



O'Sullivan Centre News

Website: <http://www.theosullivancentre.org.au/>
Email: info@theosullivancentre.org.au

October 2014

On behalf of the Board I am writing to thank all of the members and supporters of the O'Sullivan Centre for Action Analysis and Training. In the past five years we have shifted our focus from grass roots support and community development programs for the long term unemployed towards sector reform and training for community workers.

The O'Sullivan Centre is now an active participant in the ongoing debate about work and the welfare reform. We have produced a resource kit "I Just Want to Work" which is available from our website

www.theosullivancentre.org.au. The kit is a stand-alone resource, which can be used by community agencies to raise awareness of the centrality of vocational pathways and paid work as a pathway out of poverty and disadvantage. We have established ongoing partnerships with Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service in Melbourne and St Luke's Anglicare in Bendigo. Both these organizations are shifting their case management models towards a more holistic approach that will include economic participation as a goal and right for all clients. We are in the initial stages of incorporating the kit on the training calendar for The Centre for Excellence Family and Children, which is the peak, body in Victoria for family and children agencies. We recently held a forum in Adelaide for community agencies in South Australia.

We have been successful in obtaining funding from Sydney Myer, Mazda and the Scanlon Foundation. Good Shepherd and St Luke's have provided auspicing for these grant applications in Victoria. The money has been used for the publication and promotion of the resource kit in Victoria. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Charitable Trust has given a grant towards the project in South Australia. Our project worker, Denis Sheehan is based at Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service in Melbourne one day per fortnight and his wage is funded from subscriptions of members.

This newsletter is coming to you as we prepare our budget for the coming financial year. If you are able to contribute an annual subscription and/or a monthly contribution towards our recurrent costs could you please complete your details on the form on page 4 and return by the 31st October.

The website is our ongoing point of reference and we hope that you find it of interest. It includes regular items of latest news about welfare and employment related issues. We look forward to your feedback and ongoing participation.

John Bonnice
Chair
The O'Sullivan Centre

'I Just Want to Work' a resource kit for community service organisations

'It is better than sitting round at home on the Disability Pension. I hate not being able to work'.

(Overheard on a Melbourne tram when a young man said he was doing a training course to be a volunteer conductor on the Puffing Billy train. This was the inspiration for naming the Kit.)

The development of the Resource Kit has occurred in the context of ongoing changes in the labour market and the policy environment affecting job seekers and organisations dedicated to supporting their personal, social and economic wellbeing. To date it has been introduced to Victoria and South Australia where it offers a valuable resource to community agencies that are striving to provide relevant services for their clients and remain effective and viable in the changing environment.



John Bonnice (O'Sullivan Centre), Cath Smith (CEO, Futureeye), Jenny Lauritsen (O'Sullivan Centre), Robyn Roberts (CEO, Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service) with their copies of the resource kit.

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service (GSYFS) Promoting the Resource Kit

GSYFS has been a keen partner in the Resource Kit project led by the O'Sullivan Centre. Supporting the O'Sullivan Centre in the development of this resource kit is a natural partnership for Good Shepherd.

Most of you here will know Good Shepherd and about our commitment to working with the most disadvantaged people in our community. But we are not simply about being charitable; we are about justice and change. Good Shepherd's mission urges us to 'embrace wholeheartedly innovative and creative ways of enabling people...to enjoy the fullness of life, which is the right of every human being'. We all know that working, holding down paid employment is a key to obtaining that fullness of life... through enabling individuals to be financially independent; to contribute in a way that is valued by society and in turn; to be valued as a human being.

When asked by the O'Sullivan Centre to trial the tools for workers and managers, found in the resource kit, I jumped at the chance for Good Shepherd to be involved. For me the connection between work-dignity- and fullness of life is tangible and strong. This will encourage community workers to think about their practice and have the conversation about work with individuals and families they see. The kit will provide tools that will equip workers for these important conversations.

Good Shepherd went ahead trialling the tools with our workers in the western suburbs and then our managers. I must say though that there was some initial reluctance of a few workers (and managers) to participate. I think this was due to feeling like this wasn't their area of expertise or their job – it was someone else's. One or two people found it hard to see the link with their work. How could they have a conversation about work when people presented with such complex and entrenched issues?

We persisted though, recognising that employment was very much part of the conversation with the people we see and an important one at that. The sessions were well received by our staff and it was these initial trials that assisted in the development of the kit. I'm pleased to say that our experience supporting this project over the years has been mutually beneficial and has contributed to our thinking internally about sustainable pathways out of poverty for disadvantaged people.

Recently, two colleagues and I had the fortune to go on a study tour to the US to investigate the work of several organisations that focus upon the economic self-sufficiency of individuals as a way to help them and their families move out of poverty and intergenerational disadvantage. In these organisations an ongoing 'employment conversation' with people is second nature. It's a focus, regarded as one of the key domains in a person's life and a feature of their work. My takeaway from our experience is that a pathway out of poverty and intergenerational disadvantage *can* be achieved through people attaining a sense of agency and economic mobility in their lives....and it is employment that creates this opportunity.

It has been wonderful to have been able to support this initiative and I do hope the kit will make a difference in the way community workers work with people and ultimately hope that it might support a conversation that may be life changing.

Robyn Roberts, CEO, GSYFS.

'We crave the self-respect that comes from being self-supporting and the fulfillment that comes from being able to support those we love. We long for opportunities to express personal ability, to show creativity and initiative. At work we can cooperate and share companionship with co-workers. Work gives a structure to our day and our life. It gives a feeling of competence. It enhances self-esteem. Work is crucial to our whole identity as a person.'
- Hugh O'Sullivan

Introducing the Kit in South Australia, July, 2014

Boystown S.A. and Headspace Woodville attended a workshop at the City Library in Adelaide where John Bonnice, Denis Sheehan and Judy O'Sullivan outlined the kit. The roll out of the kit in South Australia will take place over the next three years with a series of workshops planned for Adelaide and regional areas. As mentioned by John Bonnice, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide Charitable Trust (RCAACT) has provided a grant for this project. Hugh O'Sullivan's family supported us in making an application to the trust for our work.

Copies of the kit have been sent to 15 community service agencies in South Australia and Denis Sheehan and Judy O'Sullivan are maintaining contact with those who have expressed interest in using the kit.



What's happening now with the Kit?

During 2014 a number of organisations have expressed interest in using the kit. Meetings have been held with David Tennent, Manager of Family Care, Shepparton, Vic and Rita Battaglin from Springvale, Vic Citizens Advice Bureau. Marilyn Webster from the Centre for Excellence, Children and Family (Peak Body, Vic), has invited us to promote the workshop on their training calendar, which reaches the majority of child and family workers in the state. The conversation at Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service is ongoing and the implementation of the vision of economic self-sufficiency for low income and disadvantaged women is the focus of a five year program at the agency. St Luke's Anglicare Bendigo has trialled an interesting initiative where young people are employed as consultants to advise on youth programs and policy decisions. These young people have sat on some interview panels when the agency is recruiting new youth program staff.

The response to the kit has been most positive from peak bodies and managers of community service organisations. Services Connect, the overarching delivery model for DHS in Victoria, has expressed interest in the kit for staff training. As noted by Robyn Roberts, there is sometimes a resistance among staff about having a conversation with their clients about vocational aspirations. This highlights the need for, and the challenge for us in promoting, the kit.

To keep up to date, visit the [website](#)

You may also be interested in reading.....

The Griffith Review is a quarterly publication of new writing and ideas. *Edition 45: The Way We Work* explores the extraordinary structural changes in work caused by technology, globalisation, economic theory, the collapse of the unions and an ageing population. Featuring essays from Ashley Hay, Gideon Haigh, Mandy Sayer, Rebecca Huntley, Peter Mares, Josephine Rowe and more, *The Way We Work* asks: How does work shape our values, our citizens, cultures and communities? As our work changes, how will it change us? How does the blurring of work and leisure through 'access anywhere' technology affect our attitudes to work? How are older Australians going to find consistent and flexible work (as the government wants them to do) when age discrimination is rife? Will flexible work help decrease the gender gap?

Australians are now near the top of the list of working hours in developed countries; a substantial and growing proportion of people work part-time with multiple employers – not all by choice; unpaid internships are the normal entry path for young people; women are no longer forced to resign when they marry or become pregnant, but the wage gap remains; manufacturing and agricultural jobs have given way to working in services, and now those jobs that don't actually demand hands on contact are also moving offshore.

We exist in professional landscapes that didn't exist fifteen years ago, that are still being altered and transformed today, and that are probably all but incomprehensible to our parents' generation.

One thing remains constant though, work is essential to economic wellbeing and meaning, so getting it right is important.

<https://griffithreview.com/editions/the-way-we-work-2/>

Strengthening the capacity of young people to reduce unemployment: The O'Sullivan Centre in Timor Leste.

A group of twenty young people have been meeting together in Dili over the last months to discuss their experiences of trying to get employment in Timor-Leste. They have shared their own experiences and also those of other young people they have spoken to. They have all expressed the frustration of being unable to get a job unless a person has family connections in the workplace.

They have also said that it is even harder for young people living outside of Dili in the districts or rural areas. There are not a lot of employment opportunities and mainly the work there is in subsistence agriculture. Many young people move to Dili with the hope of participating in broader work opportunities.

The young people who have been meeting have named themselves 'Juventude mak Dezenvolvimentu Nasional' (Young People for National Development). They are



currently meeting with a range of organisations in Dili who have the responsibility for assisting young people into training and employment.

The group is planning to make a film that gives voice to the reality and the aspirations of young people. They intend to travel to the districts to ensure the voices of rural youth are heard. They would then like to initiate some services to assist young people get training and jobs.

Jenny Lauritsen and I have been facilitating these discussions as part of the broader work of the O'Sullivan Centre and it's commitment to improving employment opportunities for young people.

There is much passion and self belief amongst the young people of this group. They are proud of an independent Timor Leste and are filled with enthusiasm for the task of building a new country that is able to build a skilled and educated young workforce. They recognise that there are currently limited economic development opportunities but want to find new opportunities for development and are filled with hope for their future.

Bernie McEvoy, Dili



Jenny Lauritsen and Bernie McEvoy with locals in Timor Leste



The O’Sullivan Centre

The O’Sullivan Centre aims to build responses to injustice within Australian society. A key tenet of its philosophy is a belief in the importance of economic participation in supporting the identity and wellbeing of the individual and as a critical means to social inclusion.

The O’Sullivan Centre was formed in 1999 and officially launched on 13th June of that year. It continues to be supported by a large network of former members of

the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and family and friends of the late Hugh O’Sullivan who share a commitment to building an equitable and just society.

The O’Sullivan Centre was named in honour of Father Hugh O’Sullivan, who worked for many years as a chaplain to the YCW at a local, national and international level to support, educate and inspire young workers.

Financial support is provided through grants, fundraising, membership subscriptions and personal financial contributions. To date funding has been received from the Sidney Myer Fund, the Mazda Foundation, the Scanlon Foundation and Community Benefit SA. The Centre is supported by Good Shepherd and St Luke’s Anglicare.

‘Worklessness, which includes but is broader than unemployment and economic inactivity, can be destructive to self-respect, brings risks of poor physical and mental health, thwarts the pursuit of happiness, and profoundly handicaps the achievement of wellbeing. Economic, social and moral arguments are advanced which advocate work as the most effective means to improve wellbeing of individuals, their families and their communities.’
 (Professor Aylward, Director, Unum Centre for Psychosocial and Disability Research, Cardiff University, UK)

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(Please complete and return this page to us)

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I wish to contribute by becoming/renewing as:

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I would like to support the ongoing work of the O’Sullivan Centre by making a monthly Direct Deposit donation of \$..... (donations of \$20 per month or more include yearly membership fee)

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Email to info@theosullivancentre.org.au

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 P.O. Box 67
 Stepney South Australia 5069**