

Wesley Centre

While our new Wesley Centre was being built, we met in temporary premises, in the area of the city where lots of teenagers hung out. We developed two programs:

CITYROCK captured the interest of young people. For many years I have wanted to see a citywide youth rally of a Saturday night providing good Christian entertainment for young people, and a strong outreach to street kids. Both purposes were served with strong attendances from Christian youth and up to 100 street kids being invited into the presentation each time to hear the Gospel message. A number were converted.

The aim of having a program packed with youth from churches all around the suburbs has still not been realised, although gradually the message is being spread and more are attending and enjoying the programs.

The name CITYROCK was carefully chosen. CITY because this is an urban ministry to kids in the suburbs and in the streets of the city; ROCK because that is the genre of the music and the basis of our theological understanding. We want young people to find security, a solid foundation for their future, a rock upon which their lives can be built.

Too many young people have no sure foundation for the building of their lives. They have no solid basis of morality by which they can judge their actions and no sure example from their homes on which they can model their behaviour. They are building lives on other kids ideas and behaviour patterns, and modelling futures on television and music stars lives. They are building on sand.

It is never too soon to start young people in the right direction. To wait as many parents do until their children are teenagers is to ignore the most powerful years of childhood development. Once, when I was talking to parents whose teenage son was placed by a court on probation under my oversight because of his behaviour. They said to me:

‘We have always believed in letting our child grow up without moral instruction so that when he is older he can make all the right decisions for himself without our influence. When do you think is the right time for us to start raising all these issues?’ I replied: ‘You had better get started now. You have already wasted the most valuable fourteen years!’

During the late 1970’s while I was still in Melbourne anticipating coming to Sydney to become the Superintendent of Wesley Mission I was thinking of the special social needs the people of Sydney were facing which would become problems in the community during the forthcoming 1980’s. It

was at this time that un-requested, a bank sent to me one of their new bankcards that was just being issued. I did not want it and had not asked for it. But it just arrived in my letterbox.

I suddenly realised that in a city like Sydney with millions of people receiving bankcards that they had not requested, that hundreds of thousands of people would go on spending sprees and very shortly personal debt would become a major problem. We had a whole generation of people that were not trained in using credit cards and the temptation to buy on credit would be too much for them. I realised that vast numbers of people would not be able to control their spending, going into debt even for groceries and household needs.

I was convinced that large numbers of people would, in the decade of the 70's, end up in debt and financial strife and much of it would be caused by new credit cards.

I decided that Wesley Mission would need to be in the forefront of helping people with their debts. I had enough experience to know that one of the major causes of suicide was the inability to pay financial debt and the worry that that caused. I also knew that many marriages broke up foundering on the rock of financial debt. I conceived the idea in late 1977 of running a service at Wesley Mission that would be called 'Debt line' to balance off our counselling service called 'Lifeline'.

In September 1978, I sent a folder to Sydney ahead of me to Stan Manning our then general manager, Arthur Oakley, the remaining minister in the pastoral department, Dr Jim Pendlebury and Keith Walkerden our honorary secretary. It contained 160 new ideas that I wanted to develop in Sydney when I arrived to keep Wesley Mission growing and serving the community:

This included resident funded units in retirement villages like I had developed in Melbourne, which have since made such a big impact on the life of the Mission. Another of my ideas was 'the institute for World Evangelism to train ministers from South East Asia and the Pacific Region specifically in the areas of Church growth and evangelism.' This idea of mine was actually taken up and developed by Sir Alan Walker following his retirement many years later and is now known as the Alan Walker College in North Parramatta.

Item #152 on this 1978 paper read: Plan through Lifeline, to develop a credit-control counselling centre when we move Lifeline into Wesley Centre. Seek government assistance to employ a person

to give counselling to people who have debt problems and who have an inability to control their credit especially on the new Credit cards.

The Mission was accepting of these new ideas and I very quickly began the work after my induction and re-ordination as the Superintendent at Wesley Mission.

I appointed a young research officer Clare Hogan to do a research report on personal debt in Australia in June 1979. Her report, received a few months later, made very clear that we were going to have a massive problem in the Australian community over people's problems in handling debt.

In November 1979 I announced that Wesley Mission would establish 'Debtline'. We started with a number of trained volunteer counsellors from 'Lifeline' and gave them special financial counselling to help people control their debts, repay them, and learn how to handle credit. We started with two volunteer counsellors and opened the offices at night for families who worked during the day. In the first month we had 288 people come for counselling. There was no other financial counselling service available in Australia at that stage. I commenced a series of training courses for other Lifeline counsellors who could help specialise in financial counselling using bank officers, accountants and other people with specialist financial skills. I had specialists come in to lecture in consumer law, budgeting, consumer protection and financial counselling. Our volunteer counsellors however, were being overwhelmed and we needed full time staff. I advertised during June 1980 for a suitable leader of the work and on the 9th July 1980 I announced that Mrs. Betty Weule had been appointed. Betty had completed some training at Wagga TAFE and had good experience in counselling people. Unfortunately Betty had been in hospital for surgery and it took a little time for her to get underway.

By September 1980 I was able to report that the two experienced volunteer counsellors had been persuaded to leave their jobs and to work full time with us in face-to-face counselling. Betty was at the helm and was starting off in fine fashion. In my first interview with her she persuaded me to change the name from "Debtline" which she believed had a very negative connotation to "Creditline". That was a good move. Betty worked with us for the next twenty years.

In the next few months Creditline received tremendous support from the Public Solicitor's office, the Housing Commission, the Inner City Legal Service, Westmead Hospital, the Child Abuse and Prevention Service and many other organisations.

We approached the National Bank and they agreed to set up consolidation loans to help clients. The Commonwealth Bank also provided joint name savings accounts with the Mission as a joint signatory and people who were hopelessly in debt began to put part of their wages each week into these bank accounts but could only withdraw the money when we were joint signatories. We went to their credit providers and to the people to whom they owed large debts and indicated that we would handle their accounts and that the debts would ultimately be paid but we needed time and cooperation from the providers. In most cases we received that co-operation instantly. What I didn't realise was that in years to come there would be people whose debts would run into hundreds of thousands of dollars and many well over the million-dollar mark and who would never be able to repay. We had to develop for these people, a new service to help them realise the significance and seriousness of bankruptcy.

In those days credit counselling was in its infancy and Betty Weule and I were interviewed on a score of television and radio programs. One of our young staff Ian Garvin made his first Supreme Court appearance for a bankruptcy case to explain to the court exactly how we could help them get on their feet again.

By November 1980 the courts were beginning to ask Creditline to do a report on all cases going before them and the official receiver was holding over some bankruptcy actions to enable Creditline to work out an alternative solution. Mr. George Cady the official receiver has worked with us consistently in helping people find their way out of debt.

We were convinced that we had to help educate people in using credit cards although this really should have been the responsibility of the credit providers, the banks and the lending companies. So we started lectures on consumer education in schools. We lectured social workers in how to help people and with the co-operation of the Housing Commission and the Prison Authorities have lectured to people in Housing Commission areas and to prisoners in jails.

We also decided to take head on some companies that were creating big debt problems for people. I went on radio and television over Easter 1981 and announced that over 950 of the 1000 clients who had come to us with impossible debt, had credit hassles with Walton Stores. In those days Waltons had a business buying bad debts from other companies. They would raise the interest charge and through door-to-door salesmen would encourage people to purchase more goods far beyond their capacity to repay. Having brought this to the attention of the public through radio and television, the

Waltons company threatened me with a \$250, 000 defamation writ. There was a jail sentence also hanging over my head if I didn't recant and take back the accusation and apologise. However I refused to do that because the facts were right. Betty Weule came with me and we confronted the Waltons company in their store, meeting with the managing director of Waltons and the chairman of the board with our evidence. John Walton chaired the meeting. When we presented our evidence Waltons stores backed down, apologised, withdrew the threatened writ and agreed to six areas which we had drawn up in order to help their customers.

This made good newspaper and television copy at the time and Creditline was on its way. It also led to thousands of people coming to Creditline for counselling. Wesley Mission had a tiger by the tail!

We rapidly increased the staff at Creditline and the number of professionally trained and competent advisers. People by the tens of thousands each year received credit counselling and were helped with their debt problems.

The support we have had since from the finance industry, from the courts and banks and from governments has been outstanding. We started to open other offices at Westmead, Macarthur, Bathurst, Castle Hill, and then in an amazing flurry all over Australia including places as remote as Alice Springs and in the middle of the Simpson Desert.

You might wonder why we would have a Creditline counsellor in the middle of the Simpson Desert?

Well, one of our guys drives a four-wheel drive through the most remote areas of Australia to tribes of Aborigines. You wonder why they have debt problems? Here is an example: Not long ago he was involved with our Wesley Legal Service which has four professional solicitors working full time taking companies to court over gambling and debt problems and in taking three companies to court for their actions of selling products to Indigenous people in the Simpson Desert.

These three South Australian Companies had sent sales people into the remote camps of Aborigines in the Simpson Desert to sell them products. One was our largest seller of Encyclopaedia. Apparently since moving on to CD ROM there were large numbers of Encyclopaedia Britannica sets available for sale and a salesman had travelled through the Aboriginal communities selling sets of encyclopaedia on low deposit but long term repayments for very high prices. Another company

had sent a salesman selling second hand Holden cars to Aboriginal people in the camps on low deposits and very high interest charges. Another company had sent vacuum cleaner salesmen to sell vacuum cleaners valued at more than \$2000 each to people who had neither carpets nor electricity. Our legal service set up to tackle such companies and take them to court. In each case we won and in all cases had the unfair contracts cancelled.

Since I started Creditline with Betty Weule as our first full time staff person there has been a change in Bankruptcies in Australia. For many years most bankruptcies were big named, highflying businessmen like George Herscu, Laurie Connell, and Christopher Skase - high flying multimillionaire corporate losers. Most people in those days going into bankruptcy were corporates who had debt beyond their capacity to repay. However in the 1980's we detected a new trend, most bankruptcies were not as a result of a business but were personal bankruptcies. And that's when Creditline arrived. When I commenced Creditline the 1978/79 financial year showed that 52% of bankruptcies were personal but by 1988, 70% of bankruptcies were personal. Bankruptcy was becoming common among those who had no property and now among homeowners bankruptcy is increasing even though under bankruptcy laws any saleable asset including the family home is liable to be sold to pay creditors.

I began to see also that there was a problem compounding these bankruptcies because most of them were not matters of personal extravagance in living, but were due to an increase in gambling. That is why in 1984 I started a gambling counselling program and trained people who specialised in gambling counselling. How that developed is another story of incredible timing! We were the first professional gambling counselling service in Australia and the first person I appointed, Mitchell Brown headed up Wesley Gambling Counselling Service for many years. It has grown to become the largest gambling Counselling Service in Australia. It trains gambling counsellors for scores of services throughout Australia and provides information, support and back-up for every gambling counsellor in the nation. In the same way Creditline has trained financial counsellors and we find them in centres all over Australia. We run a '1800' number and counsellors anywhere in the nation can ring for help and guidance from our expert counsellors.

Unfortunately the problem of debt through credit cards expenditure and debt through uncontrolled gambling is continuing to increase. Both of our services are the largest of their kind in the nation.

I soon realised that we had to do something on behalf of some of these clients, to save them from unscrupulous operators. Like the big licensed club near us in Pitt street where a grandmother in her 80's had stupidly spent all of her money on the poker machines. The first time a member of her family knew about it was when she discovered that mother was unable to leave them anything in her will. The manager of the club had provided credit facilities for the grandmother to continue playing the poker machines. He had then introduced her to a bank manager in North Sydney who took out a mortgage on her home to give her more money to gamble. We took both the bank and the licensed club to court and won. The lady's debts were cancelled and the two managers were sacked. This led us to help the government write new legislation and Betty Weule has been a wonderful asset to governments as they have written more restrictive legislation to help control companies to provide a duty of care to compulsive gamblers. Many companies throughout NSW have now been taken to court by Wesley Legal Service and in every case that I can remember we have won. Wesley Mission's Creditline and Gambling counselling service have been the lead organisations in sticking up for the battler and for those who through their own stupidity have over-spent and over-gambled.

We discovered that we should also support the families and children of such people and so many programs have been developed to help people going through such trauma. I remember for example, one young family with 5 children, including a baby with a hole in the heart, who came to us for financial counselling. The Father had been sick for three months. They had a finance company loan of \$3000 but with the sickness were unable to repay that \$3,000. They took out a consolidating loan which increased the debt to \$11,000 but this did not give them one cent more but only covered interest and repayment charges. They then took out a George Adams loan at 140% per annum to pay the finance company. They then took out a Walter Pugh loan at 162.4% per annum interest to pay the George Adams loan. Bankruptcy seemed to be the only alternative. Yet for ten years this family had stayed home. They had no car and enjoyed no outings. It was ten years since the parents had had a night out alone. Credit line re-established them until they had a small balance in a credit union bank account we opened for Christmas. We sent the family on a holiday without cost to Vision Valley. The children were excited, the parents were tearful. The children's reaction as they were being driven to the valley was hard to believe: "look at the horses", "There's a cow". On Sunday afternoon we collected the family from Vision Valley to drive them back to their own home and four young cannonballs threw themselves at us "We rode the horses. We were in the canoes. We didn't find the cave. We had scones and cream and chicken for dinner." The parents looked dazed but ever so relaxed and happy. The mother said "I haven't cooked a meal for days. I just can't

believe it's happening." To help people re-establish themselves, to educate people in handling their income, to renew their lives, that was our aim. If as Christians we would have them live according to the teachings of Jesus they would never get into such financial or gambling difficulty.

It has become popular among some trendy people to sneer at the protestant work ethic, but those who follow the teachings of Jesus Christ are saved from the traumas of financial disaster. He starts not with our consumer greed but with our commitment to Himself. He calls us to a complete re-ordering of our priorities including our finances.

In 1988 I was troubled by the numbers of young teenagers on the inner city streets all night. A number of them assaulted and robbed late night revellers, women on their own and those who appeared drunk. I appointed a couple of tough street workers to start work each night at midnight. With the approval of the Company, set up office and counselling in an all night "McDonald's" store. This helped us to make contact with these nocturnal ferals, and the presence of our staff kept the store safe. Soon it was seen a more permanent place was needed on the streets.

Bill Locke, incoming President of the Rotary Club of Sydney 1989-90, asked if we could do more if we had more money. He inspired the Rotarians to raise \$170, 000 for a program I devised. We leased a three storey building in the CBD, paid a bunch of graffiti artists to decorate it inside and out, and opened 24 hours a day. Free food and dry clothing was provided by the firms of Rotarians. Kids were encouraged to watch videos and talk with our staff. When a sense of trust was established they were invited to go to the second floor. There was gym equipment, snooker and other games – and another counsellor. As trust was established then we invited them to discuss their alcohol or drug dependence, why they had left home and how they could develop a plan for their future.

Many of them were helped to return to school or into employment. 7,000 street kids in crisis were helped in the first year. More than 1,000 completed intensive counselling. Hundreds were reunited with their families. Then we purchased 8 specialised "Street Smart" vans equipped with hot drinks and food and trained 400 counsellors to work on rosters to every night reach those on the streets. Fifteen years later the program is still running well. The Rotary Club of Sydney won an International Achievement Award for this Street Smart Project.

In the video of "StreetSmart", played in Rotary television programs all over the world, was a very developed young fifteen year old, Amanda. She had the body of a woman and the mind of a child. She had been a ward of the State but had run away from foster homes and youth centres. The State did not know where she was. She had been abused constantly by every adult she had met. She would not let us help her. She mistrusted all adults!

While I was speaking with her, on the film, she was lying on a beanbag. Her very ample bosom heaved, an effect I did not have on young women those days. And to my surprise from between her breasts a pet rat crawled out over the top of her Tee shirt. The rat crawled up through her hair and sat on the top of her head. This was her pet rat she nursed in her bosom.

Not long after that film was made, I told her story on radio and six weeks later received a call to say police had just removed the body of a 16 year old girl from Croydon Rd, Hurstville. She was lying on the footpath and the police had found a rat inside her Tee Shirt. Was this the girl I had known? Could I identify her? She was buried with only half a dozen present. When I was talking with Amanda I realised that all the adults who figured in Amanda's life, from the time she was first raped as a seven year old to the time she died on the streets at sixteen, were rats, and the only one who demanded nothing from her was a rat.

We realised we need a good accommodation centre for youth like Amanda. In 1988, at a dinner of businessmen, Max Connery, a Sydney Attorney approached me to give me a cheque as a donation to that work. I said "I do not accept cheques from lawyers." That stunned him. "But I want to give you some money" he said. I told him I wanted three infinitely more valuable gifts: prayer for our work because Christians are able to sustain the pace only through the support of praying friends; his continuing interest for at least three years, and his influence to gather ten more solicitors to hear about how they could help homeless youth. He volunteered all three and gathered together 14 lawyers to hear our story.

With that group I again said: "Put away your cheque books. I need three infinitely more valuable gifts: prayer for our work, your continuing interest that goes beyond just a cheque, and your influence to each gather ten more lawyers to hear about how they could help homeless youth." So I then addressed 140 solicitors and judges. I told them about the homeless and asked them: "I want you to pray for our workers, to continue your interest for at least three years, and I want you to take out your chequebooks now and fund a new home for street-kids!" They gave me that night \$200,000, a large property called "Stepping Stone" and have raised \$500,000 since!

We can understand human motivation from the Hierarchy of Human Motivation described by American Psychiatrist Abraham Maslow. Maslow describes seven basic human needs that motivate people into certain behaviour patterns:

1. Physiological needs - nutrition, elimination, sex, sleep
2. Safety needs: security, stability and freedom from fear
3. Love and belongingness needs
4. Esteem needs: self-esteem and esteem from others
5. Need for self-actualisation: to know self
6. Desire to know and understand
7. Aesthetic needs: beauty, music, religious experience

Maslow states that all seven of these needs are intrinsic to human personality - but not all of them are centre stage, in the forefront of consciousness or currently motivating a person's life. The need that is in the forefront of consciousness and that is currently motivating the individual will be the lowest need that is basically unfulfilled.

For instance, the basic, rock bottom human needs are physiological - nutrition, elimination, sex, sleep. If these needs are not met, a person spends most of his time in an attempt to fulfil them. Until these physiological needs are met, he ignores his other needs that are present in the background of his personality. For street kids at Streetsmart who are starving and homeless, they do not expend much energy asking philosophical questions or painting landscapes.

However, if a person's basic physiological needs are met, but his safety needs are not - they become the theatre of his conscious and motivated life. People desire safety, stability, freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos. They prefer the familiar; they want predicability and order in their lives. They want to know that the rug is not going to be pulled out from under them. If they are insecure, they will work to achieve security. Even having their own bag of possessions becomes vital. Try to take away that bag and a person might kill you: it's their security. If they feel safe, then their motivated activity shifts "upward" to satisfy their needs for love and belongingness.

At this level, they desire love and affection in meaningful relationships, and they seek a peer group with which to identify and in which they belong. They join a gang. That is why StreetSmart is painted with graffiti designs because the kids are safe in that atmosphere for it is theirs. That is why that girl constantly had her pet rat round her neck, because it was the only genuine creature who

responded to her with warmth without demanding sex from her. Her only friend was a rat, because all other acquaintances were rats.

When a person's needs for love and belongingness are essentially satisfied, then the need for esteem takes centre stage. At this level, people seem to crave esteem from others. They desire reputation, prestige, status, or at least attention, recognition, or appreciation. At this level, people are also searching for self-affirmation from what they believe to be significant achievement, accomplishment, and competence.

Only now with physical and emotional needs met, with a sense of security, can a person take an interest in appearance, hair care and dress sense. Appearance means nothing to a person who is hungry, homeless, insecure, and friendless. It takes self-esteem and esteem from others before a person takes pride in their appearance. To say "Why don't they dress nicer?" is to reveal you do not know what it means to be physically empty and totally insecure and without love.

When a person's need for esteem from himself and others is basically met, then his motivated behaviour becomes "self-actualising". At this "highest" level on the hierarchy, people work to realise their inner potential. They act to fulfil their destiny, to realise the purpose for their birth, and to express their individuality. It is only at this level that a person fully comes to appreciate beauty, truth, creation, music and God.

We must meet people at three basic levels that everyone needs to withstand life's storms: levels of existence, relationships and growth: ERG. It is only when these needs are met within, that a person can fully understand true security which is in building your life upon a true foundation in hearing and doing God's word. They must be free from pressing need to fully understand that true security comes alone from God.

Wesley Mission responded to the needs of people on the street, not just with band-aids: the emergency relief, food, clothing and accommodation that is a basic right for people, but with programs aimed at bringing people to confront themselves, making for personal self-awareness, causing people to consider their future, encouraging self-help, providing employment training, and placement programs of people into jobs and better accommodation. Then when the person is ready, they can see we act out of an even higher motivation, and desire them also to know true inner security that holds them fast in any storm.

What we are doing is not a piecemeal approach to an institutionalised social problem, but a careful strategy where each piece fits in with the other.

STREETSMART is a street level contact point, as is CITY ROCK. Basic medium accommodation needs are met in STEPPING STONE and COTTEE LODGE while longer accommodation and personal development and employment skills are provided at FORREST FARM, DESERT PARK, and the BERNARD SMITH teenage independence program. They are encouraged to develop outward looking skills in our trekking and wilderness programs and VISION VALLEY. Counselling is provided at YOUTH LINE and from our specialist DRUG AND ALCOHOL COUNSELLORS. Work and employment skills are provided by our Wesley Uniting Employment programs. The JOB CLUB helps them gain employment and fellowship and a sense of belonging may be found in our YOUTH GROUPS. The task becomes fruitful when people respond in COMMITMENT TO GOD and SERVICE TO OTHERS.

YOUTH NETWORKS is an integrated approach to the primary physical needs of food and clothing, accommodation and work, then the deeper level self-awareness and self-motivation, then the deeper levels again of self-esteem and self-awareness, for it is only when a person has developed a true sense of his own self, is he in a position of being able to appreciate God and the world about him, and come to true security.

The motivation to start a new life and find self-esteem is an important starting point for a person to come to faith and to find the true security that comes only from a life that has its foundation in God. Then they can withstand any of life's storms.

A similar approach was used when I conceived the idea of a family makeover centre to change the lives of all family members at the same time. We brought together a wide variety of our resources to create a multiple resource, cohesive program to work with dysfunctional families whose multiple problems require a total response. Intensive commitment with families are needed if a real difference is to be made. One organisation, announced it would spend up to 20 hours with selected families.

Wesley Mission spends 168 hours every week for nine months with families in what is the most intensive and extensive intervention according to family need, ever in Australia's history. The families live in two and three bedroom apartments in Cartwright, Sydney, New South Wales, in the

Noreen Towers Community, a large-scale community consisting of extensive lawns and gardens, with three two- storey blocks of accommodation each with eight 2 & 3 bedroom units.

There is also a Family Makeover Centre, which consists of a new hall, stage and kitchen, which will become the focal point for many of the group activities and training programs. Small rooms are also available for private consultation.

The aim of the Family Makeover Centre is to take in damaged, at risk, homeless, single parent families and help them to discover skills for independent living in the community. Multiple resources are available to cover each area of disadvantage. There is a maximum accommodation capacity of up to 60 persons in this community. Our aim is to work with 9 families at a time and to also house on-site staff. The families, most of whom are headed by a single parent, stay for up to 9 months paying New South Wales Department of Housing rates to rent the 2 & 3 bedroom properties. These rates are a fixed percentage of the income of the families and generally speaking we care for severely disadvantaged people so their rents are extremely low. The types of families housed on this site vary according to their homelessness, risk factors, alcohol and drug dependence, gambling problems and the like. We house families with multiple disadvantages and disabilities.

The management of the Wesley Mission Family Makeover Centre is by Wesley Mission Community Services using resources from our Wesley Uniting Employment & Wesley Homeless Persons Services, with other resource personnel being used in specialist activities. Each person lives in a family unit, which we furnish, if required. Each family is supplied with a gift of a computer with Internet access because the teaching of family members to become computer literate is part of the total program. Wesley Mission uses its benevolent and charitable organisations to provide whatever welfare needs the family might have, and specialist teams from our medical and psychiatric, counselling and family support services as required. In the Makeover Centre there are continuous programs conducted over the nine-month period. They include the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous groups for those people for whom this is appropriate. There are quite a number of people in the local surrounding community who also come in for this program. Groups of gamblers also meet weekly.

There are a series of other programs run by other competent trained personnel over the nine months including programs developing self esteem, credit and financial counselling, strong programs of mental health services including professional psychological interventions using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy as required.

The staff conducting these networks work in association with the Psychology Departments of Sydney University and Macquarie University and the National Depression Initiative.

There are other programs concerning Gambling Counselling, training in Child Protection issues, Family Values and Parenting Models, using the resources of Wesley Counselling Services and Wesley Child and Family Services.

One difficulty often found is finding a way to motivate family members to gain such help. We thought of that. These families are encouraged to attend whatever program has been worked out with this by our case-managers. Both children and parents can earn credit points by attendance, which are then redeemed towards significant family holidays. I approach travel firms for some holiday sponsorships. That solves the motivation issues.

Each family has two mentors to help in educational support doing such things as homework help for school and TAFE students and lifestyle help for mothers including cooking and family management.

This program is dependent upon corporate and community support. I sought support from significant corporations to not only provide financial support for one family, but to provide two members of their staff to act as mentors with that one family covering both the educational and lifestyle mentoring. Some staff are interested in helping as well as in the company's financial support. The Prime Minister commended this program with a gift of \$250, 000.

We also provide scholarships for children allowing each child to receive a scholarship enabling them to join a local sporting team including the purchase of sports gear, or a culture program including music lessons. The Youth Performers Academy of the Wesley Institute provide lessons throughout the nine months of the family stay at the Makeover Centre in whatever field of music young people and children may desire.

It is an important part of our total program that every family upon leaving the program has an appropriate family member employed. To this end Wesley Uniting Employment provides the skills training to enable them to get suitable jobs.

Better housing is essential so Wesley Mission Homeless Persons staff helps each family into their own independent housing.

This program is designed to enable dysfunctional families to live effectively and independently. It brings the widest range of skills ever assembled in Australia to help families cope with multiple disadvantages. When we support the family we support the whole nation. We reduce the cost of dysfunctional people in society, reduce the cost of the welfare system, and reduce the costs of running hospitals, jails, and charities. When we have better families, we not only have a better nation, but we are making a contribution to a better world.

Another example of entrepreneurial programming lay in our development of Habitat for Humanity. "A score of homeless families this year will enter their own homes by giving 500 hours of sweat labour instead of large deposits," I said in a New Year's Day message in 1988.

"Their standard brick, three bedroom houses will be sold for only \$25, 000 because they are being built on land donated by municipal councils who want to help poor families, erected by tradesmen who are donating their labour without charge, by builders not charging any profit on the new homes and by the financiers not charging interest on their mortgages for fifteen years,"

"At long last the community understands the tragedy of the homeless in Australia. We have a national economic disaster which has left people homeless in larger numbers than any bushfire, cyclone or earthquake we have ever experienced. Decent one income families can no longer qualify for housing loans because of the high repayments." "76,000 people are on public housing waiting lists: they will inhabit heaven before a unit owned by the NSW Government!" "60,000 are living in rental property in danger of eviction. 40,000 are living in substandard properties. Over 20,000 live permanently in caravans: home is wherever there is a community laundry and public toilet." We had just established "Habitat for Humanity", an inter-church housing building organisation established in all the Eastern States which organises teams of volunteer tradesmen and builders to build houses on land donated by municipalities.

"In 1988 we still needed land inside Sydney, but 31 municipalities outside of Sydney have offered land, and to them we will bring 300 volunteer tradesmen to build houses for the poor making them available for \$1000 deposit plus 500 hours of sweat labour, at a total cost of \$25,000 repayable over 15 years without any profit or interest being charged,"

Finance was raised by churches and voluntary organisations such as the Rotary Club of Sydney for the house-building project.

"With all the talk by politicians and commentators, no-one has yet come up with a more imaginative plan to the current malaise, nor organised so much grass-root support. The first houses will be opened before the end of June this year and local committees will select local families solely according to their need." That was our vision and gradually it took shape.

Habitat for Humanity is the largest home building organisation in the world. Some 100,000 Habitat houses have been built in the past 20 years. Wesley Mission brought the founder, Millard Fuller to Australia to set up the organisation and started recruiting volunteers, gaining land at low cost or no cost, talking building supply companies into donating materials, and raising funds to build the houses.

The family chosen to own the home has to save \$1000 deposit, (i.e. training them in savings), 500 hours of personal sweat effort (i.e. to show their commitment) and with the volunteers building and master builders overseeing the houses are built with donated money, materials and labour. The family are then charged the actual cost, which they pay back over 15 years without any interest being charged at all. Repaid money is used to build more houses. This voluntary effort, which inspires so much local community contribution, is now a national organisation building in all states, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. For many years I served as National President.

One particular group of Australians who have the worst housing are Aboriginal families. Survival for Aborigines in the harsh Australian environment has always been intimately linked to their families and kinship groups. European settlement had a devastating impact on Aboriginal families. Only the resilience and strength of Aboriginal families enabled the survival of Aboriginal culture.

A chronic lack of community services has resulted in Third World standards of living among many Aboriginal groups. Despite decades of promises, little has changed to improve the basics of life for

Australian Aborigines. In 1971, a survey at Royal Darwin Hospital showed that one in five Top End Aboriginal children suffered malnutrition before their second birthday. A study in 1993, found no change, ten years later there was still no change. In some Aboriginal communities, half of the children suffer malnutrition. Dr. Alan Ruben, who made the study, says the rate is worse than that in Kurdish or Somali refugee camps. Unless the "circle of paternalism, dependence and pauperism" is broken, it would be much more difficult, if not impossible, to solve.

Today may indeed be too late to do more than continue to "soothe the dying pillow". Aborigines do have to change - many illnesses are related to poor hygiene, bad diet, lack of exercise, smoking, alcohol and failure to follow medical advice. But there is increasing evidence that water, working toilets; proper housing and good medical care have to be provided first. If amenities such as toilets and water supply are provided, and are properly built and maintained - which can be done at a surprisingly low cost - Aborigines, contrary to stereotypes, use them enthusiastically, and do not vandalise property. Under these conditions there can be 50% reduction in infectious diseases in one year.

While President of the Rotary Club of Sydney, I challenged my members to get their hands dirty with me every Saturday. Each Saturday, some of our volunteers from the Rotary Club of Sydney and Wesley Mission, work to rebuild houses in Eveleigh Street, Redfern. This is Australia's worst slum. Some of these urban Aborigines are generations into poverty, illness, unemployment and despair. Bad accommodation makes worse their plight. This was the site of several racist riots. We cleared and shovelled garbage because the City Council Garbage collectors refused to go into the area because of attacks against the white workmen. We went and shovelled the garbage to clean the streets so we could start building. Chief executives, general managers, lawyers and doctors, led by a clergyman shovelled two years of putrid garbage.

Then, the Governor of NSW, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair and Mrs Sinclair called in to see the progress of the Habitat for Humanity affiliate we established there. I feel we are seeing the truth of the old prophesy from Isaiah: (Isa 58:11-12) "The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age- old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." It was becoming true in the slums of Sydney.

As Millard Fuller, the International President of Habitat For Humanity described this work: "Habitat For Humanity works in partnership with God and people everywhere from all walks of life, to develop communities with God's people in need by building and renovating houses so that there are decent houses in decent communities in which people and live and grow into all that God intended." When we started building again the burnt out ruins, it was a tough job. But that year not only built a building but also built great Rotarians.

One Thursday night in the early 1990's I attended a Christmas party in the three storey Federation hostel we run in Erskineville. Knowing that I am a non-drinker who fights the extension of the Liquor trade, some might be surprised that I had bought a pub on behalf of Wesley Mission. But we bought the great old pub in 1991, de-licensed it, and turned it into home for ten previously homeless people. Among ourselves it was called "the pub with no beer". Ten formerly homeless people now have their own fine home. The former bar is now a spacious lounge and dining room. All the upstairs rooms are now theirs.

The Newspapers had a field day reporting every aspect of the move and stressing the fact that the hotel-residence would be a "Pub with no Beer." I just kept my fingers crossed that the media did not find out that while the renovations were in progress the hotel was still fully licensed. I shuddered to think of the headlines if that became public: "TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE HOLDS HOTEL BEER LICENCE". Fortunately the newshounds did not sniff out that information.

At that party every one of our residents said to me how much their home meant to them. Once pubs had ruined their lives by helping them become alcoholics, and eventually all of them had lost families and homes to drink, but now a pub was serving them, not with beer, but accommodation and without a drop in sight.

Olga one of the residents, said to me, "You ought to buy more pubs, close them down, and make their rooms into bedrooms for more homeless. There are more homeless on the streets growing older these days and some of them are pretty crook."

Her words reminded me of one of our staff of years ago, Charlie Woodward. Charlie was known as "the converted burglar". Charlie Woodward began a men's meeting at the then Central Methodist Mission (the former name of Wesley Mission Sydney) in 1905. He was added to the full-time staff in 1917. Charlie Woodward had spent many years in the gutter. As a boy he was handed to the police by his headmaster for stealing toys from his playmates, he descended through a long list of

drunk and disorderly and housebreaking charges, mainly due to his uncontrolled drinking and gambling.

On 5 January 1905 he entered a mission hall to plan the theft of the organ. Charlie said in his own words "A companion said to me one day as we stood in front of a mission-hall in Redfern, "I want you to give me a hand to steal the organ out of that place." I consented that I would help him.

"At that mission-hall every Thursday night a men's gospel-meeting was held with coffee and biscuits. I made up my mind that I would go down on the following Thursday night and have a look round as to which would be the easiest way to get the organ out."

"When the night came there were over a hundred men present, and amongst them were burglars, pickpockets, jockeys, thieves. The earnestness of the young preacher, Mr Yarrington, touched my hard heart, and, glory be to God, instead of removing the organ, before the meeting closed I had my sins removed.

"I went into that mission-hall a gambler, drunkard, thief, burglar, and about one of the greatest scoundrels that could be found in Sydney. I thank God I came out a changed and a saved man. The night I got converted we had three robberies planned out for the following week. I was truly born again. Old things had passed away, and all things had become new; and now I can sing with a rejoicing heart, "Happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away."

Charlie remained a consistent Christian worker thereafter, never again being involved with drink, gambling, or the police until he died during World War II.

Charlie Woodward regularly visited railway workshops for lunch-hour meetings. He visited the cells at the magistrates courts at Redfern and Newtown to work among drunks and petty criminals. When men were freed from prison he met them, helped them with money or to find a job, and invited them to the Lyceum Theatre to hear the gospel. Results were limited but worthwhile.

He also visited the Chinese quarter of Sydney with New Testaments and tracts. The special interest in this work was to win back young women who had joined the opium dens in Chinatown before they became hopelessly addicted to opium.

Today we still work among thieves and criminals, drunkards and young women who are in danger of becoming addicted, seeking to convert people to God.

Olga's comment stuck in my mind after I left the "pub with no beer". I had told them about Charlie, who used to hold lunch time meetings among the railway workers, just behind their "pub with no beer." Olga's words reminded me there were many homeless on the streets who were now growing older, and some of them were "pretty crook" in very bad state of health.

I called some of my staff together and we discussed Olga's idea. The trouble was that pubs for sale were rare. We would probably have to start from scratch, raising money, getting plans and approvals, funding for staff and then building. But that is what we are good at. So we got to work. Just before the next Christmas, our first twenty residents moved into a magnificent state-of-the-art community hostel at Smithfield for frail, aged homeless people.

They had been living on the streets and parks of Sydney. Now that they have a new home everyone has their own individual space. Everyone has large private bedrooms and marvellous facilities. Our caring staff live in the community with them. These frail, homeless men and women are the kind of people that newspapers describe in their stories after every cold snap. "A man died of hyperthermia last night in a Surry Hills park."

Now they have a home of their own. I welcomed them in and we held a Christmas party. One man, who had only one leg due to liver, kidney and artery disease resulting from alcoholism said to me: "This place is too good for us."

But it is not. Here is a man who has been lost in sin, for whom Christ came, and whom in Christ's name we have rescued. This is part of the reason for the season. I told them at the party we would call our new cluster of homes, "Charlie Woodward Lodge" after our converted criminal who gave 35 years to caring for the homeless of Sydney through Wesley Mission.

But we felt providing houses needed something more for the people of the city.

So Wesley Mission went a step further in developing its leisure ministry in the development of Desert Park. This is a 500-hectare property in the 'Ninety Mile Desert' area of South Australia. Settled just after World War II, the area was made suitable for farming with the addition of super-

phosphate and other fertilisers. Joe and Joyce George, a Christian couple, owned the property, and as they approached retirement they decided to make Desert Downs available to Wesley Mission for \$600,000, plus another small property and house where they could live.

Desert Park was being developed as a youth rehabilitation centre and church camping site. We added accommodation for 150 people, a swimming pool and other facilities. As we come into contact with young people through our StreetSmart and Youth Networks programs, we have the option of sending them to Desert Park to work on the property and receive counselling at the same time. The Manager and his wife, were experienced farmers as well as very capable counsellors.

Getting young people away from the influences of the city and then giving them something physical to do is a most effective way of helping them overcome their problems. However the concept is to send only three or four young people at a time, so they can receive individual attention and supervision. However to find this work we developed “farm-stay” holidays for Japanese school children. About 1,500 a year have travelled to Pendleton Farm Retreat winning for us a national tourism award.

Without local support, Desert Park would be just another sheep and cattle property. But with community support through working bees, the property promises to make a real difference in the lives of Sydney's homeless teenagers. As well as growing sheep and cattle, Pendleton Farm Retreat also grows people. Every overseas student receives a Bible in their own language and witnesses a series of Australian Fauna up close as well as sheep shearing, cattle mustering and our on site Kangaroos, emus and Koalas.

Another such development is Mangrove Mountain Retreat. They were given about 100 acres of Crown land at Mangrove Mountain to run a medium term training program for teenagers. There was land but no residential buildings. The program has centred on skills acquisition and self-esteem raising so that the participants have the opportunity to become contributing members of society. Over 5000 young people stayed with us each year. But in the early days we had neither the accommodation nor the money to build. The answer came in a most unexpected way.

I approached Work Skill Australia, who ran the Work Skill Olympics. Every year building apprentices compete in the Olympics by being given a specific project, such as wiring a switchboard or building a house frame, to complete within an allotted time. In previous years the

objects built by the apprentices have been taken apart and destroyed after the judging, but one year I suggested building apprentices prefabricate three accommodation units for re-erection at Mangrove Mountain.

At the same time, the bricks, wiring and other materials used to judge the skills of the bricklayers and electricians be re-used at Mangrove Mountain. After the frames and roof trusses for the three accommodation blocks were completed in a mid-city exhibition where the building trades section of the Skill Olympics are held, they were dis-assembled and transported to the Mangrove Mountain site. I puzzled how to get them transported. So I called in the Australian Army engineers and within hours the low loading trucks were on their way. Then teams of building apprentices from Sydney's trade Colleges (Technical and Further Education) spent two days each on site, re-erecting the units. Horticulture students installed the gardens. Today, accommodation, dining facilities, swimming pool and a high ropes course cater for thousands every year.

Vision Valley

The conference centre is used primarily for Operation Hope programs and Wesley Mission's camping programs for disadvantaged children. School groups, churches and community groups also use the facilities.

SERVICES

Vision Valley, located at Arcadia and less than one hour from the heart of Sydney, is set in 35 hectares of native bushland.

This 224-bed retreat centre employs 103 staff and was assisted last year by 176 dynamic and committed volunteers. It is one of Sydney's busiest conference centres and outdoor adventure activities are always a highlight of the camp, with horse riding, abseiling and rock climbing the most popular activities. Vision Valley includes the 72-bed Stringybark Lodge.

Mangrove Mountain Retreat

Mangrove Mountain Retreat is located at Mangrove Mountain on the scenic Central Coast hinterland and is set on 45 hectares of native bushland, adjoining the 1000ha McPherson State Forest, 80 minutes from Sydney.

This 100-bed retreat employs 17 staff and is assisted by 65 magnificent volunteers. It is one of the Central Coast's busiest retreat centres and attracted nearly 7,000 people over the past year. The most popular adventures include the giant swing and the 180-metre flying fox.

Operation Hope

Operation Hope is a unique and exciting camping program that gives children from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance to grow, achieve and develop in a challenging caring environment located in two beautiful bushland settings. Unfortunately many young people and children carry a deep sense of hopelessness and poor self worth generated by years of neglect, abuse or violence. However, a week at either of Operation Hope's two campsites – Vision Valley or Mangrove Mountain – can be a life changing experience. At the end of an Operation Hope camp, children know they have been listened to, believed in, cared for and trusted. Moreover, their self esteem and self worth have been restored, secure in the knowledge that others care for them and that they have a contribution to make. The camping program is run as an early intervention program for children 9 to 14 years of age. Most of the children are wards of the state and come from a range of welfare agencies including Wesley Dalmar, Burnside, NSW Department of Community Services, Mercy Centre, The Smith Family, Barnardos and Anglicare. The food is great and the activities are challenging: abseiling, horse riding, swimming, canoeing, archery, rock climbing, among many others. Each activity builds confidence and esteem; each child is supported and encouraged as they take the next step and grow in confidence. Operation Hope has sponsored more than 5,000 underprivileged children to attend camps at the Vision Valley campsite since 1992. Many have returned as counsellors keen to share the care and wisdom given to them as campers in years previous. Donations from Rotary District 9680 - the local Rotary club, trusts and individual givers enabled hundreds of young people and children from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend Operation Hope programs.

Here is an example of one of the children who attended:

Tina, 13, had suffered physical abuse from her stepfather and sexual abuse from her stepbrother and was living on the streets as a prostitute. The Department Of Community Services referred Tina to Vision Valley through their Emergency Protective Foster Care program. Carlingford Rotary supplied the funds for her to attend the Operation Hope camp. Tina arrived at the camp shy & very nervous, but during the program she began to grow in confidence. "This shy and withdrawn girl slowly became a new person by becoming wholeheartedly involved in every activity," said John

from Operation Hope. During the daily half hour discussion and reflection times, Tina began asking deep and searching questions.

“Tina shared how she had never felt as loved as she had at Vision Valley, and how for the first time in a long time she felt like she was a somebody,” he said. John saw the incredible change in Tina’s demeanour. “Tina is a living example of the difference Operation Hope can make in a young persons life,” he said. Operation Hope camps seek to convey the statements: I believe in you, I trust in you, I know you can handle it, you are listened to, you are cared for, you are important to me.

Serenity Farm and Lodge.

Drug addiction is one of the most depressing new facts of life in any city. Many churches over the years have provided care for people in need, but have done very little to help in total rehabilitation. Wesley Mission has sought to come to grips with this problem by providing staff and centres dealing specially with drug rehabilitation.

Several psychologists who specialise in drug and alcohol counselling spend their days involved with people affected by drugs of varying kinds. Wise counsel and practical guidance is the first step to help people overcome their addiction.

Total rehabilitation is a long and often heart-breaking process involving a network of supportive agencies from other areas of Wesley Mission. Some are helped by Methadone treatment, others by "cold turkey" withdrawal and others by long sessions of psychiatric counselling and psychological and financial counselling. Our Christian psychologists decide upon the appropriate method. Alcoholism is the result of the most common form of drug abuse. Wesley Mission established an alcoholic rehabilitation centre at Horsley Park. Three Serenity Farms were established in January 1982 as quiet retreats where homeless men and women could recover from the damaging effects of alcohol and discover a new lifestyle. The farms provided an ideal opportunity for men and women to escape from the skid-row scene and develop a new lifestyle.

The work at Serenity Farm would not be possible without the dedication and the commitment of caring and supportive staff that minister in the name of Christ led by Nerida Dunkerley. A wonderful band of volunteer men and women support the residents during their journey to sobriety and new life. The whole aim of a ministry to those who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, gambling and other substances, is to help them develop as whole people so they live lives of freedom and independence. Our site was re-established by the Government after compulsory acquisition by the Sydney 2000 Olympics of our three farms for the new Olympic Equestrian Centre. On the new site, the work continues as before.

Wesley Mission helps thousands of homeless each year. Most are children, accommodated through our Wesley Dalmar Child and Family Care program. Edward Eagar Lodge, our entry point for homeless adults provides crisis and medium-term hostel accommodation for 63 men and 13 women. We have a church for homeless people, a Day Centre, welfare assistance, meals, shower and laundry facilities, recreational activities, liaison with statutory bodies and referrals to and from other agencies. At our Serenity House we provided supported accommodation for 42 homeless men this year. This work is currently being re-organised. Our Wesley Rehabilitation Services helped homeless men and women who were recovering from addictions. Grace Manor, accommodated 12 women and Turnaround accommodated 25 men. In the first seven months of operation, 27 men left the Turnaround Program, 21 of whom moved into independent living. Two women moved into independent living from Grace Manor, and now have regular access to their children.

Wesley Community Housing provides supported accommodation for 239 persons in 21 locations across Sydney. 32 clients attended training courses and 56 obtained full time and part time employment. We also support the Sudanese Settlement Services with short-term accommodation as we do with the St George Community Housing and Ryde/Hunters Hill Community Housing. Many of our homeless people are members of our own Church of the Homeless, while others have joined the Bardwell Park Uniting Church, Newtown Mission, and our six Community Housing Bible study groups. Some have become members of the Campbelltown Church of Christ, two of our clients have become commissioned members of the Salvation Army and one former client is now a deacon at the Yagoona Baptist Church. It is a very positive picture of service amongst the homeless.

Overseas Council

When Jesus gave us the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel He gave us a command that has never been repealed. Every Christian in every church has to be interested in taking the message of the gospel to people who have not heard it. Wesley Mission has always been committed to the support of first the Methodist Church and then of the Uniting Church of its ministry to people in other countries. Every week, a portion of the total offerings given in all congregations are sent to the Synod in order to help in the ministry of reaching overseas people with the gospel. The Uniting Churches overseas ministries cover about thirty different countries of the world. Funds are sent to help local congregations and skilled people are sent to help not only in the proclamation but also in the work of education, agriculture, village development, teaching, orphan

support and many other programmes. At Wesley Mission we have also adopted a number of programmes to help people in other countries by additional giving by the congregation.

When I came to the Mission in the late 1970's the Mission had the International Leadership Training College. This was an initiative set up by Sir Alan Walker to bring an outstanding leader from each of a dozen countries each year to give them an internship at Wesley Mission. After a year of training with Wesley Mission they were to return to their countries and provide some local leadership. Each year the Mission paid for about a dozen students from countries like Korea, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, India, and other parts of the world to train as interns.

In 1980 I realised we had a problem with this programme. A number of the students didn't want to go back home and one Korean lady, while she was about to board an aircraft at Sydney Airport had gone into the female toilets and literally just disappeared. Incidentally, three years later we found her married to a Korean in Sydney and by then she was an Australian citizen. What disturbed us was that those who were trained and competent, when they returned to their own countries, inevitably applied for scholarships to go to other countries, particularly the United States of America so our whole plan of training good quality leaders to serve the church in their own countries was being undermined by the natural tendency to go to the other paddock where the grass was greener.

About this time I discovered an organisation that was intent on training Christian leaders in their own country. We would provide funds to train the students to provide libraries within their theological seminaries, to provide funds for professor support and to encourage local theological seminaries to become accredited with proper degrees with world accreditation. This meant the student was kept in their own country, they were trained in their own language, they did not have visa and immigration problems, they did not need to return to their homeland for leave every couple of years and they were trained for life in their own environment. This was a much better way of doing mission.

The organisation that I discovered was The Overseas Council for Theological Education and Mission.

It was a long-term missionary Mr. John Alison, a friend from Queensland who informed me about this work and indicated that the founder from the United States was visiting Australia. That is how I came to meet Dr Charles Spicer and his wife Phyllis. They were delightful people who had

established this Overseas Council for Theological Education to do the very thing that we felt was necessary. That is to train leaders in third world countries by building up their theological education, by providing professor support, accommodation, individual student support and library support to help them establish their facilities. The thing that impressed me about Dr Spicer was the story of what had happened at the Seoul Theological Seminary. Seoul Theological Seminary had started after the Korean War and had attracted a significant number of the best of Asian theological brains. Very quickly the number of students grew from 200 to 1000 and then to 2000. With the help of the Overseas Council for Theological Education, the Seoul Theological Seminary grew with new student accommodation being built, new classrooms and facilities. With the booming Korean economy and the commitment of Korean Christians to theological seminary development, the seminary began to grow very rapidly indeed. For many years we supported from Australia, America, Canada, New Zealand and Great Britain students in the Seoul Theological College. After a while it was quite obvious that overseas help was no longer necessary and that the Koreans could develop that ministry themselves. I am pleased to say that 20 years after I first started supporting a Korean student, that Seoul Theological Seminary today is the Seoul Christian University with over 30 000 students and a world wide reputation for high academic qualifications.

John Alison, Charles Spicer and myself agreed that we should establish the Overseas Council for Theological Education in Australia. So in those early years after coming to Wesley Mission we established an Australian Board which included John Alison and myself as chairmen, Robert Coles a friend from Victoria and the heir to the GJ Coles fortune, Kimberley Smith an accountant in Victoria and Robert Kerr a distinguished and benevolent Christian businessman. Over the years other people were added to the board.

The major role of the Overseas Council in Australia was to raise funds to support students in third world countries. One of the first countries we began to support was Croatia. Little did we know how much the Balkans were going to appear in world history during the 1990's. The Evangelical Theological Seminary of Croatia was founded by a man who became a close friend Dr Peter Kuzmic. Peter had an excellent PHD, was a very committed evangelical and I first met him in 1983 at a world conference which I attended in the United States. From that moment on we began to provide funds for students at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Croatia. Since the conflict developed in the 1990's with Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Albanian residents in these countries, the Evangelical Theological Seminary has been bombed, blasted by tanks, and suffered destruction, rebuilding and destruction again of all of its facilities yet Dr Peter Kuzmic continued

his lecturing, building up of staff and gathering theological works for the training of young ministers.

Right throughout the Kosovo/Croatian/Serbian conflict the Evangelical Theological Seminary kept training ministers for their own people and in a world where thousands of people perished the presence of their own ministers was of great blessing and comfort to the people. Today there are more than 300 students in the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Croatia and Dr. Peter Kuzmic is still continuing to train students to minister among people in all of that devastated area. Whatever money we raised in Australia and provided for student support and in particular for the rebuilding of their library and replacement of theological works has been abundantly blessed. Two of our good Sydney supporters joined the board of the Overseas Council Mr Phillip Goh of our International Congregation and Mr John Dingle, a Senior Manager of the AMP society and formerly State Manager of Queensland, South Australia and New Zealand. John eventually followed Rob Kerr as Chairman of the board. After 10 years or so, I stepped down from both the Chairmanship of the board and then gradually from fundraising.

Frequently we had visitors from overseas theological colleges visit Australia and we would organise dinners of supporters to support the ministry in those countries. The Overseas Council for Theological Education had provided support for buildings, professors, accommodation and individual students.

One of the theological seminaries that Australians have supported particularly has been the Nusantara Bible Seminary in Indonesia. For more than 20 years we have provided funds for this seminary and today they have about 400 students training for ministry. Their graduate ministers are now ministering right throughout Indonesia.

There are a number of seminaries in India which have been supported in training large numbers of Indian ministers, in places such as the Allahabad Bible Seminary. They have had more than 900 ministers graduate with bachelors and masters degrees of whom over 98% are still in full-time ministry.

Today the Overseas Council for Theological Education are supporting 4,500 students in more than 100 different evangelical theological colleges in 63 countries of the world. Apart from that the council have provided 68 campuses with new buildings, lecture rooms, accommodation blocks and

libraries and have been responsible for providing the facilities in educational centres for more than 30 000 Christian students currently studying for the ministry.

When Jesus gave us the commission to go into all the world, He gave us a command that every Christian should respond to and support. Throughout the last twenty years of my life one of the real pleasures has been to see the results of the support we have given to theological education in third world countries.

Live N' Learn Centre

The Minister of Housing, Dr Andrew Refshauge and myself, declared open a new centre in Miller called the "Live N' Learn Centre" during 2002. There are 29 units each with bedroom, kitchen, laundry, bathroom, and study provided for twenty-nine young people between the years of 16 and 25, who are in danger of homelessness and dropping out of education. These people have a desire to go on with their education but cannot live with their parents. Living on the campus are Wesley Mission tutors and counsellors who teach living skills. Here is a partnership with a local "Live N' Learn" community board, with the Department of Housing providing the building and the Premier's Department making a major grant. The CFME Union provides our staff costs. Wesley Mission runs and manages the staff. Local businesses have provided furniture, white goods and computers. The Commonwealth Government provides financial help for the students and Work for the Dole teams who maintain the gardens. It is a whole of community project. We expect to re-duplicate that program across the whole state, then the nation. Those 29 young people will graduate and cease to be dependent upon welfare, being independent and capable of facing life's stresses.

The whole community is engaged in helping deserving young people to continue with their education and now fall into homelessness and illiteracy. It is prevention at its best. The campus itself is a huge, multi-million dollar property with 32 complete units. The Department of Housing has spent \$800,000 on renovations and it is in first class condition, with only the last units to be finished. Living on the campus are Wesley Mission tutors and counsellors who teach living skills and provide motivation and management.

Mount Druitt Integrated Youth Service

Also in 2002 April was an exciting and rewarding day for the team at the new Mt Druitt Integrated Youth Service and the staff of Wesley Dalmar.

The Mt Druitt Integrated Youth Service, partners and resources existing services in the Mt Druitt area. All of these developments came about as innovative and entrepreneurial programs usually involving many services, support groups and hundreds of people of good will, which we brought together in a co-coordinated way to solve a serious community problem. I guess a seal of approval came in 2003 when at a dinner for 500 or more businessmen and women, I was proclaimed NSW Entrepreneur of the Year.