



# **Centacare** **Canberra and Goulburn**

**50 years  
of service  
1957 - 2007**



***Centacare***

## Foreword

With a great sense of gratitude, I look back across the work and witness of Centacare through the last year and I give praise to God for all that has been achieved. Centacare is the compassionate face of the Church to countless people in need across the Archdiocese where urban and rural communities reflect both the affluence and disadvantage of Australian society today.

In this year I also wish to congratulate Centacare on fifty years of faithfulness to its mission of upholding the Catholic Church's belief in the dignity of each person, especially the troubled and the marginalised. This report shows the great scope of the ministry that Centacare offers to people as it reaches out to the whole community, standing with the most disadvantaged, seeking to empower them, working with people of every kind to build a sense of well-being and peace within each of them and among them. Half a century of such service has been a magnificent contribution not just to the Church but to the whole of society.

In the Nazareth synagogue, we are told, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-19). The Spirit of the Lord has been very much upon the work of those who work and witness in the name of Centacare, and theirs has been the compassion of Christ himself.

I congratulate everyone at Centacare on another year of splendid service. At this important milestone in its history, we also remember in prayer all those who have served with Centacare in any way over the past half century. Beyond death, may they know the fullness of that peace which they ministered to others on earth.



Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn

*November 2007*

## **CENTACARE PRAYER**

*Helping people*

*We are helping people.*

*In the dignity of all people*

*We have our belief*

*With the most disadvantaged of our community*

*We express our solidarity*

*To all of our community,*

*We direct our care*

*Full citizenship for all,*

*We have as our hope.*

*For all to belong to family,*

*We continue to strive.*

*For all of us at Centacare*

*We make our prayer*

*Within this Archdiocese*

*We do our work.*

*We are helping people*

*In God's name*

***Amen***

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

**Our Mission is to uphold the Catholic Church's belief in the dignity of each person:**

- **To deliver services**
- **To advocate for those less advantaged and**
- **To assist people to participate in the community**

## **OUR HISTORY**

Centacare is a welfare agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and has operated in the Archdiocese for the past 50 years. During this time Centacare has grown from the grass roots of volunteering to the quite large welfare agency it is today. Centacare started with a very humble and noble premise, to help people. This has not changed or wavered in 50 years. We call it supporting, valuing, strengthening, but essentially we are still helping people.

Centacare has undergone many changes. It would be impossible to discuss its history without giving some account of the history of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Centacare's place within the Church has shaped its growth, and is reflected in every area of its mission.

## **ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN**

Centacare grew out of the need for more organized approaches to the delivery of some parts of welfare within the Archdiocese. Still today much of the welfare is delivered through the ministry of Parish life, from which Centacare finds its roots and its mission orientation.

The Archdiocese evolved from the Diocese of Goulburn, which was itself created on 17 November, 1862.

In 1928 Canberra was established as a parish. Monsignor Patrick M Haydon was appointed the first parish priest. In that year St Christopher's School, Manuka, was opened under the care of the Good Samaritan Sisters. For the next 10 years the school also served as a place where Mass was celebrated. The renovated school buildings and convent now house the Catholic Education Office.

On 8 May, 1938, the foundation stone of St Christopher's Church, now Cathedral, was laid. The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn was created on 11 February, 1948. The Archdiocese is one of 11 dioceses in NSW. In order to give a sense of the geographical size of the Archdiocese, it covers an area of 88,000 square kms, 30% larger than the State of Tasmania. There are 59 parishes and 165,000 Catholics within its borders. From the extensive coastline, to the Snowy Mountains, to the rolling hills and flat plains out west, the geographical diversity of our Archdiocese reflects the Church's self-understanding of 'unity in diversity'.

At the time of the creation of the Archdiocese, within the Church and wider society there was an air of confidence and excitement. Australia was on the move. There was rapid population growth in the Canberra-Queanbeyan and Snowy Mountains areas, and an increasing movement from country to town and city.

This increase in population and movement also resulted in the Archdiocese's Catholic community needing more support from the Church. Many individual services and programs through the Church operated independently of each other; these programs were developed in relation to need and were a reflection of the current social climate. Some programs that

were being provided by the Archdiocese and non-diocesan organisations were: family support services, natural family planning, children's homes and services, night shelters, homes for the aged, hospitals, migrant chaplaincy services, mental health and prison chaplaincy services and welfare and associated groups.

One program which was in operation around 1957 was the Marian Club. This club supported young Catholic people who had gathered in Canberra, who were far from family and friends and needed a group to meet and chat. They met regularly at the Hotel Canberra under the name "The Marian Club", organised by Fr Benedict "Barney" Lynch.

Another program which was started under more organised terms was The Marriage Guidance Bureau. It was started following the Matrimonial Causes Act (1959) which united all Australian states under the one matrimonial law, and one divorce law. Given its concerns surrounding the laws on divorce, the Catholic Church lobbied Government to fund early intervention methods to assist struggling families and marriages. The government of the day, responding to these representations, saw fit to offer each Diocese £5000 a year to train people to become marriage guidance counsellors. Roughly six to eight dioceses accepted this unprecedented funding offer.

## **THE MISSION IS SEEDED**

It was with the princely sum of £5000 that The Marriage Guidance Bureau started in 1960. The mission of what was to become Centacare had been seeded, and even today family life remains a core value and program priority for the Agency. The Archbishop of the time, Eris O'Brien, quickly took advantage of the offer as it was the first time the Federal

Government had given funding for anything to do with the Church. The Bureau was reportable to the Attorney-General's Office. Fr Lynch became the director at a meeting, held in the dining room at the Archbishop's House, to discuss how to form and deliver marriage counselling. During the meeting, which involved some influential members of the community both secular and Catholic, Fr Lynch left to take a telephone call. When he returned he was informed that he was the new director of the bureau!

Fr Lynch may have had reason to think he had been put on the spot but he was the perfect person for the job. He displayed an enviable quality of dignity and a real passion for supporting and valuing individuals. He also showed a flair for creating and supporting community. He was familiar with the marriage counselling styles which were being used in Melbourne, and consequently these were adopted in Canberra.

Fr Lynch became the only staff member for the newly formed Marriage Guidance Bureau. When asked how many staff he had at the beginning he said, "Oh, there was just me." He approached other members of the Archdiocese to train as counsellors. Marie Carney, Catherine Crowe, Jack Walsh, Margaret Parker, Ethel Maguire, Bill McCue and Bryan Docherty were employed part time and worked mainly at night, possibly until the mid 1970s.

Much of the tutelage and instruction came from Prof Pat Pentony, (right) who started his training in psychology in Perth and had much to do with setting up therapeutic clinical training programs which were the first of their kind in Australia. Prof Pentony studied under Carl Rogers at the Cana



Institute in Chicago. He then moved to Canberra and taught at Canberra University College (now the Australian National University). Prof Pentony supported the trainee counsellors and Fr Lynch in counselling techniques for marriage guidance and he made the comment that what the counsellors and Fr Lynch were doing was more real than what his students were doing. Dr Pentony's contribution to the shape of the professionalism of Centacare cannot be overstated. In his memory Centacare's Board Room bears his name.

It was from this humble beginning that the Marriage Guidance Bureau started to take clients and hold regular counselling sessions. These were held out of a small room at Curtin Presbytery, in the Haydon Centre annex, at Archbishop's



**Centacare Office Manuka**

House and in the current Manuka Centacare office. This new program met with some resistance from a few members of the Catholic community, as it was seen to be encroaching on their pastoral work, however referrals did start coming through.

Centacare continues today to have, as the understanding, its role is to undertake those tasks which would be difficult to manage at the local and Parish level.

During this period of Centacare's development, changes were occurring; Vatican II was causing ripples throughout the Catholic community, and the economic and social structure of Canberra was also changing. The Vietnam War was fought, and Australian society was being increasingly influenced by the rest of the world.

During this time Fr Michael O'Halloran and Fr Kevin Barry-Cotter acted as interim directors while Fr Lynch went on sabbatical leave to Ireland to visit family.

In 1972-73, Marie and Bryan Docherty instituted the Marriage Education Courses, for which they designed four two-hour sessions. These sessions were designed in liaison with a group of couples and several priests to ensure the courses maintained church values and concepts. If couples wished to be married in the Catholic Church they were required to complete a marriage education course. For some years the courses were delivered at the Civic Health Clinic, chosen because it was believed that it was neutral ground for couples who were wary of marriage education and wary of the Church. It was during the early 1970s that a loose national body of Catholic agencies providing marriage education was established called the Catholic Society for Marriage Education. Bryan was the founding president of the Society and it was the only national body for marriage education for a number of years. Centacare continues to build on the work of those early pioneers, and still offers relationship education, including for pre-marriage.

In December, 1977 Fr Lynch stepped down as director of the Marriage Guidance Bureau. He continued his work as parish priest of Curtin and later Cobargo before retiring to Bermagui, a truly blessed man who worked tirelessly for his people. His contribution has a rightful place, written into the history of Centacare.

## **NEW CHANGES AFOOT**

At this stage, the Archdiocese had a variety of programs working independently of each other. A report was published in May 1977 titled “Report with Recommendations to His Grace Archbishop T.V. Cahill, D.D.,Ph.D.,C.B.E., on the future of Catholic Social Welfare in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn”.

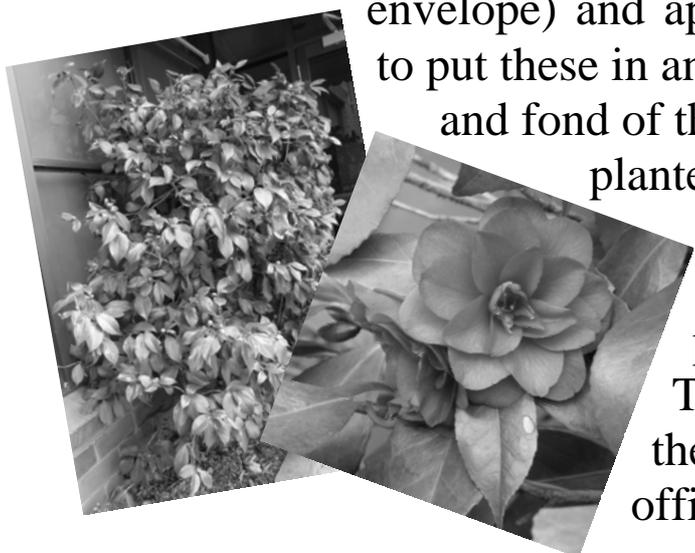
Out of this report came 12 recommendations including:

- 1 The Archdiocese appoints a Director of Catholic Social Welfare.
- 2 Offices at Manuka are set up as a central Catholic family counselling and welfare agency.
- 3 Manuka become the central office of the Catholic Marriage Guidance Council.
- 4 Catholic Social Welfare be responsible for Natural Family Planning and the Diocesan Courses for Engaged Couples.
- 5 Any future diocesan services, however independent, to be responsible to the Archbishop through the central agency.
- 6 In line with an Australian wide movement the central agency be referred to as “Centacare”.
- 7 The agency remains small and promotes the development of family support centres, child care centres, Catholic hospitals and appropriate Catholic services.
- 8 The Centre at Curtin to be retained as an example of such decentralization.

- 9 The central agency should be made up of six staff.
- 10 A board of directors is appointed, including a priest on this board.
- 11 A Chaplain to be appointed.
- 12 Clients were to be referred onto priests for spiritual direction

A request for \$67,780 was made to support these changes. The Attorney-General's Department was expected to put in \$10,000 and the Archdiocese \$30,000.

The Archdiocese met most of the report's requests and following the December 1977 report Fr Tom Wright was appointed as Director of Catholic Social Services and the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. Fr Wright (or "Tommy" Wright as he was referred to by those close to him), pulled together the fractured small programs that operated within the diocese, under the one agency. He had his own, very individualistic style to human resource management. Tommy Wright holds legend status in the annals of Centacare including, some stories edging on the apocrypha eg leaving pay cheques at the bottom of the door of the office (no envelope) and appearing surprised when asked to put these in an envelope. He was protective and fond of the camellias which are



planted outside the Manuka office, so protective in fact that he supposedly set traps to stop people picking the flowers. The plants still stand today at the entrance of the Manuka office and are over 35 years old.

Catholic Social Services started working from Manuka with eight programs operating from or liaising with the office. This

process was a very relaxed and open with staff expected to perform a number of administration tasks either at home or in other employment. Nearly 100 generous volunteers, and six similarly generous part time staff who were paid a token income, were employed. In those early days, the nature of development meant the staff, who were mostly Catholic, had little opportunity for wider agency input except in their own program. They did however get together for a monthly reflection.

The following programs existed under a very loose Catholic Social Services Bureau –

- **Marriage Counselling:** Provided marriage counselling to members of Canberra parishes who were referred by Parish Priests.
- **Natural Family Planning:** Provided information to couples to assist them in the area of fertility. Information on both Sympto-thermal and the Billings' method was provided.
- **Pre-Marriage Education:** A program, run by volunteers, provided a course for engaged couples who were wishing to be married in the Catholic Church.
- **School Social Work Service:** Provided School Counselling to Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese.
- **Family Life Education:** In early 1984 a course was run through all Catholic primary schools which looked at a holistic approach to the education of young children in relationships, including sexual relationships. This program was run in the evening and parents were required to attend with their children. It was funded by the Catholic Education Office.

- **Canberra Homemaker Service:** Introduced by Anne Laferty this was an outreach program caring for individuals and families in distress. They ran cooking and sewing classes, supported people in relation to health, housing and care of children. Even a bed was provided for people if they were feeling unwell.
- **Rainbows:** A program run for children whose parents were separated or divorced.
- **Catholic Church Insurances** had office space.
- **Refugee Resettlement:** Following the Vietnam War Fr Wright assisted hundreds of Vietnamese families to settle in Canberra, Young and Bega; later there was an influx of Polish refugees.

## **FATHER TOM WRIGHT A PIVOTAL FIGURE**

Fr Wright (far right with Centacare staff around 1982)

actively lobbied government and became a major driving force in expanding and increasing funding for the Catholic



Social Services program. In the late 1970s, he was a pivotal figure in refugee resettlement, especially the Vietnamese resettlement movement. The refugee program continues to support new arrivals into our Archdiocese.

Fr Wright was a regular face at Old Parliament House during question time and made himself known to the more powerful community figures in the ACT community. Unlike Fr Lynch,

he went to school at St Christopher's in Manuka and grew up in Canberra and knew how the town operated. When Fr Wright was appointed Parish Priest of Farrer in January 1991, he left a healthy expanding organisation that was becoming a force in the community. There was a drawing together of various services that were dotted around the Archdiocese and a cohesion that was previously lacking. The Canberra community and Centacare will always be grateful to Fr Wright for his direction and vision for the agency. Fr Wright is still remembered at Centacare through the naming of counsellors' rooms as the 'Thomas Wright Wing'.

## **THE EXPANSION OF CENTACARE**

When Fr John Southwell became director in 1991, he took over an organisation that had previously had a total of nine full-time and seven part-time staff, and 80 volunteers and total funds of \$172,149, the majority coming from the Catholic Church services including the Catholic Immigration Office, the Archdiocesan Welfare Fund, Sustentation Fund, which is a fund of a religious body for support of its ministers, chapels, etc, Catholic Development Fund, Catholic Education Office and Catholic colleges. The Commonwealth or Territory contributed around \$35,000.

**LEFT: Fr Tom Wright, Fr Barney Lynch & John Southwell**



Following a meeting of all the Catholic social services dotted around Australia a decision was made to unite the various agencies under the name of Centacare. On 1 July, 1991,

Centacare Canberra and Goulburn became the new name for Catholic Social Services and Catholic Family Welfare Bureau.

Programs auspiced by the new Centacare were:

- Marriage and Family Counselling
- Marriage Education
- Student and Family Counselling
- Canberra Mediation Service
- Canberra Family Support Service
- Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy (FACES)
- Family Life Education Program:- held in all Primary Schools
- Sexuality and Fertility Education:- Delivered to High Schools and groups were run for couples
- Refugee Resettlement
- Protective Behaviours

The organization, with increasing growth took on a more typical management structure that is familiar today. During management meetings there were five people present, who directed and managed the various facets of the organisation. Information for all staff was in the form of paper memos and it was during this time that Centacare began to slowly grow into a force in the community, and programs were developed in service delivery.

Fr Southwell and Good Samaritan Sr Jeanie Heininger, who had been working with Centacare since January 1992, started lobbying the government for disability funding. They were successful in gaining funds to purchase a house in Hearn St, Watson. The purchase was made through three groups – the ACT Government, Centacare Canberra and Goulburn and the families of people with a disability. This became Centacare's

first initiative into group housing and by all accounts it was a great success. This also marked the start of Centacare's long and successful move into disability support and care.

It was also during this time that Fr Southwell stepped down as director. His contribution in establishing further again the professionalism of Centacare during these rapid growth years remains a wonderful legacy.

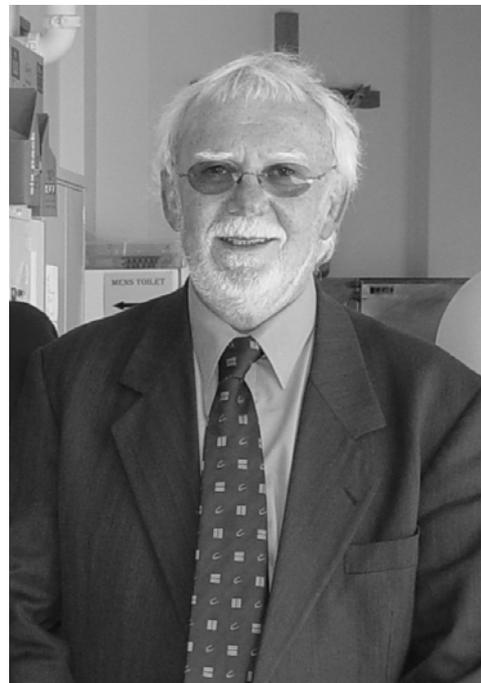
Sr Jeanie Heininger took over the directorship for a short period while a permanent Director was to be appointed. Programs continued to grow during that period, in particular in the area of disabilities of which Sr Jeanie was recognized nationally as an. Following the permanent appointment Sr Jeanie continued to work for Centacare in the Disability sections until 2000, when she moved to Camden, NSW, where she continues to work tirelessly with people with a disability and their families.

## **A NEW ERA – FIRST LAY DIRECTOR**

Neil Harrigan, the current Director, was appointed in February 1994.

Neil's first commitment to Centacare was when he worked in central Queensland with the Commonwealth Public Service. Neil, a qualified psychologist, volunteered to provide sessional counseling to clients at the

Rockhampton Office. He continued to do that, over the three year period of his posting. Neil states that this was a great introduction into the world of Centacare and credits the



director at the time Anne Maree Kinnane as a huge influence. Neil has postgraduate qualifications in management and theology, as well as psychology.

Centacare entered a new period as Governments commenced out-sourcing many of their traditional services. The ACT Government started outsourcing services which had previously been the domain of Health and Housing to maintain. This was a huge boost for the community sector and Centacare rose to the task ahead of sharing with other kindred welfare agencies in the sector, the responsibilities of caring for those in the community who had been disadvantaged. The Agency moved into areas of housing, young people, brain injury, aged care and mental health. This expanded the organisation's portfolio substantially.

During the next five years many programs were added to Centacare's portfolio including:

- Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) – Youth support
- Support and Independent Living Skills (SAILS) – Mental health support for adults
- Ainslie Village – Long term accommodation
- Open Employment – Disability Employment Service
- Disability Programs
- Dorothy Sales Cottages – Brain Injury
- Aged Care
- ACCESS Programs ACT
- Reconnect ACT and NSW
- The Lodge (previously called Special Care Unit)
- Community Support Program

In 2000, Centacare Canberra and Goulburn received 66% of its funding from the ACT Government, 29% from the Commonwealth, 3% from the NSW Government and 2% from other sources. This is a marked difference to nine years ago when a major portion of the funding was from the Church.

With this ever increasing rise in responsibilities came new issues; particularly in maintaining the framework of faith based mission at the same time as moving towards a large bureaucratic structure. Centacare expanded to be much more of an organisation rather than a collection of programs, as a result of this expansion the organisation developed a strong strategic focus including developing strategic and corporate plans.

At the same time Centacare recognised the value of its traditions, especially its approach to service which was to deliver its care through very able and value filled people willing to work where others did not wish to go. It invested a great deal of time and resources into staff and valuing staff's needs. Centacare over time has introduced a Look After Yourself Day, Maternity Allowance, a Centacare Collective Agreement which has a high staff value focus and the Agency is regularly reviewing how the staff can be better represented and how Centacare can attract new staff in a competitive employment market. People are invited to come and work for a while in a faith based agency. Our staff is our treasure.

Recently, Centacare wished to test its standards of best practice in the way it assisted those in our community who suffer from disadvantage. It held the view that faith based principles should be realized in best practice. The decision was made for Centacare Canberra and Goulburn to become certified with the International Standards Organisation (ISO 9001:2000).

Over the last seven years Centacare has built up a portfolio of nearly 50 programs; 80% of its \$11 million income coming from government contracts and the rest from the Catholic Church itself, the Catholic Education Office and other non-government area.

The future direction for Centacare Canberra and Goulburn will be around holding firm on its mission of standing in solidarity with those less well off; of operating as a good citizen with all its stakeholders; of discerning new needs in the community; and enjoying the gift of staff willing to come and work in the way Centacare values.

Centacare notices the problems of alcohol and mental illness which is besieging communities,

especially amongst the young, throughout Australia including our own community; the



lack of affordable housing; the difficulties that refugees face in entering Australia; the lack of attention and funding for those with disabilities and the ageing; and the almost impossible conditions being faced by rural Australia.

In achieving this we need to combine family and work for our staff through flexible approaches to work and more variety in work styles such as job sharing, part time work, working from home etc. and exploring more innovative uses of volunteers, such as using them in relation to more strategic tasks and not so much the more traditional service delivery tasks. Centacare will be pursuing more IT based supports, especially in assisting these in rural areas.

The past 50 years have brought huge change to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn and the wider community. Massive social change has occurred and needs have shifted. At this time in its history Centacare gives thanks for the many footprints left behind by such wonderful pioneers in the past.

Our prayer for the future is -  
That we will continue to build  
on those ideals and dreams for a better world,  
that we will strive to represent the values of the  
Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn,  
and that we will always be  
*Helping People.*

Many thanks to:

Fr Benedict Lynch

Maree and Bryan Docherty

Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn – Archive area

Ms Judy Netting

Ms Anne Barwick



**Disclaimer:** While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of historical events reported in the booklet, any errors that may have occurred are unintentional and not intended to cause distress.

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me**

**he has anointed me**

**to preach good news to the poor**

**to proclaim release to the captives**

**recovering of sight to the blind**

**and liberty to the oppressed**

