



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 gives you
all the up-to-date
information on our projects
that are directed to having
fewer homeless women on
the streets of Queensland*

Much has changed since SCP acted on its concern for homeless women almost 10 years ago. At that time there was an 'emergency'; the Anglican Women's Hostel (AWH) was at risk of being closed. It had 14 beds for single homeless women – and they were the only such beds for women in Brisbane.

SCP Fundraising Group came into existence with the express purpose of raising money to save the hostel. Some of us have been on the committee since the beginning – and it would be fair to say that we didn't know what we were getting in to. We thought if we could raise the money to save the hostel – we would have achieved our aim.

But the more we became involved with the desperate plight of the very many homeless women – the more we realised that homelessness was a massive – but hidden problem.

We started to ask questions:

'How many homeless women are there?'

Answer - 'A lot'.

But as there were then no statistics kept by gender – no one really knew how many women were sleeping on the streets or were without a home.

'What plans were there to help these women? Was more accommodation being built? Were there programs to assist the most traumatised women who were forced to sleep rough?'

There were no satisfactory answers. And the SCP agenda was transformed as a result; it wasn't just a matter of saving one hostel – it was about reducing the number of homeless women in South East Queensland. This was a new objective – and a much bigger job!

Before we could start raising significant sums – we had to start raising community consciousness. And this wasn't always easy. Ten years ago the topic of homelessness was pretty much taboo, and we had to come up with case studies, research – and projects that would make a difference for homeless women, before we could expect ongoing support.

Ten years later some things have changed. There is growing awareness that homelessness is a cruel fate, and there is a commitment to try and change it. SCP doesn't claim all the credit for putting homelessness on the public agenda but over the years SCP committee members have been turning up at all sorts of meetings and events and have talked about the lives and needs of real women - who have little hope of improving their awful circumstances without assistance.

There are now also many government initiatives that are helping to raise awareness of homelessness – and the need for affordable accommodation. Yet there are still thousands of women who are urgently in need of support. Women who are couch surfing, living in their cars, sleeping rough a few nights a week – women who have no hope of holding down a job, maintaining relationships – sustaining a positive identity – or their health.

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SCP knows about the distress of these women. Many of the case studies that SCP has used to raise awareness and money were based on bed 14 at the AWH – a bed that SCP has supported from the beginning. Bed 14 has accommodated more than 60 women, many of whom have gone on to have their own homes and a 'second chance' to manage their own lives. (80% of women who are assisted, don't become homeless again.)

Even though the AWH has made an enormous contribution to a lot of women – for SCP, just funding a single bed was no way to make a difference! We had to work out what else we could do. How could we put our funds to the best possible use?

This is when the 'Bridge the Gap' program was set up with the Brisbane Housing Company: SCP pays the difference between the required rent and the amount that the women can afford in the attractive BHC complexes. Approximately 180 women who would otherwise be homeless have been accommodated in this way.

Over the years we have developed our own project evaluation forms that we ask organisations/ agencies to fill in, when they seek our support. They are very simple: the information on the needs that will be met, who is involved, how it will be run, and how the success of the project can be measured, helps us to make our decisions. We see our funds as a precious trust and we are very careful when it comes to allocating them.

(Of course all this takes a great deal of time: SCP is a very hard working committee of volunteers; we have no paid workers.)

Initially SCP recognised that single homeless women were among the most disadvantaged: but more recently it has been young women who have become a priority. It's the fifteen to nineteen age-group who have no family support – and cannot earn enough to keep themselves – who are increasingly sleeping rough. 63% of this group are female – and quite a few are pregnant, and not necessarily by choice.

In 2009 SCP signed an MOU with Othila's – an organisation that supports young women between the ages of 15 – 24 – and some of them have children. (When SCP was considering what contribution it could make, Othila's informed the committee that in the previous year, they had received 600 requests for accommodation: they could only provide assistance for 18 young women.)

The Othila's project has now been added to the SCP list of projects – that includes Bahloo, and Logan Youth and Family Services, (and there are other projects under consideration).

In ten years, SCP has gone from contemplating the AWH's financial problems, to supporting women in safe accommodation, and - where appropriate - to uniting young girls with family members. While engaged in these projects, the committee has listened to some of the most distressing accounts of women's trauma and despair, and has recognized that it is not enough to provide just 'a roof over their head': women who have endured the brutality and indignity of sleeping rough and scavenging for food

may need support when it comes to establishing an independent life. On this basis SCP has funded a pilot program on 'good decision making' to help women regain their confidence and take charge of their lives.

NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.

Second Chance Program can only do as much as you help us to do. The committee wishes to thank all our many generous supporters and sponsors and donors who have contributed to reducing the number of homeless women in South East Queensland, and who can be assured that they have made a difference in many women's lives.

Yet at this time of Seasons Greetings and Good Cheer – there are countless women for whom there is nothing to celebrate. We ask you to help us help them over the coming year.

Report on projects

Anglican Women's Hostel

Five women have utilised Bed 14 over the past year and during their time at AWH they were able to access legal advice and counselling, and to focus on a more positive future.

One woman went on to supported housing and employment – and then to private accommodation. Another – with mental health problems – has gone into public housing. An older woman who was made homeless by a family breakup – and who has severe arthritis has been permanently housed, while a younger woman (who lost her child as a result of homelessness) has moved into a SWISH property and been reunited with her child.

This bed – and the second chance it has provided for these women – would not have been available without SCP funding.

Othila's

SCP has received an initial report from Othila's where young women are being accommodated with Brisbane Housing Company (BHC). 'I would just like to pass on to everyone at SCP that receiving housing and financial support has made a huge difference to one young woman who has just given birth to a baby girl. She would like to say thankyou I look forward to arranging a time when someone from SCP can meet her.'

Another young woman is also waiting for accommodation at BHC, and SCP hopes that there are many more successful outcomes to report on soon.

Brisbane Housing Company

SCP has an enduring partnership with BHC where approximately 180 women have been supported through the 'Bridge the Gap' program. The number of women who are part of Bridge the Gap is to be increased in 2010 – along with the funding.



BGGS

BGGS SCP committee - under the very creative direction of Abby Hills – has been engaged all year in projects to support homeless women. In June the girls held a linen drive for Pindari - and were able to provide 50 new pillows along with sheets, towels and blankets that were warmly welcomed. Later in the year there was a fundraiser - a raffle where girls guessed the identity of teachers' 'kiddie pics'; this term the school committee has teamed up with the Drama department to cater for all their needs when the year 10s do their production at the end of term. Refreshments will be provided for a gold coin donation after each of the performances over 3 nights. (A lot of work – we wish them luck!)

The girls have also done a wonderful job with their Christmas Care pack Appeal, preparing 75 care packs and 50 pamper packs for homeless women.

The year in review

March

Brisbane Girls Grammar School held its annual International Women's Day Lunch at the Brisbane Club on March 5th where Her Excellency, Penny Wensley, AO, the Governor of Queensland, was the guest speaker. Money raised at the event went to SCP and we are most appreciative of the funds, of the contribution of Her Excellency, and of the effort and support of Dr Amanda Bell, the principal of Brisbane Girls' Grammar School.

April

Second Chance Program AGM was held at McCullough Robertson Lawyers on 21st April - where the new committee was elected. Dale Spender, Colleen Forrester, Freeda Stevenson, Marjorie Morton, Ann Armstrong, Cate Heyworth Smith, Abby Hills, Pia du Pradal, Vicki Scott and Zara Sexton.

May

Clovely Wines Estate was the very attractive setting for a relaxing evening for SCP supporters on May 7th. Clovely is a partner of SCP and a percentage of that evening's sales was donated to SCP funds. (This was a clear indication that the wine and olive oil products available, were highly popular.) Clovely Estate Cellar Door is also the venue for the Seasons Greetings celebration on December 10th – see below.

June

The Parliamentary Annexe was the venue for the SCP breakfast on 22nd June where Her Excellency, Quentin Bryce, AC, Governor General was the guest speaker. The audience was visibly moved by Her Excellency's speech to a full house on women's leadership. We are very grateful for her support – and the donation of a Hermes scarf for the raffle.

September

The Zonta Breakfast Club invited Dale Spender to speak on 4th September and as part of their 2009 fundraising drive, presented her with a cheque for \$1000.

Also on September 18th, the SCP held its annual signature event, SWING INTO SPRING at the very comfortable Mirra venue. 'One of the most successful events – ever,' according to one enthusiastic supporter. It was also one of the most successful fundraisers – ever - for SCP.

For this we thank – enormously – our very generous sponsors – including the Talbot Family Foundation – who most generously presented a further cheque for \$10,000 at the event.

Such a successful event is the result of extraordinary amount of work on the part of some very dedicated people. Zara Sexton and the 'driving' force of the team where Sam Hudghton and Tiah Miller also gave unstintingly of their time and energy – and we cannot praise them too much! Girls from Brisbane Girls Grammar School provided a quartet and raffle ticket sellers (we are very grateful for their Friday night support) and the silent auction would not have been nearly as successful without the encouragement provided by Fay Jackson and Joy Graham.

A major reason for the fundraising success was the quality of the sponsorship and the donations. The list of prizes and auction items was amazing and enticing. We'd like to thank everyone who made the fundraising possible; from Philip Bacon Galleries – to the Little Black Dress Boutique: from the fashion gurus Pia du Pradal, Kennedy and Forbes, to Maryons Shoes (and the Dolce and Gabana bag!).

Many of our supporters will be dining out on vouchers from Customs House and Baguette, or working out at Pilates Studio New Farm, with Bodywize personal training – or testing their limits at Riverlife Adventure. One lucky little girl will be parading her outfit from Little Workers, and perhaps it is parents who are enjoying the 'escape' voucher from Flight Centre – or relaxing at Bridgewater Quest resort, luxuriating in the king spa room at the Emporium – or enjoying champagne at the Limes Hotel. Or just reading a Coaldrake's book!

Some will smell delightful (Libertine Parfumerie and Perfect Potion), someone will be enjoying the personal concierge services – (and another will be sporting Pearls for Girls) - while one lucky person will be tending the most splendid orchid donated by Her Excellency, Quentin Bryce AC.

Another will be having a magnificent at home dining experience thanks to Wine & Dine'm.

And no doubt someone has had a 'wind-in-their-hair-experience' as they drive the Audi on their way to Palazzo Versace!

Clearly there will be many delighted supporters. And SCP thanks all concerned for their many forms of support!



Marisa and Phillip Vecchio – two of our supporters



Dale Spender and Don Nissen, Talbot Family Foundation, with their generous donation of \$10,000



Sylvia Jeffreys (MC), Zara Sexton, Sam Hudghton, Tiah Miller



October

On October 8th a couple of members of SCP attended a Zonta function – a movie at the Barracks Palace; during 2009, Zonta breakfast Club had made SCP their designated charity and once again a cheque for \$1000 was presented to SCP. The committee is most grateful to Zonta Breakfast Club for their fundraising efforts and their ongoing support for homeless women.

Forthcoming event

The Second Chance committee invites you to join them to celebrate the festive season. We would love to share our news over drinks and nibbles. There will be wine and Christmas goods available with a percentage of the sales being donated to Second Chance by Clovelly Estate.

Date: 10th December

Time: 6pm

Place: Clovelly Estate Cellar Door, 210 Musgrave Road, Red Hill

RSVP: Cheryl LeCerf clecerf@mpmmarketing.com.au or 38535816

Cost: \$40

Thank you

Thank you to all our sponsors and partners who have helped this year been such a success, and thanks to Snap Printing at Rocklea for their ongoing support by printing our newsletters.