a female volunteer which provides free transport to and from the House, as well as a family camp held two or three times a year at the beachside suburb of Torquay. The family camp enables families, some of whom have never experienced a family holiday before because of financial and social restraints, to have a break from the routine of their every-day life (Anglicare Victoria, 2003).

The Broadmeadows Community House has proved to be a successful model of community development whereby Anglicare is engaged with the local community in ways which strengthen and enhance community capacity.



## 8. WESTERN AUSTRALIA: ALBANY/GREAT SOUTHERN REGION

The Great Southern region on the south-west corner of Western Australia stretches north from the coastal town of Albany (population 15,264) and surrounding areas through the southern wheatbelt to Katanning (population 4,683) 170 kilometres away. To the west it takes in Denmark (population 3,891) located 50 kilometres from Albany, but along the South Coast Highway to the northeast it reaches Jerramungup (population 1,332), a similar distance from Albany as Katanning. In 2000, 56 per cent of the region's 60,114 residents lived in the town of Albany and the surrounding shire (Regional Development Council of Western Australia, 2001a). Agriculture (broadacre crop and livestock production, horticulture and viticulture) and fishing still provide the main source of employment (26.2% in 1996), although employment in these sectors is declining, with employment in the retail, tourism (accommodation, cafes and restaurants), mining and manufacturing sectors increasing (Regional Development Council of Western Australia, 2001b).

The region's unemployment rate has tended to follow State trends and in June 2000 was 5.8 per cent, slightly less than the State average of 6.2 per cent (Regional Development Council of Western Australia, 2001b). However official statistics may not reflect the number of discouraged

job seekers who have given up looking for work or have left the area in search of work. Those living in the area consider unemployment to be high, particularly in the wheatbelt towns (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). Around Albany seasonal grape or strawberry picking work is readily available, but very little else (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).

*The rural crisis that is into its fifth year is now having an impact on businesses because the wealth of the farmers is diminishing and debt is increasing, so they are not buying as much from local businesses (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).*

Even the new abattoir which exports halal meat and provides employment for the small percentage of residents from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, has never operated at full capacity because of a shortage of sheep and cattle (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). The impact of the rural crisis is also felt in the social welfare sector where Albany's (part-time) financial counselling service is having to deal with six bankruptcies a week.

Many farmers retire to Albany and the town relies on tourism, particularly amongst older age groups (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). However there is resistance to further development of Albany's natural assets. Consequently, "we have this magnificent foreshore and what

is down there - an oval!" (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). Albany doesn't have a 50 metre pool or a central venue for artists or concerts. The WA Symphony orchestra, for example, goes to Esperance, but not Albany (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). The town has a TAFE college and the University of Western Australia has opened an extension campus but courses are limited. Most young people therefore leave the area after they finish school because of the limited employment and educational opportunities.

Conversely, professional and white collar workers with younger families tend to remain in the area, a trend reflected in the relatively high growth rates for the 35-50 year age group (Regional Development Council of Western Australia, 2001a).

*You have school teachers who have been here since they were first posted out... [because] it is such an easy life-style. Living in a metropolitan areas with small children is a nightmare compared to living in a place like Albany where the child care centre is close and you can go home at lunch-time to bring the washing in (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).*

Libby Hawker, Community Development and Funding Officer, Department of Community Development, believes living in the community you are working in gives a greater sense of ownership of community issues.

*You feel more passionate about trying to achieve things and get things done (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).*

Certainly those moving into the area have been surprised at the willingness of community service agencies, both government and non-government, to work together to achieve positive outcomes for clients (Kinway, 2002; Sugars, 2002).

*Down here we have very good working relationships with other agencies because it is in our best interests... We have the odd morning tea and talk about issues before they become a problem (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).*

Those who have lived in the area for a while believe the wider Albany community would also be able to work together to achieve positive outcomes for their community if given the opportunity (Kinway, 2002).

Community development has recently become a State government priority. For example, the Department of Family and Children's Services recently changed its name to the Department for Community Development, but there is confusion within the department about what community development actually entails (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002; Kinway, 2002). Ten years ago the department had discretionary funds (community assistance grants) which were used to fund community development projects. These days there are no discretionary funds available to support community initiatives, staff are not being trained in community development work, however that is defined (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002) and the department continues to operate from the position of 'we will tell you what your needs are' rather than letting local communities determine their own priorities (Kinway, 2002). Kim Brooklyn, Manager of Kinway in Albany (Kinway is a division of Anglicare WA), believes old notions of community development need to be expanded to encompass the idea of social sustainability and it is this wider definition of community development which Anglicare WA is seeking to

implement both within the organization and through its programs and services (Kinway, 2002).

At the moment a lot of the work undertaken by Anglicare WA in the Great Southern region assists the more vulnerable members of the community reconnect with self and the community (Kinway, 2002). For example, while the Women's Centre initially provides a safe place for women and children who are experiencing domestic violence, it also links the women to other services in Albany and, through its outreach program, helps the women look at how they are going to rejoin society in healthy ways (Sugars, 2002). 60 per cent of the Centre's clients are Aboriginal women and the Centre runs a weekly group called Yarning Hands where Noongar women can get together and talk while doing some sort of craft activity.

*They talk about how to keep their youth out of jail. They worry a lot about their men who have lost everything. They talk about what happens to their kids at school [and] about health issues (Sugars, 2002).*

"The Women's Centre Group, Moving On" explores the domestic violence cycle, power in relationships, how it all happened and what options women have from here. Self-Esteem (run in conjunction with Kinway) looks at developing self-acceptance, identifying strengths and reconnecting with self. The Children's Family Violence Counselling Service and the Women's Centre run groups such as the new attachment group run at the Centre's crèche which is partly modelling how to play with your child and partly observing and helping women one-on-one (Sugars, 2002).

The opportunity for longer-term therapy is provided by Kinway's domestic violence counselling services, including Changing Tracks, a program for those who are perpetrating family violence. The importance of perpetrators' programs is clear given that, on average, women will leave and return to the relationship six times before they leave and don't return (Sugars, 2002). While the courts have the power to require convicted offenders to participate in perpetrators' programs, "this is not happening" (Bojcun, 2002). There are very few mandated clients in the perpetrators' program (Kinway, 2002). The need for a perpetrators' program was recognized by the community at least ten years ago (Kinway, 2002) and, when the original Regional Domestic Violence Committee prepared a report as a result of the State government's 1995 Taskforce on Domestic Violence, one of the Committee's top priorities was a crisis intervention service for perpetrators (Bojcun, 2002). The Committee envisaged a service whereby the service provider could intervene with perpetrators at the time of their arrest.

*When bail was being considered and court was pending, there would be a window of opportunity for some sort of intervention to say, 'look this is what happened, what are you going to do about it?' (Bojcun, 2002).*

A pilot, the first of its kind in Australia, was funded for two years, but like many pilot programs, on-going funding never eventuated. Community attitudes of 'no tolerance' for perpetrators of family violence are not reflected by the courts in terms of the penalties imposed on offenders convicted of continually

breaching restraining orders or assault or stalking, which tends to negate the effectiveness of the whole community intervention project because perpetrators feel "they can get away with it" (Bojcun, 2002).

Sharing information is also critical to successful intervention in family violence (Bojcun, 2002). For example, if a woman is saying, 'nothing's changed', this information should be available to those running the perpetrators' program where the man might believe his behaviour has changed. However, at present there are a number of legislative barriers to the sharing of this sort of information (Bojcun, 2002).

One of the biggest problems faced by workers at the Women's Centre is helping women who do not want to return to their partner find accommodation. Even if the woman is able to get a priority listing with Homeswest, they still have to wait 6-9 months to access public housing (Sugars, 2002). In the meantime, women live with other family members, or in caravan parks or accept a house in one of the smaller rural towns such as Katanning or Cranbrook where there is less demand for public housing. Moving out of the local area can be positive in the short-term because it increases the woman's safety, but in the medium to long-term it can have negative impacts. The children want contact with their father and the woman has moved away from her own support network and therefore feels even more isolated (Sugars, 2002).

*Part of the reason women get themselves into this situation is their neediness for company and contact. Stick them out in a small town where they don't know anyone, they will go looking for contact or*

*anything that will blank it out - alcohol, drugs or self-harm (Sugars, 2002).*

The private rental market is not really an option because landlords are reluctant to rent their property to any single mother, let alone an Aboriginal family and many of the women coming through the Centre have a history of bad debts with rental properties. Very often they have set themselves up in rental accommodation and their partner has come along and wrecked the place, but the property is in their name, so they are responsible (Sugars, 2002).

The Department for Community Development will pay for a woman and her children to move to a safe place but will not pay for more than one move (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002). The department's failure to recognize that it may take some time to find permanent accommodation means that a woman staying with her sister, for example, who puts all her furniture into storage is not entitled to any further assistance when she finally finds a permanent place of residence (Hawker & Yates-Round, 2002).

Given the lack of alternatives to public housing, the assistance provided to Homeswest tenants through the department's Supported Housing Assistance Program (SHAP), which helps tenants experiencing difficulties maintain their Homeswest tenancy, is vital in preventing a further downward spiral. Recognizing that its staff have neither the time (each accommodation manager is responsible for between 250 and 300 tenancies), nor the skills to work with tenants who are finding it difficult to maintain their tenancy, Homeswest provides the funds so that a non-government agency can employ someone



to work individually with tenants referred to the program by its accommodation managers.

*We ask the client, 'rather than taking you to court or pursuing an eviction, would you be prepared to work with a worker one-on-one to try and resolve some of the issues?' (Thomson, 2002).*

The SHAP worker's role is to identify why a tenant is not paying their rent, for example, or not maintaining the property to an acceptable standard.

*We just see the problem with blinkers on - 'pay your rent, or we will take you to court' - but the problem might be...that the money is being diverted [to another use] that the tenant doesn't want to tell us about... [The SHAP worker] can approach the issue a little more sensitively and resolve the issue with the client. That way we get a good outcome and the client gets a good outcome as well (Thomson, 2002).*

SHAP workers have the flexibility to work with clients for "as long as it takes to save the tenancy", whether that be 12 months or two years, or in relatively straightforward cases such as helping someone get their budget in order, three to six months (Thomson, 2002). Some of Homeswest's tenants are involved with a number of different agencies (the Department of Justice, Centrelink, the Department for Community Development) and, in such cases, the SHAP worker can act for the client and act as an intermediary between the client and all the different government agencies (Thomson, 2002).

SHAP workers are funded by Homeswest through a non-government agency; in Albany, Anglicare WA provides the service. To be effective, SHAP workers must be able to operate in two different cultures; the NGO culture and the bureaucratic culture. To facilitate this, Homeswest now has new SHAP workers spend a couple of days in the department...

*spending time with each individual worker - the accommodation managers, the front counter staff, the maintenance person, the project officer who refurbishes houses - so that they have a really good understanding of each individual job and the limitations we work under (Thomson, 2002).*

SHAP is an example of a successful collaboration between a government department and a non-government agency. In the Albany area, where the program has been running for almost four years, local Homeswest staff can see the positive outcomes and are now more willing to refer their tenants to the program. Tenants who have used the service are now referring their friends who are having difficulties to the program (Thomson, 2002). What distinguishes SHAP from many other government programs is that fact that Homeswest does not try to control all aspects of the program at the local level, with SHAP workers given the flexibility and autonomy needed to achieve positive outcomes for the client and the department. SHAP is also an example of how trust can be built up between a government department and its clients when a successful program is allowed to continue.



## 9. SOUTH AUSTRALIA: ELIZABETH/NORTHERN SUBURBS OF ADELAIDE

Elizabeth and surrounding suburbs in the northern part of Adelaide were first developed fifty years ago. Many British migrants settled in the area after the war, and as their children grew up and moved out of the area, the public housing stock (50 per cent of houses in the area are public housing) which was originally built to house working families, came to be used as predominantly low-income support type housing. Located away from the beach, the hills and the inner city, Elizabeth was always considered an outer suburb and not the "in" place to be living and over time attitudes hardened, until today Elizabeth is stigmatized as an area where everyone is seen to be unemployed and on drugs (Anglicare SA, 2002a). While a lot of the young families in the area do struggle with issues of poverty, unemployment and homelessness, "not everyone in Elizabeth is unemployed. There are many people in the community who are OK" (Anglicare SA, 2002a) and are actively engaged in work which supports the local community. For example, the work of Anglicare SA's Family Centre North at Elizabeth is supported by a team of 151 registered volunteers (Anglicare SA, 2002a). The population remains pre-dominantly Anglo-Celtic with very few recently arrived migrant communities (Anglicare SA, 2002a). A lot of young families live in

the area, including single parent families.

Inadequate social infrastructure compound the problems experienced by those in the area who are living in poverty. For example, child care services are available, but they are too expensive for many families to access (Anglicare SA, 2002b) which makes it that much harder for families to move out of poverty.

*[Child care services] were identified as central to lessening their experience of poverty... If the services and support are not there... there is little or no way for the parent to identify a future direction and find a suitable pathway to get there (Anglicare SA, 2002c).*

Recreational facilities for young people are limited to some sporting activities and the Aquadome (a swimming centre) but the Aquadome is "too expensive if you have more than one child. It costs \$3 just to get in and watch your child swim" (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). There are no picture theatres in the area and a neighbourhood centre at the local school where people could do things such as ceramics, pottery, fabric painting or aerobics closed 13 years ago when funding was cut and the co-ordinator left (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). Residents would like to see both indoor and outdoor facilities for young people built; tennis courts, basket ball courts, a soccer

pitch and a skating area as well as a drop-in centre and a place where kids can play pool.

*But whatever was provided would have to be something that didn't cost money because there isn't any round here (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002).*

The lack of recreational facilities means teenagers cause trouble simply because there is nothing else for them to do (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). Mothers are now worried about their children being out after dark and people lock their doors at night, whereas 20 years ago parents didn't have to worry about their children because, "people used to look out for each other's kids" (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002).

Social and recreational facilities for adults are also limited which makes it hard for more recent arrivals to make friends. For example, a woman who moved to the area almost five years ago from Broken Hill said she hardly knew anyone in the area (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). Anglicare SA's Davoren Park Annexe therefore runs an AO (Adults Only) Club on Tuesdays where members do things together such as go to the movies, do craft activities, or visit educational institutions as a group so that members feel more confident about going on their own in future (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002).

Because rents are more expensive in other parts of Adelaide, young people tend to stay in the area after they finish school and "end up doing the same thing as their parents" (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). 20 years ago it was common for many family members to work at the same factory, but even though the main employer in the

area, Holden, has increased its workforce, it is now harder to get a job there because employees have to have completed Year 11 and pass literacy and numeracy tests (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). Many of the jobs which are available in the area are casual and "employers won't put you on full-time even if you have been casual for a long time" (Davoren Park Annexe, 2002). Casual work and low wages means even those who have access to some form of employment are not financially secure. For example, 70 per cent of workers in the area experienced some sort of financial crisis over the past year (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

Because leaving school early is such a significant barrier to finding employment, it is unfortunate that the schools in the area are under-resourced.

*Even kindy classes lack resources and there is a sense of depression in the schools... Classes are large, children have behaviour problems and mothers are tired because of trying to make ends meet all the time (Jorgensen & Chaplin, 2002).*

Recent increases in the price of scripts has made the job of "making ends meet" that much harder with many people now not getting their scripts filled, an economy which can have tragic consequences. For example, a woman with four children who used to attend Davoren Park Annexe, died after she stopped taking her cholesterol medication (Jorgensen & Chaplin, 2002). Some people are already unable to afford electricity, living in houses that do not have the power on (Anglicare SA, 2002a) and the deregulation of the utility sector in January 2003 is expected to make this situation worse, with people "already

having breakdowns about how they will be able to afford the increased prices" (Jorgensen & Chaplin, 2002).

In spite of the fact that about half of the houses in the area are Housing Trust properties, homelessness, particularly youth homelessness, is a problem (Anglicare SA, 2002b; Anglicare SA, 2002a).

*A young man came in the other day for an overnight food parcel. He lived in his car and had no cooking facilities (Anglicare SA, 2002b).*

Flats at the back of Anglicare SA's Family Centre North (which have been empty for the last four years) are used by squatters (Anglicare SA, 2002b) and there is an 18 month to 2 year wait for priority (Category 1) public housing (Anglicare SA, 2002a). Those not classified as Category 1 may have to wait 7-9 years to access public housing (Anglicare SA, 2002a). However, even to be considered for Category 1 housing, families have to be homeless.

*People say to me, 'do I have to be living on the streets before someone's going to help me?' The answer to that is yes. That is the sad reality (Anglicare SA, 2002a).*

The lack of long-term public housing strains existing emergency accommodation services which are always full because people are not moving through the system (Anglicare SA, 2002a). There is an eight week waiting list for families wanting to access emergency accommodation and emergency accommodation is simply not available to childless couples or single men (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

*If you are a single man you can go to a shelter in the city, but most men don't*

*want to go there because they are too afraid [of what will happen in that environment] (Anglicare SA, 2002a).*

Housing is not the only area where an individual has to reach crisis point before being offered assistance. Respondents in an Anglicare SA report on poverty in South Australia felt frustrated that "it was not until their experience of poverty spiralled into a crisis that they started to receive the support and services they needed" (Anglicare SA, 2002c:15). Once they did receive support, they were able to move forward. Consequently, many respondents felt that "much earlier intervention, accurate information and options would have lessened the impact of poverty" (Anglicare SA, 2002c:15). Certainly those working in the social welfare sector believe the current "crisis model" of welfare assistance creates or enforces failure (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

*Because you have to portray yourself as being absolutely hopeless, worthless, useless and a failure in order to access services like ours, we actually have an ingraining of that in people's psyches. So when they are trying to access other services like private rental they use the same strategy and of course it is totally counter-productive (Anglicare SA, 2002a).*

In the Elizabeth area, the vacancy rate in the private rental market is about one per cent. Because the market is so tight, landlords are "really picky" about who is allowed to lease their property. Consequently, "many of the people we see will never access private rental because they don't present well or have six children or are Aboriginal or have a bad rental history because their place has been

trashed" (Anglicare SA, 2002a). Even if someone is able to access the private rental market, "the chance of them being able to sustain the tenancy is pretty low" (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

The need for shelter is a basic human need and not being able to access safe, secure accommodation makes it very difficult for people to resolve other issues in their lives (Anglicare SA, 2002a). The positive impact of being able to access safe, secure accommodation is clearly illustrated in the case of a woman who has been a client at Family Centre North for the past year. When she was referred to the Centre she was depressed, was drinking and living in a lodge in the city which had lots of syringes all over the bathroom floor.

*We did a review of how far she'd come over the past year. She had stopped drinking and no longer felt depressed. The major thing that had changed for her was that she now had a house she liked and her own space*  
(Anglicare SA, 2002a).

As well as providing emergency assistance, staff at Anglicare SA's Family Centre North provide a range of services such as financial counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, counselling for problem gamblers, assistance with housing issues, alternative care and family support. Although each of these services focuses on a particular issue, Anglicare SA has adopted an integrated service delivery system which allows workers to see their particular area of expertise as part of a much broader picture. Confidentiality is maintained within the Centre rather than within each specific service. Clients are formally referred to other services as

appropriate, but there is also informal information sharing between services that is relevant to the outcome (Anglicare SA, 2002a). Clients are told this is how the Centre operates when they first make contact and clients are happy with this approach, particularly as it means they are not forever repeating the same information to different workers (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

Respondents in Anglicare SA's report on poverty identified access to information from people who understood what it was like to live in poverty and one-on-one emotional support as being the most valuable service provided by agencies like Anglicare (Anglicare SA, 2002c).

*People often think it is about money. I don't necessarily need money. I need help in dealing with being on welfare. I need help with all the shit about being worthless, useless and doing nothing*  
(cited in Anglicare SA, 2002c).

Staff working at Family Centre North agree that a major part of their job is "imparting knowledge about the system and how things work" as well as just "being there" (Anglicare SA, 2002a).

*A lot of the time it may not be what I am able to do for them, but just the fact that I am there for them and they have that support...It's about encouraging them to see they do have the skills...that they are capable and have got the power to make those decisions. It is about empowering them and giving them the knowledge...so that they can help themselves*  
(Anglicare SA, 2002a).

Family Centre North staff have found that individuals who are provided with information and support can make changes in their lives and, if they change,

their mini-environment will also change (Anglicare SA, 2002a). Thus, by empowering individuals, by helping individuals break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and disadvantage, the local community is strengthened.

Individuals who come to Family Centre North seeking assistance are very often sick and tired of being part of a huge bureaucracy; they are tired of filling in forms and being told to go to another agency where they have to fill in yet more forms.

*The Housing Trust, Centrelink, all those government agencies have all these binding rules and regulations that basically make people jump through hoops and run round from service to service to try and find what they want (Anglicare SA, 2002a).*

Family Centre North clients therefore appreciate being treated as an individual, in a professional, caring and non-judgemental manner and feedback from

clients shows how powerful this approach can be. For example, in a letter to the Manager of Family Centre North, a client who had been having trouble with the South Australian Housing Trust wrote...

*During the past two or three years of "battling" the system of the South Australian Housing Trust, I began to think I was "on my own"... [and] whatever problems I was struggling with were insurmountable... Then I heard about Anglicare... Julie Stapleton listened carefully and displayed such understanding and empathy that for the first time in years I found myself beginning to "trust again". I suddenly found some courage and that elusive belief in "hope". Together with all that came a renewed self-respect which reflects in most areas of my life... My whole outlook has altered tremendously in the most positive way.*



## 10. AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

One of the common misconceptions about the ACT is that poverty doesn't exist. In fact, using the Henderson half median poverty line, 8.5 per cent of the ACT population (approximately 25,000 people) are affected by poverty. Those most at risk are single person or single parent households (ACT Government, 2000:19). People affected by poverty in the ACT are less likely to be working than those affected by poverty in other parts of Australia (ACT Government, 2000:21). Certainly the majority of those coming to one of Anglicare Canberra/Goulburn's agencies in Canberra, St John's Care are on the disability support pension, Newstart or sole parent pension with slightly more men than women seeking assistance.

*Our clients include families, single men, separated men, refugees; 18-20 per cent of our clients are indigenous. Our youngest client is 16 and our oldest is 83, but the majority are in the 25-45 age bracket (Turner, 2002).*

The cost of housing is one of the most significant contributing factors to poverty in the ACT (ACT Government, 2000:21). Private rental is expensive, leaving low-income households reliant on the public housing system. However, evictions from public housing are increasing with a large number of tenancies at risk because of accumulated rent arrears (DDH&CS,

2002:101). Those most at risk are families (including sole parent families) with children (DDH&CS, 2002:101), a disturbing trend given the shortage of crisis accommodation in the ACT generally and the fact that there is little crisis accommodation for families in the ACT, so families are faced with the potential of being split up when they become homeless. The father may go to a refuge, the mother and children under the age of 14 access women's Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services and young boys over the age of 14 go to a youth refuge (Horne, 2003).

*Friday afternoons can be incredibly stressful when we start getting phone calls from people needing accommodation. As a professional worker there is this sense of being powerless as we are unable to meet the need we are confronted with (Turner, 2002).*

St John's Care used to be able to place people in a hostel style of hotel but it closed over a year ago and has not re-opened. Backpacker hostels now require photo ID before they will provide accommodation. Hotels which previously took clients referred from welfare agencies can no longer accommodate this need due to the high support needs of some of the clients. This leaves the sector with very few options. Other

accommodation options are no longer available because of on-going problems with inappropriate behaviour. Managers of caravan parks have at times been affected by damage to their caravans and sites and some have been left with no option but to remove their low cost accommodation and refuse to take referrals from welfare agencies (Turner, 2002). Dira Horne, Manager of Anglicare's Youth and Family Services agrees that "other people don't want our clients". Unfortunately, the pressure on public housing, emergency and rental accommodation in the ACT is expected to increase significantly over the next twelve to eighteen months as a result of the January bushfires which destroyed over 400 homes.

Given the lack of low-cost accommodation in the ACT it is perhaps not surprising that ACT SAAP clients are more likely to remain homeless than those accessing SAAP services in other parts of Australia, with 21.7 per cent experiencing chronic homelessness (that is, being homeless for more than six months) compared to the national average of 14.6 per cent (DDH&CS, 2002:10). A significant number of SAAP clients (18.4%) are recent arrivals in Canberra with no means of support (DDH&CS, 2002:8). Single men, and sometimes families, come to Canberra looking for work (DDH&CS, 2002:63).

*We had a family with two children and a doberman living in a station wagon. They'd come up from Adelaide on the basis that [the father] was told he would get a job here... They were sleeping in the car somewhere round Parliament House and showering the kids under the*

*Parliament House sprinklers at 10 o'clock at night because that didn't cost anything. We couldn't get them into accommodation... o all we could do was give them money for petrol to take them back to Adelaide (Turner, 2002).*

An increasing number of people experiencing homelessness in the ACT have high and complex needs including mental health issues, challenging or violent behaviour or drug and alcohol issues (DDH&CS, 2002:10&50). Such people can be difficult to accommodate within SAAP services because their behaviour can place staff or clients at risk and some ACT SAAP providers do not accept clients with high support needs (DHH&CS, 2002:51). Because of agencies' reluctance to accept clients with violent or challenging behaviour, ACT government departments often withhold information from service providers in order to place clients (Horne, 2003).

Anglicare Youth and Family Services runs two SAAP refuges for young people aged between 12 and 17 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and recently have had to shut down four beds because, with the high support needs of those using the refuges, government funding was not sufficient to run the service safely. SAAP funding provides for one worker to be on duty at any one time. However staff have been assaulted at one of the refuges and two young women were self-harming quite badly.

*We moved one of the young women to the other refuge to see if that improved the situation. We tried to put her on a contract on the weekend not to cut herself in the house. She managed one day, but then went over to the park and cut*



*herself... It is quite stressful for the other young people in the refuge to have to witness her cutting. Now one of the other woman in the refuge has also started because she sees all the attention the young woman is getting... I would like the government to go and do a 12 hour shift there and see how they manage 12 hours on their own with 7 potentially violent young people (Horne, 2003).*

Across the road from one of the refuges is a three bedroom house where young people who don't return home or go into foster care can live for a year before moving into their own accommodation. While Anglicare is not funded to manage the house, workers do come over once a week just to see that everything is OK and the young people know they can ring Anglicare at any time if a problem does arise (Horne, 2003).

People can wait six to nine months for public housing in the ACT even when they are homeless (DDH&CS, 2002:63). But even when someone does access public housing, drug and alcohol abuse and aggressive behaviour from a proportion of the younger male residents makes life extremely difficult for those living in flats and courts. For example, a young woman who was living on her own in Fraser Court came into the drop-in centre because she was struggling to pay her bills.

*In the time that we knew her, she was beaten up once, she was harassed, she had her windows smashed... A garden she created was totally decimated. She had graffiti written in the carport of her flat so she had to call the police otherwise ACT Housing would charge her for the cost of removing the graffiti. While she*

*and I were sitting on the kerb of her place waiting for the police to arrive, a shopping trolley was thrown from upstairs which missed us by a metre... There's this constant harassment and ACT Housing wonders why they have tenants who yell and scream at them (Turner, 2002).*

ACT Housing put in a garden at Bega Court, but in less than a month it was trampled with needles everywhere again (Turner, 2002). Doris Turner, Manager, St John's Care, believes positive outcomes are more likely if the residents themselves are involved in the decision-making process.

*At Gowrie Court at Narrabundah, for instance, the residents got together to put in a garden. So there was this sense of community pride and that seemed to work (Turner, 2002).*

Family Centre North staff made the point that it is difficult for people to work on issues in their lives when they have nowhere to live. However, it is not good enough just to get people off the streets. Inappropriate housing can also prevent people from moving forward. For example, St John's Care has been working with a young man who is trying to leave behind the culture and environment which in the past saw him end up in prison.

*So where's the only place we can put him? Somewhere where he is surrounded by petty criminals, people who want to get to him because they are connected with his previous life. There are always fights, people selling drugs, fencing stolen goods. He is not sleeping properly because he is always waiting in case his unit is broken into. He doesn't have any money.*

*He is trying to pay off a loan. The environment is depressing him. So all the work we have done to move him forward - it's like one step forward and two steps back because of where he is living (Turner, 2002).*

Despite the obvious need for mental health support services in the ACT, it is hard for services such as Anglicare's Junction Youth Health Service, which provides free medical services, to access psychiatric services.

*We broker dental and other services but because of the cost, we are reluctant to broker psychiatric services because we don't have the funds to commit to on-going treatment (Horne, 2003).*

Those working with clients who have mental health issues describe mental health services as "stretched" which means accessing the mental health team can, at times, be difficult. For example, a man who had been in detox for alcohol abuse was discharged and placed in a local hotel. He came into the drop-in centre on Friday afternoon saying he felt really depressed. Staff at the centre negotiated with the mental health team who at the time were experiencing a heavy workload and were unable to assess the client for some time. St John's Care staff were worried that he was not going to survive the weekend because he felt so depressed. The option offered by the mental health team was for the client to make his way to Canberra Hospital and await the arrival of the crisis team which would take two or three hours. This left the client feeling even more distressed. Staff then rang Calvary Hospital who said, 'get him here and we

will try and see him within the hour'. On Monday the man phoned the drop-in centre to thank them saying, 'going to Calvary was the best thing that happened. They put me on the medication I needed to be on and I'm starting to feel a whole lot better - I don't feel so suicidal'. Doris Turner believes that if she had followed the advice of the mental health team, this man would have simply become another statistic (Turner, 2002).

The failure of all government departments (including the mental health team) to look beyond a very narrow definition of what it is they are responsible for means individuals fall through the gaps and agencies such as Anglicare are left to pick up the pieces (Turner, 2002). For example, one of the drop-in centre's clients was released from Goulburn goal with \$150 in his pocket and a booking on a bus to Darwin which left Canberra two days later.

*Now where was he going to get the balance of the money to pay for his ticket to Darwin so he could fulfil his parole obligations? Where was he going to sleep? How was he going to eat? Who's expected to pick up the pieces? The community is (Turner, 2002)!*

An even more disturbing example of the failure of government services to exercise this wider responsibility is the case of an older man in his fifties who was living at the back of the youth centre.

*He was dying, he chose to die, but he had been there for eight days and was living in his own urine and faeces. I called mental health and they said, 'well he is choosing to do this, he is quite clear about his intentions'. I finally got him*

*removed into care and he came back the next day and set himself alight. Surely these sort of things are preventable (Horne, 2003)?*

While Anglicare is there to help people who "fall through the gaps", it also provides early intervention services and services to help people reconnect with the community. Anglicare's educational outreach worker runs anger management groups in primary schools so that the young boys who need help are not singled out or stigmatized (Horne, 2003). A homework club where young people can get one-on-one support and mentoring is very successful, as is Anglicare's youth education program where young people, many of them juvenile justice clients, are able to do work at their own pace completing Year 10 modules (Horne, 2002).

*The young boys at the school love the program because they make up the rules. They have school meetings every Tuesday, they say how things will be run, what behaviour is acceptable and what is not (Horne, 2003).*

Also part of the youth education program is assistance for people who are not yet up to Year 10.

*We have two young boys with disabilities. One of them, his mother is an addict and has been for a long time and they have a fantastic relationship, but he can't read or writ... So we have tutors come in and these two young boys are learning the alphabet at age 15 (Horne, 2003).*

With support from the Commonwealth government's Pathways to Education and Opportunities program, Anglicare was able to employ two teachers and a case worker. However Commonwealth

funding, which runs out in June 2003, was for the pilot phase only and while Anglicare has received some money from the ACT government, "it is not enough to run a school with 18 students" (Horne, 2003). The ACT Education Department is not very supportive of alternative education programs so the program's role of re-engaging disadvantaged young people back into the mainstream education system or into vocational education is at risk (Horne,2003).

The issues of funding being available for pilot projects but disappearing once the pilot is deemed a success and on-going support is needed is a perennial problem across the social welfare sector which does nothing to engender trust between various communities and the government.

*What are we telling people - that you're only worth the pilot program? Not worth sustained, on-going support (Turner, 2002)?*

Anglicare's Youth and Family Services also provide services for the 1,600 children in the ACT who are the primary carer for a parent with a disability. Part of the young carers project is to educate teachers, and the general community, about what life is like for young carers.

*A lot of them are up at 4 am doing all the household chores, bathing their mum, so by the time they get to school they are tired and can't concentrate. Homework doesn't get done, so they are identified as "lazy" (Horne, 2003).*

Another part of the project is providing respite care so that the young carer has the opportunity to do things like ballet or music lessons which are paid for by the project. St John's Care, in

partnership with Cyclops ACT, is establishing a grief and loss support group for young carers. A camp run by St Vincent de Paul provides another opportunity for Anglicare staff to work with young carers in a happy environment (Horne, 2003).

The challenges facing those who work with people at times of crisis are enormous and Doris Turner believes service delivery needs to move away from the current piecemeal approach to more holistic models which are capable of addressing the whole range of individual needs as well as providing an opportunity for "the client to take more responsibility for managing the service delivery

environment" (Turner, 2002). For example, Doris would love to take over a currently vacant hotel to provide accommodation for both welfare service clients as well as those in the general community who need accommodation in a "normal" business environment.

*I would have a very quiet support program running, something that is there if people need it. For example, at night when people can't sleep and are afraid as well as during the day. The residents would manage the place and the support workers would be there to empower the residents and to make it all happen (Turner, 2002).*

## 11. CONCLUSION

The examination of the life of the less well-off in nine different localities across Australia has revealed a number of common patterns of disadvantage. Those living on the fringe of capital cities, in major regional centres or more isolated rural areas all talked about the difficulty in accessing existing services as well as the paucity of health, educational and social services in their local area. Their experience highlighted the isolation experienced by many in the community. This may be physical isolation from social services and recreational facilities reinforced by poor transport links. It may be emotional isolation from neighbours or even other family members where both formal and informal support networks have broken down. This suggests that changes at a community level have the potential to assist the disadvantaged. Three inter-related themes emerging from this look at life in nine localities point to a way forward.

The first is that community capacity is there. Local communities do have ideas about what needs to be done to improve the quality of life for people living in the local area and that community capacity can be developed or enhanced when previously isolated individuals or families are given the opportunity to reconnect with their neighbours or the wider

community. Simple interventions (such as knocking on people's doors or sitting in the main street) can be very powerful, but there is no "one size fits all" in terms of community development. Interventions have to fit the lifestyle of each local area and build on existing strengths. Furthermore, local ownership is important. That is, to be effective, community development workers have to act as catalysts rather than controllers, facilitating change by providing information and assistance with specific tasks (such as preparing funding submissions).

The second is that local communities cannot do everything themselves. Local government and the State government need to be actively involved. For example, at Cooloola Cove, residents identified a need for a community building, the local council allocated a large block of land for the building but support from outside the local area is needed in order to build the community building.

The third theme is perhaps the most important. At least in part, the nature of government assistance needs to be changed. The targeting of services to those with "the highest need" has reached a point where it has become counter-productive. Work by Bryson and Winter (2002) comparing the same community in the 1960s and the 1990s support the

notion that the way in which assistance is provided can reinforce the negative consequences of unemployment (Saunders, 2002a:9).

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the area of housing. Young people trying to establish a life outside residential care, women trying to move beyond an abusive relationship, families trying to deal with the effects of unemployment and financial crisis, individuals struggling to overcome depression, alcohol or drug abuse, all are held back by their inability to access safe and secure accommodation. Children who spend two years moving between friends' lounge rooms, caravan parks and crisis accommodation while waiting for the family to move into public housing have their schooling disrupted, making it more likely that they will not succeed in the school system and leave school early, thereby planting the seeds for the continuation of disadvantage across generations.

Because lack of access to affordable housing is such a major consequence and reinforcing cause of poverty, it is worth looking at the macro-level picture. In 1993 the Industry Commission's inquiry into public housing concluded that there were many areas of unmet need...

*areas which warrant additional funding. Governments have a long way to go in assisting Australians who are in housing stress and in urgent need of assistance (Industry Commission, 1993:xvi).*

Unfortunately, the situation has only got worse since the Industry Commission inquiry. Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement funding has declined in real and nominal terms since 1991/92 (ACOSS, 2002:3) and public housing in every State

and Territory (with the exception of Tasmania) is housing less people every year (ACOSS, 2002:2). Less than 10,000 properties were added to public housing stock between June 1992 and June 2000 despite the fact that more than 200,000 people have been on the waiting list for public housing throughout this period (ACOSS, 2002:2). The Commonwealth government's policy of looking to the private rental market to make up the short-fall in public housing is clearly failing. Many low-income Australians cannot access the private rental market because of very low vacancy rates, discrimination on the part of landlords or because private rental is too expensive even with Commonwealth Rent Assistance. The fact that almost 90,000 low-income Australians receiving the maximum rent assistance from the government still spend more than half their income on rent (ACOSS, 2002:4) is another clear indication of policy failure.

Anglicare staff consistently identified trying to find accommodation for their clients as the most frustrating part of their job, a situation which looks likely to get worse as the Commonwealth government's forward estimates for 2003/04 show a withdrawal of GST compensation money (which compensates States and Territories for the higher costs borne by housing authorities as a result of the GST) and a further reduction of \$100 million in Commonwealth funding (ACOSS, 2002:3).

Therefore, in order to “**break the cycle**” there needs to be a radical realignment of government priorities and ways of operating, beginning with a recognition of the inter-connected nature of the issues facing communities across Australia.

**Firstly, current underfunding of public housing has to be reversed.**

**Secondly, more resources need to be put into early intervention strategies and resources need to be made available beyond the pilot phase if a pilot proves to be successful.**

**Thirdly, all levels of government need to develop ways of working co-operatively with each other and with local communities to achieve community development objectives, which may mean that governments commit themselves to supporting the direction of change rather than controlling it.**

For example, when the Mayor of Port Augusta initiated a collaborative partnership with the State and Commonwealth governments as well as the local indigenous community, non-indigenous community leaders and service providers, Port Augusta locals all agreed that upgrading the wharves at Port Augusta should be done before anything else. Kate Lennon, Chief Executive of the SA Attorney-General’s Department and the Department of Justice, couldn’t see how upgrading the wharves would be a springboard for development in the region, but decided to trust the judgement of local residents (Lennon, 2002). Developing a good working relationship with the Port Augusta City Council meant that pressing social issues

were then able to be tackled (Lennon, 2002). Furthermore, funding needs to be for a minimum of three years to enable effective implementation of programs designed to improve community participation and local empowerment and decision-making.

Two of these three elements are found in the Western Australian Supported Housing Assistance Program. SHAP can be seen as an early intervention strategy in that the purpose of the program is to help Homeswest tenants maintain their tenancies. In other words, to prevent the crisis of eviction. In funding the program, Homeswest has moved away from a narrow definition of its responsibility, to one which recognizes the wider needs of its tenants. Furthermore, while Homeswest provides the funds through non-government agencies, the department does not attempt to control all aspects of the SHAP workers’ interaction with their clients. All the department is concerned about is achieving a positive outcome for the client and the department. However, while SHAP is an example of a successful partnership between the government and non-government sectors, it does not address the critical lack of public housing: an issue which demands the attention of State, Territory and Commonwealth governments.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, D. & Hess, M. 2001, 'Community in Public Policy: Fad or Foundation?', *Australian Journal of Public Administration* vol. 60, no. 2, pp.13-23.
- ACOSS 2002, "Public & Community Housing: A Rescue Package Needed", *ACOSS Info 323*, ACOSS, Sydney.
- ACT Government 2000, *Sharing the Benefits: Final Report of the ACT Poverty Task Group*, Task Group Paper No. 4, ACT Government, Canberra.
- Anglicare SA 2002a, focus group discussion with staff from Anglicare SA Family Centre North, 14 November.
- Anglicare SA 2002b, focus group discussion with volunteers from Anglicare SA Family Centre North, 14 November.
- Anglicare SA 2002c, *Poverty Trapped: Experts speak about their experience of poverty in South Australia*, mimeo.
- Anglicare Tasmania 2003, material provided by Anglicare Tasmania, mimeo.
- Anglicare Victoria 2002, focus group discussion with staff from Preston Northern Region Youth Services, 13 September.
- Anglicare Victoria 2003, material provided by Anglicare Victoria, mimeo.
- Begg, P. 2002, personal interview, 2 October.
- Bega Valley Shire Council 2000, *Bega Valley Shire Council Social Plan 2000-2005*, Second Edition.
- Bojcun, M. 2002, personal interview, 5 November.
- Bryson, L. & Winter, I. 2002, 'From job abundance to job scarcity: Unemployment, social policy and community life, 1960s-1990s, in P. Saunders & R. Taylor (eds),



*The Price of Prosperity: The Economic and Social Costs of Unemployment*,  
UNSW Press, Sydney.

Buckley, E. & Webb, J. 2002, personal interview, 12 September.

Cappo, D. 2002, paper presented at the Institute of Public Administration Australia  
National Conference, Adelaide, 13-16 November.

Collins, C. 2001, *Report on activities for Anglicare Commission*, mimeo.

Collins, C. & Entwistle, S. 2002, personal interview, 25 September.

Cooloola Shire Council 2001, *Cooloola Community Development Plan*, Technical Paper 10  
- Needs Assessment.

Curtain, R. 2002, 'Area-Based Partnerships and Service Delivery Coordination', in  
*Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration*, no. 105, pp.50-55.

Davoren Park Annexe 2002, focus group discussion with women who use Anglicare SA's  
Davoren Park Annexe.

Department of Disability, Housing & Community Services 2002, *Needs Analysis of  
Homelessness in the ACT*, DDH&CS, Canberra.

Department of Families 2002 *Caboolture and Redcliffe Peninsula Region: Regional Profile*,  
mimeo.

Department of Health & Human Services 2000, *Demographic & Health Analysis of the  
North-West Region*, Research & Analysis Paper No. 6, DH&HS, Hobart.

Department of Health & Human Services 2001, *Economic Wellbeing in Tasmania:  
Healthy Communities Survey: November 1998-February 1999*, Strategic Development  
Series Report No. 9, DH&HS, Hobart.

Flanagan, J. 1999, *Life on a low income: a consultation with the people of Circular Head*,  
Just Tasmania Coalition.

Gasse, S. 2002, personal interview, 2 October.

Gratton, A. & Ingram, I. & Walker, J. 2002 personal interview, 26 September.

Gregory, R. & Hunter, B. 1996, 'Increasing Regional Inequality and the Decline of

Manufacturing', in P. Sheehan, B. Grewal & M. Kumnick (eds) *Dialogues on Australia's Future*, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University, Melbourne.

Hawker, L. & Yates-Round, P. 2002, personal interview, 6 November.

Horin, A. 2002, 'Life in the country a magnet for urban poor, but jobs hard to come by', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November, p. 4.

Horne, D. 2003, personal interview, 8 January.

Hunter Valley Research Foundation 2002a,  
[http://www.hvrf.com.au/hunter\\_demographics.htm](http://www.hvrf.com.au/hunter_demographics.htm) (27 May 2002).

Hunter Valley Research Foundation 2002b,  
[http://www.hvrf.com.au/hunter\\_labour\\_force.htm](http://www.hvrf.com.au/hunter_labour_force.htm) (27 May 2002).

Industry Commission 1993, *Public Housing Volume 1: Report*, AGPS, Canberra.

James, S. 2002, 'Community capacity building: how does it work?', *Impact*, p. 8.

Jorgensen, J. & Chaplin, N. 2002, personal interview, 14 November.

Kelly, L. & Levi, M. & Denny, H. 2002, *Changing faces in Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park: Brotherhood of St Laurence community consultation*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne.

Kenbrey, P. 2002, personal interview, 2 October.

Kinway 2002, focus group discussion with staff from Kinway Albany, 6 November.

Lennon, K. 2002, paper presented at the Institute of Public Administration Australia National Conference, Adelaide, 13-16 November.

Marriner, C. 2002, 'Growing poverty could create banana republic, study warns', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 October, p. 6.

McDonald, G. 2002, personal interview, 4 September.

Mercer, N. 2003, 'Making boys finish Year 12 helps cut crime', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January, p. 7.

Regional Development Council of Western Australia 2001a,

[http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/perspectives/great\\_southern/demographics.asp](http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/perspectives/great_southern/demographics.asp)  
(12 September 2001).

Regional Development Council of Western Australia 2001b,  
[http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/perspectives/great\\_southern/labour\\_force.asp](http://www.regional.wa.gov.au/perspectives/great_southern/labour_force.asp)  
(12 September 2001).

Rice, P. 2002, personal interview, 12 December.

Saunders, P. 2002a, 'Introduction: The reality and costs of unemployment', in P. Saunders & R. Taylor (eds) *The Price of Prosperity: The Economic and Social Costs of Unemployment*, UNSW Press, Sydney.

Saunders, P. 2002b, 'The Impact of Unemployment on Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion', in P. Saunders & R. Taylor (eds) *The Price of Prosperity: The Economic and Social Costs of Unemployment*, UNSW Press, Sydney.

Shevels, C. 2002, personal interview, 2 October.

Sugars, E. 2002, personal interview, 6 November.

Thomson, J. 2002, personal interview, 5 November.

Turner, D. 2002, personal interview, 10 December.

Walsh, P. 2001, 'Improving Governments' Response to Local Communities - is Place Management an Answer?', *Australian Journal of Public Administration* vol. 60, no. 2, pp.3-12.

## NAMES AND POSITIONS OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

### **Queensland**

#### *Anglicare Brisbane*

Caroline Collins, Community Development Officer

Sue Entwistle, Community Settlement Services Officer

Avryl Gration, Manager, TRACC

Alison Ingram, Foster Care Worker

Jenni Walker, Family Support Worker

### **Tasmania**

#### *Anglicare North-West Region*

Gordon McDonald

### **New South Wales**

#### *Anglicare South-East*

Peter Rice, Chair

#### *Samaritans Foundation*

Cec Shevels, Executive Director

Peter Kenbrey, Manager, Community and Employment Services

Sam Gasse, Community Development Worker

Phoebe Begg, Co-ordinator, Two Bishop's Trust, Muswellbrook

### **Victoria**

#### *Brotherhood of St Laurence*

Eileen Buckley, Manager, Craigieburn Centre

Jill Webb, Manager, Child and Family Services

#### *Anglicare Victoria - Preston Northern Youth Services*

Joanne Pampanella, Case Manager

Josie Howie, Youth Support Worker, Lead Tenant Program  
Emily Flett, Youth Support Worker, Lead Tenant Program  
Adam Liversage, Youth Support Worker, Lead Tenant Program  
Anthony Radovanovic, Residential Youth Worker  
Frank Perrone, Case Management Team

### **Western Australia**

*Anglicare WA*

*Relationship Services Kinway Albany*

Kim Brooklyn, Manager

Kate Gargett, Administrator

Jayne Carver, DV Counsellor and PDR Mediator

*Anglicare WA*

*Albany Women's Centre*

Elizabeth Sugars

Libby Hawker & Piers Yates-Round

*Department for Community Development, Albany*

Merryn Bojcun, *District Police Office, Albany*

John Thomson, *Homeswest, Albany*

### **South Australia**

*Anglicare SA Family Centre North - staff*

Helen Connolly, Manager

Ruth Hayden, Administrative Assistant

Julia Smaistrala, Break Even Gambling Counsellor

Gerry Phillips, Financial Counsellor

Denise Non, Drug and Alcohol Counsellor

Jenny Rickard, Housing Advocate and Support

John Siviour, Housing Advocate

Juliet Parks, Private Rental Worker

Tina MacPherson, Placement Support Worker, Alternative Care Program

Joanne Stoner, Family Worker, Supported Accommodation Program

Kaylene Stapnell, Family and Personal Support Program

*Anglicare SA Family Centre North - Volunteers*

Pam Blanchard

Marcie Hunter

Phoebe Lyon

Steve Waterman

Hilary Hopetoun

Joyce Bellman

*Anglicare SA Davoren Park Annexe - staff*

Jean Jorgensen

Nicole Chaplin

**ACT**

*Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn*

Dira Horne, Manager, Anglicare Youth and Family Services (ACT Region)

Doris Turner, Manager, St John's Care – Anglicare