

Christmas 2015

Transformations



Standing together with
Australians in need
this Christmas

MISSION
AUSTRALIA | together
we stand

CEO welcome **Christmas newsletter**



For many Australians, Christmas is a time of celebration and joy. But for others, the Christmas choirs, tree lighting, lavish gifts and tradition of family togetherness can make feelings of loneliness seem even more acute.

The people in our communities who are most at risk of loneliness at Christmas time are those who are socially isolated and/or homeless. Loneliness is also a leading contributor to poor mental and physical health.

For Tracy*, the mother featured in this edition of Transformations, recurring mental health issues had blighted her adulthood, leaving her extremely isolated from her local community. Tracy was on the verge of suicide when she was referred to our Brighter Futures program.

As you will read in the following pages, Mission Australia worked closely with Tracy to help her address the trauma she'd experienced as a result of domestic violence. We also helped her to improve her parenting skills because, as we know from our work, when families are strong and stable so are children and communities. Above all, we encouraged Tracy to reconnect with friends and neighbours. As Tracy's self-confidence grew, she began to make long-term plans for her family's future. Today, she has a job that she loves; she does volunteer work; and she is a valued member of her local community.

Tracy's story highlights why Mission Australia's goal to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities is so important, because it draws on the very essence of what makes us human: our connectedness.

Sadly, Tracy is just one of the hundreds of men, women and children who turn

to Mission Australia every day after their life has taken a turn for the worse. Throughout our 155-year history, our work has been focused on supporting Australians in need, and changing lives so that everyone has an opportunity to participate and achieve their potential in life, regardless of their background or circumstance.

"Much of our work to support Australians in need as they journey towards independence is only made possible through the generosity of those who donate. By donating to our programs and services you really are helping to change people's lives."

Each of the stories you will read in the following pages reflect the incredible contribution that our supporters make to the people and communities we serve.

I can't thank you enough for showing such faith in our work. Your compassion and generosity has helped countless men, women and children on their journey to independence.

I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful summer and a very happy Christmas.

Catherine Yeomans
CEO, Mission Australia.

*Names and images have been changed to protect the identities of those we help

Our Goal Reduce homelessness and strengthen communities

Purpose Mission Australia exists to meet human need and to spread the knowledge of the love of God

Our Values Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Perseverance, Celebration

Connect with us



Supporter Administration, GPO Box 3515, Sydney NSW 2001



supporter@missionaustralia.com.au



1800 88 88 68



missionaustralia.com.au



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Kmart Wishing Tree



For the past 28 years, Kmart and their customers have helped to make Christmas a little bit brighter for families in need through the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of the Australian public, the Appeal has received more than 6 million gifts since its inception and has become something of a Christmas tradition both for Kmart and its customers.

This year, the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal will bring joy to many of the families and children Mission Australia assists, with 33 Kmart stores providing gifts directly to Mission Australia.

If you would like to share in the joy of Christmas giving and reach out to families in need, participate in the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal by:

- Donating a gift in-store
- Making a cash or coin contribution in-store
- Purchasing any Kmart Wishing Tree merchandise in-store
- Making an online donation at missionaustralia.com.au/kmartchristmas

The 2015 Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal will run from 16 November until Christmas Eve.

Participating stores:

NSW

- Northgate S/Centre, Hornsby
- Sturt Mall, Wagga Wagga
- Bankstown Square
- Eastgate, Bondi Junction
- Nepean S/Centre, Penrith
- Campbelltown Mall
- Hunter Mall, Maitland
- Garden City, Kotara
- Marrickville Metro

VIC

- Burwood One
- 434 Sydney Rd, Campbellfield
- Fountain Gate, Narre Warren
- Footscray Plaza
- Northland S/Centre, Preston
- Stud Park S/Centre, Rowville
- Victoria Gardens, Richmond

QLD

- Sunnybank Plaza S/Centre
- Arana Hills S/Centre
- Logan Plaza, Woodridge
- Mt Ommaney Centre
- Redbank Plaza
- 106 Barnard Dr, Mt Sheridan
- Sunnybank Hills S/Centre
- Peninsula Fair, Kippa-Ring
- Cairns Central S/Centre

WA

- Maddington Metro S/Centre
- Innaloo S/Centre
- Mirrabooka Square

SA

- Old Port Canal S/Centre
- 127 Rundle Mall, Adelaide
- Munno Para S/Centre, Smithfield
- 400 Churchill Rd, Kilburn

TAS

- Eastlands S/Centre, Rosny

"Kmart is delighted to be supporting the fantastic work that Mission Australia does for families in need through our Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal"
Guy Russo, Kmart Managing Director

Helping every child to thrive

At Mission Australia, we know that early learning opportunities and inclusion are critical to children's development. They give children the social space to learn through play, to connect with other children and to develop a strong sense of who they are.

We believe that every child deserves access to these experiences, regardless of their background or ability. We run 53 early learning centres across Australia, including Parmelia Early Learning Centre, which is located near Perth.

Parmelia caters for 99 children each day, aged between 6 weeks to 5 years. For our younger children, we nurture and support their social skills and independence.

For our kindy children, it's all about school readiness so that they arrive at the school gates with the confidence to make the best of the opportunities that 'big school' brings.

We also offer a second language program to our kindy children. This term they've learned to speak Italian and have had lots of fun finding out about the food and culture.

In our outdoor area, there is a special vegetable and herb garden, where our children can pick produce for use in our daily meals. We also have a magical dome, where children are free to use their imagination. We have outdoor kitchens in each of our yards, as well as compost bins and worm farms to teach our children about sustainable practices.

Families are made to feel very welcome here, with lots of opportunities for parents and other family members to connect over morning tea or a working bee to tidy up our garden.

We love coming together with families to celebrate special events such as Mother's Day when everyone is encouraged to bring a plate of food. This has been a great hit with the children who have enjoyed trying different types of cuisines.

Our annual Parent Information Night is an opportunity to showcase the children's work in an informal setting. It's also a chance for parents to gain a better understanding of the programs we offer. Parents are kept informed of upcoming events and activities through our monthly newsletter, but we also encourage regular feedback from families. By finding out as much as we can about each child's home life and their individual preferences, we can tailor our activities accordingly.

Christmas is celebrated extensively at Parmelia Early Learning Centre and has grown significantly since the centre first opened in 2009.

All our children, families and educators look forward to our Christmas party, especially as Santa makes an appearance every year. Families bring lots of delicious food to share, as well as a gift-wrapped book for Santa to give to their child. There are performances, Christmas carols and great raffle prizes to be won. All the money goes towards more resources for the centre.

Welcoming children with special needs

At Parmelia Early Learning Centre, our dedicated centre manager and team of educators work alongside other professionals, such as occupational therapists, a speech pathologist and the local child and parent centre. Together, we tailor and implement a range of support programs that assist our children with special needs. This includes practising tasks with each child individually, such as learning to use Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) cards so that we can help any non-verbal children to communicate their needs.



Helping Monique to thrive

“Coming together as a community to create a truly inclusive environment for Monique and her family has been an absolute joy. I’m so proud of the commitment and willingness that our staff have shown in helping Monique to overcome barriers so that she can participate and learn alongside other children.”

Jess Gundry, Parmelia Early Learning Centre Manager

Monique Whelan joined our Nursery room in September 2013. She is now transitioning into our Kindy room. Monique is a special little girl who has faced many trials already. We have watched her reach many milestones and achieve great things during her time with us.

The ACECQA National Quality Framework monitors quality to drive continuous improvement and consistency in Australian education and care services. Parmelia Early Learning Service has recently received the highest rating in all 7 quality areas:

- Educational program and practice
- Children’s health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- Leadership and service management

Thank you from Monique’s Mum

Dear Mission Australia,

Parmelia Early Learning Centre has done a great job in helping my daughter Monique. Monique was born with a very rare chromosomal condition called Trisomy 20 Mosaicism. This condition comes with many difficulties, including some physical setbacks and developmental delays.

Monique started attending the centre just before she turned two.

It was a big decision for her father and me to place her into childcare as we had always been so protective over her and everything she has endured at a young age.

The centre was nothing but accommodating and welcoming with our situation. Monique was not yet walking and they accepted her into Nursery 2, a room that had never had a child not walking before.

Throughout Monique’s time at Mission Australia she has had different accessories that have meant extra care and attention. She is required to wear special orthotic boots daily, and due to scoliosis, she has had a torso plaster cast that could not get wet. She wore this casting for 5 months and the centre did everything they could to help Monique through this period.

Monique is now required to wear a fibreglass back brace that must be worn all day. This needs to be removed at nappy changes/toilet time, and the centre has been fantastic at making sure it is handled and worn correctly. Monique also has a sneaky habit of taking it off, but everyone knows to keep an eye on her in case this happens.

The centre has also been very supportive with Monique’s therapy. Her therapists have visited the centre and everyone does try and use her PECS communication cards with her. Monique is non-verbal and



we are trying to instil the PECS method to help her communicate. Between the centre, her therapists and us, we have all worked together to try and help Monique thrive in this environment.

I love hearing about Monique’s achievements and her educator, Sam, never fails to get excited and tell me when they have had success with communication, whether it be with a PECS communication card or a verbal or physical prompt.

Although I was hesitant about seeing my daughter going into childcare initially, I do believe it was the best decision we could have made. We have loved the support, protection and encouragement everyone at the centre offers her.

She has learnt so much from all the educators and other children and we have seen her go from strength to strength. The centre has done, and continues to do, an amazing job at supporting our family and Monique with her special needs.

Regards,
Carla Whelan

Leave a lasting gift

Every day, Mission Australian reaches out to thousands of Australians in need as they journey towards independence. **Without the donations we receive from our supporters, many of our services would cease to exist.**

From supporting a particular appeal to signing up for regular monthly giving, our supporters donate to help Australians in need in a variety of different ways. Leaving a gift of money or assets in your Will to Mission Australia is a very special act of generosity and foresight because it enables us to allocate funds to areas where we can make the biggest difference.

In the past 12 months, 56 people bequeathed a total of \$4.6M to Mission Australia in their Will.

With a focus on early intervention and prevention, these donations will help us to support thousands of Australians in need across our services to target homelessness and provide integrated family support; early childhood education; mental health services; youth programs; access to safe and secure housing; and programs to build capacity, resilience and opportunity for local communities.

One of the bequests we received was from the late Myrtle Cusack. Myrtle had left details in her Will that in the event of her death, her solicitor was

to arrange for her home to be sold and for Mission Australia to use the proceeds to help children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We were incredibly grateful to receive \$1.2M from the sale of Myrtle's home, which we have allocated to seven different services that support vulnerable children as per Myrtle's wishes.

For information about leaving a bequest to Mission Australia in your Will, please contact Christine Thomas in our Bequest Team on 0409 315 062.

Parents Staying Connected

The largest portion of Myrtle's bequest was allocated to our Parents Staying Connected program, based at Chigwell House in Hobart. This invaluable program supports disadvantaged families, many of whom are at risk of homelessness, helping them to build strong community support networks and improve the health and wellbeing of parents and children.

We recently helped 34 year-old Tara*, who was struggling to raise her young family. Living in dark, overcrowded conditions with no space for her children to play, no parks nearby and few local amenities, had left Tara feeling stressed and lonely. The family learned that their tenancy was unexpectedly coming to an end, leaving them at risk of homelessness.

Chigwell House serves as a neighbourhood hub, offering a range of community programs and accommodation to support vulnerable families. A dedicated case worker helped the family to complete applications for public

housing and bond assistance, and worked closely with Tara to improve her parenting skills, giving her the confidence to connect with other mums in her local community.

We worked closely with Tara and her children to make sure that everyone's needs were being met. The family have maintained their tenancy and have built strong friendships with their neighbours. Tara remains

a valued member of our Parents Staying Connected Program and now takes an active role in welcoming new families to the group.

"My family would probably be homeless without Mission Australia's support. Now our future is bright." Tara



*Name and image has been changed to protect the identities of those we help.

Join Mission Australia in the New York Marathon



New York is a dream destination for many people. It's also home to one of the best road marathon events in the world.

Just walking through this legendary city is exhilarating. Now picture yourself pounding the pavements of this concrete jungle as part of Team Mission Australia in the 2016 New York Marathon.

From Staten Island to Manhattan, as you cross the Queensboro Bridge, millions of people on the sidelines will be cheering you on, urging you to dig deeper.

Imagine your sense of fulfilment as you cross the finish line in Central Park, knowing that you've raised vital funds to help vulnerable Australian families in need to gain their independence.

To join Team Mission Australia, you need to fundraise \$10,000 (we will help you get there) and be ready and willing to train hard for this long distance run.

The marathon is on Sunday 6 November 2016, so there's plenty of time to train and plan your trip.

By taking part in this incredible adventure, you will be raising the funds to give vulnerable children the childhood they deserve, offering them and their families long-term stability.

For more details or to register your interest, visit our New York Marathon 2016 event page inspiredadventures.com.au/mission-australia-new-york-marathon-2016

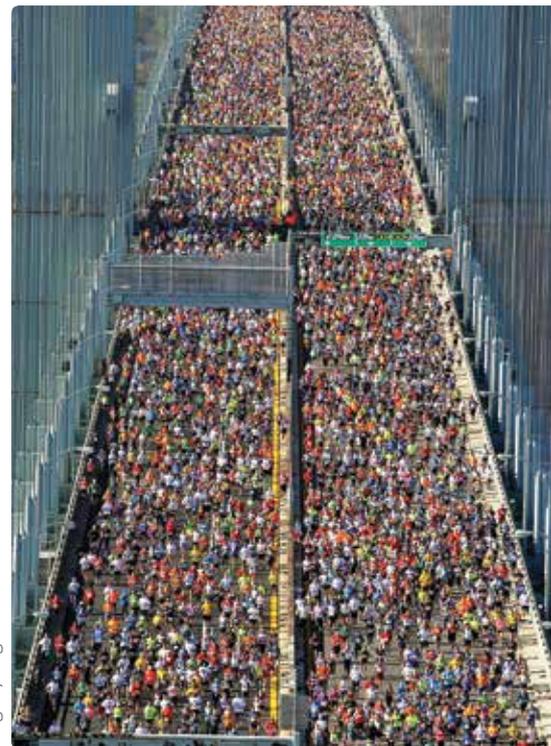


Image by Brightroom

A home with heart

Mission Australia has a proud history of standing together with Australians in need of all ages.

Our residential aged-care facilities in Sydney, the award-winning Charles Chambers Court and Annie Green Court, provide a warm and welcoming environment for aged Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes people who have previously lived on the street, in crisis accommodation or in insecure housing.

Residents come to our services with little or no financial resources or personal belongings. Most have experienced significant trauma and suffer from undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions. Some of them are suffering from the effects of malnutrition, poor personal hygiene and ill-health due to their experience of homelessness. Many have complex behavioural issues that need to be addressed and carefully managed. Mission Australia provides the custom



Artist's impression of Benjamin Short Grove

designed, physical environment and specialised social services that these residents need, to feel safe and supported, and to retain their dignity.

A home filled with love and laughter

Earlier this year, Mission Australia received approval to build another aged-care facility in Orange, which will be named Benjamin Short Grove after our founder. This 60-bed, residential facility will provide high quality aged

care for local men and women who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or socially or financially disadvantaged. We estimate construction will be completed in late 2016/early 2017.

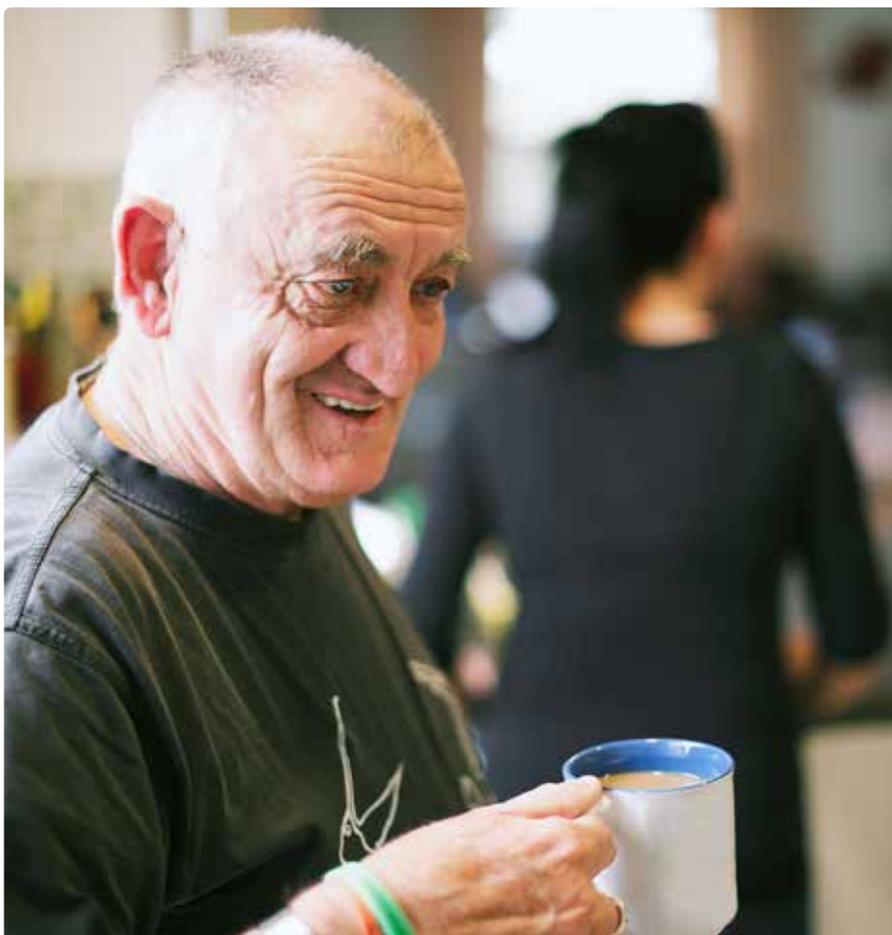
Demand for aged-care services is skyrocketing in the Orange/Cabonne area, with a growing number of older Australians experiencing homelessness.

Winters in the Orange region are extremely cold, and in extreme cases, vulnerable people are taking refuge in stormwater drains or rubbish compactors in a desperate bid to keep warm.

In March, we launched a Capital Appeal to raise \$2M. So far our tally stands at just over \$1M. When we reach our target we will be able to fit-out and furnish the facility to make it feel like home for the residents.

In addition to the obvious benefits this centre will bring to the local community, Benjamin Short Grove will create up to 40 ongoing jobs, source all related services locally and employ around 100 people during the construction period. This aligns well with our goal to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities.

For information about Benjamin Short Grove or to make a donation to this particular service please contact our Supporter Services Team on 1800 88 88 68.



A Christmas cake like Nana used to make

If you are looking for ways to impress your holiday guests this Christmas, give this delicious, but simple, fruit cake a go.

It was once made for our Bequest Coordinator, Christine Thomas by Diana, a loyal benefactor who has since passed away. Christine loves the cake so much that she bakes it every Christmas – much to the delight of her family and friends.

For Christine, it serves as a reminder that many of us share a common heritage through the food of our childhood.

Ingredients

- 2 cups mixed dried fruit
- 1 tbs butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup cold water
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup of self-raising flour
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 tsp bicarb soda
- 1 tsp mixed spice (optional)

Method

Preheat oven to 130°C and grease a 20 x 20cm cake tin.

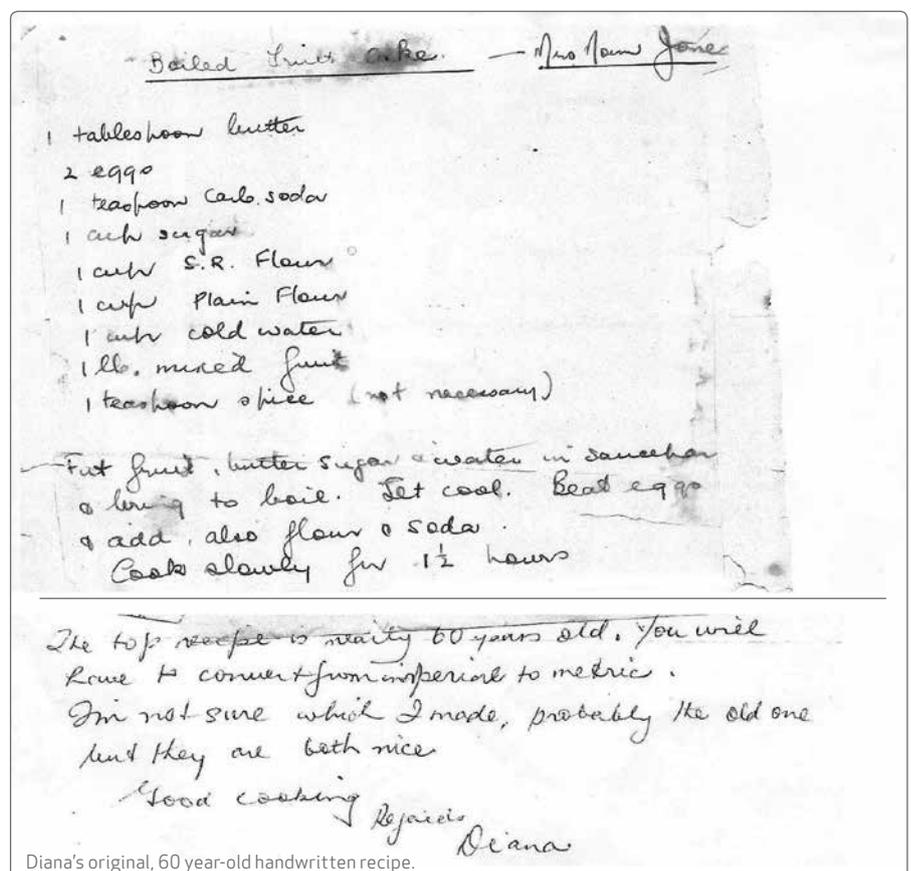
Place fruit, butter, sugar and water in a large saucepan and bring to the boil. Set aside to cool.

Once cooled, beat eggs and add to the fruit mix with the flour, bicarb soda and mixed spice, if using.

Transfer mixture to cake tin and bake for 1.5 hours. Serve once cold with custard or vanilla icecream.

“This 60-year-old recipe speaks of a time when recipes were swapped over morning tea with friends and neighbours, rather than gleaned from the pages of a website or a glossy magazine. Even better, it’s delicious and is so easy to make!”

Christine Thomas, Bequest Coordinator



Diana's original, 60 year-old handwritten recipe.

A brighter future for Tracy this Christmas

Although loneliness is a common experience, some people are particularly vulnerable. This includes single parents, people without work or those living with a disability. Moreover, feeling lonely for a long time can lead to physical and mental health problems.

When 40-year-old mother of two, Tracy* was referred to our Brighter Futures Program, we had grave concerns for her mental health and wellbeing. Tracy had sustained a serious back injury as a result of a domestic violence incident when she was younger. This had left her heavily dependent on pain killers.

Domestic violence has a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing, but the psychological consequences of violence can be just as serious as the physical effects.

Although Tracy had ended the abusive relationship years ago, it had left her with serious mental health issues. Anxious, depressed and with no self-esteem, Tracy struggled to care for her children, 15-year-old Caleb and 2-year-old Summer. Caleb's father had died when Caleb was a baby and Tracy was estranged from Summer's father Phil.

Mission Australia puts a lot of importance on face-to-face contact with people. We know that by building relationships and establishing trust with our clients, we can empower them to make real changes in their lives.

Emily, a Brighter Futures caseworker, was assigned to support Tracy. She began to visit Tracy at home and built a rapport with her. Tracy was really starting to open up to Emily when, tragically, Phil committed suicide.

Tracy was already socially isolated, but life-changing events such as bereavement can lead to acute loneliness. In Tracy's case, her grief over Phil's suicide triggered a relapse. She became completely withdrawn and was almost bedridden. The family was terrified that she would also commit suicide.

Emily took Tracy to hospital, where she was immediately referred to a local mental health facility. Tracy absconded



the next day and it took Emily three days to track her down and persuade her to return home.

From that moment, Emily became the whole family's lifeline.

Grief-stricken and feeling sidelined by Tracy's mental illness, Caleb had started missing school. Emily arranged for him to have the counselling he desperately needed. She also decided that it would be better for Caleb to live with relatives so that he could do his HSC in a supportive environment.

Emily arranged grief counselling for Tracy. Not only did she have bereavement issues, but she had never addressed the trauma of domestic violence. Finding Tracy safe and secure accommodation made an immediate difference to her wellbeing. As her self-confidence grew, Tracy started to set some long-term goals with Emily. She applied to TAFE to study community services and with

Emily's support, became a volunteer at the local neighbourhood centre.

Tracy graduated from TAFE and is now a valued staff member at the local youth centre. She loves her new-found independence and the sense of purpose her work brings.

Caleb is back living at home and working as an apprentice electrician and little Summer is thriving at school.

Thanks to the loyal support that Mission Australia receives from wonderful supporters like you, Tracy and her family's life has been transformed. They can't wait to celebrate Christmas this year, surrounded by their friends and neighbours.

*All names and images have been changed to protect the privacy of the people we help.

Spirit matters

Picture your happy place. Is it your favourite coffee shop, library or even the local pub? Maybe it's simply a chair in the sun where you can watch the world go by?

When I think about any of these places, I picture people. Where I live, these places help to unify people, forging a strong sense of local connection and helping to promote the regular, random encounters from which a wealth of community life can grow.

In his bestselling book, *Bowling Alone*, respected American social researcher Robert Putnam reveals that over the last 25 years, there's been a disturbing trend in civic life. We no longer know our neighbours, we meet with friends less frequently and we belong to fewer organisations. According to Putnam, more of us go bowling than ever before, but we are not bowling together. He attributes this decline to factors such as television, the internet and changes to the workplace.

At Christmas, our connections with family, friends and neighbours are so important. Sharing a meal, exchanging gifts or even just a casual conversation are ways that bring people together, enriching lives and strengthening communities.

Since 1975, Mission Australia has held Christmas Lunch in the Park in Perth, where I am based. It's open to everyone, particularly those who are isolated, disadvantaged or experiencing homelessness. Each year, more than 2,200 people, families and children come together to share great food, music and entertainment. Santa also comes with a gift for everyone. For me, Christmas in the Park is an incredible celebration of community, bringing people from all walks of life together.



This Christmas, let's all reach out to other people and foster the sense of belonging and community that is so important to our health and wellbeing.

In the words of the Apostle Paul:
"Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; shed tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back. Discover beauty in everyone."
 (Romans 12:16-17)

Scott Vawser
 State Chaplain, Mission Australia



Christmas on hold

It's hard to make
your children's
Christmas wishes
come true when
you are homeless

**Help bring back some
joy this Christmas**

Please donate today

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

 Complete the enclosed coupon

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