

STREET RIGHTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PILCH HOMELESS PERSONS' LEGAL CLINIC

EDITION 45 DECEMBER 2008

by the HPLC Consumer Advisory Group



The content for this edition was provided by the HPLC Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) which is made up of people who have experienced homelessness or who are currently homeless. Currently, the group has 6 members, each with their own stories about their experiences of homelessness. The CAG is based on the principle that every person has the right to contribute to policies and decisions that affect them.

For this special edition, CAG members spoke to people who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness during Christmas time. This is what they had to say:

I won't be home for Christmas

interviews conducted by Bec, Kirra, Troy and Diarmuid

LYN

My ideal Christmas would be with my kids. A big Christmas, lots of food, heaps of pressies and a big Christmas tree. Everyone happy and laughing and having fun.

I miss my kids, I don't get to see them Christmas day. I feel sad as Christmas gets closer and it's worse Christmas day, I miss them. They're my family and I'm theirs. We should be together, especially at Christmas.

JOE AND SAMANTHA

Christmas is really just another day for both of us. We have no family to celebrate with. We both fell out of contact a long time ago for many reasons. The last three Christmas' we've been in caravan parks but the couple before that we were in squats. Christmas means a struggle at best. We try to get presents to the 3 kids we have but some years we can't. They live in foster care so it doesn't bring that much, only a little sadness.

Our ideal Christmas is to have the kids with us in a stable home and a traditional tree with

lights and presents. No threat of being evicted and all the bills paid.

Our Christmas wish is to have our old home and way of life back. For Joe to have his old job back. To be clean and have the kids back to be a proper family again.

Sometimes giving up looks easier than to keep trying. And if this is meant to be a Holy time, where is our salvation? It only counts for some in the community and not for us.

JAMES

“Our ideal Christmas is to have the kids with us in a stable home...No threat of being evicted and all the bills paid.”

Christmas to me has always been family. As a practicing Catholic growing up it was a day when we all got together, regardless of where we were. A celebration of Jesus and family closeness. As kids it was time to receive presents that otherwise would be inaccessible due to financial hardship and working class roots. But the family

aspect is the one that always resonates with me. Best day of the year!

My ideal Christmas would be to celebrate with family. That relationship is now as strong as ever. Over the years I have also discovered my social conscience. I am toying with the idea of providing gift cards to others who otherwise have no-one to share Christmas with. One gentleman is a resident in my building. He is in his eighties and has been visiting his wife in a nursing home 2 - 3 times a week. She unfortunately has passed away. When I asked what he will be doing he replied, "just staying home". There are others in a similar position. So my ideal Christmas will be to give time and a bit of cheer to others.

My Christmas wish this year is to be true to myself. Be true to others. Just to continue my life in a way that reflects how I feel. My wish is to learn, contribute and consider others around me. Personally I am not wanting for much. All the above is just what I think is Christmas for me for now.

PETER

What does Christmas mean to you?

The celebration of Jesus' birth, the Christian church organisations and free food not just at Christmas, but throughout the

year.

It's also about underlying loneliness and feelings of inadequacies with my personal life – family dysfunction, destruction, and depression.

What is your ideal Christmas?

A loving mum and dad and a happy family. As a child it was about Santa and gifts,

toys. Now, it's about making it through the day without getting depressed.

What is your Christmas wish this year?

That the Rudd Government (whom I did not vote for) keep on keeping on with their approach, and with giving people like me a voice in 2009 and beyond.

Being homeless is hard – you've got to be resilient. It's hard enough for an adult, but when you're young it's all the more depressing. Seeing what I do of Australian and overseas news, I can't help feeling optimistic for the future in my own space – a better world for all.

CAG Chronicle December 2008

In every community there is work to be done, wounds to be healed and within each of us the power and conviction to do it. For me there is no greater example of this than the Consumer Advisory Group and the team at the HPLC in their commitment to promoting the Human Rights of people who have been or are at risk of homelessness.

As a member of the Consumer Advisory Group for the last 3 years we have and will continue to campaign for the human rights of people experiencing issues of homelessness by promoting the right to participate, the right to adequate and affordable housing, the right to an adequate income, the right to adequate and accessible services, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, the right to privacy and the right to equality under the law.

As is the way sometimes, this is my swansong as I hang up the gloves and make way for some new blood in the CAG to pursue my university studies. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the CAG and the HPLC. To Bec, Bushy, Diarmuid, Kirra and Troy as well as Caro, Kristen, Helen, Amy, Marika, Rachel, Phoebe, JP, Anna C, Tina and Tony, I would like to thank you for your generosity,

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

your time, your love and your support over the last 3 years. It has been an enormous honour and a privilege to be part of such a hard-working, dedicated and committed team of human beings and I am a better person for knowing you all.

Margaret Mead once said “Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

All the best to all the readers, continue to support the HPLC, the CAG and our message of human rights. Cheers and a Happy New Year to you all.

- Tanya (now retired)

It has been a busy year so far, finalising our terms of reference, holding a public forum, a begging survey, media training, lawyer training, public speaking, community radio, then throw in all the birthday cards, letters of appreciation, the staff comings and goings, losing and regaining Helen etc, enlisting of our new members, and it's only December. I think we have been quite productive. We have to finish up this year, plan the next one, move offices (easy for us). We should be well on our way to being ready for 2009.

Thanks Kirra, Tanya, Troy, Bec, Bushy, Kristen, Helen, Caro, Amy, Monika, Marika, Phoebe and any others I may have missed.

- Diarmuid

HPLC Holiday Closures

Please take note of the following Clinic closures over the Festive Season. The PILCH office will be closed from 24 December 2008 and will re-open on 5 January 2009.

For more information or for urgent legal assistance please call the Clinic on 03 8363 4444 or FREECALL 1800 606 313.

We wish you all a safe and happy Festive Season!



Drop In Clinics

The Big Issue, 148 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Mondays 10:00am – 11:00am

Final Clinic 2008 - 22 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 12 Jan 2009

Urban Seed (Credo Café), 174 Collins St, Melbourne

Tuesdays 12:00pm – 1:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 9 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 3 Feb 2009

St Peter's Eastern Hill, 15 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne

Wednesdays 7:30am – 9:00am

Final Clinic 2008 - 17 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 7 Jan 2009

Drop In and Appointment Based Clinics

Ozanam House (adult male service), 179 Flemington Rd, North Melbourne

Tuesdays 10:00am – 12:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 16 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 6 Jan 2009

Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation (adult male service), 9 Roden St, West Melbourne

Tuesdays 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 16 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 6 Jan 2009

Salvation Army Life Centre, 69 Bourke St, Melbourne

Tuesdays 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 25 Nov 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 2 Feb 2009

Appointment Based Clinics

Melbourne Citymission, 214 Nicholson Street, Footscray

Mondays 10:30am -1:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 15 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 2 Feb 2009

HomeGround Housing, 1A/68 Oxford Street, Collingwood

Thursdays 12:00pm – 2:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 18 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 8 Jan 2009

Hanover Southbank, 52 Haig Street, Southbank

Wednesdays 1:15pm - 3:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 17 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 2 Jan 2009

VACRO, Level 1, 116 Hardware St, Melbourne

Thursdays 1:00 – 3:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 18 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 8 Jan 2009

Koonung Mental Health Clinic, Level 1, 43 Carrington Road, Box Hill

Fridays 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 4 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 -16 Jan 2009

St Luke's, 175 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo

Every second Friday 10:00am – 12:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 12 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 9 Jan 2009

Loddon Mallee Housing Service, 24-30 View Street, Bendigo

Every second Tuesday 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Final Clinic 2008 - 16 Dec 2008 | First Clinic 2009 - 13 Jan 2009

Subscribe

Please contact 1800 606 313 or hplc@pilch.org.au to subscribe, or to have your say.

Where can I get a free Christmas lunch?

Sacred Heart Mission
87 Grey St, St Kilda
11.30am - 1.30pm

Indian Sisters
69 George St, Fitzroy

Our Lady Help of Christians
49 Nicholson St,
Brunswick East
From 12:30pm
Complete booking form
or call Dianne on 9410
9528

**Lexus Centre
(Collingwood FC)**
Corner of Batman and
Swan St, Melbourne
From 12pm
Call in at Salvation
Army, 69 Bourke St and
collect a ticket

**Ozanam Community
Centre**
268 Abbotsford St,
North Melbourne
From 11:45am

Salvation Army
69 Bourke St,
Melbourne
10:30am brunch at the
Mecca Bar in CBD
Call 9653 3213
to book or visit the
Salvation Army

Roominations
Off Brunswick St,
North Fitzroy
BBQ lunch at Edinburgh
Gardens
12 - 3pm

Flagstaff
9 Roden St,
West Melbourne
Residents only
From 12:00pm