



Volume 7: Issue 2(b)
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Making a Difference

FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO A FRIEND

*Ask them to do the same,
we need your help!*

Welcome

*to the newsletter of the
Second Chance
Programme that reports on
the activities of the SCP –
and which seeks your help
to give homeless women a
second chance to take
charge of their lives.*

SECOND CHANCE PROGRAMME: REDUCING WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

SCP has assisted 350 women who would otherwise be homeless: we aim to make it 500 in 2011 – but we can't do it without you. Please help us help homeless women to have a home of their own.

It's nearly a decade since a group of concerned individuals got together to save the Anglican Women's Hostel for homeless women. It was one of the few – if not the only – functioning hostels in Brisbane and it provided accommodation (up to 3 months) for 13 women who had been made homeless.

The women could stay up to 13 weeks at the hostel before they had to leave and find a place for themselves in the community.

Another shock to those of us who became involved was the inequity: there were more than 400 beds for homeless men.

When we took up the hostel as a cause, it seemed like a simple exercise. It was an opportunity to put something back into the community: we would ask some questions about resources for women, raise money – and save the hostel. But 10 years later – and much the wiser – we understand that there is nothing simple about solving the problem of women's homelessness.

As well as raising money, SCP has done much to raise awareness of the horrors of homelessness – and the reality that it can confront any woman. And while more than 350 women have been assisted by SCP – the problem is still very much with us.

There are hundreds of homeless women in south east Queensland and Micah Projects (at the Brisbane Homelessness Service Centre) has talked to some of them. There are young women and older women, and mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. There are women who have been reared in foster care - *almost one third of them according to MICAH figures*; and there are women from the very best of homes. Yet they all have one thing in common.

They have all been traumatised by homelessness.

If you didn't have mental health problems before you became homeless you would be lucky to avoid them after life on the streets; *69% of the women surveyed by MICAH reported treatment for mental health issues.*

Likewise, good physical health is not something that goes with sleeping rough – or in emergency accommodation. *Between 10-20% of women revealed that they had significant health issues such as diabetes, heart conditions, kidney and liver problems etc.* Of the 58 homeless women consulted by MICAH, *24 had visited the emergency department in the previous 3 months.*

58% of women reported being attacked.

Newsletter
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The gap between being homeless and having a home is almost too great for some of us to comprehend. To be a healthy and participating member of our society, homeless women need homes. Not just emergency accommodation for a night – or even three months – but a home with a bed (and slippers) with a door (that locks) – and a sense of security and possibility.

This is why SCP could not stop with saving the Anglican Women's Hostel – and with financing an extra bed on the premises. SCP has become firmly committed to bridging the gap between homelessness and a proper home. As a result more than 260 women have been accommodated in real - and very attractive – homes, with the Brisbane Housing Company. SCP pays the difference between the required rent and the amount that women can afford.

A home is not a home without a bed, a table, a chair, a sofa, or even a fridge – many of the things that homeless women have lost and that they are not in a position to purchase. This is why SCP is now helping to furnish apartments at the BHC.

Dignity and independence however do not always come easily for women who have suffered the privations of homelessness. Sometimes there is a need for help with life skills that have been lost in the struggle for survival on the streets. Everything from shopping to cooking, and from job hunting to financial literacy, so that the transition to having and sustaining a home – and a tenancy – can be achieved. SCP has also undertaken a pilot study on decision-making skills and expects to do more in the future. Fundraising permitting.

Once upon a time there was an assumption that ending homelessness was about providing a roof over the heads of those who were sleeping rough. But few people would be able to function as members of the community if all they had was a (different) bed for a night – or a week. The essence of a home is the stability and security it can provide – it's the foundation stone for earning, learning, living and participating in our world. It's the base from which a woman can plan a life, build confidence, get a job – and see a future.

The goal of SCP is to provide the opportunity for more women to have homes in the forthcoming year.

But we need your support to help us to do it.

Hold a fund raising event over Christmas and make SCP the beneficiary; make a donation, ask your friends to be generous. All the money raised goes to homeless women; we are all volunteers at SCP.

Project Reports

While SCP's major partner is BHC we continue to support other projects. Throughout 2010, SCP maintained its contributions to the Anglican Women's Hostel and also provided financial assistance to Najidah Domestic Violence Refuge on the Sunshine Coast; SCP has completed the pilot project with Othila's Young Women's Housing and Support Services and helped to add an extra room for a young woman at YES (Youth Emergency Services). The fund to reunite young women with their

families at Bahloo Women's Youth Shelter has been replenished and further projects that will help provide women with homes are in the pipeline.

Brisbane Housing Company

Below is a profile of a woman who has benefitted from SCP's Bridge the Gap program with BHC.



Lisa

Lisa is a person who has dealt with adversity in her life and keeps on smiling.

Working as a nurse and paying a mortgage on her home, Lisa was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998 and was devastated to find out how much her illness impacted on her independent lifestyle.

Because of the time she had to take off work for treatment Lisa took the sensible step of downsizing her home and mortgage. But in 2002 she was dealt another blow when she disturbed a burglar at her home and suffered an assault which left her with concussion. This was an experience she found difficult to recover from and one which made her decide to sell up. However, further time off work meant that she could no longer hold on to her job and without employment was unable to rent privately. The money realised from the sale of her home soon ran out and Lisa found herself in Boarding Room accommodation. Her experiences in that situation led to depression and she went to the authorities in desperation.

Fortunately that was at a time when Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) was building their Warry Street accommodation in Fortitude Valley and Lisa was referred for a vacancy in a studio apartment. It was also at that time when Second Chance was providing financial support to help women who are either homeless or in danger of homelessness. Second Chance has provided assistance with rent for the first six months of their tenancies to women in similar situations to Lisa's to help with their accommodation costs with BHC while they get their life back on track. This is the assistance that sets many on their way to recovery and a stable home and Lisa is no exception.

Able to work once again she had a place to call her own and although further illness meant she had to eventually give up her nursing she is very active and is currently doing some volunteer work. Perhaps more significantly Lisa has also been able to transfer to a one bedroom unit



with BHC and is truly back to where she wanted to be. Lisa says that she is very grateful for her time at Warry Street in which she has made some good friends while also keeping her independence and privacy, a happy ending made possible by the unique agreement between Second Chance and BHC.

The Year in Review

Therese Rein Breakfast

One of our most successful events was the Therese Rein breakfast at the Hilton. Ms Rein is a professional when it comes to the issue of homelessness (she is the patron of Common Ground Australia) and she was also a professional when it came to addressing the audience. She spoke movingly of the value of family support in times of difficulty – and then went on to make the link with homeless women for whom there is no such luxury.

This was the first SCP breakfast at the Hilton and not only did we 'make' the numbers, but there was generous support for the raffle and the event was highly rated by those who attended. More breakfasts are planned for 2011. SCP supporters will be informed by email – and anyone who isn't on the list should go to the SCP webpage www.secondchanceprogramme.com.au and register.

Swing into Spring

Swing into Spring is the signature event of the year and again, it was most successful. The band – Calibre Cats – was a great hit, and appealed to the many youthful guests – although there were some mature dancers who clearly couldn't resist the music.

In contrast, BGGGS provided the musical event of the evening that was much appreciated.



Queenie Chang, Holly Theile, Amber Evans and Alice Wauchope.

SCP is grateful for the generosity of those who sponsored the event and donated items for prizes. As a result, hearts were won with the purchase of jewellery items along with big bags and accessories. No doubt some will be appreciating the benefits of fashion gift vouchers while others will be relaxing in resorts, dining out or enjoying the benefits of the wine – or the spa!

We would like to thank our wonderful sponsors, Commonwealth Bank Australia, Ariadne, McCullough Robertson, Castaway, Queensland Government, Clovely Wines and IPG Print.

We owe a great big thank you to Sara Hatten-Masterson from The Image Boutique for organising the fashion parade; a first for Swing into Spring.

Lastly we would like to thank our MC, Channel 9's Sylvia Jeffreys for again donating her time.



Dale Olsson and Patricia Balmer

Swing into Spring provides an opportunity for the committee to raise awareness of homelessness with a different audience and to promote the work – and the needs – of SCP. Committee member Zara Sexton is the brains, beauty and the boss behind Swing into Spring and SCP is deeply indebted to her and her friends (Samantha Hughton, Tiah Miller, Amy Bent and Cass Thies) for the long hours of planning and effort that went into making this event so successful.



Tiah Miller, Zara Sexton, Amy Bent, Samantha Hughton and Cass Thies



The crowd enjoying themselves

Movie nights

SCP held two movie nights this year – *Coco & Igor* in April and *Eat, Pray, Love* in October. One of the advantages of changing the venue to the Palace Barracks is that you can take your drinks into the cinema. This proved to be a necessary aid as one of the movies this year was labelled 'interminable' by many who attended – but who nonetheless enjoyed the venue, the company – and the shared endurance test.

Movies are popular with SCP supporters and there will be more of them in 2011: we'll let you know what and when **IF YOU ARE ON THE DATA BASE**. Please contact www.secondchanceprogramme.com.au if you think you might be missing out.

The Brisbane Girls Grammar Second Chance Committee Christmas Wish Tree

The Brisbane Girls Grammar Second Chance Committee decided to organise a Jumbo Clothing Drive and an Xmas Wish Tree to round the year off. Bags and bags of good quality second hand children's and women's clothing and accessories were donated to Pindari, Zig-Zag and Bahloo. Local services including Bahloo, the Anglican Women's Hostel, Zig-Zag and Othilas sent in information about individual clients (and their children's) ages and interests for the Xmas Wish Tree. The students created gift tags which were placed on a Christmas tree in the school library. The fundraiser has been a huge success, so much so that the tree was constantly being replenished with tags. \$183.95 was raised during a Grammar Dance performance which went towards buying gifts also. Many of the recipients are the students own age, and in some cases even younger. This has made quite an impact on raising greater awareness within the wider school community about the realities of homelessness and the demographic affected by it. The fact that the students have the opportunity to engage more meaningfully with personalised gift-giving as opposed to dropping off donations to an 'unknown entity' has contributed to the broader success of the fundraiser also. The gifts have been gratefully received at a time of the year which can be particularly challenging for those affected by homelessness. This year the Brisbane Girls

Grammar Second Chance Committee has managed to raise \$2579.25 which has either been directed to the Second Chance Programme, or spent on items such as linen, a wall heater, blankets, gifts and care packs for various services around Brisbane over the course of the year. The students are looking forward to raising more money and awareness as well as fostering greater links within the community next year.

Abby Hills
Second Chance Coordinator



The BGGGS Christmas wish tree

2011: Big year – big ideas – big projects! Big donations welcome!

We will have more movies and breakfasts in 2011 – as well as Swing into Spring – but we also hope to attract new supporters with new possibilities. **WATCH THIS SPACE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.**

www.secondchanceprogramme.com.au

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS and HAPPY NEW YEAR

SCP would like to wish all its supporters and sponsors, season's greetings, and to thank you for your engagement with us through 2010: you have helped us make a BIG difference. We are committed to funding projects that will provide homes for homeless women – but we cannot do this without you! We need your gift to help us help women who have so little in 2011.

We want you at our functions; we would be delighted if you could raise some money for us. We need your donations. Every cent goes towards our projects that help provide women with a home.