

# Executive Director's Report 2008



Dr Clive Begg, ACRO Executive Director



Achieving Social Justice

As I have watched the years spill into each other during my time within the not-for-profit sector, the issues for the poor and dispossessed within our community seem not to go away. In fact, the only apparent change is that the faces are different and the numbers are increasing.

I wouldn't be the only practitioner who has maintained a vision for a community in which economic fragility and social dislocation were relics of the past. I also wouldn't be the only practitioner disappointed by the responses – or lack of responses – by our elected representatives in carving a more equitable pathway for those for whom a lack of employment, health and educational opportunity have become impediments that exacerbate their vulnerability.

The current parlous state of the world economy adds little comfort as we prepare for high unemployment and escalating rates of poverty. In a housing

market already stretched to the limit, it seems hard to conceive of further constriction, higher prices and increasing demand. Yet this appears to be the future we face.

The reality of people forced to live in the open or in cars is already well known by our overseas counterparts in the UK and the United States. The response to poverty by successive governments in Australia has been historically to offset social dislocation via basic welfare provisioning. The net effect of this safety net has been to both hide the conspicuousness and to provide fundamental services that maintain a basic level of dignity for those in crisis.

The troubling trend by governments over the past two decades has been to corporatize its operations and to track a conservative pathway accommodating business interests at the expense of civil society. This has created unfortunate con-

sequences. The more recent manifestation of free trade agreements, proudly touted by governments of all persuasions, has the potential to completely dismantle safety nets for the poor. Services stemming from real social need and constructed by not-for-profit organisations are now within the purview of for-profit Companies.

We need to be cautious of the motivations of those who are entering this marketplace and we need to become more vigilant of government policy that "cut and pastes" from failed adventures in other countries. It was John Maynard Keynes, a British economist and proponent of the welfare state who argued that market ideology was indifferent to the concepts of high unemployment and poverty (Theophanous 1994). It is government that must not become indifferent. Its role is to ensure that access to opportunity for citizens to health, education, income, employment, housing and so forth is maintained.

## Executive Members and Key Staff

Ian Stewart, Chairperson

Stephanie Whelan, Secretary

Chris Stewart, Treasurer

Clive Begg, Executive Director

Fiona Begg, Programs Coordinator

Ashley Reid, Program Administrator

### ACRO

- A Public Benevolent Institution
- Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act (#10000)
- Registered as a Charity under the Collections Act (#472)
- <http://www.acro.com.au>
- 07 32 62 6001
- P O Box 440, LUTWYCHE, Q., 4030

I am pleased to report on the following accomplishments for ACRO during the 2007/08 Financial Year.

### Family Centre

The Wacol Family Centre has been re-oriented since the discontinuation of Corrective Services funding. It is now operated as a Collective Resource Centre with ACRO partnering with Sisters Inside and the Samoan Community Advisory Council of Queensland to provide a range of services for offenders in the Wacol precinct. The Samoan group operate on Mondays and Thursdays and their program has been recognised by the Federal Government through the Mental Health Council of Australia. Sisters Inside operates on Wednesdays and Fridays.



ACRO has moved its Family Support project into the Stafford/Wavell Heights area. The organisation has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with various groups in the region partnering the *Stafford Futures Project*. Other partners include The Stafford Community Forum; the Salvation Army Stafford; The Community Place; and, Wilston Grange AFC. The goals for this partnership are to increase connections between Stafford residents and the organisations that exist in the area and to increase resources for the benefit of these residents. ACRO's role is to provide secretariat support; community development advice; and, assistance with the professional supervision of workers.

During the year the following support services were rendered by ACRO Staff:

### Welfare

ACRO continues to provide a raft of support services for those in crisis

within our community. During the year 1326 calls for assistance were received with Emergency Relief Assistance being provided to 320 individuals. In spite of the discontinuance of funding by the Department of Corrective Services, ACRO continues to support those stressed by the prisons experience. During the year information on prisons was provided to 168 persons. Accommodation inquiries accounted for 474 contacts during 2007/08. Other contacts (including Community Development) generated some 255 contacts or enquiries.

### Housing

ACRO has been providing accommodation services since its inception in 1965. The more generalist Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) has been operating since the late 1980s. In the past year 6773 bed nights of accommodation were provided by the organisation. This represents an increase

of 23.5% over the previous year and this increase in need is indicative of

the stresses being experienced in the housing market.



In addition to its Supported Accommodation Program, ACRO has also provided 2302 bed nights of accommodation in its Transitional Housing Program. This project provides short-term accommodation for those who are ineligible for continued supported accommodation but for whom private rental is

DayTripper Fun at Bribie

not an option as a result of cost. ACRO has become a respected provider of this style of accommodation for many refugee groups and culturally diverse individuals.

### Services for Older People

ACRO's Home Assist Secure Program, which has entered its 15th year of operation has provided assistance through 3562 services to clients this past year. Of these, 674 were new clients. In addition to these clients, ACRO has also undertaken 3169 Home and Community Care (HACC) jobs for clients. 2008 was also the year that ACRO em-

ployed its own Occupational Therapist, Miriam Bull. Miriam has provided support to 592 clients.

### Young People on ACRO School Holiday Camp

### Services for Young People

ACRO's School Holiday Recreational Program has continued to successfully operate during the year. Six programs with 48 partici-

pants were undertaken with a wide range of activities across a number of different venues. ACRO continues to provide services for young people from indigenous





and non English speaking backgrounds. I would like to thank Shannon and Julz for running the camps with Melly. Shannon and Julz have now "retired".

#### **ACRO Maintenance Pty Ltd**

There have been some exciting changes to the Company structure during the year. Following the Special General Meeting held in June, the funds initially advanced from consolidated revenue have been returned and is the subject of a Loan Agreement between the Charity and the Company. This will generate income for the Charity for the next ten years. The Company is in the process of issuing new Shares with ACRO Charity becoming a minority shareholder. As discussed and agreed at the Special Meeting, the business of the Company is not core to the work of the Charity. It is nonetheless edifying that the development of this

enterprise will greatly assist in the growth of the Charity away from its dependence upon government funding. In seeking to achieve this goal, ACRO moves closer to meeting its mandate for representation of disadvantaged constituencies without fear of losing the financial backing of government.

#### **Proposal to Purchase a Crisis Accommodation Centre**

For a long time the Executive Com-

mittee has been concerned about the emergent crisis in accommodation as government withdraws from the market of affordable housing. As a consequence, the Charity is considering the purchase of an accommodation facility to house long-term homeless clients. Of considerable concern is the fact that our SAAP clients have had to move on after 3-6 months and are unable to afford private rental – and therefore cycle back to the organisation for short-term crisis housing.

The income from the Company as principal/interest repayment over the next ten years will enable a loan for the purchase.

As there is little indication that long-term housing options will be made available by either State or Federal agencies (at levels that will



**ACRO Maintenance Workers  
Matt and Dale**

satisfy the need generated by economic downturn), the creation of our own housing stock becomes more important. Part of ACRO's mandate is to house persons in crisis and the establishment of our own facility will assist in this regard. This enterprise will also enhance our status as a public benevolent institution (PBI). In addition, any purchase will also consolidate the asset base for the organisation into the future.

#### **DayTripper Program**

This year saw the development of ACRO's DayTripper Program. Initiated by Ashley and Norma Reid,

DayTripper is a monthly program to get older clients out of their homes on bus trips at a low cost (\$5.00 fee). This is a project that addresses an emerging problem for older citizens—social isolation.

This highly successful and appreciated program has included trips to Bribie Island and a winery. The project has been so successful that two buses are now run with an increasing demand being experienced

Funding is being sought for a larger bus and some recurrent funds from various sources. A big thank you to Grace Burton, Frank Koopal and

Graham Kersnovske volunteering their time and support to enable this program to grow.

ACRO would like to express its appreciation to the various government agencies and workers who have assisted with its work this past year. In particular we acknowledge the Department of Communities, the Department of Housing and Disability Services Queensland.

We also acknowledge the support of long-standing ACRO member Ken Hayward who has announced his resignation from the Queensland

Parliament. Ken has been a friend to ACRO for a long time and we wish him well in his retirement.

ACRO also lost a good friend in Arthur Burton who passed away this past year. Arthur was much loved by the many hundreds of families he supported as ACRO's Family Centre Bus Driver. Arthur will also be greatly missed by all ACRO Staff and friends.

Finally I would also like to thank all the ACRO Staff and Volunteers without whom there would be no ACRO. I am honoured by the calibre of people who commit to the organisation and to their outstanding contributions on a daily basis. We are also honoured by the participation of our exceptional Executive Committee: Ian, Chris and Stephanie.

**ACRO Friend and Bus Driver  
Arthur Burton**





# ACRO Workers 2008



(Above Left to Right) Miriam, Fiona, Jennifer and Ashley



Stephanie



Ian



Chris



*Achieving Social Justice*



Ben



Frank



Graham

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Ed

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