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## A HISTORY OF THE HILLS COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP. 1983 - 2003

Lyla Elliott

WITH UPDATE FOR YEARS 2004 - 2008

**Alice Nelson** 

ISBN 978 0 646 49956 7

Published by Hills Community Support Group

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First Published 2003

Revised Edition 2008

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Printed by Success Print

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## **PREFACE**

Writing the twenty-year history of the Hills Community Support Group was more difficult than I had anticipated. In 1995, I researched and wrote the story of roughly the first decade as an essay for a university history unit. Having this as a starting point, I thought it would be relatively easy to review that and add another ten years. It was not. In the second decade of its existence the HCSG was in a constant state of change, expanding existing programs, demonstrating innovation and creativity in the development of new ones in response to consumer needs, and transforming itself into a large highly professional organisation. It was also not a simple task to write in historical form about a living, breathing, dynamic organisation that was continuing to change as I wrote.

However, in mid 2002, I optimistically began a project for which I had twelve months to research printed records, interview thirty people, transcribe the tapes, write the story, type the manuscript and get it to the printer in time for production for the book launching at the HCSG twenty-year celebration on 12 July 2003!

There are two people, in particular, whom I should like to thank for helping me to achieve this. Firstly, Ann Palmer of the HCSG office, who responded efficiently and with good humour whenever I asked for assistance, whether in providing HCSG records or photographs or arranging interviews with Coordinators. Secondly, my husband, Jack White, who with great patience provided coaching in how to use the computer properly, and at times rescued a panic-stricken wife who thought she had lost a complete chapter she had just typed. He also assisted in editing the manuscript. I am indebted to these two people for their invaluable assistance.

While it was a challenging project, it was also an extremely rewarding one. It was a privilege to be able to meet many of the staff and consumers who, by their interviews, helped me to write a book about people. I would like to express my appreciation to them for providing valuable information and sharing with me their stories, some sad, some hilarious.

I particularly enjoyed morning tea and a lot of laughs with the three delightful members of the Get Away Club, Doreen Hawkins, Vicky Turner and Jean Sutcliffe. My thanks also go to them and Minna Wells, another member of the Club, for their visits to the Battye Library and the *Hills Gazette* office in search of photographs for the book.

One of the problems of writing a history about an organisation like HCSG is that there have been so many people, both staff and volunteers, who have, over the years, contributed a great deal to the organisation and those it is meant to serve, that it is impossible to mention everybody. I am very conscious of the fact that there could be people who may be disappointed at being overlooked. If this is so, I hope they will forgive me, but enjoy reading the book anyway. I am sure they will be able to relate in some way to the stories they read.

LYLA ELLIOTT

## INTRODUCTION

Since colonisation, voluntary organisations have, to varying degrees, played a role in the care of the aged and infirm in the Australian community. In the nineteenth century, primary responsibility rested on families, and when this failed, on private charitable organisations. It was not until the twentieth century that the State accepted the concept that the institutional method of care was inappropriate for the destitute but well aged, and that a pension should be considered as an alternative.

Old Age Pension schemes were introduced in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, but these were superseded by the Commonwealth Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act of 1908. The Treasurer, Sir John Forrest, in introducing the legislation, made it quite clear the pension was only intended for destitute aged or invalid persons- the "deserving poor".<sup>1</sup>

Up until the middle of the twentieth century, public and official thinking was still orientated towards institutional services for the frail aged and handicapped. In 1954, the Commonwealth Government introduced the Aged Persons Homes Act, which provided funds to religious and charitable organisations to build aged persons' housing.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1963 the Commonwealth approved a Nursing Home daily subsidy of \$2 per person and in 1968 an additional benefit of \$3 per day for patients classified as needing intensive care. The new benefits "encouraged a belief among certain investors that nursing homes were low risk high profit financial ventures." The result was a marked increase in the number of private nursing homes conducted for profit.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until 1969 that the Commonwealth took action to provide community home care services through the States Grants (Home Care) Act and in 1970 the Delivered Meals Subsidy Act on a cost-sharing basis with the States. Three years later, there were still too many people in nursing homes who should not have been there. *The Medical Journal of* 

*Australia* of November 1972 claimed that twenty-five percent of patients in nursing homes had no clinical reason for being there.<sup>5</sup>

By 1973, the rapid growth in private nursing homes and the excessive profits being made caused the Commonwealth Government to introduce controls over them. In that year, too, the Government provided additional funds under the States Grants (Home Care) Act to try to redress the heavy bias towards institutional care by stimulating community home care services.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the 1970s, it became obvious that the legislation was not flexible enough to respond to the individual needs of frail elderly people and younger people with disabilities and the carers of these groups. A House of Representatives Committee brought down recommendations in 1982 which led to the establishment of the Home and Community Care Program in 1985.<sup>7</sup> The HACC Act brought under the one umbrella existing programs which provided home nursing, home help, delivered meals and paramedical services mainly for the elderly. It also changed the target group for community care services to: the frail elderly and younger people with disabilities, who would otherwise be at risk of premature or inappropriate admission to residential care, and the carers of these groups. The type of service that could be provided under the program was also broadened. Service providers eligible for HACC funding were State/Territory government, community organisations, local government and religious and charitable organisations.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s there was a dramatic change in both official and community ideology in respect to people with disabilities, prompted by Wolfensberger's Normalization theory which had emerged in the 1970s. This theory, later known as Social Role Valorisation, challenged the somewhat demeaning and paternalistic treatment of people with disabilities at that time. It was argued they were entitled to a valued social role with the same fundamental rights as others in the community. These rights were spelled out in the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons adopted by the United Nations Organisation in 1975, and included greater self-determination and participation in the wider community.9

In Western Australia the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped persons was introduced by the State Government in 1986. This was followed in 1991 by the Bureau for Disability Services. The roles of the two bodies were amalgamated in 1993 with the establishment of the Disability Services Commission. The Commission was given responsibility for policy and program development and planning of services for people with disabilities. The principles and objectives spelled out in the

legislation followed largely those of Wolfensberger. Funding was to be made available to individuals, service providers and public authorities who satisfied the requirements of the WA Disability Services Act.<sup>10</sup>

The role of local government in social welfare did not begin to emerge until the 1970s. Prior to that time, most local authorities saw their role more as physical rather than social planners, and this continued well into the next decade.

The Whitlam Government, during its term of office (1972-1975), was the catalyst for change in local government thinking and involvement in social welfare issues. It greatly increased funding and encouraged local authorities to accept more responsibility in this area. Many Councils took advantage of this challenge, but many did not.

Over these two decades, dramatic changes had taken place in society at a number of levels. Australia saw the nuclear family under challenge and a decline in the extended family; more married women entering the workforce; greater pressures on young people and families through unemployment; and earlier retirement occurring when there was increasing longevity in the population. At the same time as these changes were occurring, greater expectations developed concerning the quality of life of people generally and of disadvantaged groups in particular.

In the Shire of Mundaring, the initiative would be taken by a dynamic group calling itself the Hills Community Support Group. In the two decades following its founding in 1983 as an organisation run purely by volunteers, it would grow into a \$5 million enterprise providing quality services for 1500 people who were frail aged, people with disabilities and youth at risk. This is their story.

THE FIRST DECADE



## **GENESIS**

## "We had a great team of volunteers"

The Hills Community Support Group had its genesis in the Swan View area in the Shire of Mundaring.

In 1982, Ron Dullard, a candidate for election to the Shire Council, went doorknocking in the Swan View and Midvale areas. During the course of this, he became aware of the fact that there were many isolated, lonely, elderly people in the community who needed support in various ways. His efforts to enlist the aid of a welfare group in a nearby Shire were unsuccessful.

During the 1982-83 Christmas holiday period a number of women, including his wife Helen, volunteered their services to a program providing recreational activities for young people with intellectual disabilities at the Brown Park Recreation Centre in Swan View. At the end of the program, the women concerned realised there were many needs in their community that were not being met and decided to do something about it.<sup>1</sup>

They acquired information and advice about how to go about establishing a support group, and by 13 June 1983 were ready to proceed. A lunchtime meeting was held on that day at the Recreation Centre when it was agreed by those present to name the group "The Hills Community Support Group" (HCSG) and to set up a Steering Committee comprised of Joy Baker, Lyn Mohr, Lorraine Evans, Sonia Michaelson, Jean Scott, Helen Dullard, Kevin Brown, Irma Chappell and Nola Lee. Helen Dullard, Sonia Michaelson and Jean Scott were selected to work as Chairman and Secretaries respectively. Other decisions included the aims of the Group, hours of business and an approach to the Shire of Mundaring for support. The support to be asked for included a telephone, a desk, volunteers' insurance and the advertising and chairing of a public meeting to be held in July. <sup>2</sup> The purpose of the public meeting was to verify the need for the proposed service, to publicise it and to seek more volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

The birth of the HCSG would be the catalyst which would force the Mundaring Shire Council to accept some financial responsibility for welfare services within its boundaries. In 1983 there was a lack of unanimity among Shire Councillors as to whether the Council should become involved in the provision of these services. Some Councillors were concerned that there could be a repeat of a previous situation where recreation officers were appointed by local authorities with State Government funding, which was subsequently cut, leaving them to pick up the bill. Others were just ideologically opposed to the proposition that local government should become active in this area. However, the Council agreed to provide advertising, invitations and a chairman for the public meeting in the person of Councillor Ron Dullard.

The Hills Community Support Group in conjunction with The Shire of Mundaring have called a Public Meeting 7.30pm July 12th Swan View Community Contre Brown Park , Salisbury Road , Swan View. То · Establish the need. · Publicise the service. · Call for Volunteers.

Public notice for HCSG meeting held 12 July 1983.

#### FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting, held in the Brown Park Recreation Centre on the evening of 12 July 1983, was an outstanding success. It was a credit to those women whose initiative and enthusiasm to fill the unmet needs particularly of the frail aged and people with disabilities had touched community sentiment. The response from the public was overwhelming with an attendance of 90 people, leaving standing room only. Guest speakers were local Members of Parliament Gavan Troy and Gordon Hill, the Swan Districts Hospital Social Worker and representatives from Swan Caring, Volunteer Task Force and Northam Care and Share. In addition, those attending included representatives from the Shire of Mundaring, Churches, community groups, Service Clubs and other interested residents.

The meeting recognised the need and endorsed the formation of the HCSG. It was agreed to seek Council support for space to operate in the Brown Park Recreation Centre, the use of some office furniture and administrative costs. At the end of the meeting fifty-five enthusiastic volunteers had signed up to offer their services to the new organisation.<sup>4</sup>

The decisions of the public meeting were before the Mundaring Shire Council meeting seven days later when, with some reluctance, it decided to lend its support to the Group by agreeing to provide the accommodation, administrative costs and the furniture. Because Councillors were not altogether convinced the venture would succeed, it was suggested to the Council that the furniture would be of considerable use to the Community Centre if the HCSG's need diminished! It was estimated that following the establishment of the Group the annual operating costs would be approximately \$690.<sup>5</sup>

The first meeting of the HCSG volunteers was convened a week later on 26 July to elect Executive Officers and to discuss the Group's future direction. The first office bearers elected were: Chairperson (later President): Stephen Dellar; Secretary: Jopie Peetoom; Treasurer: Joy Baker; and Coordinator: Helen Dullard.

Those volunteers who initiated the idea were thrilled at having established an organisation which would enable them to help improve the quality of life of many local people. They lacked confidence at first, but gained this with experience and the satisfaction of being able to help vulnerable people.<sup>6</sup>

#### FIRST OFFICE

This is it!

Helen Dullard recalled the atmosphere in the early days:

We were very anxious about – whatever had we done and whatever had we let ourselves in for, and when our first 'phone call came through I remember thinking 'this is it!' It was John Hodder from Chidlow wanting to go to R.P.H. and that was our first call. The furniture was sparse. At least we had a 'phone. We worked behind this screen that kept falling over when we knocked it and the pins wouldn't stay in, so anything we stuck on it fell off. Each weekend the desk was broken into by the vandals who came to the Centre, so it was nothing for us to find that we couldn't get into our desk every Monday...That was a common occurrence. But we had a great team of volunteers and certainly what came out of the first two public meetings was that we had what I always used to refer to as almost an Ecumenical Council. We had representatives from almost every Church that you can imagine, and it was a great feeling of support for each other. There were no divisions about religion. It's something that I remember feeling very good about. Everybody talked about what religion they were and it made no difference. They were all focused on what they were there for.

Interview by author 28 September 1995.

The office was staffed by ten volunteers each working for half a day with one person, Helen Dullard, attending virtually every day to coordinate or provide backup. Most districts in the Shire had a volunteer who acted as Area Coordinator where she lived. This involved visiting and liaising with volunteers and providing information.<sup>7</sup>

The Group, soon after its founding, adopted a logo designed by Stewart Lee, which was inspired by Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel in Rome and which depicted two hands, one reaching out in support. Ron and Helen Dullard had conceived this idea of a helping hand as well as the motto "A Conscious Involvement." The sentiment behind those words would guide the philosophy of the HCSG for the next twenty years. The founders were determined that every effort would be

made to consciously listen to and understand the needs and wishes of people as individuals. The organisation would be consumer driven and when decisions were made they would be conscious decisions based on the best interests of consumers.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE CONSTITUTION

At its meeting on 23 August 1983, the Group adopted its constitution, which contained the following objectives:

- To provide a caring community service for those residents of the Shire of Mundaring and adjacent areas who need support, assistance, advice and encouragement in their daily lives.
- To provide practical non-directive assistance to those residents by simple useful services which can be given by volunteers of the support group.
- To develop a comprehensive knowledge of all the caring services, both voluntary and professional, within the Shire of Mundaring and surrounding Shires in order to coordinate and facilitate referrals to those services for residents needing a particular service.
- 4. To provide a public forum to debate the needs of the Shire of Mundaring residents and to draw those needs to the attention of Governments and other relevant organisations and people.
- 5. To develop whatever other programs and services are needed to meet the first two objectives of this constitution, where it is taken by the Group that the service is within the resources of the Group, and further to provide a service which is new or complementary to those existing in the Shire.<sup>9</sup>

Membership was open to any person living in the Shire of Mundaring over the age of sixteen years and willing to abide by the Constitution. The Group was officially launched on 5 November 1983 at the Shire Civic Reception area and in March 1984 became an incorporated body. $^{10}$ 



#### **EARLY VOLUNTEERS**

As the Hills Community Support Group became known, it continued to attract volunteers. Two months after its establishment it had seventy on its books. The Group's monthly meetings, held in the Mundaring Primary School, were meetings of volunteers. These meetings made the decisions on running the organisation and kept volunteers informed about what was happening in each area. They were well attended. They

The duties carried out by volunteers were many and varied. Some worked in the office, some provided transport in their own vehicles to doctors, hospital and shopping. Some did home visits. One of the earliest volunteers, Edith Hickey, performed most of these tasks. In

addition, her concern about lonely elderly housebound people led her to arrange occasional morning teas or picnics. She then organised a fortnightly "Friendship Luncheon" at the Churchill Brook Family Centre in Swan View, cooking a meal for 30 with the help of a couple of friends, and arranging transport for them. Other requests for help had found her waiting at a hospital at one o'clock in the morning, finding someone dead on the kitchen floor and having to arrange the funeral because there was no family.<sup>13</sup>

The joys and sadness of a volunteer.

### Edith Hickey talks about her time as a volunteer:

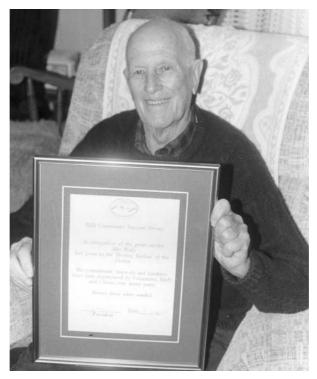
I started out just as a driver taking the elderly folk to the doctors, hospitals, etc. My very first real assignment was a young lady of 34 with cancer...was dying of cancer. I was told it would only be for two weeks, because that was the time she was expected to live, and she had cats and dogs and chooks to be looked after. So I went in and it went on for three and a half years. Four or five times a day I would go to her house because of her cancer condition and fully looked after her for that length of time. But in between times I did doctors' surgery visits, shopping, whatever they wanted doing...Apart from the transport I did the shopping trips with the bus. It started out fortnightly. I would pick them up from the villages or their homes and take them for two hours to Midland Gate shopping or wherever they wanted to go shopping and then a return trip. I started out with about seven and ended with about thirty every week...I did the Library on Wheels from the Greenmount Library ... Started out with about six folk who couldn't get out to the library, so I used to take them library books ... Out of that I think the biggest thing was that people got a visitor - somebody to have a cup of tea with along with their books...By the time I had finished that I think I was doing about twenty houses which just got too much by the time you've had so many cups of tea a day...What started out taking me about two hours, by the time I had finished was taking me two or three days to get around everybody. So then we just split it up.

...There were just so many enjoyable moments, and the singa-longs on the buses when we went on a bus trip, whether it was a Support Group's bus or I'd have a bus from somewhere, always we'd have a good old sing-a-long on the buses coming home. That just topped off everything, to know they are usually home behind their four walls so sad and lonely and you can get them out there and altogether. It's just so great. I would advise anybody to do it.

Interview by author 10 October 1995.



When the Red Cross Society ceased providing transport services in the Hills in 1983, two of their drivers, Alby Wells and Mrs. Tommy Bromley, offered their services to the HCSG. Both drove for the Group for many years until their own poor health stopped them. Alby Wells had often driven five or six days a week for long hours to and from the city. They were fondly remembered by people who knew them for their friendly, conscientious help to anyone needing transport to doctors, hospital appointments and other places.<sup>14</sup>



Alby Wells with his Service Award from the HCSG.

Another volunteer who also joined in July 1983 was Corry Barbour. She offered her services over the years in a number of ways. These included working in the office, at one time keeping the books for five years, helping in the Day Centre, and driving people to outings and appointments, sometimes early in the morning or on weekends spending hours on the road.<sup>15</sup> Mrs Barbour would become renowned for her dedicated service to the HCSG over the following two decades.

Volunteers also took over and ran the monthly Seniors Social Afternoon which had been started by Bob Evans, the Recreation Officer at the Brown Park Recreation Centre. What began as a small afternoon tea for a few lonely people grew into a seniors concert for eighty or ninety and was run by the HCSG for more than nine years.<sup>16</sup>

The importance of the support and friendship offered by the Group to lonely isolated people was shown in a telephone call from Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital one day. The hospital rang to say one of its patients had put the Hills Community Support Group down on the admission form as "Next of Kin."<sup>17</sup>



Back row: June Parfitt, Joy Baker, Eleanor Gwilliam, Helen Dullard, Helen Creagh. Front row: Minna and Alby Wells.

#### **COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY**

Increased public knowledge about the Group not only attracted volunteers, it also resulted in a growing number of calls for help. It decided that, if it was going to become an effective community organisation, it should be more proactive and undertake some research which would enable planning to take place. At its September 1983 meeting, it decided to apply for a grant under the Commonwealth Government's Community Employment Program (CEP) to employ a research officer. The application was successful and the Group employed a Social Science graduate, Jopie Peetoom, for a period of 24 weeks to undertake a survey. Peetoom commenced work on 1 February 1984 with the following terms of reference:

To develop a project that would:

- give demographic information on the Shire's population;
- identify, as far as possible, areas of social need in the Shire;
- seek public opinion on existing services;
- elicit suggestions on improving existing services as well as suggestions for new services and programmes needed in the Shire; and

To produce a report on the findings of the project.<sup>19</sup>

The project was managed by a Steering Committee and used 65 volunteers to collect information by way of questionnaire.

The Survey provided comprehensive information about community attitudes and needs. It not only reinforced the need for the Hills Community Support Group, but proved to be a valuable tool in providing credibility for the Group in future submissions for funding. It also activated public awareness about welfare issues.<sup>20</sup>

Jopie Peetoom would later become employed as the Shire of Mundaring's Community Development Officer and play a significant role in the HCSG as a member of its Management Committee.

Fundraising was an important activity of the volunteers for an organisation which to begin with had minimal input from Government sources. Great resourcefulness was shown and much hard work put into the many ways in which money was raised. This included selling cakes, hamburgers, baked potatoes or fairy floss at the Swan View Show or other local events, raffles, garage sales, concerts, toymaking, swap meets and "cash for cans." Donations came in from Service Clubs and other local groups in money or goods such as a piano, a refrigerator, bowling equipment or furniture.

#### FIRST DAY CENTRE

Within a year, the Group had acquired a nine-seater bus with assistance from the Lotteries Commission, the Shire and local Service Clubs, and in March 1985 opened a Day Centre at the Bentley Park Hall



Stoneville Day Centre March 1985. From left: Charlotte Evans, Laurel Hartnell, Ivy Conradi, Jock, Ted McCamey, Marjorie Caporn.

in Stoneville, a building owned by the Shire of Mundaring. In response to an approach by the HCSG for assistance with establishment costs for the Day Centre, the Shire Council contributed \$250.<sup>21</sup> The Centre was run every Thursday by volunteers coordinated by Laurel Hartnell, herself a volunteer, and provided much needed social interaction for frail aged residents.

Laurel Hartnell's memories of the first Day Centre in Stoneville:

There was a need to help the elderly lonely people in our community. In 1984-85 the Hills Community Support Group was approached by Mike Warren, the Occupational Therapist from Swan Districts Hospital to form a Day Centre for the invalid and frail aged citizens of the Mundaring area. I offered my support to whoever took on this task. I had no experience except I loved being with the elderly. As there was no one else to fill this position, I took on the job as Coordinator with the help and advice of the HCSG and Occupational Therapist, Sandra Wilson.

The only venue available was the Bentley Park Community Hall in Stoneville. On 14th March 1985 we started in this venue. This was a transportable building at the far end of the park, edging on the bush behind it. It was very pleasant, quiet, and you could hear the birds. It seemed ideal at the time for the few people we had then. The HCSG supplied a vehicle which was a Holden shuttle-van converted to seat passengers. Peter Hesse was the volunteer driver and he picked up clients about 9.30 a.m. Other volunteers were Elisabeth King, Bev Balfour and myself Laurel Hartnell. Our first five clients were Charlotte Evans 86 years old (our oldest at that time), Ted McCamey, Ivy Conradi, Mina Doornbush and Joan Sewell. The HCSG gave us \$50 to get started to buy essentials (food etc.) and it was decided to charge the clients \$2.50 each for the whole day including morning tea and lunch. We finished up about 2 p.m.

When we started here, there was no room to store things, so I had to bring everything with me each day, morning tea and lunch, activity things and craft materials.

We started the day with morning tea, then into handcrafts. Although some had very bad arthritis most tried to do something. We tried to show them there was always something within their capabilities. About 12 p.m. we served lunch which was a delightful chatter time. Then the afternoon was filled in by playing table games, quizzes and other things of interest at the time. We had a raffle occasionally (extra funds). I would spend a couple of hours a week preparing for this day. The smiles on the faces of these lovely people, and the enjoyment I see they get from this one day a week makes it all worth the effort.

The Playgroup had a small room off one end of the Hall to store their toys etc., so we approached them to see if we could put a cupboard in that room to store our things. They agreed and that made things a lot easier for me. This meant only bringing food each day and new craft materials.

The young people of Swan View had a disco running and they wanted to help us. We needed a tape recorder for some of our activities, so they raised the money and presented the Day Centre with a portable radio cassette player, which got plenty of use. It was very much appreciated.

Written communication to author, 21 February 2003.



Laurel Hartnell, first HCSG Day Centre volunteer Coordinator, presented with a bouquet by 86 year-old Charlotte Evans on the Centre's first anniversary in 1986.

In July of 1985 the HCSG celebrated its second birthday at the Stoneville Hall and in the same month learned that the new Home and Community Care Program (HACC) had funds to be made available for appropriate organisations.  $^{22}$ 

## **GETTING ON WITH THE JOB**

## "The quiet achievers"

As demand for services provided by the HCSG grew, it became increasingly obvious that its physical and human resources were inadequate. The HACC Program introduced by the Hawke Government in 1985 offered a major breakthrough in this problem. A decision taken by the Group in November of that year to seek HACC funding for a Coordinator would be the first step on a path which led to an organisation with a \$5 million budget in 2003.

The decision was a controversial one and not unanimous. Concerns were expressed about the loss of volunteerism and the fact that with Government funding there would be strings attached. However, the volume and nature of the work being handled by the Group was such that it was felt a full-time paid position was called for and the submission should proceed.<sup>1</sup>

#### **NICHOL HOUSE**

By now, too, the office desk in the foyer of the Brown Park Recreation Centre had long since outlived its usefulness, and the Group decided to approach the Shire Council regarding its need for a proper office. In April 1986 the Shire offered to assist the Group with a three-year lease on an office in Nichol House, Mundaring, and by June it had moved to its new accommodation at that address. It was small, but it was an improvement on the corner of a foyer with no security.<sup>2</sup>

The HCSG's reputation by this time was such that organisations like the Council on the Ageing and the Citizens Advice Bureau were seeking input from it, recognising its commitment and expertise. Its assistance was also being sought from organisations like the Silver Chain, Red Cross, Church groups and local doctors. In addition, the Coordinator, Helen Dullard, and Jopie Peetoom had been elected to the new HACC Advisory Council to represent the W.A. Network of Community Based Services.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1986, the Group's activities, in addition to general support and transport, included the Hills Day Centre at Stoneville, extensive support for a brain-damaged child, an Alzheimer's Support Group, a Club for Stroke Victims, monthly Seniors' Social Afternoons, an "Old Tyme" Dance, a Library on Wheels for the housebound, and Indoor Bowls at the Brown Park Recreation Centre. It also agreed to take over responsibility for a Youth Club which had been started by a Swan View couple, Kath and Dave King. A Mobile Day Centre was introduced in Swan View for those elderly people who were not so frail. The regular outings were greatly enjoyed by the participants, including the three who got lost the day they went to the Maze.<sup>4</sup>

There were three significant matters before the November meeting of the Group: advice from the Australian Taxation Office that approval had been granted for donations to the HCSG to be tax deductible; the imminent official opening of the Hills Day Centre in the Senior Citizens' building on 4 December, by the Federal Member for Moore, Allen Blanchard, M.P.; and the success of the submission for HACC funds for paid staff.<sup>5</sup>



Laurel Hartnell, Allen Blanchard, M.P., Federal Member for Moore, and Jopie Peetoom at the Official Opening of the Hills Day Centre at the Mundaring Senior Citizens Centre December 1986.

#### THE DAY CENTRE MOVE

The operation of centre-based respite at the Mundaring Senior Citizens' building was not a happy experience. When the facilities at the Stoneville Hall proved inadequate, an approach was made by the Group to the HACC office for assistance. Through this, funding became available for an extension to the Senior Citizens' building in Craig Street, Mundaring, to cater for Day Centre activities. The Senior Citizens' Association, which had for some years been seeking an extension for other purposes, also contributed a considerable sum towards it. When the Hills Day Centre transferred from Stoneville to the new building in

October 1986, it was not greeted with enthusiasm by the Senior Citizens. There remained an uneasy relationship between that organisation and the HCSG until the latter acquired its own building two years later and moved the Day Centre.<sup>6</sup>

A tactical error.

Jopie Peetoom talks about the Day Centre at the Senior Cits.

It became a real issue when the HACC Program put some money into extending the building for the Senior Cits. The Day Centre that was in Stoneville moved in there and that really was a tactical error. What it showed people – the well aged – was what was ahead of them – the frail aged. From a psychological point of view it wasn't very smart, and the volunteers also used the kitchen. It's like having another person in your house. It became quite a problem. I think \$14,000 was put into extending the building. Whether it worked or not was not the worry of the State. The money was specially put in for a day care centre, but the Senior Cits. could use it when the day care wasn't in there. It was this constant living with a neighbour you don't really like, which isn't a very healthy situation, and you saw a real split. It was always the HCSG versus the Senior Cits. - anything that could happen like somebody didn't clean the toilet or left the gas on. They almost counted the bits of toilet paper they used. But the reason really is that well aged people don't want to know what may happen to them.

Interview by author 26 September 1995.

The Day Centre in the Senior Citizens building was still staffed by volunteers with Laurel Hartnell coordinating.

Problems in the kitchen

Doreen Hawkins recalls her days as a volunteer cook for the Day Centre: We had been in the Senior Cits. and we were very unwelcome there...They didn't like us using the kitchen. So I used to bring my soup pot and a little oven and whatever else I could so I could do things in the little side room, which just had a huge sink and a little board. And then on occasions I used to do things like pizzas. What I would do, I would prepare them at home and put a big note on my oven to my husband 'Please put the oven on at such and such a time, put the pizzas in at such and such a time and I'll come and collect them at 12 o'clock. I used to feel they had a wonderful kitchen in there and they've made it unpleasant for us.... So when we went into this house [Wahroonga] it was absolutely wonderful and it made such a difference.

### Interview by author 11 November 2002



Doreen Hawkins, a volunteer, on the right, with a Day Centre member.

#### FIRST PAID STAFF

The first recurrent HACC funding of \$32,200 per annum was provided for the salary of a coordinator and a part-time typist. These positions were filled by Helen Dullard and Valerie Adnams respectively, who commenced their paid duties on 4 March 1987 at Nichol House.<sup>7</sup>

The acceptance of HACC funding introduced a new dimension in that the Group would have to focus its services more narrowly than in the past. The target group under the HACC guidelines were the frail aged and younger people with disabilities who would otherwise be at risk of premature or inappropriate admission to residential care and the carers of these groups. While there was a broad range of services that could be provided under the program, it did exclude, for funding purposes, other types of assistance, for example services to families who did not fall within the target group. This did not deflect the HCSG from its determination to help families in distress.

## Family Crisis Support

Jopie Peetoom speaking about her experiences while working at the Mundaring Shire Council and unmet family needs in the 1980s and early 1990s due to the new HACC guidelines:

One is family services basically. I may get a call on Friday afternoon at 4 o'clock. A mum has had to go to hospital and she's got six kids and dad's working on an oil rig up north. What can you do. None of the normal services can come out. So you ring around until you get someone. Often the Hills Community Support Group will say so and so can help and that's usually a volunteer because it falls outside the guidelines.

Interview by author 26 September 1995

The problem would be handled by enlisting the aid of HCSG volunteers or organisations like Sacred Heart Care, and later the CWA.

## Desperate Need

Helen Dullard tells how families with needs outside the HACC guidelines were supported by HCSG and the community:

If somebody rang up and said they were in desperate need...we would go and see what we could do for them. Desperate need might mean 'I've got no money, no food, my kids have got no blankets.' What we would do is get food around for them and

get blankets or we would organise some sort of help for them to go to hospital. In this respect we would work with Sacred Heart Care who provide that service free. Usually those sort of requests are only short term to get them out of a hole, and we would make sure that they are referred to the appropriate service and if that service didn't pick it up we would probably do so. We have been asked to play the role of facilitator between husband and wife meeting in the presence of their children where one partner needs to have someone with them as part of a Community Family Order. We are often asked to do that.

Interview by author 28 September 1995.

However, at the time there were some problems with the volunteers who were not happy about the direction the HCSG was taking. Some realised it was inevitable that paid full-time staff needed to be employed to cope with the ever-increasing demands being made on the Group. Others, however, feared that the basis on which the Group was founded, namely volunteerism, would be destroyed once payment was introduced for some workers. They were also worried about the change in culture dictated by HACC guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

The Coordinator, as a founding member of the Group, was very sensitive to the concerns of the volunteers. She was determined to ensure the valuable contribution that had always been made by them, and would continue to be essential, would be recognised and fostered. This helped pave the way for future big changes in the organisation.<sup>9</sup>

The introduction of HACC funding to the HCSG for administrative purposes encouraged the anti-welfare hardliners on the Mundaring Shire Council to oppose any financial assistance to it in the 1987-88 Budget. The Council's Community Services Committee recommended the sum of \$3,730 be granted for the forthcoming financial year to cover office rental, maintenance and licensing of the bus and a telephone subsidy. The Committee pointed out firstly that the Group, through its hard work, had over four years attracted grants from Government Departments and the Lotteries Commission of over \$120,000. Secondly, as most of this money was identified for specific purpose facilities and programs and could not be used for administrative purposes, the Group still needed the Council's support. The Committee's recommendation was thrown out at the Council meeting on a close vote 5 for and 6 against.<sup>10</sup> The public uproar that ensued forced the Council to reverse its decision at the next meeting.<sup>11</sup>

The year 1987 was an eventful one in other respects, too. In April, volunteers set up the Greenmount and Mundaring Library Reading Groups, which were to provide a great deal of pleasure to members in their weekly gatherings over the years, and the acquisition of Community Employment Program (CEP) funding for a Youth Project Officer to work with youth in the Shire resulted in the formalising of the Swan View Youth Centre in Brown Park in August. Among the achievements for the following year were funding provided by HACC for a handyman scheme using local tradesmen, and by the Bureau for the Aged for a successful nine week intergenerational program, which brought school children and elderly people together to share knowledge, skills and friendship.



Gavan Troy, M.L.A., receiving an invitation from Mundaring Primary School students to the Intergenerational Program in 1988.

The HCSG's interest in youth led to its pursuit of funds to ensure the continuation of the Swan View Youth Centre when one-off CEP funding for the nine-month appointment of a Youth Project Officer ran out. The Group successfully gained a recurrent grant from the Department for Community Development in April 1988. The Swan View Youth Centre with Government, Mundaring Shire Council and community support was managed by an Advisory Committee under the umbrella of the HCSG. It offered a range of social activities and programs for young people generally, but particularly those at risk, and would gain praise and respect from both community and government agencies over future years.<sup>13</sup>

By now the Group's activities were affecting the lives of a lot of people for the better. One of its consumers commented to a friend that she had resigned herself to a life confined at home, but on having found the Library Reading Group and the Wednesday Day Centre, life for her had begun again at eighty. 14

The 1988 Annual General Meeting was told that the Mundaring Shire's General Manager, Max Williams, had complimented the HCSG on its achievements and purpose of direction. It did not seek press headlines, but instead "got on with the job." Members were delighted to learn that he had described the Group as "the Quiet Achievers." <sup>15</sup>

# WAHROONGA

# "Something too awful for words"

The year 1988 would see a major milestone in the history of the HCSG, and one which would provide a solid base for the growth of its services.

By the end of 1987, the fact that the Day Centre in the Senior Citizens' building was proving unsatisfactory and the organisation was growing to such an extent led the Group to think in terms of acquiring a building, preferably a house, which could accommodate both day centre and administrative activities. That building turned out to be a dilapidated old house at 2 Craig Street, Mundaring. It had already been discarded by another community group as "something too awful for words." It was a tribute to the resourceful spirit of the HCSG that those members who looked at it were not completely daunted.

# First Impressions

Helen Dullard vividly remembers the original appearance of Wahroonga

...The ceilings were falling down. They were mildewy. The occupant had been incontinent for a long time and he boiled meat...there was this most incredible smell compacted with the damp coming up from underneath the house...the smell was something...but we thought we might give it a go.

Interview by author 28 September 1995.

The Group was successful in its bid to convince the Shire to purchase the building for \$45,000. The Lotteries Commission also granted \$42,000 for renovations and essential furnishings. In keeping with the other nomenclature in the district, it was decided to give the



Wahroonga before renovation.

building an Aboriginal name. The Group selected "Wahroonga" (Our Home) from a list presented by the Coordinator. $^2$ 

While the major structural renovations were carried out with grant money, most of the labour involved in the project was provided by enthusiastic members of the Group with some community input. Ted Barbour stripped back and painted almost every weatherboard on Wahroonga.<sup>3</sup>



The volunteers working hard on Wahroonga in 1988.

Thank goodness for the volunteers – More memories of Wahroonga.

## Doreen Hawkins remembers the fun and goodwill:

...Wahroonga, it was a terrible place. I couldn't believe it...it was amazingly awful, but with the help — we did get somebody who was a professional who was doing the renovations — but the whole of the volunteers and the employed staff got stuck into painting, putting down paving stones, and I can remember two of us cleaning a filthy oven, but it was all done with such goodwill, and it was always fun and everybody brought something to make a nice lunch, so we enjoyed it you see. I had a photograph of Helen doing some painting not looking like Helen at all with something tied round her head, and it was really good. And when it was opened we all felt very pleased with ourselves, because we had really made a makeover. The garden was done gradually, and everyone just loved the house.

## Interview by author 11 November 2002



Helen Dullard helping to renovate Wahroonga in 1988

Helen Dullard proudly describes the volunteers' contribution:

...We had volunteers working every Saturday for something like three months. We rubbed down every weatherboard on

that place right back to its original and then painted it twice. We painted the window sills. We scraped down the windows, which were all just eaten away with years of wear and neglect. We painted inside twice, and none of us were painters...Joe Hegney made us our letter box and sign on our fence, which was wonderful and made us feel very proud. The driveway, which the Shire paid for, was done by a contractor. Volunteers did all the garden and the renovating of the house.

## Interview by author 28 September 1995.



Elaine and Joe Hegney painting the inside of Wahroonga in 1988.

Despite the massive effort put in by volunteers and staff from the HCSG, a dispute over the state of the roof revealed there were still



The "new" Wahroonga.

Shire Councillors who opposed the spending of Council funds on the Group. After the building had been purchased and Lotteries funding committed for renovations, it was discovered that the old concrete roof tiles were porous and beyond repair. The Group approached the Shire Council for the \$3,000 required to carry out the work on what was after all a building it owned. A heated altercation took place at the Council meeting which dealt with the matter, when one councillor tried to change the recommendation for a grant into a loan to be repaid by the Group. After some debate, the Council agreed to accept responsibility for payment for the necessary repair work.<sup>4</sup>



Official Opening of Wahroonga. Local Member and Minister, Gavan Troy, M.L.A., presents a cheque to Treasurer, Corry Barbour, watched by Stephen Dellar, on 16 July 1988

The Official Opening of Wahroonga took place on 16 July 1988. It was chaired by Stephen Dellar, the founding President of the Group five years earlier. The chilly winter's day did not dampen the jubilation of all concerned at their achievement. The current President, Helen Creagh, paid tribute to the great support given by the volunteers to the HCSG. Other official speeches were given by local M.L.A. and Minister, Gavan Troy, the Mundaring Shire's General Manager, Max Williams, and Shire President, Russell Waugh, whose role it was to declare the building open. But another speech, popular with the crowd of 200 who attended, was that of Alice Orton, in her eighties, who also cut the cake celebrating the HCSG's fifth birthday. She was chosen for this privilege because she was one of the earliest members in the Hills Day Centre at Stoneville. Laurell Hartnell, the first volunteer Coordinator at Stoneville, shared the honour in recognition of her contribution to the Group.<sup>5</sup>



The author and her husband, seated next to Mundaring Shire's General Manager, Max Williams, centre, at the Official Opening of Wahroonga in July 1988

The Shire of Mundaring was now the owner of a very attractive and useful building, and a ten year lease for its use by the HCSG for a peppercorn rent was drawn up.<sup>6</sup>

#### THE DAY CENTRE

When Wahroonga opened, the Day Centre was moved there from the Senior Citizens' building, to the relief of all concerned. With the new facility, HACC, which had previously been reluctant to provide any further funding for additional staff, now agreed to one full-time Day Centre care aide, and two part-time In-home Respite care aides. It also granted the Group funding for a new twenty-two seater bus.<sup>7</sup>

The first Day Centre care aide or Coordinator was Judith Huntley. It was her job to plan the Centre's activities, bus rosters and outings of the consumers, who liked to be called "members" because they believed they belonged to a club. She was also expected to support the volunteers who offered their services to the Centre and to the two In-home Respite workers.

By the end of 1988, there were four days on which centre-based respite was being run at Wahroonga.<sup>8</sup> This was increased to five days the following year. The Centre relied heavily on the services of volunteers in providing transport, supervising the day's activities, offering personal support and friendship to members and catering for anything up to a total of 100 meals weekly.<sup>9</sup>

#### THE WORKSHOP

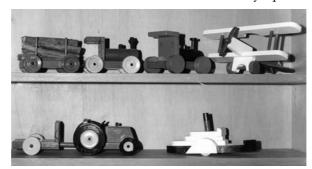
It was becoming obvious to people involved with the Day Centres they were not fulfilling the psychosocial needs of the male members who attended. In fact it appeared the gender imbalance, with women heavily outnumbering the men, and the female-orientated



The Workshop at Wahroonga.

activities were discouraging them from participating in the Centre. In true HCSG style, an answer was sought to this problem. That answer came in the form of a workshop. Research had shown that, for many men, a workshop or "men's shed" could provide them with "a sense of purpose, belonging and productivity" which comes from sharing and using skills and knowledge and meeting new people. <sup>10</sup> The experience at Wahroonga would provide support for this theory.

The services at Wahroonga were enhanced considerably by the addition of the workshop with assistance from Appealathon and the Lotteries Commission. The workshop, whose planning and layout were the work of volunteer Ian Landsmeer, was officially opened on 8 July



Toys made by Day Centre members in the Workshop.

1989. It proved to be an extremely valuable asset, which broadened the range of activities enjoyed by those members attending the Day Centre. In addition to the benefits that came from companionship and making new friends, toys produced in the workshop for sale were so popular that demand soon outstripped supply. It was not long, too, before in addition to woodwork other art forms were introduced such as painting, copper art and pyrography. In later years, glass etching, foot stools and cleverly crafted clocks were added to the achievements of the workshop members.

There were good reports from spouses and carers about the positive effect the workshop was having on the participants. Day Centre volunteers were also making such statements as "our men-folk now have the workshop and love every moment they can spend there" and "the workshop…is a joy to everyone." <sup>12</sup>

In the year following its establishment, other improvements to Wahroonga added to the comfort and enjoyment of members. The garden's development was a source of great interest and pleasure and the easier access created for wheelchairs allowed more activities to be held outside.<sup>13</sup>



The garden at Wahroonga was a pleasant place for a cup of tea.

## Wahroonga's atmosphere – warm, friendly

## Helen Dullard's description of early Wahroonga:

The Day Centre room flows throughout Wahroonga. It chases the sun in winter and suddenly the lounge is a coffee parlour, or equally it becomes a theatrette where a 'special' movie is enjoyed in the company of friends — others choose to keep either their hands or minds busy, while others enjoy the garden, birds or working with wood. Choice of area, activity and environment is encouraged and enjoyed by members. Volunteer staff also appreciate the relaxed unstructured approach. This movement inevitably results in small group problem sharing or leads to requests for information and support, which are followed up by the Day Centre Coordinator. Guest speakers are organised to ensure accurate, informed details of relevant services are given.

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Christmas at the Wahroonga Day Centre.

## A caring place

Sue Richardson reported on her observations as a person relieving the Day Centre Coordinator for a brief time in 1989:

The most important thing that came out was the amount of caring and patience both staff and volunteers showed to members and the pleasure the members had from their visits. Each day group had a different flavour, but all seemed to enjoy themselves. The group that could not go out and enjoy the sunshine still seemed to be happy with the company of others. The workshop is a big advantage to the men, and I am so proud of the work they have done, both the organisers and the members. Of great help to me over the two weeks was the tireless patience and time by the bus drivers Corrie and Colin. Both brighten up the day of the members and they always feel they are in safe hands.

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#### MOBILE DAY CENTRE

The Tuesday Mobile Centre was also proving very popular. This service was provided for those well aged members whose greatest need was to overcome loneliness through isolation in the home. In addition to making new friends, these members were transported by the HCSG bus to all kinds of interesting and enjoyable destinations. Whether their tastes ran to art galleries, exhibitions, the Casino, tenpin bowling or just plain fish and chips on the Fremantle wharf, most were catered for.<sup>14</sup>

#### IN-HOME RESPITE

The In-home Respite service, which HACC also funded when the Group gained its own building, was greatly appreciated by carers. The two part-time workers provided desperately needed time out for people who were caring twenty-four hours a day for elderly people with various degrees of dementia or younger family members with intellectual or physical disabilities, sometimes both.<sup>15</sup>

The life of a respite worker

Eileen and Helen, early In-home respite workers – an extract from their annual Report:

...Occasionally our respites are quiet and peaceful, but they can also be hectic, frustrating, heart-rending or confusing. The qualifications for our job are: plenty of patience, a genuine liking for the sort of folk we deal with, an understanding of their different problems and most importantly a sense of humour. For if we didn't laugh at some situations we would cry for our dear friends – our clients and their families.

One young client who is autistic has a fascination for mud. However, many things look like mud from a distance, and even when a dog has left his 'visiting card' it can be mistaken for mud. This 'mud' must be felt, squashed, etc. and if attempts are made to take it away from her, you will be met with unintelligible screams and the offending item will be thrown at you.

We are very aware that our clients' dignity as human beings must be retained at all times, which is why we do not correct irrational or out of character behaviour in people with Alzheimers Disease, as it just confuses or upsets them. For example: One of our elderly clients who has Alzheimers was unable to find his brush. After a brief search he was found diligently brushing his hair with a toilet brush. He was simply assured that his hair looked fine and needed no further grooming. Why take away the last shreds of dignity?

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### TRAINING PROGRAMS

Staff and volunteers in the HCSG were now facing greater challenges than in the early days. To enable them to meet these in a proficient, professional and caring way, they were invited to attend training programs. For example: "Communicating with your Client," "Working with people with Disabilities and the Younger Disabled," "Effective Community based Respite Care," "Lifting Techniques,"

"Listening Skills," "Diseases of the Aged and their Management," "Toiletting," and a First Aid Course related to Aged care, to mention a few.<sup>16</sup>

#### CONSUMERS' RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION

Greater attention was also being paid to the rights and opinions of consumers. In April 1989, a survey, funded by the Bureau for the Aged and the Family Foundation, was conducted through Wahroonga. The purpose of the survey was to encourage seniors to evaluate the performance of the HCSG and to have some input into the future direction of the Group. A report was produced entitled *Over the Hill: A Survey of Seniors from the Hills Community Support Group in the Shire of Mundaring.* The survey had a positive influence on the direction and thinking of the Group in respect to real consumer participation as against tokenism. In the coming years it would implement a policy which conscientiously respected the needs and opinions of consumers.<sup>17</sup>

# **DEVELOPING A HIGH REPUTATION**

"An effective and valuable service"

By 1989, the number of volunteers registered with the HCSG was 130. It now enjoyed a good relationship with the Shire Council and respect from all Councillors. Its standing in the community was so high that the Shire of Mundaring won that year's Local Government Innovation Award based on the achievements of the Group.<sup>1</sup>

As further confirmation of the Group's status, a review carried out the following year by HACC Project Officers found that it was providing an effective and valuable service to members of the HACC target group within the Mundaring Shire. The report also pointed out, however, the growing demand for services in the area had led to the Group stretching its limited resources. In addition to recommending present funding increases for transport costs and secretarial staff, the HACC officers also supported further staff resources being provided in the next funding round to expand services to the frail aged in the Swan View area and to extend the general service provision for the younger disabled. The immediate result was the ability of the HCSG to increase the total petrol subsidy available to reimburse volunteer drivers and to employ a part-time bookkeeper. With money from fund raising and bank interest accumulated on grants, the Group was able to employ some other part-time staff to perform essential duties. These were an activities assistant for the Day Centre, a cleaner, handyman/gardener and a person to clean and maintain the bus.2

Over the next couple of years, the changes taking place in the HCSG were beginning to accelerate. Grants from HACC or the Lotteries Commission enabled the Group to install a computer, introduce a streamlined accounting system, update the two existing buses and buy a third one, extend the workshop and increase Day Centre and In-home Respite staff.<sup>3</sup>

While these changes provided some important basic infrastructure for the organisation, people like Helen Dullard realised that the future would hold some real challenges for the Group if it did not seriously review its administrative and policymaking framework. From her experience, beginning as a volunteer at the Brown Park Recreation Centre in 1983, she had a deep understanding of the special needs of young people with disabilities and their carers. There were many gaps in the services for these people and requests to the HCSG for help had grown at an alarming rate. Government funding bodies were providing opportunities for organisations to meet some of these needs, and she wanted the Group to take advantage of these opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

The HCSG Executive Committee agreed with Dullard, and recognised that if the Group were to significantly expand with added responsibilities in the disabilities area, there would be ramifications for the efficient management of the various programs and necessary resources. It took the first steps to deal with future challenges in 1993. The Group's Constitution was rewritten and a new document adopted in March of that year when the Aims and Objectives were reviewed, new powers written in and provision made for a Management Committee.<sup>5</sup> But the major changes to the Group's administrative structure that were to take place the following year would lay the foundation for a professional organisation equipped to cope with the heavy responsibilities that evolved in its second decade.

THE SECOND DECADE



# THE METAMORPHOSIS BEGINS

"The personal fuzzies were secondary"

The HCSG's second decade was a dynamic and exciting one. New responsibilities would be taken on board which made an enormous difference in the lives of many people in the Hills. However, before this could happen, more work needed to be done on the Group's administrative framework.

To begin with, at the Annual General Meeting in September 1994, the Constitution was again amended to reflect what had occurred during the year in the management structure of the organisation. The Management Committee was changed to a Board of Management and the Coordinator's position was replaced by that of Administrator with a heavier workload, made possible by grants from HACC and the Shire of Mundaring. Board members agreed to take on portfolios to enable them to become fully informed and involved in specific programs covering either the aged, people with disabilities or youth. In turn, they would pass on their knowledge and advice to the Board as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

As part of the move to create a more professional organisation, advice was also sought from a management consultant, who conducted a workshop resulting in new guidelines being drawn up covering, among other things: a Code of Ethics, the role and responsibilities of the Board of Management, responsibilities of the Administrator, the role of the Advisory Committees and lines of communication within the organisation.<sup>2</sup>

The 'personal fuzzies' were secondary

Helen Dullard's comment on the 1994 restructure

It is a measure of the commitment of all involved that the restructure, which proved to be not only extremely challenging but at times downright daunting, was achieved with a minimum of disruption and 'pain' to those affected. Special volunteer meetings informed all members, and although there was concern for the 'warmth' of Wahroonga being able to survive, everyone fully agreed that the benefits of the additional support services to the community outweighed everything else. All members were extremely generous in recognising who they were there for and the 'personal fuzzies' were secondary.

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Over the years more people with a professional background would become members of the Board. These, who were mainly retired, included a community nurse, an accountant, a general nurse, a general practitioner, a bank manager, school teachers, an education officer from the Department of Family and Children's Services, Disability Services Commission staff and a parent of a young person with a disability. The Shire of Mundaring had always been represented either by Jopie Peetoom as its Community Development Officer or by a Councillor until 1994 when a change in Shire policy removed delegates from community committees.<sup>3</sup>

The Board members played a significant role in the affairs of the HCSG, both collectively and individually. In addition to the responsibilities related to their particular portfolios involving the Group's programs, there were often community meetings to attend, potential employees to interview, and workshops and training programs designed to enhance their skills towards good governance. They also participated in fundraising and other activities involving volunteers.

The Board gained respect from HCSG staff, who saw its members as accessible, supportive and embracing the culture or common goal of the good of the organisation and consumers taking precedence over anyone's particular ego.<sup>4</sup>

By 1995, with the new disability services to be offered, the organisation was responsible for bringing into the Shire of Mundaring from government agencies recurrent funding alone in the vicinity of \$1 million. It was now one of the largest employers in the shire outside of Government with a staff of fifty-nine people representing thirty-three full-time-equivalent positions.<sup>5</sup> It could not afford to be anything other than a highly professional organisation. Since 1994, the Board of Management

had been making the major decisions on matters affecting the Group. General meetings of members, which were once held monthly and which had made the significant decisions, no longer played such an important policymaking role. They were held less frequently and were orientated more towards issues like fundraising and the receipt of reports. The total number of volunteers registered had dropped dramatically to forty-eight. While some who had left may have been disillusioned with the changing profile of the HCSG, the decreasing numbers were attributed to a variety of reasons, the main one being the changing economic situation, and the need for women to find paid employment to supplement the family income. Often women who started working as volunteers found jobs through the networks they became involved in. Volunteer work, it was said, boosted the confidence of women who had been out of the workforce for some time having children, and encouraged them to either take on paid work or further education. Potential volunteers may have been discouraged by the thought that Government funding for some paid staff meant they were no longer needed.

Nevertheless, despite the changes that had taken place in the staffing of the organisation, volunteers were still essential and highly valued. The Administrator, Helen Dullard, went to great lengths to promote this message and to encourage harmonious relationships between paid staff and volunteers. The successful transition of the Group from an organisation run totally by volunteers to one which integrated many paid staff with volunteers was a tribute to her management and interpersonal skills.<sup>6</sup>

The mutual esteem and cooperation that existed between all sections of the organisation from the Administrator and the Board down created a healthy environment in which the HCSG could develop.

# **DISABILITY SERVICES**

"Willing to give anything a go"

The dramatic change in official policy on services for people with disabilities had a major impact on the direction taken by the HCSG in the 1990s. The influence of Wolfensberger's Normalization theory – or Social Role Valorisation as it was later called – caused a paradigm shift in service provision from the medical model and institutionalisation to community based services. This was an essential step in the attempt to help the individuals concerned achieve a valued social role. To accomplish this and to enable them to reach their full potential as human beings, governments were prompted to provide more funding to appropriate community organisations prepared to develop the necessary services.

That the HCSG took advantage of this opportunity, and became so successful in greatly increasing the services available in the Hills and surrounding areas for people with disabilities, demonstrated the farsighted and courageous approach taken by the Board of Management. While already providing a measure of assistance for these people in existing programs, the move into accommodation services was the beginning of a holistic approach to the needs of people with disabilities. This would include recreation, work opportunities and greater respite for carers.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY HOUSING PROGRAM (LGCHP) – "PIONEER"

The first project which the Group agreed to take on and manage was a house to be built in Mt. Helena, under the Local Government Community Housing Program (LGCHP) on land donated by the Uniting Church. The four-bedroom house was funded by Homeswest contributing \$103,720 and the Shire of Mundaring \$22,000, and was to enable three adults with various disabilities, but low support needs, to live independently in the community.<sup>2</sup>

As this project presented new challenges, the Board set up an Advisory Committee to take carriage of it. There were many months of planning and negotiations with the authorities concerned before the house was finally built. The HCSG was to take on landlord and other support responsibilities with the continued assistance of the Advisory Committee. The land and house were legally vested in the Group as long as it was fulfilling its obligations. If this were to change, it would be returned to Homeswest.<sup>3</sup>

When referring to the program, people found it convenient to convert the acronym LGCHP to "LOGCHOP," and this prevailed until a suitable name for the house was discussed by the HCSG Executive. It was thought appropriate to name it after a nearby park called "Pioneer Park" and so "Pioneer" it was.<sup>4</sup>

The nice new home for three people was furnished with the assistance of the Lotteries Commission, Mundaring Lions and the Soroptomists, and officially opened on 18 June 1994 by the Minister for Housing and Community Services, Kevin Prince, M.L.A. In addition to the delighted residents and their families, the gathering included a team of local Scouts, who had landscaped the front garden, students from Eastern Hills Senior High School, who provided the afternoon tea, and, of course, the HCSG staff and volunteers involved. The generous community spirit shown by local groups in the development of Pioneer was a feature of most HCSG projects.

Unfortunately, despite all the careful preparation and planning of the building, the project generally was not a success. Within a few months it became obvious that its distance from recreation and shopping facilities plus poor public transport services made its location inappropriate for the people it was meant to serve. By February 1995 negotiations were under way between HCSG, Disability Services Commission and Homeswest which would allow relocation of the tenants of Pioneer to a more convenient area in Mundaring and the use of the house for people with higher support needs.<sup>6</sup>

#### **COMMUNITY LIVING PROGRAM**

One of the members of the Pioneer Advisory Committee, and also a volunteer offering support to residents, was Philippa Catchpole. Philippa and Bernard Catchpole were the parents of a son with an intellectual disability and organic mood disorder. Like many other parents in the 1970s with similar problems they were faced with the devastating conclusion that there was no alternative but to admit him to Pyrton. Pyrton was a State run residential facility for people with intellectual

disabilities, particularly those with challenging behaviour which required twenty-four hour care. While regarded as providing good services and the best model available at the time, it was still an institutional setting with up to sixteen people in the different houses on the site in Eden Hill, and staffing-to-resident ratios were comparatively low. It certainly did not meet the criteria necessary to achieve Wolfensberger's Social Role Valorisation for residents.

In 1987 the parents of Pyrton residents were dismayed to be told that the establishment was to close. However, the initial alarm was ameliorated somewhat by a year of meetings and personal futures planning with sympathetic staff from the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped (later the Disability Services Commission). At the end of this period, a determined Philippa Catchpole began a six year lobbying campaign, writing letters to every level of government, including the Mundaring Shire Council. She outlined the financial and other implications for former residents of Pyrton if they were to successfully move out into the community, and called for greater funding from government. In this she had the backing of family and friends and particularly the Eastern Metropolitan Region staff from Disability Services. It was because of the interest shown in this area that in 1994 Catchpole was invited to join the Advisory Committee for Pioneer House, her first involvement with the HCSG.<sup>8</sup>

In May 1994 the HCSG Board was approached by Marita Walker, Regional Director of Eastern Metropolitan Region, DSC, and asked to consider becoming involved with the Pyrton devolution. The house called "Pindarra," where Andrew Catchpole lived, was ready for this process to begin, and DSC wanted two houses in the Mundaring Shire to facilitate the transition. Recurrent funding of \$550,000 per annum was being offered to cover staff and vehicles for the two houses.

Board members were a little apprehensive about the responsibilities involved in the proposal. They had to think about not only the financial ramifications but also the fate of the residents, should future problems arise about continuity of funding. However, following full consideration of the offer, which included discussions with Philippa Catchpole, they agreed to accept it, initially for a period of two years.<sup>9</sup>

In November 1994 the HCSG received advice that the funding for the first stages of redevelopment of Pindarra Hostel had been approved by DSC.<sup>10</sup> This was exciting news for the Catchpoles. Philippa's long campaign to get these services introduced in the Hills had at last paid off. She and husband Bernard made the decision that, instead of waiting for a house to be built by Homeswest, they would speed up the process by buying a house themselves.

A suitable house was located in Mt. Helena, with the assistance of staff from Pyrton, who worked with their son Andrew, and after consultation with Helen Dullard the Catchpoles put in an offer, taking possession of it in March 1995. With the help of a friend, Michael Wilkinson Cox, a Trust was set up to own and manage the property. The HCSG would have DSC funding to manage the provision of staff and other services.<sup>11</sup>

A great deal of hard work and planning had to now take place to ensure this dramatic change in the lifestyle for four people, who had lived in an institutional setting for many years, was successful. The new residents to be selected by DSC staff had to be compatible, new staff had to be employed, and necessary safety and environmental issues in the house attended to. Household budgets, leisure activities for residents, and staff rosters were also matters for attention. But perhaps one of the most important challenges was to ensure the four new residents would be moving to a homely, welcoming environment, where they would have their own rooms with their own possessions, enabling them to have some privacy and to be respected as individuals.

The proposed moving target date was not very far away and the house needed some renovating, so the Catchpoles with other volunteers provided the necessary labour.

A place to call "Home"

Philippa Catchpole recalls the joys of renovation!

We worked flat out from March till August. There was setting up money from DSC. We ripped up the carpets and we put tiles right through. We put skylights in. We repaired the verandah and Bernard himself did a great deal outside, painting, bits of carpentry that needed doing. He mended the chook house, extended the fences, pulled out any bushes that one of the residents might eat – she loved colourful things and we didn't want her to eat poisonous things. So we got Sue from Everbloom to come over and tell us what was poisonous, and we put in things that we thought would be more appropriate. So everyone worked very hard and Bernard looked at his notes last night and saw that on many occasions I'd gone over four times to let in people coming to give quotes and see them off again, four times a day. He unfortunately hurt his back and spent a month in bed, but for the rest of that time he worked very hard. And they moved in. We went off to Myers with Jill from Pyrton, another mother and I to buy the sheets and the towels and the things that they had for the first time of their own – each had a different colour, I remember. So they moved in very quietly...we just wanted to slide in unnoticed.

## Interview by author 8 November 2002

The four residents, including Andrew Catchpole, all with high support needs, moved into their new home "Elm" on 7 August 1995. On the whole the transition to the new environment went smoothly, due in large part to the planning and preparations that had gone on over the previous months, together with careful selection of staff. It was helped, too, by the conscientious way in which the Pyrton staff handed on useful guidelines on behaviour management, based on their experience with the four people concerned.<sup>12</sup>

In the early days of the program there were several minor incidents with the neighbours, but these were resolved and life in Elm settled down to one of steady improvement in the life experiences of the four new tenants. These life experiences were carefully planned with a view to developing living skills and the individual's right to choose, whether in food, clothes or recreation. An important aim of the Community Living Program, too, was social integration and acceptance. Residents were involved in normal activities like visiting the shops, the hairdresser, local cafes and fairs, shows, a swimming pool and other community facilities. As in most homes, Christmas and birthdays were times for celebration with flowers and streamers and balloons decorating the house. A very good relationship developed between the staff, the residents and their parents.<sup>13</sup>

## Mothers' Day

# Philippa Catchpole loved the photograph:

Just to give a sense of the quality of the relationship between the staff and Andrew and us. When we were going away for six weeks, I went to say goodbye in May and it happened to be the Mothers' Day weekend, and there was much excitement. They brought out this large photo of Andrew all wrapped, and he watched as I unwrapped it. The staff just stood round 'Is she going to like it?' Obviously I did. Yes, they told me how they'd arranged for it to be done because one of the staff members was a commercial photographer before. They'd dressed him up, and they'd framed it, and we were very touched by that.

## Interview by author 8 November 2002

By September 1995 Homeswest had agreed to provide alternative accommodation in Mundaring for the original tenants of Pioneer House, which would make it available for new people from Pyrton. Arrangements were therefore made for three new residents to move in around November of that year. With funding from the Lotteries Commission and DSC and gardening assistance by the Lions of Parkerville/Mundaring, HCSG was able to proceed with necessary renovations and structural alterations to Pioneer House to accommodate people with high support needs.

The same careful planning and preparation undertaken for Elm was now carried out for Pioneer House, resulting in another seamless transition for, this time, three former residents of Pyrton.

By early 1996 it had become obvious that the programs being run at Elm and Pioneer House were very successful. This applied particularly to the seven residents, who were thriving in their new environment, displaying initiative, choice and developing personal relationships. The practical side, too, had proved more than satisfactory. There were benefits in a program being under the umbrella of a larger organisation where resources like vehicles, administrative support, maintenance and staff training could be shared. This gave the Board the confidence to submit a tender to DSC for two more houses to accommodate seven to eight people with medium to high support needs from Pyrton.<sup>15</sup>

The tender was successful and another property was located in the new housing estate in Mundaring. After negotiations between the HCSG, DSC and Homeswest it was purchased and suitable modifications undertaken.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, Nobel House, as it was called did not turn out to be the success of the two previous houses. The transfer of the four chosen Pyrton residents was not entirely without its difficulties. While preparations were underway to facilitate the move, a neighbour created some resistance to the project in the area with his public comments. This obstacle was overcome with some judicious work on the part of the HCSG and, with the usual helpful support from staff at Pyrton, the four new residents moved into Nobel House in April 1998. 17

However, Nobel proved to have serious inadequacies as a building in that it did not meet the high physical and behavioural support

needs of the residents. The HCSG therefore negotiated with DSC and the Ministry of Housing to replace it with a purpose built house with appropriate dimensions and facilities for people with disabilities. In line with the policy of the HCSG to encourage consumer and staff input in decisionmaking, the families and staff, along with the occupational therapist involved, were given the opportunity to examine and make suggestions about the plan drawn up for the new house.<sup>18</sup>

The house, named Buckland, was built in Mt. Helena and the four residents from Nobel moved in on 20 June 2002. Nobel was now vacant and available for other HCSG consumers. In the meantime, Philippa and Bernard Catchpole were so pleased with the way in which the HCSG were running Elm and the great difference the program was making in the lives of the four residents that they decided to wind up the Trust and donate the house to the HCSG.<sup>19</sup>

#### INDIVIDUAL OPTIONS

In February 1994, the HCSG introduced a service which provided an alternative for people at risk of institutionalisation, called the "Accommodation Support Program." It was funded by the DSC and offered to people with disabilities living in their own homes in the Shire of Mundaring. The initial recurrent funding of \$30,000 per annum was for three people, but this would later expand. Like most new programs, it involved much careful planning to ensure a quality service and one which embraced the principles enshrined in the National Disability Services Standards.<sup>20</sup>

The program Coordinator, Penny Leech, described much of the work done over many weeks as "of a ground-breaking and challenging nature." The challenge was to prepare Independent Program Plans tailored to each consumer's needs, which would enhance the quality of life and assist the person concerned to achieve and maintain the highest potential independence. The programs, designed in consultation with the consumer, drew on a variety of services available through the HCSG to achieve what turned out to be some successful outcomes.

HCSG support workers, who were mainly recruited locally, spent a total of approximately fifty hours a week between the three recipients of the program. During this time they were assisting with the development of what most people regard as basic daily living and social skills. These included using the telephone, personal care, house cleaning, cooking, shopping, paying bills, and transport to doctors and other health professionals. As the consumers' confidence grew, this led to more social integration with the outside world, including visits to the

Hills Day Centre and Craft Group, and even holidays, with the support of a staff member. The importance of safety in the home was also not overlooked. A one-off grant from the Gordon Reid Foundation enabled the HCSG to arrange for the installation of smoke detector alarms and security locks on doors and windows.<sup>22</sup>

Facing life without knowledge and confidence can be frightening.

Linda Smith, a support worker, talks about her work:

A lady that I was first introduced to very early in my time with the Support Group was at the time living on a five acre property with her elderly mother. She had been brought up on a farm and she's profoundly deaf and has an intellectual disability. This lady had wonderful skills outdoors, but inside the house she really never had learned how to housekeep or to look after herself in any way. She'd had fears put into her about electricity and various things, so it frightened her. I was put into the home to try to give her some home skills, life skills, and it was quite a challenge to gain her trust in the first place and also to deal with an elderly mother who was very doubting that this lady could ever change what she had always been used to doing. But I'm still involved with this lady eight years down the track and she's a totally different lady. When her mother was placed in a nursing home she remained on the five acre property looking after the animals and the gardens and learning to cook and clean and tend her clothes and wear the right clothes at the appropriate times. This lady now has moved into her own unit...and manages her home very well with a daily visit from the Support Group. She has become integrated into our Day Centre and is shortly going on a holiday with them to Mandurah. She also attends our Craft Group for intellectually disadvantaged people in Midland. But she now cooks for herself and she really manages very well and interacts with other people in the community. I really feel the Support Group have made a huge difference to this lady's life.

Interview by author 13 November 2002



Aged and Disability Services Coordinator, Jill Mackenzie

By 2002 the program originally introduced as "Accommodation Support" was called "Individual Options," and an administrative change had seen it placed under the Coordinator for Aged and Disability Services along with the Community Living Program. It was now providing assistance to eleven individuals, some of whom were still living with their families, with the flexible services offered including in-home and out-of-home respite. Some were from outside the boundaries of the Mundaring Shire, due to the fact that, according to Jill Mackenzie, the Coordinator for Aged and Disability Services, a lot of agencies were not willing to take people with high support needs. She believed the HCSG had become an agency renowned for "being willing to give anything a go." The DSC were recognising that, she said, and the people it referred to the HCSG were often those whom other agencies were reluctant to manage.<sup>23</sup>

# THE GESUNDHEIT PROGRAM

"Bushfires, snakes and flooding"

The success of the government policies of the 1980s to increase home care services to the frail aged as an alternative to residential care encouraged further investment in this area. With an ageing population, the economic benefits for government were no doubt a motivating factor. However, the social dividends were also a major consideration.

Studies into the needs and preferences of the frail aged have shown that the majority of people want to see out their days in their own home rather than move into residential care. Their home was important to them for various reasons. In many cases it held a lifetime of memories and it involved a sense of identity; it was full of familiar possessions, maybe a pet or two, and one was used to the neighbourhood and the shops. But the most important issue of all was that of self-determination, which was highly valued. The fear of loss of independence was a real one. In fact, research into the psychosocial influence on health suggests that, while social support is essential, the most important factor in determining health and wellbeing is control of one's destiny.\(^1\) A widow in her sixties, in a small country town, eloquently expressed this when she said:

"To sell up may be the practical thing, but it's not the emotional thing. It's very important to be able to do your own thing, no matter how old you are."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, to be able to achieve their wish to remain in their own home, many elderly people needed some form of assistance. A large number lived alone, and in addition to physical frailty many were experiencing problems of isolation and loneliness. Some had no family to visit them or family relationships had broken down for various reasons. In such circumstances in the past it was often expected that people in this position would think about moving into residential care. However,

the Home and Community Care Program introduced in the 1980s had provided an alternative to institutionalisation. In 1992 another option became available which complemented the HACC Program, and that was a Commonwealth initiated program which provided Community Aged Care Packages (CACP).<sup>3</sup>

A limited number of these packages were available each year for elderly people who had been assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team as eligible to enter low level residential care, namely hostel accommodation. People who were fortunate enough to be offered a package had the option of access to services that would support them in their own home seven days a week, instead of moving into a hostel for the aged. For this they were expected to pay a sum equivalent to 17.5 percent of the basic pension

The program offered significant flexibility in that each package could be designed around the needs of the individual consumer. It was obviously an appropriate one for the HCSG to acquire. It was already offering many of the services under its other programs, and there was a demonstrated need in the Hills for this program. An application to the Commonwealth to sponsor twenty packages in the Shire of Mundaring was successful, to the extent that fifteen were approved, and the service was introduced in July 1994.<sup>4</sup>



Jane Robertson and Gwen Jennings, a Gesundheit consumer aged 99 years, in September 1997.

Maureen Meldrum had recently joined the Board of Management. A retired Silver Chain nurse with experience in the Community Aged Care Packages, she was able to offer valuable assistance in setting up the program. This involved selection of both consumers and staff, including the new Coordinator, Jane Robertson, who commenced duties on 20 July 1994, and who also had a nursing background.<sup>5</sup>



Fred and Edna Batley, Gesundheit consumers, have a happy stay at Milperra Respite Cottage.

The name "Gesundheit" gave the program a unique identity, but it also created some confusion with one potential consumer thinking it was "this German home help program."

Gesundheit, the German word for "sound health" or "wellness," was suggested by Maureen Meldrum, who had heard a radio interview with Patch Adams, the founder of the American institution of the same name. She felt its emphasis on a holistic approach to health and wellbeing most appropriate to the HCSG's program.<sup>7</sup>

How Gesundheit got its name

Maureen Meldrum recalls listening to her car radio:

Well I was sitting in the car one day listening to Radio National, as I tend to do quite a lot, and they were interviewing a gentleman called Patch Adams who has developed, without any funding at all apparently, a hospice type of institution

in America for people with terminal illness. His philosophy was to bring fun, friendship and the joy of service to these people, and I just felt that that was really the way we should be looking at providing services rather than the formality—you must have the professionalism, but also you must bring those sorts of elements into a service, particularly the Community Aged Care Packages, which is the Gesundheit Program. You are dealing with people who are housebound and disabled and ill and socially isolated. So that's how I felt that that was an appropriate name for the program.

## Interview by author 11 November 2002.

Although only funded for fifteen packages, within a year of commencing, twenty-two consumers were receiving services through the Gesundheit Program. The extra seven were the beneficiaries of the principle of economies of scale in an organisation which was able to efficiently manage under its umbrella an increasing number of services for the aged and people with disabilities. While there were staff directly employed only for the Gesundheit Program, some were shared with other HCSG services. This allowed flexibility in the allocation of resources and benefited both the consumer and the staff. For example, a support worker could be employed across programs such as Gesundheit, Accommodation Support and HACC Support Services, and provide assistance to individuals of all ages who were frail, lonely, suffering from dementia or some other disability, or respite to the carers of these people. In addition to the many and varied in-home services available, Gesundheit consumers also had access to the popular Day Centres and other recreational or social programs like the Library Reading Group. Transport was provided for this, as it was for shopping or visits to doctors and other health professionals.8

In 1997, the Howard Government's Aged Care Act introduced an upfront fee and accommodation bond for people entering nursing homes. This had a significant effect on programs like Gesundheit, with demand for home care services soon outstripping their availability, and creating lengthy waiting lists for Community Aged Care Packages. The structural changes in aged care sector accommodation had a "push down" effect. It was found that people delayed going into nursing homes, opting to stay at home longer. Also the closure of a number of nursing homes forced people with higher support needs to move into hostel accommodation. This in turn resulted in more potential hostel residents with a lower level of need remaining at home.<sup>9</sup>

As the HCSG anticipated a growing demand, it decided to seek more packages. After an unsuccessful tender for additional places within the Mundaring Shire, the Board made an important decision in January 1998. That decision was to look at extending its services to areas adjoining the Mundaring Shire. A successful tender for twenty-five Community Aged Care Packages in the Kalamunda area would come to be regarded as a significant milestone in the history of the HCSG, because it marked the beginning of the expansion into areas beyond the boundaries of the Mundaring Shire.

The increase to a total of forty packages meant some hard work for the HCSG involving appointment of local staff in Kalamunda, negotiations with health professionals, enrolling consumers and assessing their needs, and coordinating the necessary services to meet those needs. However, a great deal of valuable experience had been gained by the Group and its Gesundheit staff over the previous four years, and this enabled a smooth introduction of the service for the new consumers in Kalamunda on 1 July 1998.<sup>10</sup>

A year later, the Gesundheit program was running so successfully that it was catering for the needs of sixty people – twenty-four in Mundaring and thirty-six in Kalamunda – although only funded for forty; it had appointed a new Assistant Coordinator; and its headquarters had moved from Wahroonga in Mundaring to a new HCSG office centre in Midland.<sup>11</sup>

Another decision by the Board of Management in June 2000 resulted in the HCSG becoming a leading provider of services under the CACP Program. The Board decided that for the organisation to remain viable and, in fact, go forward in what had become a very competitive environment, it should extend its catchment area to the whole of the Eastern Metropolitan Region. This would mean tendering for service provision over the three local government areas of Mundaring, Kalamunda and Swan. The first attempt to implement this policy produced a dramatic result. January 2001 saw the allocation of another forty-five packages to Gesundheit, effectively doubling the size of its program and its geographical area. The funded places now totalled eighty-five: thirty in Mundaring, thirty in Kalamunda and twenty-five in Swan.<sup>12</sup>

The confidence placed in the HCSG by the funding body to deliver a service seven days a week to eighty-five consumers spread over 2,000 square kilometres made a significant statement about the professional standing of the organisation and its reputation for quality. While careful selection and training of staff may have been one reason for the HCSG's reputation, there was another, equally important. That was

the close relationship and respect between the Group and the community. The Gesundheit Program, like the others, conscientiously observed the fundamental HCSG guideline of listening and responding to consumer and staff opinion and information. Feed-back was treated respectfully and influenced the Group's policies and services provided.<sup>13</sup>

# Making a difference

Jane Robertson speaking about the loneliness of Gesundheit consumers

At a maximum it's probably an hour each day, and an hour each day seven days a week doesn't sound a lot, but we've proven over and over again it really does make a difference to their lives. It links them to the community, because we try to keep the staff local. They have an interest, something in common, they make friends, they can talk about common issues and they do seem to respond to that. The feedback we've had shows it has been probably the most dramatic difference that it makes to their life.

# Interview by author 15 July 2002

The size of the Gesundheit Program now had significant implications for staffing. The increase in support workers and administrative responsibilities saw the appointment of two new Assistant Coordinators in August 2001.<sup>14</sup>

It could be said the population in Gesundheit's extended geographical area represented a broad cross-section of Australia's senior citizens. Ranging from urban to remote rural areas, the region contained consumers of varying ages, cultural and socio-economic diversity, health and disability, and living arrangements. In this environment, Gesundheit staff and support workers faced challenges not usually encountered by their city counterparts. In addition to the skills needed for the many facets of personal support of consumers, they also had to be trained to handle other crises. They had to know, for example, how to cope with snakes, flooding and bushfires. It was also not unusual for them to be visiting a consumer on a dark winter's evening in a forest area without lighting.<sup>15</sup>

# Bushfires, snakes and flooding

Jane Robertson tells of some of the adventures of Gesundheit staff:

There's the threat of bushfires, snakes, all those sorts of things, but other things you'd find in a rural area – lack of lighting if staff are out at night, particularly in winter when it's dark at five o'clock and you're in the forest area. So there are a lot of issues to look at, not only from a service point of view, but where people live. It's not unusual for bushfires. We have had to evacuate people, so we have evacuation plans in place. Staff really need to know about that – what they should do in a bushfire situation, what should they do with flooding, all sorts of things. So it's quite a varied job.

Interview by author 15 July 2002

But that visit was so important to many people, whose lives would have been so much the poorer without it.

# THE RAINBOW PROGRAM

"I would be dead without you guys"

In the early 1990s, there was increasing concern about the lack of options in terms of both accommodation and other community services for people with psychiatric disabilities. A growing body of research found in documents like *The Psychiatric Rehabilitation Advisory Group Report [PRAG Report]* 1991 and the *Report of the Inquiry into the Human Rights of People with Mental Illness [Burdekin Report]* 1993 influenced community and government thinking in this area. In 1996, a West Australian project conducted by Maryann D'Alton contributed to this research, and produced a recommended model for housing and other supports that offered a solution to the problem.<sup>1</sup>

The primary need was seen as decent, affordable accommodation, which many had been denied for various reasons, with the backup of necessary clinical and social support. The proposed model to deliver this was to be a collaborative arrangement between government health, housing and disability agencies and non-government organisations. For those with a psychiatric disability, it meant the option of access to services in the community instead of a hospital or another kind of institution.

This concept formed the basis of future government planning with the principles enshrined in the W.A. Mental Health Act of 1996.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1996, the Swan Health Services approached the HCSG with a proposal for such a partnership between that agency and the Group to establish a program in the Swan catchment area. The plan was for Homeswest to provide twenty-five properties and for HCSG to take on Head Lease responsibilities and manage them. The Group would provide social support for eligible tenants and Swan Clinic (Swan Adult Mental Health Centre) the necessary clinical support. Recurrent funding of \$30,000 per annum was available to the Group for this purpose.

Helen Dullard, who had been in discussions with the Swan Health Team for several months, was well aware of the great need for such a program and recommended to the Board of Management that the invitation be accepted. She also suggested that the then HCSG HACC General Services Coordinator, Sandra Stanley, be given the role of Head Lease Support Worker to administer the program. The other service Stanley had been coordinating, Accommodation Support, had proved successful and the Group's initiative in this area was a reason why it had been asked to take on the new program. The proposal met with keen interest on the part of the Board who, after its usual careful approach to new services, agreed to accept it.<sup>3</sup>

The Community Housing Program, as it was known officially, commenced on 1 July 1996, but Sandra Stanley had begun her work several months earlier: liaising with both Swan Health Service and Homeswest; preparing necessary documentation; interviewing prospective tenants and searching for suitable properties. So it became somewhat disheartening that the first tenant was not admitted until November of that year.

The program did not go smoothly in its early days, due mainly to long delays by Homeswest in providing the accommodation. Potential tenants, who had been accepted and were anticipating moving into their new homes, were forced to wait as the housing authority continued to reject properties identified as suitable for purchase. Stanley became seriously concerned about the effect of the disappointment and the uncertainty on the people involved.

A meeting arranged with Bob Thomas, Homeswest Director, in October brought about some swift and satisfying results with Homeswest subsequently "bending over backwards to honour their commitments." The first two tenants were housed within a month.<sup>4</sup>

There was more good news before Christmas that year when the HCSG received advice from the Health Department of W.A. (Mental Health Division) that it had been granted the status of Preferred Provider for funding for support services for people with psychiatric disabilities in the Swan Health Region.<sup>5</sup>

A new name was chosen for the program early in the New Year to reflect the significant role it was already playing in improving the quality of life of tenants. "Rainbow" was the suggestion of staff at Swan Clinic, because it was "positive, colourful and a symbol of peace and joy." 6

By August 1997, the Rainbow Program was managing eleven properties in Midland, Guildford, Bassendean, Bayswater, Koongamia and Mundaring. Quality, access to transport, shops and other community facilities were a consideration when they were selected. Of the fifteen tenants, nine had been diagnosed with Schizophrenia/Schizo affective Disorder or Chronic Schizophrenia, two with Bipolar Disorder, two had

Major Personality Disorders, one Major Depression, and one had been head injured from birth and had a dual disability.

There was excellent cooperation between the HCSG and Swan Health Services in their commitment to produce the best outcome for their consumers. While the former's staff provided the necessary social support, the tenants received clinical services through the South Guildford or Viveash Rehabilitation Centres or the Intensive Rehabilitation Team at Swan Adult Mental Health Centre. There was flexibility in the program, which respected individuals' rights in that they were given some choice about location of their accommodation and whether they wished to share or live alone.<sup>7</sup>

The additional support provided under the Rainbow Program, officially termed Disability Support, was available to both tenants and others in the community who had been deemed eligible due to psychiatric disability. It was based on a model which aimed at recovery rather than merely maintenance, and it was designed to help individuals regain or acquire skills to enable them to not only survive, but hopefully develop to their full potential. It ranged from assistance with daily living tasks in the home, including cleaning, cooking, shopping, budgeting, to social integration through opportunities related to education, work and recreation. The Rainbow staff derived great satisfaction from the achievements of some of their consumers in these areas.<sup>8</sup>



Rainbow Coordinator: Sandra Vidot.

Great things are possible with the right support and motivation

Sandra Vidot<sup>9</sup> proudly tells of the achievements of a Rainbow Tenant:

I'm always thinking how can they be valued members of the community, and that's what drives the program. Housing is not enough, support is not enough. You have to look at employment, whether it's paid or not. Sometimes volunteering is fine to gain skills like the Work-for-the-Dole people do. So gradually getting them into having something useful to do in the day instead of just sitting there; it's so important. And TAFE – we've had a tenant who's won the top Award in TAFE for what she's doing in Community Services....She's a wonderful, wonderful tenant. She's just received an Award for achieving the highest marks in Community Services, Mental Health.

Interview by author 16 July 2002.

Some consumers gained recognition for excellence in educational achievement; others produced beautiful work that featured in a highly successful exhibition at the Mundaring Arts Centre following their participation in a ten week project called "Opening the Door." Paid, meaningful work opportunities in a supported environment offered by Work Options, another HCSG initiative, were taken up by a number of Rainbow tenants.<sup>10</sup>

Rainbow developed a considerable reputation for the quality and compassionate nature of the service it was providing consumers. In March 1999, the Manager of the Swan Adult Mental Health Centre told the HCSG that there was both "strong support and satisfaction" with the services being provided and respect for the Group's philosophy.<sup>11</sup> But even more significant accolades came from the consumers themselves when, in an evaluation of Rainbow Housing and Support Services by a TAFE student, responses to a questionnaire elicited comments like "more than excellent," "there when needed," "interested but not intrusive," "very understanding" and "easy to talk to."





Left: Miranda's art

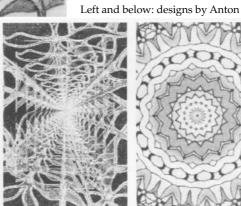






Above: Grant's art







Rainbow consumers' exhibition "Opening the Door," at the Mundaring Arts Centre 2001.

# Life was worth living again

Rosemary, a Rainbow tenant, speaks about how her life improved:

When I got there and it was this lovely little two bedroom unit it was just unbelievable, just the feelings of 'Oh wow I've actually hit the jackpot.' And to have the security, that was the big thing, to have that security in knowing that it was mine for as long as I wanted it, just as long as I paid my rent it was mine, and to have that support as well, because there was support with shopping or whatever they could give, I could have. It was a happy time, yes, really happy.

...With the support of the Group I started going to a place called South Guildford, which is for people with disabilities, and that was like a rehabilitation centre and people go there and there are all sorts of things like craft and pottery and woodwork and all those sorts of things plus personal development, there were some personal development programs. I went there for about three to four years, and I've moved on from there...I now have a job here at Hills in Midland two part days a week. I also work in their Enterprise East section out on Great Northern Highway there for about three or four hours one day a week. And with their support I've gone on to do Numeracy, Literacy and a computer course to help improve those skills. So I'm doing that as well and a pottery course, and also other leisure activities as well with Hills help...I also do volunteer work, which I got through working here. One of the ladies in Gesundheit said would I be interested in doing some aged care work and I said I would, so they put my name forward to work in St. Vincent's Nursing Hostel in their Day Therapy Centre. So I do that two hours a week.

...It's had a tremendous effect. It's had a really positive effect. I've seen improvement in myself. Others have seen improvement in me. I'm out there doing things. I'm doing more things now than I've ever done before. It's given me a lot more confidence, a lot more self esteem, because they're very good at encouraging that in a person, nurturing it. It's helped me cope better with a lot of things, just having that support there, knowing that if I do have a problem and I can't

solve it then I can say 'Look I've got this problem, can you help me with it?'

Interview by author 12 November 2002

An element of consumer satisfaction was the standing policy of the HCSG to give them a voice in matters concerning them. For example, when a review of the Rainbow Housing Code of Practice took place in 2002, there was full consultation with consumers, carers and staff.<sup>13</sup>

It's important to have your opinion valued

Rosemary talks about being invited to express an opinion:

You have a good system where quite often you're asked your opinion anyway. You don't have to wait and think will I say something or not. Quite often you're asked your opinion and your opinion counts...They really do listen to what you have to say. It's really informal. I don't think we sit down and sort of pick each other's brains and that sort of thing, it's informal. They might say 'Oh look what do you think we could do with this group. We're having some problems and we want to know what would be the best way to go about fixing those problems,' and then you can have your say and put your opinions forward.

Interview by author 12 November 2002

In 2001, the HCSG took advantage of a Government focus on the needs of carers of people with disabilities. Aware of the gaps in this area of service provision in the Rainbow Program, the organisation applied for funding. The success of the submission enabled the Program to offer Carer Respite services from 1 July 2001.<sup>14</sup>

By 2002, the total number of properties in the Eastern Metropolitan Region managed by Rainbow had grown to forty-four, providing accommodation for 74 tenants – 52 adults and 22 children. In addition, following an approach by the Mental Health Division, it took on three properties in Northam. The staff, which had originally consisted of one Coordinator in 1996, now totalled five – a Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator and Property Officer, and three outreach workers.<sup>15</sup>

The Program enjoyed a high standing in the community. There was a harmonious working relationship with the Swan Adult Mental Health Centre and the Department of Housing and Works, and valuable networking with other relevant outside bodies established. A significant tribute was paid to the HCSG in October 2001 when it received a High Commendation for the combined efforts of the Rainbow Housing Program and Work Options in the 2001 National Awards for Excellence in Community Housing. The Rainbow Coordinator, Sandra Vidot, with some pride, travelled to Brisbane to receive the Award on behalf of the HCSG.<sup>16</sup> But the greatest success was reflected in the stories of the consumers helped by the Rainbow Program, who had gained some peace of mind, more confidence and self-esteem, a better life generally, and who had not been forced to return to hospitalisation as the only option in times of crisis. Two poignant examples of statements made to the staff of Rainbow were: "You have given me back my life," and "I would be dead without you guys."17

# HACC FUNDED SERVICES

"We don't say no to people"

The Home and Community Care Program introduced by the Hawke Government in 1985 was perceived by the community a decade later to be a valuable government initiative. Organisations like the HCSG, with funding from HACC, had been able to make a difference in the lives of many people who were frail aged, people with disabilities and their carers.<sup>1</sup>

By the early 1990s, HACC services being offered by the HCSG had grown both in program category and incrementally within programs. The organisation had shown initiative and creativity in responding to community needs as it became aware of them. The dynamic environment in which the HCSG found itself during the ensuing decade called for constant vigilance, flexibility and professionalism.

The challenges were twofold. Firstly, the changing profile of consumers which created a greater demand. This was due, in the main, to an ageing and more frail population, the Howard Government's 1997 structural reforms in aged care, and the call for more support for people with disabilities. Secondly, not-for-profit organisations like the HCSG would be faced with fundamental change in the funding process from submissions to unit costing and competitive tendering, greater accountability, implementation of National Standards, and the ever-increasing legislation governing legal responsibilities concerning industrial, occupational health and safety, and other issues.<sup>2</sup>

#### **GENERAL SERVICES**

The HACC funded services offered by the HCSG in 1994 ranged from general to various forms of respite. General services available were transport to shopping, doctors and other destinations; home help and a handyman scheme, later renamed "home maintenance" to remove the gender bias in the name. While these services were perhaps considered

basic, access to them often meant the difference between maintaining the ability to remain in one's own home and being forced to relinquish it and move into residential care.3 But it was often not uncommon for a consumer's needs to cross several programs, for example transport, home help, centre-based or in-home respite. There were by now three staff members with responsibility for coordinating different HACC funded services: Carole Martell (Day Centres), Helen Foskett (In-home and Crisis Respite) and Sandra Stanley (HACC General Services). The close communication and cooperation between these three and the Gesundheit Coordinator, Jane Robertson, meant only one holistic assessment to identify the needs of a person seeking assistance was necessary. It also resulted in the best tailored plan to suit an individual's position. The criteria for assistance were whether a person was frail aged, disabled or at risk of institutionalisation, and a resident of the Shire of Mundaring. There was no means test. A scale of fees for services was set, but inability to pay did not exclude a person from receiving a service.<sup>4</sup>



Coordinators, Russell Small and Colin Johnson at the Opening of Hamilton House December 1999

A holistic approach from a community-based organization

Colin Johnson talks about the Group's policy on helping families:

I think one of the big things in this organisation has been because of its size and its sort of holistic approach to things that we've been able to be flexible in terms of service delivery, and been able to meet the needs of families out there.

...We don't say no to people. We listen to what their needs are and then we try to respond to them.

Interview by author 17 July 2002.

#### LIBRARY READING GROUPS

Also under the HACC General Services umbrella at that time were two Library Reading Groups at Mundaring and Greenmount. The two groups had been established some years earlier at the Mundaring and Greenmount Libraries and continued to be run by volunteers. Some provided transport for the more frail participants, and others acted as the coordinator or reader.

The weekly get-together was always an enjoyable one, offering morning tea and a book reading. Friendships were formed among people, some of whom had been been leading lonely lives before discovering and joining the Group. It was always a sad time when they lost a member.

Tears and laughter at the Mundaring Library Reading Group

Veronica Hearn, volunteer Coordinator, writing about the loss of their reader:

In May Jeff Hart, our reader, passed away. Jeff had been the reader for the Group since its inception. His sudden passing was a great shock and cause for sorrow to all of us. He sometimes called us 'his harem' – perhaps because he was frequently the only male present. Jeff was a very fine and respected gentleman. We all felt a deep sense of loss, as will many other members of the community. Jeff was an exceptional reader, reaching into every book and bringing each nuance and emotion to life. His skills often reduced us to tears or brought forth bursts of laughter. It was a wonderful gift he shared

HCSG Annual Report 1993/94.

# HILLS SUPPORT GROUP FOR WOMEN WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

One of the benefits of the HACC Program was its flexibility, shown in endorsing innovative ideas. A number of HCSG consumers got together with Sandra Stanley in 1994 to plan a mutual support group. They were women with profound disabilities like cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and stroke, who were seeking a means of improving the quality of their life through friendship, social and creative activities. Through her position as HACC General Services Coordinator, Stanley was able to offer ongoing support to them.

The women launched their new group on 23 February 1995 and up to ten met monthly at the Churchill Brook Family Centre in Swan View. With funding from the U.W.A. Artists with Disabilities Fund, they were able to employ the services of a Hills art psychotherapist to help them with a folk art project. The creative work produced by them gave cause for great joy when it was exhibited – and much of it sold – at the Darlinton Arts Festival in 1999.<sup>5</sup>



Members of the Hills Support Group for Women with Physical Disabilities, with Despina Maiolo, art psychotherapist, (centre) in 1999.

#### The excitement was infectious

Despina Maiolo, art psychotherapist, had happy memories of her involvement with the women:

I feel privileged to have been involved with the wonderful spirited women from Women with Physical Disabilities (WWPD) Art.

In the beginning of our meeting a year ago, the women lacked in confidence and self esteem. Most felt they that had little talent and nothing much to contribute.

Each week I saw the unfolding of a new skill, a new excitement. The Group's morale, self confidence and commitment grew rapidly. With the possibility of displaying their work at Darlington Arts Festival, the Group found purpose, focus and direction. In the latter stages of preparation, the excitement was infectious....

Extract, WWPD photographic album November 1999.



Hills Support Group for Women with Physical Disabilities art exhibited at Darlington Arts Festival in November 1999.

When the U.W.A. Artists with Disabilities Fund money ran out, the HCSG and a women's organisation in Midland, Midland Women's Health Care Place, agreed to share costs to enable the folk art classes to continue. A measure of the success of this group, which was then meeting fortnightly at Midland Women's Health Care Place, could be found in the increased confidence and self esteem of the participants.<sup>6</sup>

# Life can be good through art

Members of the Hills Support for Women with Physical Disabilities comment after five years of membership of the group:

"Life is good to me."

"Joining the Folk Art Group has given me the opportunity to interact with others, while also helping me to overcome the fear of moving forward...and believing in myself."

"We can now justifiably claim to be a very caring, self-reliant, self-help group."

"From tears and pain to success and laughter."

HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000.

#### THE CRAFT GROUPS

Other women were to benefit from a meeting with representatives from the HCSG in 1994. In that year, the Disability Services Commission announced that it was to withdraw funding from a Craft Group in Midland run for people with intellectual disabilities for some years at the Enterprise Centre. Eight women aged from thirty-one to sixty years were to lose what was for them an important day in their lives each week where they had made friends and enjoyed recreational and creative activities.

When Helen Dullard heard about this, she arranged for the HCSG Respite Coordinator, Helen Foskett, and herself to meet with a representative from the DSC and the people involved.

There was a happy outcome for the women. The negotiated solution was for the DSC to pay the rent on the room at the Enterprise Centre and the HCSG would provide a coordinator. Successful fundraising among the local Service Clubs also assisted to meet some of the costs involved.

The official transfer to the HCSG took place on 12 October 1994, and Helen Foskett, under her respite "hat," also became the coordinator of what would be known as the Wednesday Craft Group.



Members of the HCSG Craft Groups displaying their work.

In addition to enjoying each other's company over morning tea and lunch and creating all kinds of interesting arts and crafts, the participants were taken on entertaining outings by the Coordinator, who had a bus licence.<sup>7</sup>

A mystery tour can be quite exciting

Helen Foskett was a bus driver as well!

We've been to Fremantle. We've been up the pipeline and just lit a fire and had a picnic, which they enjoy. They love mystery tours. So we've been to art galleries, to lunches...We've been to coffee houses. We've just got in the bus and driven, because that's actually quite exciting. Most of what they do is very organised and disciplined, so to rock up on a Wednesday morning and have someone say where are we going, and I say wherever the bus takes us is really exciting for them to do that.

Interview by author 16 July 2002

The Craft Group, which was run with the assistance of a volunteer, became so successful that it was found necessary to introduce a second day. So, in September 1998, with some HACC funding, it was extended to Thursdays. Eventually the program was totally funded by HACC.<sup>8</sup>

### YALLAMBEE VILLAGE LIAISON

A new responsibility was handed to Helen Foskett in January 1997. Through its contact with the frail residents of Yallambee Retirement Village in Mundaring, the HCSG became aware of problems being experienced concerning building maintenance in their homes. A proposal that would see the HCSG address these issues was accepted by the Mundaring Accommodation for Retired Citizens (M.A.R.C.) Committee. It meant that residents with a complaint or a problem would contact the Group's office instead of the Shire to have the matter attended to. It was hoped this would ensure the matter received prompt attention.

While some people were initially reluctant to accept the arrangement, preferring to deal direct with the Shire Council, it was eventually found to work very well, and to the satisfaction of the village. This was attributed to the friendly relationships fostered with the residents by the Coordinator, Foskett, and to the efficiency and "sensitive ear" of the HCSG reception staff, who handled the contacts. Yallambee residents also received the services provided to other Hills people under the Groups' programs.<sup>9</sup>

#### STAFF RESTRUCTURE AND NEW HACC GENERAL SERVICES

The year 1997 brought with it a number of changes under the Group's HACC Program. A growth in programs and staff responsibilities led to a restructure which brought all HACC General Services under one full-time coordinator. <sup>10</sup> The first person to fill this position, Colin Johnson, was appointed on 5 February 1997. It was a challenging time for a new Coordinator of HACC Services, because of the new funding arrangements with governments demanding unit costing, tendering and contracting. It was also a time of implementation of more complex and comprehensive data collection, the HACC fees policy, and service assessment. <sup>11</sup>

That year also saw an expansion of existing HACC services provided by the HCSG. In addition a new one, Personal Care, was introduced in October 1997 in response to a high demand for the type of assistance it offered, namely showering, toileting, dressing and food preparation. One reason for this development was the lengthy waiting list for Silver Chain services. Another was seen in the lack of help available for families caring for a member with a disability with high support needs.<sup>12</sup>

In January 2001, the HCSG was selected by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide Home Care Services to veterans, similar to

those of the HACC Program. In the same year, the Group added another category of service, Social Support. This was another example of the organisation perceiving a gap in service provision and taking steps to fill it. Social Support was a flexible form of assistance. It was intended to help people to carry out normal every day tasks, which they would find difficult on their own. These could include shopping, banking or other commitments. It could mean taking them out for a cup of coffee, or visiting them at home for various reasons, one of which could have been sheer loneliness through lack of any other people in their lives.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the ongoing efforts of the HCSG to meet social needs wherever they became apparent, there continued to be individual cases which did not meet the criteria for assistance from government funded programs. In these circumstances the Group managed to find a way to overcome a crisis, and, as in the past, continued to draw on the generosity of the Hills community for help in these circumstances.

#### A little bit of extra stuff

Colin Johnson talks about the value of a community based group

One of the benefits, I suppose, for us as an organisation is that we are truly community based and therefore you embrace the community no matter what the issue is... Being based up here, the Hills Community Support Group, by virtue of its name, is a support group, and therefore you'll often have the Shire referring people to us not knowing where to go themselves. So they refer them to us and we would somehow organise a little bit of what we call 'informal' community support. It's not necessarily embraced in any specific funding arrangement other than it's a little bit of extra stuff that we do over and above our specific funding projects...

Informal support included contributions from community organisations like the Country Women's Association.

#### Colin Johnson:

... Yeah, they've been a wonderful support for us in picking up the pieces – families who maybe would come under more

welfare related support arrangements – they help with that and they also help people who are eligible for our own services in providing just a little bit more at times. It might just be hampers of food; it might be just a little bit of financial support, maybe to get a load of wood for someone who just can't afford to get it during the winter. That type of support, and providing meals in a crisis situation.

## Interview by author 17 July 2002

By 2002, the broad areas covered under the HACC Support Services were the HACC Program, the Veterans Home Care Program and the National Respite for Carers' Program.

#### RESPITE SERVICES

Services for carers became a major concern of the HCSG in the 1990s. As demand for both centre-based and in-home respite grew, the Group negotiated with funding bodies for the resources to meet the demand.



Melbourne Cup Day at Wahroonga Day Centre.

The Day Centre at Wahroonga, which catered for both individual consumers and carers, was very popular. The staff and volunteers went out of their way to make life more interesting and enjoyable for their members.

The Wahroonga Day Centre was popular:

Avon Dufty described her experiences as a member in 1995:

Nothing is ever an effort. Volunteers and staff go to great lengths. I am very impressed with them...I don't think I've ever met such a happy lot of people. You often get it with volunteers, but the staff here seem very happy and they all seem to get on so well together. What I admire the staff for here – everything that comes along we celebrate. We celebrate the fourth of July and Bastille Day and anything like that, and they decorate the room according to what we're celebrating. They go to an awful lot of trouble to get all sorts of little gadgets on the table, like French or English or American gadgets. Steve will make hats. Everybody has a cake on their birthday. Everybody's birthday is recognised. It's a really lovely atmosphere.

Interview by author 26 September 1995.



Lyn Hunter, former HCSG President, May Jones, a consumer, and Steve Williams, staff member, at the Day Centre's "Barcelona Bash" 1992

While the Workshop and other indoor activities, or perhaps an outing in the bus, attracted most members, some enjoyed just sitting in the garden chatting or daydreaming, listening to the birds. One of these was Ted McCamey, one of the original consumers from the Stoneville Day Centre in 1985. Wahroonga was a second home to him, and he became a favourite of the staff. When he died in 1994, his family, in appreciation of the kindness shown by the HCSG to their brother over the years, made a donation which was spent on a much needed computer and printer. But in the Wahroonga garden there also sits a seat made in his honour, known as Ted's Bench.<sup>14</sup>



Swannie Johnson and Delfina Tesconi, HCSG consumers making good use of Ted McCamey's bench.

## Ted's Bench

# Carole Martell recalls Ted McCamey:

Ted was there when I first started. He was a real character. He lived alone in a little humpy type place on a big bush property. I sort of adopted him a little bit. He was a single guy that enjoyed a drink, and every now and then we used to send him off to hospital, back to Wooroloo for some respite, for some TLC. Ted used to come to the Support Group four times a week and we used to take him meals and everything else. His family were wonderful. They all lived in Perth. He had some

fantastic family members, quite well known and connected, and they respected Ted for how he wanted to live. They often used to come up to the Support Group for morning tea to see how he was going, and I used to communicate through Ted's sister to let her know how he was going on a regular basis. And when he died the family wanted to acknowledge their appreciation of the Group and what they had done for their brother. We sat with the family and thought about what would be nice to do and one of Ted's favourite pastimes – he never participated in any activity – he used to like to sit in the garden rain or shine and have a cigarette. He was a heavy smoker. So I thought it would be rather nice to have a bench where Ted used to sit. Because Ted was a bushie, the bench is the sort of bench that it is. A guy in Kalamunda made it from bits of timber he collected from the bush. So yeah, that's how it evolved. Everybody knew Ted.

I remember taking Ted home once because he needed a bit of a clean up — I'd get shot now, you wouldn't do it now — and put him in the bath, because he was unable to use his bath at home for whatever reason, and my daughters came home from school — they were only young then. Oh, it was funny. I remember Amy came running 'Mum, Mum, who's in the bath? There's an old man in the bath.' Oh gosh, then my husband came home, because he knew Ted as well. I just gave him a bit of a feed and took him back home.

You did those things back in those days, but you wouldn't be encouraged to do it now because of all the legislation. You know, if Ted had slipped while he was in my house, and all those sorts of things. Yeah, he was a favourite of everybody, Ted, and he always used to drink lots of sherry because 'that's what Silver Chain told him to do,' and that's what he did, copious amounts of sherry. We used to go and buy it for him. Some people didn't think that was a good idea, but he was alert enough to know what he was doing, and if he said he wanted a flagon of sherry – you know, rather than seeing him trying to get across the Highway to get it himself. He was a gorgeous man and lived the life that he chose.

Interview by author 29 November 2002.



Carole Martell on a Day Centre members' visit to the Mandurah Bird Park.

#### MT HELENA AND SWAN VIEW DAY CENTRES

As referrals to the Day Centre at Wahroonga grew well beyond the capacity of the resources to cope, it became necessary to consider possible new locations for centre-based activities. Following discussions with the HACC Project Officer in April 1994, it was agreed that the HCSG would run two new Centres, one in Swan View and one in the Chidlow/Mt. Helena area.

Sally Roberts, who had been working as a volunteer at Wahroonga Day Centre, was employed to establish and supervise the two Centres one day a week each.

It was not easy to locate suitable premises, and the HCSG settled for the Scouts Hall in Mt. Helena and the Churchill Brook Family Centre in Swan View. Apart from sharing the facilities with other groups, the main problem was lack of storage space. With usual HCSG ingenuity, this was partially overcome by the acquisition of a custom built trailer to transport the food and equipment to the Centre on the day. The new arrangement took the pressure off Wahroonga, and meant less travelling distance for consumers, but it was not the most ideal situation, being both inconvenient and hard work for staff and volunteers who had to load and unload equipment on each occasion.<sup>15</sup>

#### **MILPERRA**

It was finally decided to begin searching for a more suitable property to replace the Mt. Helena Hall. Enquiries to local Councillors produced a most appropriate little house at 20 Chidlow Street, Mt. Helena,

owned by the Shire of Mundaring. The property, originally the old Schoolmaster's house, had been used by a local playgroup, which had recently vacated it. At the invitation of the Shire Council, the HCSG in April 1996 submitted an application to use it as a Day Centre and Respite House.



Milperra cottage.

At the Board of Management Meeting two months later, Councillor Jan Storer had the pleasure of informing members that the HCSG request for the house had been approved by the Council the previous night. <sup>16</sup> Jopie Peetoom, the Shire's Community Development Officer, had played a significant role in locating the property and persuading the Council to offer it to HCSG. <sup>17</sup>

The name for the new house, selected by the Board from a list of Aboriginal names suggested by the Administrator, was "Milperra," meaning "meeting place."  $^{18}$ 

Milperra had been made available to the HCSG on a peppercorn rent basis, with the Group being responsible for any renovations or internal structural alterations. An estimate obtained by the Group



Morning tea in the garden at Milperra.

revealed the cost to be \$12,000, which had to be raised. As usual, the HCSG was able to assemble an enthusiastic and willing number of staff, volunteers, consumers and others to turn the beautification of Milperra into a community project. Busy bees were organised and transformed the building into a warm, attractive cottage. Plants and landscaping were donated by a local nursery, and paint by a Midland paint retailer. Elderly consumers also brought along plants for the garden.<sup>19</sup>

The Coordinator, Sally Roberts, thrilled with the transformation of Milperra, set about planning a Christmas party to introduce the consumers to their new home prior to moving in January 1997. It was a day of fun and happiness for all concerned.

# A surprise Christmas party

Jean Sutcliffe, a volunteer with the Day Centre, tells of her part in the conspiracy:

I can remember that the folk, as we called them, ...so wanted our Christmas function, our lovely Christmas lunch that we always had, to be in the new Milperra, and we kidded them along that, no the plumber hadn't been and it wasn't quite finished, and we'd been furiously decorating it with the last balloon and whatnot. We said we're sorry but we'll just have to have morning tea here. Then we took them over to see what it was like, and wow it was like somebody coming out of a cake, it was so gorgeous. It was just a fantastic day. And the love and the feeling in that place always – it was just like the clients' home. They really enjoyed it, it was so beautifully done. And they helped to do the gardens and put bulbs in and planted things. So they felt they were in the swing of it, too. It was just such a lovely feeling.

Interview by author 11 November 2002.

In addition to the weekday Day Centre, the cottage was well used by different HCSG and other groups for meetings, workshops and weekend day respite for carers. However, within a couple of years, the number of referrals from the eastern end of the Shire for Day Centre placement began to drop, as those from the Swan View area were increasing simultaneously. Also, the HCSG were looking at ways of expanding services for carers, who had shown that they preferred

respite provided out of the home environment, either for themselves or for the person for whom they were caring twenty-four hours a day. The combination of these three factors caused the Group to review both the use of Milperra and the centre-based needs in the western end of the Shire.<sup>20</sup>

Carole Martell, the Centre-Based Respite Coordinator, in her report to the 1999 Annual General Meeting, pointed to the fact that fifty percent of Day Centre consumers lived in the West and South Wards of the Shire, and a new centre in that area was becoming urgent. She pledged to make it a priority of hers in the following year.<sup>21</sup>

The HCSG Annual Report in 2000 contained two significant announcements by Martell: Firstly, that the "exciting and challenging goal" to secure a new respite centre in the western end of the shire had been achieved, and the new centre in Koongamia, to be known as Centenary House, would open early in 2001. The other news was that Milperra would cease to be used as a Day Centre in 2001 and be converted into a retreat cottage for carers.<sup>22</sup>

When Centenary House opened in Koongamia, consumers from the surrounding area who had been attending Wahroonga were able to transfer to the new facility, enabling the Milperra consumers to move into Wahroonga. In the meantime, some conscientious staff set about preparing Milperra for its new role as a full-time facility dedicated to planned and crisis respite whenever needed, whether daytime, overnight or weekends.

Furnishing Milperra was a joy

Linda Smith talks about how she enjoyed her shopping:

...We were able to have a small amount of money to spend on equipment. So we started to draft with Jill's help and Colin's help for a bed and breakfast type cottage. I went out duly armed with my shopping list and bought beds and bedding, furniture for the lounge, dining table, all the crockery and cutlery, and it was wonderful trying to coordinate everything and trying to make it look so beautiful. We have a television, we have a video recorder, we have a sound system. Russell managed to find us a computer... That was quite an honour to be asked, and I did enjoy the process.

Interview by author 13 November 2002.

The development of Milperra as a respite cottage was made possible by funding through the National Respite for Carers Program.<sup>23</sup>

In the first twelve months of Milperra's conversion, the HCSG was able to provide over three thousand hours of respite to forty-six households over a wide area in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. Crisis support for fourteen families helped in the prevention of family breakdown. While in nine of these cases the support was given in the family home, Milperra became an extremely valuable venue for both planned and crisis respite, making a significant difference in the lives of many carers.<sup>24</sup>

There are many stories that can be told about the benefits of a stay at Milperra, not all sad.

A holiday at Milperra.

Linda Smith recalls one happy couple who stayed at the cottage:

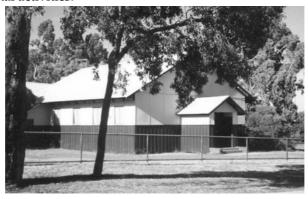
I've been lucky enough to do one or two shifts there since we've had it in operation and one couple arrived and they were sisters. One lady was suffering from dementia, but her sister was quite a bright little button. They lived together and the only way the lady's son could get them to come was just say that they'd actually won a weekend away. So they arrived, and the workers at first weren't quite sure how they had this weekend, but we carried on with the story and it developed, and they had such a ball. They just loved all the different workers coming in on the different shifts, and each was regaled with this weren't they so lucky to have won this holiday. I understand they have actually been back for a second 'holiday' and they just loved it.

*Interview by author 13 November 2002.* 

# **YOUTH SERVICES**

"Challenging, frustrating, busy, funny, stressful, sad, and also at times very rewarding"

The HCSG's commitment to services for youth at risk continued to be strongly demonstrated in the 1990s. By 1994, the Youth Service established in Swan View in 1987 had reached a lot of young people, offering support through social, educational and recreational activities.



HCSG Swan View Youth Centre.

The Swan View Youth Centre in the Brown Park Hall, which operated as a drop-in centre, attracted teenagers who presented with complex needs. The reason for this may have had something to do with family problems, health issues, low self-esteem, unemployment or the problems arising from the use of drugs or alcohol. Not interested in joining organisations like sporting clubs or church groups, they felt at home at the Youth Centre, which was staffed by a Coordinator and part-time assistant. There they only had two rules to observe: respect for others and no drugs or alcohol on the premises.<sup>1</sup> Between thirty and fifty young people attended on a Friday night socialising, watching television or videos, playing pool or table tennis. There was a netball



Swan View Youth Centre participants and the Urban Arts project.

team, a homework program to assist students, an urban art project to discourage illegal graffiti, and a Girls Only Group.

The staff at Swan View also played a role in re-establishing the Hills Youth Centre in Mundaring. The Mundaring Shire Council had been keen to involve the HCSG in reopening this centre, which had been closed due to vandalism. At the Shire's invitation, the Group conducted a three month project to research the needs of young people in Mundaring and surrounding areas for a youth service. The study showed "enormous" support for the reopening of the Centre.<sup>2</sup> As the HCSG agreed to manage it, the Council made an old house in Craig Street, Mundaring, available to the Group and \$9,000 to set it up. With the help of \$12,300 from the Lotteries Commission for repairs and renovations, the "new" Hills Youth Centre was opened in June 1994. The Shire's next budget provided



Hills Youth Centre, 6 Craig Street, Mundaring July 1998.

\$21,000 to the HCSG for twelve months running costs. Unfortunately, the funding proved to be totally inadequate to cope with the demand from the district's youth. Because of its popularity, instead of the anticipated

twenty to thirty, over sixty young people consistently turned up on a Friday night. A part-time Coordinator was employed to supervise the Hills Centre as an outreach program from the Swan View Youth Centre. But the large group of participants, some of whom had serious behavioural problems, presented an overwhelming challenge.<sup>3</sup> While most of the young people took advantage of the programs being arranged for them, it was not long before a hard core of troublemakers began what would be a painful story of unrelenting theft and vandalism.

The HCSG did not give up on the Mundaring youth. It built up networking relationships in the community and continued to run activities like the popular band contest workshops and urban art project, funded through the Mundaring Arts Centre, while at the same time seeking more funds from government to increase staff resources. When the Hills Youth Centre Coordinator resigned in April 1996, it was decided that both centres would be run by the one Coordinator, Damir Lendich,



Coordinator Damir Lendich

who had held the position in Swan View since 1992, and that staff and other resources would also be shared.<sup>4</sup> The Department of Family and Children's Services provided \$45,000 and the Mundaring Shire \$8,000 per annum for the Swan View Youth Centre, and the Shire increased its funding for the Hills Youth Centre to \$30,000.<sup>5</sup>

The ensuing year continued to present challenges to the staff of the HCSG Youth Services. Lendich, in his Annual Report in 1997, described the previous twelve monrths as "challenging, frustrating, busy, funny, stressful, sad and also at times very rewarding."

In the mid 1990s there was a change of direction in the Department of Family and Children's Services policies to target smaller groups of young people to achieve more meaningful outcomes. This was reflected in the HCSG Youth Services, which began to focus support on individuals who were considered more at risk, and to provide outreach services for them. This allowed the youth workers to meet young people away from the Youth Centres and to make contact with others who, for various reasons, were not using them.<sup>7</sup>

Friendly relationships developed among staff and the young people who took advantage of the Youth Service over a number of years. So it was always devastating when some tragedy resulted in the death of one of their friends. In the first six months of one year, 1997, three young members lost their lives: a nineteen year old who suicided; a twenty-four year old who overdosed on heroin; and an eighteen year old who was the victim of a car accident. Emotional support and counselling were provided by the Youth Therapy Team and a Family and Children's Services clinical psychologist to help the young people confront the issues and deal with the overpowering sadness they were experiencing.<sup>8</sup>

However, there were happy times as well. Constant submissions to funding bodies for money to enable each Centre to run worthwhile programs were often successful. The highly popular Music Program run



by a Hills musician, Alex Roper, was one of these. With the support of the Mundaring Arts Centre, a \$2,500 grant was secured from Healthways which enabled the Swan View Youth Centre to introduce weekly music workshops in 1995. The outcome was the release in December 1996 of a CD titled "In Season," which featured eighteen original songs written and recorded by nine bands from the Swan View and Hills music workshops. The success of this project led to further funding from Healthways and another recording, "In Season 2," released in mid 1998. Future funding for the Music Program would also come through the Mundaring Arts Centre, but be provided by the Gordon Reid Foundation. The young people of the district were the beneficiaries of the close cooperation between the HCSG Youth Services and the Mundaring Arts Centre. In



Participants at Swan View Youth Centre.

addition to the music program, the latter Centre was also instrumental in providing support and funding for the Urban Arts Program, another successful project run by the Youth Services.<sup>9</sup>

It's not so much about technical ability

Damir Lendich talks about the real value of the music workshops:

With a lot of these kids, their music isn't about technical ability...it's really more the desire to want to play. So if they can only play three chords that's fine. They don't need to play

three hundred chords, they can write a song on three chords. Some of the best songs written by the Beatles were written on three chords. So Alex is very much coming from that perspective – and being an observer at a lot of those workshops, specially in the early days – it was as basic as people just rolling up. I vividly remember a young guy sitting down and watching his friends, and looking at them and looking at them for about two months, and just hopping up and picking up a base guitar and playing some basic noises and things. Three months later they recorded a song...They've written five original songs and are playing to their friends. So it is quite basic... it's more about knowing the real basics, and the beauty of Alex's program is if they're not musically inclined to play music, he can fit them in somewhere in regard to promotion, making up flyers for concerts, lighting, sound mixing, sound recording, sound engineering. He's got this huge program which has just snowballed over the last four or five years.

...We have our weekly music workshops, but these usually culminate in an end-of-term concert at the Youth Centre for three or four hours where the kids organise their own event, three or four bands. They'll make some flyers. Alex will be there and he sort of oversees everything. So it's just empowering the young people to go the extra step. All their friends and the young people will hand out their flyers. Some of them go to La Salle. Some of them go to Eastern Hills, Governor Stirling, Swan View [Senior High Schools], to their friends, and the next thing you'll have fifty to one hundred young people on Thursday night listening to their friends playing music. It's all very low key, but it's about getting out there and doing things, rather than waiting to be at a certain point in life to do things. We find the skills people learn from picking up an instrument to writing a song or recording a song, playing in front of their friends, builds up confidence and self esteem, which they can transfer to other aspects of their lives. So that's the beauty of that workshop.

Interview by author 25 July 2002.

#### NEEDLE AND SYRINGE PROGRAM

The October 1997 meeting of the Board of Management heard from Damir Lendich that drugs were a "huge problem" with a number of young people attending the Hills Youth Centre. It was one of a number of problems which, once again, forced its temporary closure that month until these could be sorted out. Lendich was concerned about the lack of adequate resources for teenagers in the Mundaring Shire, and particularly in Mundaring. The most pressing and serious issue was that of illicit drugs use, and he suggested the HCSG should look at developing policy and procedures to handle any emergencies; for example, drug overdose. At the Board's request, Lendich consulted appropriate professionals on this, and at its meeting held the following month a decision was taken to host a "Drugs in the Hills Meeting." <sup>10</sup>

The public meeting, held at Wahroonga on 9 December, was well attended by a broad cross-section of professionals and other interested community members. In addition to those from the HCSG, there were representatives from the Family Adolescent Counselling Services, Department of Family and Children's Services, Midrock Youth Services Midland, Swan Clinic Adolescent and Youth Therapy Services, Eastern Hills Senior High School, Police, Ambulance drivers, Shire Council and general practitioners. The speakers included the Director of Emergency Medicine at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, and the Executive Director of Holyoake.<sup>11</sup>

This very successful meeting would be the beginning of a strategy by the HCSG to address drug abuse issues. One of the outcomes was the introduction of the Group's Needle and Syringe Program. This Program was a testament to the courage and proactive spirit of the Administrator and Board of Management, who gave it their encouragement and endorsement. The HCSG Youth Service would be taking on a program which was usually only attached to specialist health services, and which carried with it heavy responsibilities.

In May 2001, the Youth Services were certified by the Health Department of W.A. to conduct a Needle and Syringe Program through the Swan View and Hills Youth Centres, the latter having reopened early in 1998. It was to be a small program only available to young people who attended the centre, but who also had a problem with intravenous drug use. Although drugs were not tolerated at the Centre, the staff were being approached for information about access to clean needles. From these conversations they had discovered that users were sharing needles either because of lack of funds or not wanting to approach the local chemist. Following consultations with appropriate specialists in

the health field, careful preparation of policies and procedures and staff training, the service became available in June 2001.<sup>12</sup>

In the following year, attention was turned to intensive support for young men with what was termed dual diagnosis issues, which involved both mental health and substance abuse. A model was developed to handle such cases, through consultation with specialist agencies. As a result of the close working relationship that was fostered with other Health, Welfare and Justice agencies in the district, practical help was able to be given in a number of instances.<sup>13</sup>

The sad story of 16 year old "Michael"

"Sharon" speaks about her son "Michael's" problems and the help he has received from the Swan View Youth Centre:

(The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the family).

It's linked to a lot of troubles that they [Michael and his brother] had before, and a lot of emotional abuse from other people...There have been terrible things happen to them, which I'm not prepared to repeat. They're depressed at times and they are suicidal at times, so that's their way of coping; they get stoned or drunk or they sniff glue and they forget all about their problems, and then because the problem's there when the effect has worn off they start again. That's how they got into the habit. So at the end, they don't drink so much, but they smoke marijuana all day long, and when they haven't got marijuana they go and steal glue and sniff glue.

...Damir never spared his time. He was really good. If we needed him he came. He phoned at least three times a week when we were in big troubles with 'Michael.' He came to pick him up on Friday night, and then on Thursday night with the music, and then sometimes on Sunday morning as well...On Thursday he went to listen to music. Then when he went on Friday night they watched a video and played games and socialised with other children the same age, and on Sunday morning they went to the beach or to outings. That's mainly what he's done. Then on top of that Damir went to visit him while he was in gaol, and went to court with him and helped

us move houses.

... The Swan View Youth Centre is really good. The thing is, I don't know how it works, but it's a good place for kids to feel safe. It's not like a school where you feel safe because you have a lot of boundaries. It's a place where they can go and talk and say whatever they want without having their parents listening, and they have someone who knows what it's like to be young and who understands them. I think it makes a big difference in the young people's life because they need somewhere to go where they can feel safe instead of hanging around shops and getting into mischief...They're not judged or watched. They're looked after, but they're not looked at. If they need help, someone is there, but it's not someone saying don't do this don't do that. They can do whatever they want. As long as it's safe and clean fun it's fine, and they really like it. 'Michael' really likes going there. So I just hope it remains open for many years, because that's exactly what the young people need at the moment, somewhere that they can go and feel safe, instead of being on the street.

Interview by author 25 November 2002

#### YOUNG MUMS' PROGRAM

One evening in 1994 Tanya, a young teenager, went along to the Swan View Youth Centre with some of her friends. She played a game of pool, listened to some music and felt quite at home. She found the environment friendly and the staff approachable. It made her want to go back. She took advantage of the homework program to improve her schooling and enjoyed the social activities. She also joined the Girls Only Group, which was formed with Health Department of W.A. funding to enable gender specific health issues to be addressed. This group attracted several young teenage mothers. In 1999, Tanya herself, now twenty, also became a mother, and like the other young women with babies felt the Girls Only Group was not meeting their special needs. She decided to approach the Coordinator, Damir Lendich, and ask if the Centre could be used during the day for a young mothers' support group. This was readily agreed to, and the Young Mums' Group was born with the blessing of the HCSG and the Health Department of W.A.



Members of the Young Mums' Program enjoying a trip to Rottnest

Formed initially for social reasons and to overcome isolation, the group of five met fortnightly with the support of one of the staff who later became its Coordinator. By the following year there were eighteen young mothers who met regularly and participated in informal workshops on safety and first aid and various social and recreational activities. By 2002, the number of participants in the Young Mums 'Group had grown to twenty-four with ages ranging from sixteen to twenty-five years. In addition to the centre-based and other activities organised for the Group, individual outreach support was provided where necessary. Some of the major issues raised were "parenting, lack of support, mental health, relationships, substance misuse, conflict with ex-partners, financial hardship and physical health". 15

Some experiences shared by the Young Mums

Tanya talks about picnics at Whiteman Park and other activities:

Sometimes fifteen, up to twenty mums [attend] and then they might bring one or two friends along as well...Some of the Mums have got a couple of children. So there's always a lot of children around. You could have thirty or forty children. It's good because the area is actually all grass and it is fenced off, so they can run for miles and we can still see where they are. So that was really a lovely social gathering. Educationwise, we've had women come from Women's Health Care, Homeswest, Centrelink. We've had a Health Nurse come in just to give us a brief on when you first have bubs and that sort of thing. We've

done sporting, we've done acqua babies, which is swimming lessons for little babies. We've done kindy gym for the babies, and we've done Yoga for the Mums, meditation, and we've also done Black American Funk...

#### On new friends:

...and other benefits are meeting new friends. If you meet someone, like some of the other Mums, you get to go out socially with your baby and with your friends as well, instead of having —you know some people have to have their child babysat to have a good time and go out with their friends or something, where we try to bring the two together.

## On funny incidents:

I can't think of any funny incidents, but with Leah [the Group's Coordinator], you've got to meet Leah, she's a funny incident all the time, she's just funny. Someone's always laughing. Someone's always got something funny to talk about. We're always laughing. We're the loudest group over there.

Interview by author 8 January 2003.

The benefits of belonging to the group were becoming well known and other agencies began making referrals to it, just as valuable links with outside bodies were being developed. A major achievement by the HCSG Youth Services in 2002 was the partnership forged with Midland TAFE, which produced an eighteen month course specially designed for disadvantaged young mothers. Titled "Come on Board Girls," the course, which was held at a venue with crèche facilities, presented them with the opportunity to turn their lives around through improving their academic and life skills. <sup>16</sup>

#### HILLS YOUTH CENTRE

While the Young Mums' Group flourished, the Hills Youth Service did not. In June 2000, the Mundaring Shire Council had before it a proposal from its officers that the Council cease funding the Hills Youth Service and introduce an outreach service.<sup>17</sup> The withdrawal of funding would, in effect, mean the Hills Youth Centre would close.

The HCSG Board of Management and the Chief Executive Officer, Helen Dullard, 18 were totally opposed to the proposal, preferring instead to see enough resources provided for a centre combined with an outreach service. Firstly, a Youth Needs Study recently commissioned by the Shire Council, had shown strong support for a youth drop-in centre in Mundaring, preferably in the form of a café. Secondly, Dullard was in the process of investigating an abandoned garage as a possible site for such a facility, and had been holding discussions on funding and other sources of support with relevant agencies. The response had been positive. In particular, the Mundaring Arts Centre was keen to be involved in a major way. The Group had also received the exciting news that the CEO's submission to the National Illicit Drug Strategy (Support and Information Service) had been successful. An amount of \$63,000 was to be made available over a two year period to run a youth café mainly targeting at-risk young people, and a person had been appointed in June 2000 to help develop the project.<sup>19</sup>

Relationships between the senior staff of the Shire Council and the HCSG were somewhat strained over the coming months. However, with the backing of the Board of Management, Dullard vigorously pursued the café proposal, optimistic about a successful outcome. Their hopes were dashed in February 2001 when the Mundaring Shire Council finally decided to cease funding the Hills Youth service on 30 June that year, and to call tenders for a different model of service for youth.

The HCSG did not tender for the new model on the grounds that it did not include a centre for young people, which it considered an essential component. The withdrawal of Shire support led to the closure of the Hills Youth Centre on 28 June and its demolition on 1 July 2001. Without the Shire's backing, the HCSG did not feel confident about achieving recurrent funding to run a café drop-in project, and so the café proposal, which had been pursued with such enthusiasm, also came to a dead end.<sup>20</sup>

In 2002, the HCSG Youth Services employed two full-time and two casual staff offering both centre-based services at the Swan View Youth Centre, and outreach support to individuals. The good working relationships that were fostered with other agencies in the Eastern Metropolitan Region enabled practical help to be given in numerous ways to 214 young people over the previous year who accessed the service.<sup>21</sup> The HCSG had not wavered in its commitment to youth at risk, and would continue to take proactive steps to try to improve the quality of life of these young residents in the Hills.

## THE GET AWAY CLUB

## "Old age can be wonderful. I wish I had embraced it earlier"

In 1997, the HCSG expanded into yet another area of human need. The Department of Veterans' Affairs had decided to cease running a small social program for War Widows, and was inviting expressions of interest from any organisation willing to take it on. Helen Dullard and Jopie Peetoom prepared a submission to the Department seeking funds for this purpose. The proposed program was to be directed towards those aged people who, while physically mobile, may be leading unhappy, lonely lives through social isolation.<sup>1</sup>

International studies into social determinants of health have shown the importance social support and social networks play in sound mental and physical health. Those with the fewest social connections through lack of participation in group activity, few friends, or living alone, have been found to be the most at risk of serious illness like coronary heart disease or stroke. Depression and a lack of general wellbeing were other outcomes. On the other hand, "belonging to a social network of communication and mutual obligation" made people feel "cared for, loved, esteemed and valued." This had a powerful protective effect on health.<sup>2</sup>

The approach to the Department of Veterans' Affairs was successful in that it agreed to fund the HCSG for twelve months to organise a program targeting well aged veterans and others over sixty years of age "with a wide range of activities to help prevent social and geographical isolation and to encourage community participation." It would cover the local government areas of Mundaring, Swan and Bassendean.<sup>3</sup>

The new program to be named "The Get Away Club," would be a far cry from the modest one run by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Instead of social gatherings in someone's home over a cup of tea, eighty-year-old members would find themselves, among other things, abseiling, sky diving, and riding on the back of Harley Davidson motorbikes!

The Club was officially launched in the Mundaring Shire's Civic Centre on 28 July 1997, when the Department of Veterans' Affairs presented a cheque to the HCSG for \$26,842 for establishment expenses and twelve months running costs. The press publicity about the occasion immediately began to attract members to what would become another very successful HCSG program that would bring friendship and happiness into a lot of lives.<sup>4</sup>

Sally Roberts, who had established and been coordinating the Milperra and Swan View Day Centres, also became the Coordinator of the Get Away Club, funded for twenty hours a week. She set up a base



Sally Roberts and Jopie Peetoom at the launch of the Get Away Club on 28 July 1997

in what had been the Old Midland Post Office, now Lotteries House, but shortly moved to a more convenient venue in the Enterprise Centre in Midland. Roberts lost no time in attracting members and organising enjoyable activities. Within a month there were thirty members, who were being offered a Get Away Club luncheon, movies, and a bush walk from Hovea to Swan View followed by a picnic lunch. The participants included three in their eighties. The following month saw members attending the Garrick Theatre, going tenpin bowling, having fun on a two-day trip to Rottnest, and visiting Lake Leschenaultia to hear a talk about the area by a naturalist.<sup>5</sup>

The members of the Get Away Club would have many exciting times ahead for them organised by a resourceful Coordinator with a keen sense of fun and a great belief in the ability of people to rise to a challenge. While she investigated and suggested activities, members were invited to put forward their own ideas, and these were included in the program wherever possible. An attractive feature of the Club was the variety of interests that were catered for. While some members enjoyed a Mozart Concert performed by the W.A. Symphony Orchestra, others preferred to try something more active like abseiling or cycling. Some wanted to try everything. The Club's bimonthly newsletter *The "Get Away" Gazette*,

featured many amusing stories by members of their recent escapades and eagerly awaited news of planned events.

The Get Away Club changed the life of many people. They made new friends, participated in challenging events they never thought they were capable of achieving, attended all kinds of social occasions and generally had fun. There was a sense of belonging, too.

## A gift from Heaven

Vicky Turner, 84-year-old member, tells why she enjoyed the Club

...It's probably changed my life completely. It's probably the most important part of my life. I look in my calendar every week and see what's on in Get Away, because I live out of town, marginally isolated, and as you know there are lots of things you don't do on your own when you're old, and you certainly don't go out at night on your own. Transport isn't good, and so something like this is a gift from Heaven. I can do all the things I couldn't do alone. That's my major point. The other thing is I have met other people, got to know them, made friends, a whole new life.

Interview by author 11 November 2002

Tickled pink.

Doreen Hawkins, 79-year-old member, remembers the day she was invited to join the Club, while a volunteer cook at Wahroonga:

...Five years ago, I was still cooking then, and Helen came into the kitchen and she said to me that they were setting up this Get Away Club, and she just told me what we would be doing. And I can remember saying 'I feel as if a door opened and my life is going to expand.' I can remember saying that because it just seemed to be what I needed, because there being not much family around you know you really begin to feel you're isolated. I was just tickled pink, and we started off straight away.

Interview by author 11 November 2002.

Although it was anticipated, it was nevertheless disappointing that at the end of the first twelve months, despite the outstanding success of the Get Away Club, the Department of Veterans' Affairs did not continue to fund it. This presented a dilemma for the HCSG which depended mainly on funding from government agencies to provide its services. As nearly fifty people were now relying on this unique program, its demise was unthinkable. A financial plan was therefore devised to ensure its survival. The HCSG would find \$10,000, but would require the Get Away members to raise \$3,000 yearly to supplement this.<sup>6</sup>

At a meeting held by Get Away members in September 1998, they showed how resourceful they could be. At this meeting they decided to introduce an annual membership fee of \$20 and \$25 for couples, applicable from 1 September 1998; to increase membership by lowering the eligible age to fifty-five years, opening membership to all areas, bringing a friend to Club activities, and arranging more media coverage; to assist the Coordinator with office work and the newsletters and to raise funds with a produce stall at the forthcoming "Heart of the Hills Showcase" that month.<sup>7</sup>

By implementing these proposals, and with other fundraising activities like a quiz night, a fashion parade and raffles, the Get Away members did indeed raise the \$3,000 required of them each year. This not only helped to save the Club, but members contributed part of the cost of a fourteen seater bus purchased with support of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Lotteries Commission.<sup>8</sup>

With the financial arrangements settled, it allowed Sally Roberts to continue as Coordinator of a stimulating program for members, organising outings that challenged the best of them.

It was a lot of fun

Sally Roberts talks about some of the outings:

They range from their sixties to their eighties. I think of one – it was when we went caving we had an 87 year old. She was our oldest one that went caving, and it was way down a heck of a cave, it was umpteen steps down and steps up and she did so well – it was Yallingup. She did so well. She was excellent. But anyway, the last adventure we had we went on the flying fox in Bickley Quarry in the adventure camp, and there was a group of Perth College kids there and they were doing exactly what we were doing. You know, they were going across on the flying fox, and the next thing we were on the flying fox. I'm

not sure who had the most fun. I think our group had more fun than they did. But they were just amazed, they just stood there with their mouths open. They couldn't imagine these old ladies and these fellows coming across on this flying fox. And then Russell got some drums and a rope and couple bits of string and said 'Here make yourself a raft and go and paddle to the other side.' Some of the rafts didn't hold together too long, but it didn't really matter. It was a lot of fun. And that's what it's all about. As Vicky can remember saying 'Who'd have thought ten years ago I'd have ever been doing things like this.' It's the sort of thing her grandkids do.

Interview by author 15 July 2002.



Members of the Get Away Club try their hand at paddling on the river.

The following year, Roberts resigned from her Day Centre duties at Milperra and Swan View to concentrate on the Get Away Club.<sup>9</sup> In this International Year of Older Persons, 1999, Get Away was the recipient of funding from the Office of Seniors Interests. This afforded the Club a valuable opportunity to run informative seminars on health issues for both men and women, finance and banking, making a will, the funeral process, handy home hints and using the Internet. All the seminars were open to the public and were well attended. The information gained from them was both interesting and useful to the elderly participants. This project was yet another example of the versatility of services that could be organised under the umbrella of the HCSG.<sup>10</sup>

In early 2000 yet another valuable initiative was taken by the organisation when the Community Reference Group for Older Persons



Get Away Club members Ray Bell, Alvin Harris, Jean Sutcliffe, Jean Harris and Eric Hawkins participating in a fitness workshop December 1999.

(CROP) was formed. Although under the aegis of the Get Away Club, attendance at the bimonthly meetings was open to anyone in the community. The purpose of the Group was to provide a platform for discussion and expression of opinion on matters concerning policies and services for both well aged and frail older people. It did not take long for CROP to be recognised as a worthwhile group. It not only allowed people to raise questions of concern to them and get answers and sometimes practical action, but also provided valuable input into government and Shire planning. Issues discussed included transport, the use of hospital emergency services, the local environment and road safety.<sup>11</sup>

CROP gave the participants a feeling of making a contribution which was listened to and valued by both local government and other government representatives. They learned they could make a difference.

## Having a say

Jean Sutcliffe, a 70- year-old member, talks about CROP:

We all have our say at CROP. I think this is the beauty of this group, that nobody's opinion is belittled. If you've got something to say, then, no matter how trivial you might find it, it is listened to. How do you know if it's trivial or not. It's big to you. Do you know if it's big to the person next to you? It's only by saying these things that you can find out, and often you find that, yes other people have these concerns too.

Interview by author 11 November 2002.

In 2001, the Get Away Club undertook a project supported by the Lotteries Commission called "Now and Then." This exhibition, staged



Get Away members Molly Moffatt, Vicky Turner and Jean Sutcliffe with Member for Swan Hills, Jaye Radisich, M.L.A., who opened the "Now and Then" Exhibition in 2001.

in the Darlington Hall during Seniors' Week that year, featured works of art, painting, woodworking, tapestries, embroideries, some dating back to the 1920s. Open to all seniors, it was a fine example of the contribution made by the Get Away Club to the community. The local Member who opened it, Jaye Radisich, M.L.A., appealed to the exhibitors present not to allow their talents to be lost, but to pass them on to the younger generation. She had made a good point. Seniors had so much of value to offer the community. Apart from their artistic skills, they had a lifetime of experience and knowledge, foreign to a world rapidly changing in social values and technology, that should be shared with their modern contemporaries.

By 2002, the Get Away Club had moved to Hamilton house, the HCSG'S Midland centre. Its membership had grown to over seventy, and life was becoming even more interesting for members. Camping trips and holidays to different parts of the State were always popular, as were the W.A. Symphony Concerts, Festival of Perth music and drama events, Art Gallery visits and walking groups. And some of the older members continued to show remarkable courage and determination tackling the more adventurous pursuits.<sup>13</sup>

## Life can be fun for an 84-year-old

Vicky Turner talks about some of her adventures:

It's hard to pick a favourite. They're all so interesting. I'm particularly interested in theatre and music. I would never go to any of those things on my own, not now that I'm older, and I enjoy picnics with people. And that's something else you don't do alone, do you...We do things that I never thought I would do. I mean you're challenged aren't you. You know, you see something on the list – 'Oh, I'll have a go at that,' and you do it. It makes you feel good.

...Well, we went up in a hot air balloon, we went up in a glider, rode on the back of a Harley Davidson, ...on a flying fox ...we made a raft and paddled on the reservoir, we abseiled...

## On holidays and theme nights:

When we go away...we have two types. We have one that's in the bush where we rough it a bit and one where we go posh.

...We spend a week away in a cottage and one evening, generally the night before we come back, we have a theme and we have a little play, we sing songs, read poetry, tell stories and things like that. This year we were down at Geographe Bay and before we went down I had read an article in The Australian about wind, passing wind. It was a medical thing, wasn't meant to be funny, but when I read it, it was the most hilarious thing I'd ever read. Everybody was in stitches and so was I. I couldn't read it, it was so funny. It wasn't rude, it was factual, but it was hilarious. And I think the thing is when you're all together you see the funny side of things much more than when you're just reading things alone. It brings out this side of you.

Interview by author 11 November 2002.

One of the most popular events was the day Sally Roberts arranged for filming for a video to promote positive ageing. The stars of the video were Get Away Club members, who were to be passengers

on massive Harley Davidson motorcycles. The occasion was one of great fun, excitement and not a little nervousness.

It was just supposed to be stationary for the film.

Sally Roberts remembers the day they hired the Harley Davidsons:

We were going to do a seven-minute video on positive ageing. So we came up with some ideas that we thought would work well. We hired some Harley Davidsons with the guys and we all met in Mundaring in the Sculpture Park. It was very professionally done by a young lass that had just finished training in media, and she came and interviewed some of the folk on what Get Away meant to them and what they got out of it...And the guys took them off zooming down Mundaring Weir Road faster than I'd ever like to imagine that they did, and one lady ...she was actually petrified of motorbikes. So I said 'I really would like you to come along and participate even if you just sit on it.' She said 'It won't move will it?' and I said 'Certainly not.' And I'd forgotten all about it in the meantime, and she was one of the first people that actually got to sit on the motorbike. So the guys are there putting all the leather jackets on and the helmets and the sunglasses, and the gloves so they'd be all nice and warm, and she sat on the back and the cyclist got on. Anyway, he had to start it up just so we could take this photograph. The next thing she went. She was away down the Weir Road, and I suddenly remembered she had said 'It won't move will it?' Well, it was an age before this motorbike came back, and when it came back she had her eyes dead closed. I said 'How did it go, Vicky?' She said 'I don't know, I have no idea, I haven't opened my eyes yet!'

Interview by author 15 July 2002.

One of the remarkable things about the Get Away Club was the extent to which people enjoyed themselves without any quarrels or competitive spirit. This was attributed, among other things, to the fact that there was no committee involved. A Coordinator organising the Club's affairs, with voluntary support from members, seemed to work



An adventure on the Harley Davidsons for Get Away Club members.

very satisfactorily.<sup>14</sup> The results could be found in the amount of fun and laughter that accompanied so many of the outings.

#### The full moon

Jean Sutcliffe enjoyed everything from W.A.S.O concerts to the flying fox. Here she talks about a pre-Christmas evening:

We went down to somewhere near Cottesloe. Swanbourne. We had an evening Christmas function there, a late picnic if you like. And we had eaten - we'd had a beautiful repast - we've become quite well known for these picnics. And we were taking a walk along the sand, Doreen and I were walking together...and everything was calm, it was just beautiful. Suddenly one of those freak waves came and we were bowled. Doreen probably had a foothold better than I did because she was in the sand and I was in the sea and I was suddenly soaked down to everything, and I mean everything, and everybody howled with laughter. Hair was soaked, and we went back to the bus and Sally had one of her jackets which she wears when she's walking – you know the thermally type things, a parka, and this was a hot summer evening. We were also going into the city to see the lights afterwards, and out to Morley to see all those gorgeous contraptions that people put outside their houses. And I was clad in Sally's parka and one of those very colourful crocheted rugs round me, and I had to actually get out of the bus in this gear if I wanted to see the lights in Morley.

But I think the funniest part of all about it was that as I got out of the bus and into my car at Midland Station where it had been parked all this time – to get my key in the lock of my car I had to let go of something, and the people in the bus were presented with my bottom, because the bottom half of the blanket completely slipped, and it must have looked like the full moon or something.

Interview by author 11 November 2002

When the teabags got hung out to dry.

Doreen Hawkins also rode on the back of a Harley Davidson, but usually preferred more passive activities like walking and camping. Here she tells the story about the teabags:

We went for a walk on the Bibbulman Track. Mainly we just did a short walk and we slept overnight in one of their huts, you see. We were all excited, and we got there and went to make a cup of tea, and there were only seven teabags. Somehow they had got missed, and of course we all wanted tea. There were ten of us, I think. So we used the teabags very sparingly, and I think we had two weak cups eventually in the evening, but we hung them up [to dry] on a piece of string so we could have one for breakfast. And that was the thing that stood out in everybody's mind. You know, Bibbulman Track – teabags!

Interview by author 11 November 2002.



Get Away Club members on the Bibbulmun Track in 1999.

The happy atmosphere and goodwill that was exuded by Get Away members seemed to be reciprocated by the community.

The bikies behaved like gentlemen

Sally Roberts tells how the Club members were treated at Alfred's Kitchen:

After theatre or an evening in Perth or we've done an activity, often we'd left before dinner time, so folks might want a cup of tea or a hamburger or bucket of chips, so we go to Alfred's Kitchen in Guildford, and I think a couple of the grandkids and their children were amazed that the Bikies would leave the fire and let the oldies sit down by the fire – they are great. They are really great. Once upon a time I think it was just a novelty, but Alfred's have got used to us and all the oldies pile in and stand around the fire, and yeah, these bikies are quite gentlemanly. They get up and leave their seats by the fire and curb their language a bit, so it's really lovely. It's an excellent opportunity to do things that people never do. I don't think my mother had ever been to Alfred's until she joined Get Away. So they are the extra activities – you can slip in the extra things. A regular stop is the Junction Ice Creamery in Midland, and he gives us all his new ice creams to try, because we're such regulars. Yeah, not good for the diets, but it's good for them to be able to participate in things like that.

Interview by author 15 July 2002.

Get Away Club members would, no doubt, have wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiments expressed by an eighty-year-old member in a letter to the Coordinator, Sally Roberts, when she said "Old age can be wonderful. I wish I had embraced it sooner."<sup>15</sup>

## LEISURE FOCUS

"From here it can only get better"

The HCSG's Leisure Focus Program officially began on 1 July 1997, and it was to become a great success story. But there had been a troublesome history behind this achievement.

In the early 1990s, the HCSG Coordinator, Mundaring Shire's Community Development Officer and Irrabeena Hills Team were looking for ways to fill certain gaps in services for young people with disabilities. It was decided to proceed with an application to the Gordon Reid Foundation for Leisure Buddy funding.¹ A joint submission was lodged with the intention that the Shire Council would take carriage of the matter until the service was established. Then, as the HCSG had other services for people with disabilities, it was felt appropriate that the Leisure Buddy Program be eventually handed over for inclusion under the Group's umbrella. The application for establishment funding was successful, a Management Committee of Parents was established, a Coordinator appointed, and the Mundaring Leisure Buddy Program was in business under the auspices of the Mundaring Shire Council.²

Problems began to arise in 1994, following the Shire's application to the Disability Services Commission for recurrent funding for the Program, indicating its intention to hand the administrative responsibilities to the HCSG as originally planned. Members of the Mundaring Leisure Buddy Management Committee raised objections to this proposal. The major issue, it would seem, was their reluctance to be answerable to another body, fearing loss of autonomy. The HCSG Board of Management was concerned about the atmosphere of mistrust that had been engendered among the parents, and did not believe it to be a satisfactory basis on which to forge a new partnership. It therefore informed the Mundaring Shire Council that it was "not prepared to accept management responsibilities of the Leisure Buddy Program under the present circumstances."<sup>3</sup>

By 1997, the Mundaring Leisure Buddy Association was experiencing difficulties. A new Chairperson, Don Butler, believing the HCSG to be a professionally run organisation, pleaded with the Association to take advantage of what the Group had to offer, and to move under its administration. There was still an element within the Association opposed to such a move, which Butler attributed to "personality" issues. However, a majority of the parents finally accepted the idea. After their agreement to certain conditions specified by the HCSG and approval from the DSC, the program was transferred to the administration of the Group.

The Mundaring Leisure Buddy Association was dissolved on 30 June 1997, and the funding from the DSC transferred to the HCSG to run a renamed program, Leisure Focus, from 1 July. The unexpected resignation of the then Program Coordinator at short notice saw an HCSG administrative staff member, Eleanor Gwilliam, invited to take on the role in an acting capacity until the appointment of a full-time, qualified person.

The inaugural Leisure Focus Advisory Committee was comprised of five members of the former Mundaring Leisure Buddy Association including the Chairperson, the HCSG Administrator, Helen Dullard, and the Leisure Focus Coordinator. The predominance of members from the former Association on the new Advisory body no doubt helped to allay some of the concerns of parents about the changeover of responsibilities. This would have been reinforced when representatives of the Committee played a key role in the selection of the new Coordinator, Russell Small, who took up his duties on 18 August 1997.6

Within the first month, Small had met as many consumers, parents and supporters as possible, introduced a newsletter, began planning future activities with input from consumers and organised a recreation weekender at Milperra for six, which included tennis, bushwalking, canoeing, quoits, archery, videos, music and a visit to Toodyay. He told readers of the Newsletter "I've enjoyed the first month as Coordinator, and, as they say, from here it can only get better."<sup>7</sup>

Leisure Focus did indeed get better, providing opportunities and new experiences which helped participants acquire self-confidence, social skills and new friends. Parents benefited, too, from both the respite they gained and the pleasure of witnessing the social inclusion of their sons and daughters.

Early changes to the Program included a move from Lotteries House in Midland to offices in the Enterprise Centre, newly painted by HCSG volunteer, Ted Barbour, who became well-known for his very proficient painting and maintenance jobs on the Group's properties, in addition to his commitment as a volunteer driver.<sup>8</sup>



HCSG volunteer, Ted Barbour.

Sharing in the early days – a lot of fun

#### Russell Small remembers his first Leisure Focus office:

When I first started, Sally Roberts from the Get Away Program was in Midland. She'd only just started and I lobbed into Midland back in August 1997 as well. So we shared an office in Lotteries House, which is the old Post Office overlooking the Crescent. We shared a room, shared a computer, shared a 'phone, and it was a lot of fun, but we didn't realise we were going to get this big. So I guess, with the programs growing, a major innovation was moving from that office into the Enterprise Centre where we moved into three rooms, and then the other programs started filtering down. We had Jane from the Gesundheit Program – used it as a bit of a base there, and Sandra's workers, mainly Penny, used it as a base as well for the Rainbow Program.

Interview by author 25 July 2002.

Initially, to be eligible to join the program, participants had to be aged between eighteen and forty, have some form of disability and reside in the Shires of Mundaring or Swan. However, as it was found people who needed the program were being excluded because of these limitations, in 1998 the age qualification was changed to sixteen to sixty years and the geographical area extended to include the Shire of Kalamunda.<sup>9</sup>

The Program offered participants the opportunity to take part in recreational activities with the support of a compatible partner or "leisure buddy" who could be either a volunteer or paid staff member. In its first year, Leisure Focus received \$49,327 in funding from the DSC, about twenty-five percent of which came through the Commission's Individual Support Scheme. It was also successful in obtaining \$22,835 from the Gordon Reid Foundation in non recurrent grants for various projects, and nearly \$1,000 in public donations. By the end of that year, there were 50 consumers. In 36 of these, the primary disability was intellectual; others were acquired brain injury: 7; physical: 6; and psychiatric: l. Staff now included the Coordinator and ten casual workers, but there were only eight volunteers.<sup>10</sup>

It was not easy to recruit volunteers. Working with people with disabilities was a specialised commitment and presented a challenge in selecting, training and matching leisure buddies with the people concerned. There were factors like age, gender, time available, and other compatibility issues to deal with. But when a relationship was successful, it often developed into a lasting friendship. Long after matchings arranged through the Program had ended, former leisure buddies were still visiting people for their birthdays and at Christmas time.<sup>11</sup>



Leisure Focus participants and staff on a camping trip to Pemberton in June 1998. Coordinator, Russell Small, front far right.

Feedback from consultations with consumers and parents indicated that peer group activities were preferred to those tailored for individuals, and this influenced future planning, although the Program still aimed to provide one-on-one pairing of consumers with leisure buddies. Throughout the first year, small groups were organised to participate in regular activities that included barbecues, canoeing, video nights, recreation weekenders at local HCSG facilities, and a camping trip to Tone River in the South West. It was a particularly exciting time for eight young people to be involved with eleven students from La Salle College in Midland in a Centenary project, a colourful production of Brazilian music and dance. Presented at the Mundaring Arts Festival in April 1998, it was followed by a performance in Forrest Chase in December of that year.<sup>12</sup>



Forrest Chase performance by participants of the Leisure Focus program and La Salle College Students, December 1998.

## Absolute Joy

Russell Small reports on the performance in Forrest Chase

The project, funded by Healthways, performed in Forrest Chase recently on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December to a large crowd of appreciative people. The group combining young people with a disability and a student group from La Salle College had spent the past 8 weeks rehearsing their routines. One of the most heartening aspects of the event was to see the absolute

joy in what they were doing, they all enjoyed what they were doing, and the self-confidence in themselves and boosted self-esteem was evident. The group from La Salle so enjoyed the whole project they can't wait to be involved in a similar project again next year.

Report to HCSG BOM Meeting 16 December 1998.

The event, funded by Healthways, was so successful that Healthways provided an even larger grant the following year. That project, called "Bridging the Gap," enabled another production involving young people from Leisure Focus and La Salle College to be performed twice at the Octagon Theatre in November 1999. As with the previous year's production, the show was a big hit with the audience.<sup>13</sup>

The HCSG, in 1998, was approved by the DSC as an Official Provider of services for an alternative-to-employment program for school leavers with a disability, called Post School Options. Originally placed under the Leisure Focus Program, it was later transferred to a coordinator of a new HCSG program to be known as Open Options. The first four participants were received into the Group's Post School Options Program in February 1999. 14

The year 1999 also saw Leisure Focus move to the new HCSG office centre in Midland, called Hamilton House. This would provide the Program with more resources and support through improved communication between Program Coordinators located there.<sup>15</sup>

As participation in more challenging activities grew, so did the consumers' confidence. In 1999, a number of them formed their own Friendship Group, and as a group, they made decisions on their monthly outings, which included such venues as restaurants, ten pin bowling, the Royal Show and movies. In addition, four of the members of the Friendship Group became consumer representatives on the Leisure Focus Advisory Committee, replacing parents. <sup>16</sup>

What a little confidence can do

Don Butler, father of Amanda, a Leisure Focus participant, recalls when they formed the Friendship Group:

Amanda has been away on numerous weekends, and through Russell's initiative they've formed this Friendship Group, where Russell initially had a paid support staff to organise it, it was going to be at so and so's house and they were going to organise their pizzas and their eats, and they would just hire a couple of videos, and they'd just sit around and watch videos. It got to the point where the support worker was able to just back off and they can initiate their own nights out.

Interview by author 24 November 2002.

The ability to express an opinion, to choose, to put forward ideas, and have these listened to all helped to increase the self-esteem of the participants. It was part of the fundamental thinking which drove Leisure Focus policies and planning to assist the individual to develop to his or her full potential to enable inclusion in the community. Although the primary purpose of Leisure Focus was to provide a quality leisure service, this was not only to be achieved through recreational activities. Every avenue was explored for opportunities to develop skills and confidence. Participants were found part-time employment in other HCSG programs, educational courses in TAFE were arranged, such as the use of computers. Others were invited to contribute their services in other ways.<sup>17</sup>

A valued member of the community

Russell Small talks about people making a contribution:

Where possible, we're trying to educate the community as to the benefits of what a person with a disability may offer the community. So what I do when someone presents onto my program is I'll leisure-counsel them as to what they want to achieve through the program...For instance a man came to me with multiple sclerosis, and he was still able to drive, and he was after me to provide a service to him. I thought well what am I able to provide for you, but then I looked at it the other way as to what could he maybe do for me. He said that he had a friend that liked going to the cricket and that he could take that person to the cricket. So I said well, through the volunteer leisure buddy program if I pay you to take that person to the cricket you're both engaging in a recreational activity, you as a volunteer driver, you're getting reimbursed for the money for travel and you're seen as being a valued member of the

community. So to me that was a win win situation. Instead of him being dependent on me for a service, I was valuing what he could do; his ability versus his disability.

#### Interview by author 25 July 2002

At the July 2001 meeting of the HCSG Board, Helen Dullard, now the CEO, informed the Board that Russell Small was "ecstatic." The reason for his joy was the success of an application to the DSC for recurrent funding to provide respite support for people with disabilities with high support needs and/or ageing carers. An amount of \$31,700 had been granted for this purpose.<sup>18</sup>

HCSG staff were always conscious of the respite needs of carers of the frail aged and people with disabilities, and were constantly exploring avenues for funding to enable them to offer respite. While respite was being provided under other programs, in particular those funded by HACC, there were never enough resources to meet the demand. The news that Leisure Focus was now able to offer support in this area was most welcome indeed.

The demand for the respite services offered by the Leisure Focus Program was so great that the DSC doubled the funding the following year, providing an additional \$31,000. The increase in the recurrent funding and in the service provided was reflected in a change in the name of the program. It was now called Leisure Focus and Respite Options.<sup>19</sup>

The expansion of its respite service was only one of many success stories of the Leisure Focus Program in its six-year history. Others concerned the changes that occurred in the lives of the participants. Life offered more fun, more challenges that could now be met, friendships, a say in their affairs, all of which led to more confidence and self-esteem and to a valued role in the community.

## A social life is important

Don Butler tells how Amanda dealt with a problem:

Amanda had a leisure buddy who took them to the Aberdeen. The leisure buddy said where do you want to go. They all wanted to go to the Aberdeen where all the young people go with the loud music – the Aberdeen Hotel. Anyhow, this leisure buddy, Bronwyn, would take Amanda and another young girl

Renae, and Renae's in a wheelchair. She's a quadraplegic. They would go once every two or three weeks or a month to the night club and dance and Bronwyn would bring them home. Actually I think they would go in Amanda's car, but Bronwyn was there to supervise. Anyhow, Bronwyn got another job and she couldn't do it anymore and Amanda and Renae were really upset, they were in tears. We found out later, not through Amanda, that Amanda actually picked up Renae a couple of nights in a wheelchair and they went into the Aberdeen on their own. So, to me, it was the initiation of this process to enable them to have the self-confidence to go and do something like that...So they're very subtle things that happen in time where the consumer benefits greatly. It just makes them feel good, because they can go and do it on their own. It gives them the confidence to go and do it on their own. So Amanda's been able to go to many places on her own, but with all these disabilities they each have their own little drawbacks, things that they can't do. But in our case, if it wasn't for the Leisure Focus Program, Amanda wouldn't have a social life.

Interview by author 24 November 2002.

# HCSG ENTERPRISE EAST and WORK OPTIONS

"We started off in my shed"

At the HCSG Board of Management meeting on 25 March 1998, members had before them a proposal from the Administrator, Helen Dullard, for the appointment of a gardener/handyman. The primary purpose of this project was not the maintenance of the gardens at HCSG properties. It was rather to meet identified needs of people with an intellectual or psychiatric disability, who were already HCSG consumers. Dullard suggested that by providing appropriate, paid work in a supportive environment it would not only give them some meaningful occupation of their time, but also the opportunity to increase their social and living skills, and perhaps lead to other employment.

The Board was convinced of the case put forward by the Administrator and gave approval for her to proceed with the concept. The position of "gardener" was filled by Craig Meldrum and initially placed under the Leisure Focus and Rainbow Coordinators for administrative assistance.<sup>1</sup>

#### WORK OPTIONS

The new program named Work Options officially commenced in July 1998 employing three people with a disability, who were HCSG consumers. They were paid award wages for the hours they were able to work maintaining properties managed by the Group. The transport and tools were provided by Craig Meldrum, who now held the title of Supervisor.

As the trial project showed great promise, the HCSG, which had been supporting it from within its own resources, applied to the Lotteries Commission for funding. To everyone's delight, in April 1999 Lotteries granted \$72,500 towards the purchase of a vehicle, essential equipment, and a year's salary for the Supervisor.<sup>2</sup>



The first Work Options vehicle and trailer outside 18 Leslie Street Middle Swan

It was all kept in the back of the trailer and in the shed.

Craig Meldrum remembers the beginning of Work Options.

We started off in my shed. It was all kept in the back of the trailer and in my shed at home, and we did that for two years until we got this place. So there were no facilities; there was no room at the back of Wahroonga to put any gear. We got a dual cab ute with the Lotteries money and we were able to transport everyone needed using that ... It's an eight by six metre shed, and it was probably half full of equipment most of the time, but we only had enough equipment to fit in the trailer anyway, so it wasn't really a major drama to start with.

I can't remember whether our first contract was a Shire contract or with the Ministry of Housing, but they both arrived around the same time, and then we were able to give these guys more work, and then the more work we gave them the more they wanted. So, it sort of grew from that, sort of grew from the demand ... and the number of guys we were getting referred. We've had referrals from Royal Perth Hospital... and the Swan Mental Health Viveash Rehabilitation Centre...

Interview by author 22 July 2002

To enable the Work Options Program to become a viable self-supporting entity, the HCSG developed the concept of an enterprise centre, turning Work Options into a "private arm" and expanding into the nearby local government areas of Swan and Kalamunda.

While exploring this possibility, the Group set about securing contracts for gardening and maintenance work from both the government sector and local community. Within the first year, it had contracts with the Mundaring Shire, Ministry of Housing and the community to the value of \$62,000. There were by now ten males and one female working a total of 130 hours a week.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE MIDLAND BRICK PARTNERSHIP

In early 1999, the Group had started thinking in terms of looking for a corporate partner, who might be interested in a long-term business relationship. The name Boral and its group Midland Brick Co. Pty. Ltd. were discussed.<sup>4</sup> Helen Dullard was able to take some good news to her Board's meeting in May. She had arranged a meeting with Midland Brick and was delighted with their response and preparedness to "walk through the door" with HCSG. While "no dollars were asked for or offered," other in-kind services would be available. Midland Brick's Human Resources Manager would be visiting Wahroonga later that month for further discussions.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of that meeting on 27 May, the HCSG would embark on a course that represented a huge milestone in its history, and one which would be unique for such an organisation. Midland Brick wanted a community presence, but wished to achieve this through practical assistance rather than direct donations. The assistance to the HCSG would come in a very tangible form. Firstly, the Company offered the Group the use of two houses in Middle Swan. These could be used as bases for Work Options and other programs for young people who were unemployed or who had intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. Secondly, it offered a decorative brick project and a nursery to be managed by Work Options, and training opportunities for young unemployed people to cut and lay bricks. Thirdly, it was suggested some of this training could take place in the building of a new Day Centre planned by the HCSG, if Midland Brick were involved in this project. In addition, the Company offered building materials possibly at cost and a building supervisor for the project. It would be an understatement to say that the HCSG was overwhelmed by the Midland Brick offer and entered into its new business partnership with great enthusiasm.6

By September 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding had been drawn up and the HCSG had taken possession of the keys to 67 Great Northern Highway and 18 Leslie Street, Middle Swan. Both properties were cleaned and painted and the grounds tidied up by young teams organised by the Group.<sup>7</sup>



Landscaping at Enterprise House

The move into the house at 67 Great Northern Highway, named Enterprise House, gave Craig Meldrum and his Work Options Program a great fillip. There was now a proper base from which to work, and "it gave the guys a definite identity." Their pride was reinforced when they later had the name of the business embossed on their shirts. When Midland Brick provided a kiln at this address, a very successful decorative brick project was introduced, which would become a lucrative fundraiser, not only for Work Options, but also for the community groups which used the process.9



A participant using the brick press in the decorative brick project at Enterprise House

A ceremony to celebrate the partnership was held on 8 December 1999. The Minister for Youth Affairs, Mike Board, M.L.A., who officially launched it, expressed admiration for what had been achieved by the HCSG and the Company.<sup>10</sup>



At the launch of the partnership between Midland Brick and HCSG by Mike Board, M.L.A., Minister for Youth Affairs, on 8 December 1999. From left: Helen Dullard, the Minister, Paul Arndt, Divisional Manager Midland Brick, and June van der Klashorst, M.L.A.

#### WORK-FOR-THE-DOLE PROGRAM

In March 2000, HCSG<sup>11</sup> agreed to become a sponsor of the Work-for-the-Dole Program, initially taking on ten young participants. This complemented and strengthened the viability of the Work Options Program, offering more flexibility in training opportunities.<sup>12</sup> The sponsorship was repeated at the end of each six-monthly contract.

The participants were treated with consideration and given a variety of jobs, in an endeavour to make life more interesting for them. At the end of their six months placement, a barbecue was held and certificates presented to celebrate their achievement. Some participants found the HCSG Work-for-the-Dole Program so acceptable in comparison to others that they "rolled over" into another program when they had finished the first one. There were many success stories of young people going on to paid employment or to TAFE courses, because of the training and other social skills they were able to gain. The community, too, benefited from their work in various ways. Two examples of this were the landscaping at HCSG's new Day Centre and the building of an amphitheatre at Governor Stirling Senior High School.<sup>13</sup>

They deserve some respect, too.

Craig Meldrum talks about the Work-for-the-Dole participants:

It takes about a month for them to get used to coming in here, especially if it's their first Work-for-the-Dole program. They sort of think the world's against them, and someone owes them a living, but once they've been here for about a month they start to respect – we try to give them a variety of things to do, not just one type of work. We try to give them a bit of landscaping, a bit of lawn mowing. It's all very basic, but they're not doing the same thing. One of the first participants we had came in and complained. This was his second Work-for-the-Dole program. In his first one he spent six months shifting mulch with a wheelbarrow and a shovel, and that to me is just slave labour. You're not giving them the respect – they may not have a lot of self-esteem... I don't think you're encouraging them by doing that to them. Anyway, he turned up at the end of his six months, he was quite a pleasant young fellow and he was actually looking at different ways that we could do work and how we could get involved in different projects, which was an entire turn around from when he started. A lot of it, I think, is because we had small groups of people and we were doing a variety of work, not just abusing the privilege of having them.

#### Two success stories

...The first assistant I got was a guy who was unemployed. He had a back injury through a work problem and he was told to go out and offer his services as a volunteer to some organisation, and he came through, and he got to the stage where he was actually just about an embarrassment, because he was here all the time. He was prepared to do anything. So we actually employed him. He's now one of our supervisors. So he's gone from being unlikely to get employment through to having a full-time position.

...We had a guy who was here in our first Work-for-the-Dole Program and he was excellent, but he just couldn't sell himself. He just had no way of advising or talking to anyone. He couldn't promote himself in any way, but when it came to work he'd do anything for you, and we lost him. I don't know where he went, but after two years I heard he was around and we got him a job up in the Valley ...and he's been there for the last seven or eight months, full-time employed now. He just needed an opportunity, and we are lucky enough to be in a position now where, with our links with other groups in the community that work in the landscaping or any of the other allied industries, they come and ask us if we have anyone, and it's good to be able to pass someone on to them.

Interview by author 22 July 2002

#### ENTERPRISE EAST

As momentum was starting to build, and the business began expanding into other programs, it was felt a new name was called for. By June 2000, the name "Enterprise East" was put forward. This later included the letters "HCSG."

The redevelopment of the Midland area and of Homeswest properties opened up even more opportunities for employment for the young people being targeted by HCSG, and these were certainly pursued by the Group. A major contract taken on by HCSG in 2000 was the revitalisation of Midvale under the Eastern Horizons project. HCSG was given the responsibility of managing it through its business arm Enterprise East with input from the North East Regional Youth Council, W.A. Department of Training and Employment, Midland Joblink, Mundaring Arts Centre and Midland Enterprise Centre. The work called for the application of a number of skills which would provide substantial experience for the young people involved such as landscaping, building maintenance, gardening, brickpaving and fencing. The project would also give priority to unemployed Ministry of Housing tenants and Workfor-the-Dole and Work Options participants registered with HCSG and the North East Regional Youth Council.<sup>15</sup>

Because of its expansion in a number of programs, HCSG was beginning to acquire a regional profile and a reputation as an organisation of some substance. This, no doubt, weighed heavily in its favour when seeking support for new ideas or funding for one of its programs. In March 2001, for example, the Group was able to appoint a Business Development Leader for Enterprise East, made possible by twelve months

funding of \$65,000 from WADOT and \$17,500 from the Ministry of Housing. The position, which would share the Great Northern Highway premises with Work Options Coordinator, Craig Meldrum, would have responsibility for marketing and promotion of sales and contracts to ensure the long-term viability of the organisation.<sup>16</sup>

Contracts had already been increasing, involving more participants, and this called for a greater level of supervision of the teams. By May 2001, Work Options had, in addition to the Coordinator, four supervisors, including a young man who had joined as a consumer at the beginning of the Program three years earlier. The supervisor concerned, Paul, was one of Work Options' great success stories.

## Paul's story

Paul, a Work Options Program participant, tells how his life turned around and he became self employed with his own lawnmowing businss:

I used to go to rehab. in Viveash Rehabilitation Centre, and I had a mate there called George, and I heard through George because he started about a week before – he said 'Oh look, they're starting up some work in the Hills,' and I thought 'Oh yeah, I'll jump at that chance.' What happened was I went and saw Craig. Craig was in charge there. He gave me a chance, and that's how I got started. I think George is still in the crew. Yeah, I just heard through him, and basically Craig taught me everything from the start and that's how I've got my own lawnmowing round now...When we first started, we had Hills Community houses up in the Hills that we looked after – Milperra, Pioneer, Elm and Nobel. We used to maintain the gardens and if they needed work around the places, building things or whatever, that's what we used to do. Probably about a month after I started we built this pergola for a bloke that lived next to Pioneer. He was part of the HACC Program. We built a pergola for him and I learned off that. Craig taught me how to use the mowers, the maintaining, the mechanical part of it...I did a chainsaw course through Hills Community, and trimming. Craig taught me how to trim trees and plants. You know, basically all gardening sort of work and just maintaining machinery as well.

...I think with the work situation, how it's set up is good, because it actually gets you out of the house and it gives you something to do, and if your mind's busy you don't think of other things. So, in that way, it's very good for people with illnesses—with anyone really, even if you don't have an illness—if you work. It's better to work than just sit at home and dwell on things.

... I think it's been great because it's helped people with mental illness, because a lot of people think they're different to other people, which they're not. Craig's probably been the main instigator, I think, that's pulled us all through. If we've got problems, we talk to Craig, because we trust him sort of thing. Basically it's been good. It's good for everyone, I think.

## On buying his lawnmowing business:

...Dad gave me a bit of a loan to get me started and it's worked out well...I bought the trailer and all the gear, the stuff I needed, and the goodwill off a private owner. That was July this year I bought it. It's going well. I've actually done more bookwork than ever I had done at school. I'm really enjoying it, because it's really – I'm trying to look positive. I have days when – I think everyone has days when they're not feeling the best, but I try to move on... I have my father working with me, and I think he's probably the greatest person that has helped me in my business. He's there to help me. That's the bottom line.

Interview by author 6 November 2002.

In June 2001, contracts for work totalled \$255,000. This represented a "break-even point" for HCSG Enterprise East, and signalled a stronger future financial position for the business<sup>17</sup>

During the next twelve months, the commitment given by both HCSG and Midland Brick to their partnership led HCSG Enterprise East to become involved in even more programs. These, too, were targeted at marginalised young adults with special needs related to unemployment, social isolation, low self-esteem and other personal issues.

In July 2001, the organisation became interested in the Sustainable Training and Employment Project (STEP) for indigenous youth, providing twelve months practical on-the-job training for young aboriginal people undertaking related TAFE courses. The following month \$30,000 was awarded to HCSG Enterprise East by WADOT to run a JobWorks program in conjunction with Midland Brick and Midland Joblink, providing work experience and training for long-term unemployed youth. The twelve-week program turned out to be an outstanding success with ten participants, most of whom were Aboriginal, receiving certificates for completing the program, and seven of them being offered full-time employment by Midland Brick. This good outcome enhanced the reputation of HCSG Enterprise East as a provider of quality programs and led to WADOT offering a further JobWorks project to the organisation. The supplement of the programs and led to WADOT offering a further JobWorks project to the organisation.

Discussions between HCSG and Midland Brick in 2001 led to the introduction early the following year of an innovative program called Joint Solutions. The major concern, which motivated the partners, was that, despite the apparent inadequate number of young people entering the building industry generally, there were barriers to these jobs being faced by participants in HCSG Enterprise East programs. It was felt that there had to be a way of overcoming this anomaly with cooperation between the Government, the private sector and organisations like HCSG Enterprise East.

Approaches to government received a very sympathetic hearing and a practical response, making a pilot project possible. The Ministry of Housing and Works set aside five properties for this purpose, and, in addition, WADOT granted eighteen months funding of \$35,000 to provide social support to help trainees overcome personal and social problems, which were impeding their employment. The on-site social support was provided by an occupational therapist employed by HCSG Enterprise East.<sup>20</sup>

Helping to solve personal problems

Craig Meldrum describes how young people with major personal issues affecting their lives were helped:

Shane's role is to link the participants – if we can't provide it here, if we don't have the skills to provide the support here, the personal development support that they require – we link them with other programs. When it comes to the budgeting or the

working with their fines or whatever else is preventing them, whatever their barrier is, whether it's literacy, numeracy, their lack of self awareness, or maybe their self abuse, we've linked them with other providers in the community to help them with those problems. But we don't just say ring this number and go with it; Shane actually helps them. She takes them there, or she follows up to make sure that they follow through, not just, you know, it's your problem go and deal with it yourself. And I think that's why it works. The guys have so much respect for Shane. It's very encouraging to see them have that sort of respect for someone in that position...

We call her a project officer, and that covers a lot of the personal support or the social support that we put in, which is to get the guys comfortable. The biggest problem with most of them is to get them comfortable in turning up somewhere, and if you can get them to come and see you you've overcome that barrier for a start. And then if they're prepared to talk to you about their issues they're really starting to come a long way. Then we find out that they've got troubles at home or they've got drug abuse problems, or they're recently out of prison and they can't get accommodation, or whatever else, and then, once you know what the problems are, Shane is able to work with them and to deal with them. We don't solve their problems for them, but we help them solve their own problems.

Interview by author 22 July 2002.

The Joint Solutions project drew support from other government departments, the Housing Industry Association, a private builder and the Catholic Education Office, which offered a school building extension as part of the trial.<sup>21</sup> The enthusiasm of all the stakeholders, not the least of which were the young people for whom it was designed, augured well for the future. HCSG had shown once again what could be achieved by a coalition of government, business sector and community organisations.

By July 2002, a Marketing Plan for HCSG Enterprise East had been developed with the assistance of professional consultants to guide the future direction of the business. The Business Development Leader had resigned in April and the position combined with that of Work Options Coordinator. The new position of Manager was taken by



Presentation to HCSG and Midland Brick of Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships by Senator Alan Eggleston, November 2002. From the left: Kelvin Ryan, Midland Brick, Craig Meldrum and Helen Dullard, HCSG, Senator Eggleston, and Peter Hogan, Midland Brick.

Craig Meldrum, who was given responsibility for the Marketing Plan's implementation.<sup>22</sup>

The unique partnership between HCSG and Midland Brick continued to flourish. It became a model of what could be achieved with vision, ingenuity and a spirit of cooperation between two parties who respected the specialised expertise of each other. In November 2002, the HCSG and Midland Brick won the West Australian section of the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships. The awards "honour partnerships that have made a positive contribution to the quality of life of the people involved, and which have provided a genuine benefit to the community." <sup>23</sup>

It was a fitting honour for the two partners.

# OPEN OPTIONS and POST SCHOOL OPTIONS

"If the service isn't there, lets create one"

"...If the service isn't there, let's create one – and we did." So wrote Elizabeth Small Coordinator of the HCSG Open Options Program in her Annual Report of 1997/98. The statement, part of a short history of the program, epitomised the proactive spirit behind many HCSG achievements.<sup>1</sup>

By 1998, people like the CEO, Helen Dullard, and Elizabeth Small were becoming aware of certain needs of consumers in the Group's Community Residential Program, later known as the Community Living Program. It was felt that the quality of life of the residents in the three houses being managed by the HCSG could be improved considerably given the opportunity of access to quality day centre placement. However, being people with intellectual disabilities, some severe with high support needs, who were ageing, it appeared there were no services available for them in the Hills. Therefore, it was decided the HCSG would set up its own program. A submission to the Gordon Reid Foundation for funding was successful. The grant enabled the employment of two part-time staff for three days a week for twelve months.

Good ideas can lead to great things

Elizabeth Small recalls how Open Options began:

Helen identified the fact that, okay we had a number of people who didn't have any placement, and what were we going to do about it. I had ideas in that area. I then looked at staff that I was working with up in the Community houses, sort of talked about my ideas, and a lot of people said 'Yeah, great idea, great idea.' When it came down to brass tacks, there was one staff who stood out and said 'I love what you want to do, I'd love

to be in on it with you,' and that was Jo Hooper, and Jo is now the Assistant Coordinator here, and has been with me for the five years that we've been doing it. She just had the same – you know following through with ideas, being creative, what can we do, what sort of programs can we run and that sort of thing. So the two of us basically got it up and going, and now we've got thirteen staff here in this program working from full-time to casual hours.

...We needed a name for our program five years ago when we started and we thought 'What are we going to do; what exactly are we going to do?' And we thought, well what we're going to do is give options to people who didn't have any options in their life, and we wanted those options to be as open as possible, as broad as possible. So we came up with the name Open Options.

Interview by author 16 July 2002.

Milperra, the HCSG new respite centre, was the ideal place for the program to be based, and on 4 February 1998 a morning tea was held there to launch it with invited guests from other agencies present.

On 11 February, the first participants were introduced to their new program, which had been developed by Elizabeth Small and Jo Hooper. It would make the world a much more interesting place for them with enjoyable centre-based activities or outings designed with flexibility to cater for individual choice and level of disability.<sup>2</sup> Within the first few months, those activities included music, puzzles, sensory materials, art, gardening, papermaking and cooking. The "outdoor component" focused on community integration through walking and swimming groups, canoeing, visits to cafes and assisted use of public transport.<sup>3</sup>

Fears about the viability of the Program were somewhat allayed when, because of the age of the participants, HACC recurrent funding was approved in mid 1998.<sup>4</sup> However, it was only for two days a week, and it had been hoped to extend it to five days, as there were now referrals coming from outside agencies. This was to become a reality when the HCSG later took on a DSC program called Post School Options designed to offer alternative-to-employment activities to school leavers with a permanent physical or intellectual disability.

In August 1998, the HCSG became accepted by the DSC as a Preferred Provider of these services and by the end of the year had been chosen by four families, who were individually funded by DSC. Following a decision to place Post School Options with Open Options, a new expanded intergenerational Open Options commenced on 1 February 1999. While the age range was now sixteen to sixty, activities would still be designed with the individual in mind, ensuring they were appropriate and recognised the participant's choice and needs. The program would also continue to be based at Milperra.<sup>5</sup>

Staff for the Open Options Program had to be carefully chosen. To work with people with challenging behaviours required a special type of person. In addition to being trained to handle different kinds of disabilities, they needed to be patient, enthusiastic and creative; to be thinking of new activities and ways of making life interesting for the participants.<sup>6</sup>

A great deal of thought went into ensuring that, irrespective of the degree of disability, a way would be found to include participants. Whether in community integration through outings or some centre-based activity, the emphasis would be on enabling them to achieve something to promote a feeling of self-worth.



Open Options participants painting black cat silhouettes.

#### It was a real buzz

Elizabeth Small talks about how everybody gets to do something creative:

What we try and look for, and I'm always looking for, are activities that I can break down to different skill levels, and so one of the things that's been a real winner are our mosaic garden stepping stones ... I can have somebody who's quite severely disabled with a hammer breaking tiles, so he gets great satisfaction out of that. You can also have somebody who might have a bit of a wicked temper who's able to smash those tiles. So you can fit in both, and within that project you might also have somebody who's capable of looking into a book getting pictures and photocopying them, somebody else that'll place the tiles. Then we might have a day where we'll have three or four people with one of the staff mixing up cement and they pour that in onto their mosaic, onto the back of it, and we use the spring cake tins and we turn out these beautiful garden stepping stones. People buy them for \$20 for Christmas presents and things like that. Then ... they go out with the staff and buy more tiles, more cement, more tins, so that they're able to see the work that they did then gives them that money to go out and buy more tools.

Then we started doing these black silhouette cats. We've got three different shapes of those and we've got a volunteer that cuts them out for us, the participants paint them, we bag them, we label them and we sold \$150 worth to a chap at the Fremantle Markets. So, for the boys going along and handing those over and getting the cheque was just, yeah, it was a real buzz. And then we do lots of pressed flower cards, and we've actually sold them to an Australiana shop in America, and to a gift shop in Maylands, and we just sell them here and anyone who hears about them comes and buys them. We don't sell them for a lot of money, so they're affordable, but anything we get then goes back into buying more cards or that sort of thing.

Interview by author 16 July 2002.



Some of the popular gift cards with pressed flowers made by Open Options participants, for sale at Centenary House

With the assistance of a \$3,000 grant from Healthways, a memorable occasion was organised by the Open Options Program for the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December 2000. Called "WalkAbilities", the project was a remarkable achievement for H.C.S.G. Planned around people with disabilities, it involved a walk along the Kattamorda Track between Mundaring and Bickley Reservoir. The day,



Ron Dullard, right, and friends enjoying a barbecue lunch after WalkAbilities.

which ended with a barbecue, was an outstanding success with ninety people turning up, including HCSG staff and volunteers, participants from various programs, parents, carers, friends and community groups. The walk was broken down into manageable sections. While some covered the whole distance, thirty kilometres, others managed three kilometres. The section for those in wheelchairs was seven kilometres. As the track was not designed for wheelchairs, many hands helped push, lift or manoeuvre these through difficult terrain.<sup>7</sup>

Each year, HCSG held a Staff Development Day. A measure of the dedication of the staff to their consumers' best interests was the way in which they spent that day in 2000. On that occasion they went to the trouble of trying out the seven kilometre section of track planned for WalkAbilities. By taking turns in a wheelchair, blindfolded, it helped them to understand the feelings and needs of someone who relied on this assistance for mobility.<sup>8</sup>

A milestone in the Open Options Program occurred when HCSG's grand new Centenary House opened in Koongamia. Initially planned as a day centre for the frail aged, it was decided to also make provision for accommodation for Open Options, which had outgrown Milperra. This proposal, according to Elizabeth Small, was initially greeted in some quarters with "a little bit of shock-horror." How could you possibly have people with disabilities and aged people in the same centre, they asked. However, according to Small, the arrangement worked extremely well with good communication between both groups creating a happy atmosphere.

It was a win- win situation

Elizabeth Small describes the friendly relationships at Centenary House:

One of the fantastic things that we've had here ...the younger guys and girls come through and say 'Good morning' and 'hello' to everyone in there, and we'll often have people from there wandering down saying 'Can we pop in and say 'hello?'...One day we had a staff member and some of the boys out here mixing cement and neither the participants nor the staff knew how to mix cement, and one of the older chaps, in his eighties I think he was, from next door, heard that we were in a tangle. He came through and said 'I've been mixing cement all my life. I'll show you how to do it.' And I thought this is

fantastic. He went out there and he taught our staff and the young boys with disabilities how to mix cement, and I thought here we have in this aged centre over here so many life skills and people wanting to be needed.

...And then another lady who makes these butterflies came through and she said 'I made these butterflies, would you like one for your window?' And the guys here said 'Yes, we'd love one.' And she said 'I'll go home and make it and have it down to you this week.' So she went home and made that and brought it in and she just felt fantastic, and I thought from her meeting the chaps here it gave her something to do at home. So there are some wonderful skills.

We've also got a train track that we put up mainly for the young fellows, and they love putting the trains on. I thought I really need to develop this more. I wanted mountains and bridges and buildings, and a couple of the guys that are in the men's group next door measured the train – one of them was actually involved in the Second World War in managing some sort of rail station - they've measured the train, looked at the scale, and they're making scale buildings. And I thought here again - through those older fellows meeting and seeing a need here with the young people, they started going to the library, getting out books of railway stations, railway tracks, bringing them in here to be photocopied, and everything they're building is to scale. So that's going to go in the 'Shed' so the older gentlemen as well as our chaps can build up this train station. It's been an absolute win-win situation, it really has, and Sam and I share resources. She'll say 'Look, I've got this group in, have you got any ideas?' and I'll say 'Yeah, yeah...' and she'll do something, and I'll say 'God, I'd love to borrow that.' It's been really brilliant.

## Interview by author 16 July 2002.

The new base for Open Options, which opened on 1 February 2001, was beneficial in a number of ways. In addition to being an attractive purpose-built facility, it offered the Program more convenience in respect to its location for staff contact and for logistical purposes related to transport of participants. However, within three months of Open Options moving to Centenary House, the HCSG CEO informed her

Board that, because of the excellent reputation the Program had gained, it had now outgrown its new home. To ensure the continued quality of the service offered, it was therefore considered necessary to provide an additional venue. It was fortuitous that an ideal property was available in the form of the Midland Brick house at Leslie Street in Middle Swan. <sup>10</sup>

The acquisition of Leslie Street created a good deal of excitement among the staff and participants at Open Options. There were great plans for its use, which would be reflected in the choice of a name. The participants were invited to suggest one and decided on "The Studio." This, it was felt, portrayed an image of what it was hoped would be happening there, such as art, drama, music, the use of computers and social gatherings like barbecues.

As well as choosing a name, the participants were also included in the decision-making on how The Studio would be decorated, and involved with the staff in the actual work. It really made them feel it was their own.<sup>11</sup>

When it was all finished, a barbecue was held, to which representatives of Midland Brick were invited, to celebrate and to thank them for the use of the building.

## A day of celebration

Helen Dullard remembers the fun of renovating The Studio with the participants' help and the later celebration:

...Oh yes, and they participated in the barbecue. They were pretty excited about cooking for visitors. They put a great deal of time into cleaning and painting the house. How Elizabeth had done it was just amazing. She actually let them paint it. They stood in the paint, they painted each other; they did all that, but they were just so proud of their achievements at the end. They ripped up old smelly carpets and got the floors stained. They painted it with bright lemon and bright blue to brighten it up. They put big music notes all over it to make it theirs and make it different. Cleaned and scrubbed. Great deal of pride in getting that house up to scratch. So on the day, cooking, and they actually gave Midland Brick a black cat cut out of cardboard and some other collage, concrete and coloured glass, which Midland Brick just loved. It was a lovely

day. It was a lovely day of them saying thanks for giving us this extra opportunity.

# Interview by author 19 December 2002.





Keen Open Options participants painting The Studio at 18 Leslie Street.



Staff and Open Options participants celebrating at their new venue, The Studio.



At the launch of the "Can Do Dat" CD and Video

Many activities were planned for The Studio, but the one which probably caused the most joy for the participants was the "In Tune" Music Program, run throughout 2002 and funded by the Lotteries Commission. The \$17,300 grant paid for a program leading up to the production of a CD and video. The musicians and stars were ten participants, some with severe physical and intellectual disabilities. With the resourceful staff at Open Options, some with musical talents, a program was designed



Jo Hooper, Elizabeth Small and Wendy McGlone, staff from Open Options, at the "Can Do Dat" launch.

to include everyone, using percussion instruments or singing. The CD was called "Can Do Dat," which was a regular response from one of the participants whenever confronted with an obstacle. A recording studio in Maddington, chosen because of its "atmosphere," was attended once a week by the young musicians, accompanied by staff members Simon

Lyons (the musician) and Wendy McGlone. In line with Open Options policy to maximise consumer participation, the young people chose the design for their T shirts, and all went along to the printer to take part in

the printing.12



Open Options participant, Nick, with mother Ann Palmer, right, and grandmother Rita Palmer, left, at "Can Do Dat" launch.

The program, which had provided a lot of fun for the participants throughout 2002, culminated in a launch of the CD and video at the HCSG Swan View Youth Centre on 3 December, the International Day of People with Disabilities. It was a day of pride and excitement for everyone: the parents, the staff, but most of all the participants, who all turned up looking particularly smart in their T-shirts and scarves. Among the invited guests were the local Member and Minister, Michelle Roberts, M.L.A., and



Gemma, an Open Options participant, practising for "Can Do Dat."

representatives of the Shire Council, the Lotteries Commission, DSC, and Midland Brick.

Many in the audience were visibly moved when the video was shown. It was a great credit to all involved in the production.<sup>13</sup>

Two of the young people involved in "Can Do Dat" were Simon Cashmore, whose disability was Acquired Brain Injury, and Kate Baker, who had an intellectual disability. As Post School Options participants in the Open Options program, both represented success stories for themselves as individuals and for their parents.

## Simon's story

Simon was involved in a car accident when he was seven and was left with a serious disability called Acquired Brain Injury. He spent time at primary and later secondary special education schools until he was eighteen. His mother, Robyn Cashmore, speaks of his earlier experiences and those with HCSG Open Options Program:

... They did their very best there, but he put up with that, too. I say put up with that too, because now he's so happy, you know the difference, because he was treated like a baby really, not like a person. Not that it's their fault, they've got a lot of children, small children; a lot of them have that age mentality, they just stay there, and because he was high support, - I mean not a walking child, he's a wheelie, not a walkie – he was left with the younger ones, the little ones...But when it was time for him to leave I went along to an Expo and I walked around looking at all the different things, and I chose Hills because it was closest to us...Then I can't remember whether they visited me or not, but I did go round to meet everybody at Centenary House, and that was good, because they were all fresh and new because they'd just begun and they were excited to have another participant, and they were a happy lot, you know. I said they were very privileged, because Simon had just begun smiling after eleven years of not smiling. He began smiling and it was just really wonderful.

...Simon and I went and visited on Thursday 26 January 2001 and met everybody. We met all the carers and Elizabeth and

it was very shortly after that we began, and he was having three days a week for five hours a day, which he totally and utterly enjoyed...Oh, they just treat him like a person, you know. They treat him like a young one and they razz him. They expect him to talk back and he does talk back, or he tries to talk back, with his eyes, and he'll even make happy sounds too...I mean it's really person to person. They treat him like a normal person, whereas other people haven't. In all the other places they didn't.

...When I go in in the morning and say good morning to him, I say 'It's Hills today,' and there's just a great big smile on his face, a great big smile because he knows what's happening. And then I get him all ready and I'll leave him sort of parked by the door so he can see them. He's listening for the beep beeps as they reverse and everything. So he's listening for that, and then Wendy, bless her heart, she comes in and she just gets hold of his face and says 'Gidday gorgeous boy,' you know, and he bursts out in another smile. He just loves contact.

#### On the "Can Do Dat" CD and video:

...They usually pop an organ or a xylophone on Simon's lap and give him the little baton thing, and Simon Lyons – 'double trouble' they call them, the two of them together – Simon plays the guitar and my Simon makes music with him. Or actually Simon will let him make a noise and then he'll tune into it so that's harmony.

## On some of the outings:

...He goes to movies. He goes to museums. He goes to Whiteman Park. He went to Kings Park today, that's why he's so tired now. Have wheels will travel! He's been to ...Marmion – Underwater World. ...They took him to Joondalup Festival on a Saturday. He went and saw 'Singing in the Rain.' He went all the way down South to a festival that was down there, Fairbridge. That's Elizabeth. If there's something on, she'll do her best to get them there.

# On what Open Options has done for Simon:

...It's brought him out of his shell, absolutely. It's given him a confidence that he didn't have before that. They just extract it out of him. He was starting to smile, but they've sort of reached in and brought everything out and just made him feel accepted. They treat him like he's really special, and he knows he's really special, so therefore whatever he does they respond and he responds more. They do it with all of them. They treat them like people...I could go as far as to say that Open Options is the best thing that's happened in Simon's life. Absolutely. Of all the years since the accident, it's just the best thing.

## Interview by author 8 November 2002.



The two Simons: Simon Lyons, Open Options musician, helps Simon Cashmore, participant, practise for "Can Do Dat."

Each year, Elizabeth Small represented HCSG at the DSC Expo, which enabled the various agencies to advertise their services to prospective consumers of the Post School Options Program, and each year she heard the stories of parents who desperately needed respite as carers of teenage children with high support needs. There had been some respite for them when the children were of school age and able to attend a special education facility five days a week. But when this ended, due to the child's age, the parents became full-time carers twenty-four hours a day seven days a week.

Government funding allowed parents to obtain a certain amount of respite each week from programs like Open Options. However, in some cases particularly those with high support needs, it never seemed to be enough. The Coordinator tried to overcome this problem by arranging, where possible, weekend outings where there may be additional funding for a particular project, for example the Music Program, when participants were taken to shows like "Singing in the Rain." On that occasion the girls were given the special treat of being brought into the centre to have their nails, hair and makeup done. <sup>14</sup> In fact, the grooming was found to be so popular and effective in boosting self-esteem that Wednesday at the centre became Girls' Day, which included facials and makeup, and the girls went home "looking absolutely beautiful." <sup>15</sup>



Open Options Girls' Day at Centenary House.

#### Kate's story.

Kate had an intellectual disability. She left school in 1997 at the age of fifteen. Her mother, Carol Baker, learned about Post School Options funding and the HCSG Open Options Program from Centrelink in 1998. She talks about the outcome of Kate's placement with the Program in that year.

Well, to begin with, Kate didn't complete High School. High School was a total disaster, and at the end of Year 8, so after her first year of High School, she became very unhappy and things deteriorated into Year 9 to the point that we couldn't get her to school and for the whole of that year...our lives were really topsy turvy. After so many years of nice sweet peaceful little Kate suddenly ... everything was terrible.

I was under the impression that Post School Options didn't kick in until she left school officially at eighteen, so I didn't pursue that area until we went to Centrelink to get some advice about the pension and all the rest. They were the ones who put us in touch with Hills. And by the end of the year we were accepted and she got Post School Options funding so that she could start off in 1998 with Hills

...Now, I would say that Kate would be their real success story. Her first year with them was really hard. They gave her just one support worker for stability and continuity, because we couldn't get her to leave the house. She didn't want to go out with them; she was carrying so much anger and so much baggage from school. I don't know what happened at school, but she really was a very mixed up child after that year or so at school. And so Elizabeth said 'Look we are not going to give in with Kate.' They used to come, she'd get ready and they'd drive up the driveway and she'd say 'I'm not going.' And then she'd rush off to her room and shut the door...get anywhere, you know, disappear...Elizabeth would say 'We don't care Carol, we will never ever give in. We will keep coming back if we have to.' And I can honestly say that first year, when it was so hard, that they never did miss a day. Eventually they got her there, and there were occasions when they'd go away for ten minutes and come back and try again, and eventually, even though she wasn't all that happy that first year, they got her to go and they involved her in all sorts of activities, and they kept her with the one support worker whom she seemed to like and get on well with. And so it was a very up and down year, but successful from the point of view that she went.

But then, after that, things really settled into place and what was it '98, four years ago now, she's been going so happily and she's so involved. I can't speak too highly of them. They

are so creative, so innovative, they are always thinking of new things to do and there would not be two weeks in the year that are the same. So she's moved into a very flexible interesting program, and she's as happy as a lark. She's a different girl. She's matured. I suppose she was going to improve a bit, but I'd have to give full credit to Hills. She's great company and we love having her around. So, it's just one big success story for her and the workers for the way that they dealt with her and gave her the self-confidence that she was desperately lacking - and her self-esteem increased and it's still improving. Every year we see just wonderful changes in her. All that anger's gone and she's relatively calm...I just can't think how Kate would have ended up if we hadn't had that. She goes to work two days a week, and that has rubbed off on work too. She seems relatively happy with work, but she doesn't have the same enthusiasm, and maybe that's because it's work.

There were numerous activities organised by Open Options, which Kate participated in, but Carol Baker was particularly impressed by her eighteenth birthday party:

When she had her eighteenth birthday, which was rather special, I decided to take a cake over to share with her friends at Centenary House on her birthday, and I think I got there late. They'd had their chips and their little party before. And after some time someone comes in and says 'Kate, come outside, we've got a surprise for you.' So out we all trundled, and they'd taken the trouble to bring a horse — Kate really is mad about horses, she loves horses — and apparently this horse lives up the road in a paddock somewhere or other, and it's one that they'd stopped and talked to and patted, and they'd taken the trouble to arrange for the girl who owned the horse to bring it down to Centenary House for Kate for her birthday, just to pat it and feed it carrots. I just couldn't believe that they would think to do something like that.

Interview by author 12 November 2002



Carol Baker, left, Kate her daughter, centre, and Rupert the horse, on Kate's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday at Centenary House.

As HCSG Open Options' reputation for quality continued to grow, so did the demand for its services. By 2002, there were twenty-five participants in the Program with ages ranging from seventeen to fifty years. Their disabilities included Acquired Brain Injury, Duchennes Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy, intellectual and associated physical disabilities. With seven new consumers seeking placement for 2003, Open Options had obviously become a respected and viable program. <sup>16</sup>

# **CENTENARY HOUSE**

"The jewel in the crown"

Centenary House stands as a monument to outstanding community cooperation and participation. By the time it was opened in 2001, there had been keen support for the project by the HCSG staff, volunteers, consumers, its corporate partner Midland Brick, State and Commonwealth Government agencies, local government, local community business, Service Clubs and even school children.

To undertake the establishment of a purpose built facility was an ambitious project for the HCSG. There were large funds to raise, land to obtain, plans to be drawn and a builder to choose. However, as a substantial need had been demonstrated in the west of the Mundaring Shire for a respite centre, the Board of Management decided to proceed.

It was fortuitous that the relationship with Midland Brick was being explored around the same time. The Company, aware of the HCSG's intention to build a new centre, was interested in becoming involved. It was prepared to provide a building supervisor and to train young Work-for-the-Dole participants for employment on the project. It also offered to provide at cost the concrete, slab, bricks, windows, roof and plastering. Of course, the offer was accepted and resulted in a highly successful and, indeed, amicable relationship between Midland Brick and the HCSG in the building of the new centre.<sup>1</sup>

Carole Martell, the HCSG's Coordinator of Centre Based Respite, was given the responsibility of managing the project on behalf of the organisation. It was Martell who, in 1998, began pressing for a new Day Centre in the western end of the Shire, and she was extremely proud of the confidence placed in her by the Board.

After several months negotiations with the Shire of Mundaring in 1999, a site in Helena Valley was investigated and arrangements made for the architect to draw up plans for it. However, as local residents made it clear both to Shire representatives and at a public meeting that they were

opposed to the planned centre, a new location was sought. The HCSG then became aware of a 1600 square metre block in Jinda Road Koongamia owned by Homeswest. The Mundaring Shire, which had not been able to find an alternative site to that in Helena Valley, was nevertheless keen to support the HCSG in its quest for a new centre. As the Koongamia block was in the City of Swan, HCSG approached the Ministry of Housing, requesting it make the land available and take into consideration that the Mundaring Shire would provide \$20,000 towards the cost.<sup>2</sup> It proposed a special partnership under the Community Housing Program in which the Ministry of Housing would provide the land, maintaining equity in it, and the HCSG would accept responsibility for building the centre on it. The CEO, in her letter, emphasised the great benefits the centre would offer, not only to the frail aged and people with disabilities in the area, but also in the training opportunities being proposed for young unemployed people during the building of it.<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Housing was obviously persuaded by the case presented and agreed to the proposal. A Joint Venture Agreement was drawn up between the Ministry and the HCSG, and the project was able to proceed. The Shire of Mundaring's \$20,000 was still accepted as its contribution to the centre's establishment and used for other Ministry of Housing projects.<sup>4</sup>

The HCSG now had before it the daunting task of raising a fairly large sum of money to build the centre, thereby honouring its part of the agreement. It would approach the appropriate funding agencies like HACC and the Lotteries Commission, and would seek some of the funds being advertised for Centenary 2001 projects, which prompted the choice of the name Centenary House. Trish Macey, a former Board member, also volunteered to promote the project and head a fundraising committee.<sup>5</sup>



Centenary House under construction in 2000.

In the meantime, a general spirit of support and cooperation that was to be a feature of Centenary House in the future became evident early in the project. Carole Martell and the builder provided by Midland Brick, Kevin Thomas, were getting along very well; the neighbours were "very supportive" and the City of Swan had "fast-tracked" the planning process.<sup>6</sup>

A case of real job satisfaction

Carole Martell recalled the building of Centenary House:

It was incredibly exciting and I was proud and honoured that Helen actually entrusted that to me really. I think because my husband's a builder the terminology that was being bandied around, and the actual process of seeing a building develop and rise from bricks to roof height, I was quite comfortable with it, and my husband actually played a very important part there, although in the background. We had a great supervisor on that project, too, and Craig Meldrum was also very supportive.

...Centenary House took up a lot more time than I thought it would, you know just choosing the colours and the bricks. I probably just did the whole thing as if it was a home that I was building for myself. The colours eventually shocked a few people, because it became known as 'the blue house,' but I thought it looked lovely, and the neighbours were just brilliant. When we first got that site there was some concern and a lot of pessimistic talk about – oh you know, things will get vandalised and stolen and this, that and the other, but we didn't have any trouble whatsoever. The immediate neighbours were brilliant, and they almost became like a little mini Neighbourhood Watch there. Kept an eye on the site. I had gone around anyway when it looked like the project was going to be definite and introduced myself to all the neighbours, and chatted and explained what was going on, and I remember there were some rough and tough people living in one of those houses and they were bikers, and I remember the young girl saying 'Oh, I think it's wonderful. I've got a granddad lives around here, and if you get any trouble you come and tell us and we'll sort them out.' So whether or not that got known around the local neighbourhood then I don't know...

...You know the area is totally different; it enhanced the area, became the entry for Koongamia, and it was just great and the folk were really interested, and I'd give up-dates to everybody – the consumers were very interested...I was very honoured really. It was great. I had the support of everybody there and I think David in Finance and even Helen now and then threw their hands up in horror because I had such expensive tastes, and I know it went way over budget, but we were fundraising all the time, because I was determined to have this fancy front entry with the door. It's just so beautiful.

### Interview by author 29 November 2002.



The colourful entrance to Centenary House.

Work on the site commenced on 24 May 2000 and progressed very satisfactorily as HCSG continued to raise the necessary funds to pay for it. By August, it seemed it was within \$40,000 of its target. It did not receive the \$25,000 Federation grant it was expecting, but decided to keep the name Centenary House anyway. HACC had promised \$122,000 and the Lotteries Commission \$45,000. There had been a \$10,000 bequest, and Trish Macey and her team had been very active. It was decided to invite carers and friends of HCSG to donate \$10 to \$20 towards the project.

## How to raise money

Eleanor Gwilliam tells how some of the funds were raised:

Oh gosh, Trish put in heaps on that project, going around to building suppliers, business groups, getting people to provide things for fundraising activities like going to wineries and getting bottles of wine and organising a cheese and wine party that we had in the winter – that was an excellent evening, too, had a raffle, and it was a lovely social evening, which made some money.

## Interview by author 13 February 2002

The final costing for the project was \$306,220.50. This did not cover the landscaping, which was carried out by Craig Meldrum's Work Options and Work-for-the-Dole team, and the Mundaring and Districts Lions Club. It was a significant achievement for HCSG to be able to raise the entire amount by the time the building was opened.<sup>8</sup>

## A bit of sleep was lost

#### Helen Dullard remembers a few worries about the bill!

Carole played a major role in the building of that house. It was fortunate that she had a husband who was a builder. She wanted to build the facility and design it in a way that she believed from her practices and experiences would provide the greatest space and benefit for Day Centre services. So, in true Hills style, Carole was given the freedom and autonomy to have a major part in a building that she was going to be working out of. I think it was very hard work. She didn't worry about who was going to pay for it; that was David's and my nightmare. She didn't sleep about other things; we didn't sleep about how we were going to pay for it. So she had a major role. She and Elizabeth negotiated a lot of things, because, after all, one was going to have half and the other was going to have the other half. But Carole played a major role.

Interview by author 19 December 2002.

While already in use for several months, Centenary House was officially opened on 30 May 2001 by the Minister for Housing and Works, Tom Stephens, M.L.C., who praised all those involved in this unique and impressive undertaking. The atmosphere of the occasion provided



At the opening of Centenary House on 30 May 2001 by the Minister for Housing, Tom Stephens, M.L.C. Back: Lynne Evans, HCSG Chairman, Helen Dullard, CEO, Greg Joyce, Managing Director, Ministry of Housing. Front: the Minister and Nathan, an Open Options participant, who created the tapestry displayed.

a most fitting finale to what had been a project that had broad and good natured community support. Not only were all the stakeholders well represented, but there were also children from the Koongamia Primary School looking very smart in bright red T shirts, some Aboriginal, one in a wheelchair. They were very proud of their mosaic artwork on the courtyard wall. To add to the enjoyment of the happy occasion, the sun shone brightly through the specially designed colourful glass entrance during the ceremony, creating a warm and cheerful picture.<sup>9</sup>



Children from Koongania Primary School and others who worked on a mosaic project for the building, at the opening of Centenary House.

Centenary House was appropriately described by HCSG Chairman, Lynne Evans, in her Annual Report that year as the latest jewel in the crown of the HCSG.<sup>10</sup>



Fabric dyeing at Centenary House Day Centre, a favourite pastime. Standing from the left: Debbie Armstead, Coordinator, Margaret Platt, assistant, Bev Smith, volunteer. Seated from the left: Margaret Hyslop, Rosina Pachota (obscured) and Jean Clark, consumers. 2003.

The Centre-Based Day Care Program for frail elderly consumers had, in fact, commenced in the building in January 2001, shortly after its completion. In addition to being a pleasant environment for both consumers and staff, the new venue enabled the introduction of three new services: Dementia Specific Service, Recreation for Men, and Carers' Support Program.



Colin Heine, HCSG volunteer, with Centenary House Day Centre consumers Ian and Eric, trying their luck at fishing at Garvey Park 2003.

The new holistic Dementia Specific Program included centre-based respite at Centenary House and overnight or weekend stays at Milperra. HCSG soon found referrals starting to come in from the Swan Adult Mental Health Centre, Alzheimer's Association and carers. <sup>11</sup>

The original building project of Centenary House did not include a Men's Workshop. However, because of the great success of the one at Wahroonga, it was always on the drawing board. In fact, the organisation was so committed to the concept that a decision was made



Eric Cumming, right, a volunteer carpenter who constructed the interior of the Centenary House Workshop, with Open Options participant, Steve.

early in 2001 that, if funding was not available from the usual government sources, HCSG would continue its own fundraising to pay for it. The "Men's Shed" was completed in 2002, part-funded by HACC, and like Wahroonga proved to be very popular as part of a program to meet the special recreational needs of men.<sup>12</sup>

HCSG had been concentrating on the needs of carers for some years, providing support services in both the areas of the frail aged and people with disabilities. But it was always constrained by insufficient funding and other resources to meet the demand. Increased government grants and the development of both Milperra and Centenary House improved the situation immensely from 2001. Carole Martell, who had played a major role in developing carer services and the Carer Support Group, retired at the end of 2001. A staff restructure led to the appointment of a Coordinator for Aged and Disability Services with two Assistant Coordinators. With increased funding for carer services HCSG was able to also employ in June 2002 a Coordinator of Carer Support.<sup>13</sup>

These services, along with those offered by the Open Options Program and the opportunity for meetings, workshops and exhibitions, made Centenary House an extremely valuable asset to the community. HCSG and all who contributed to its establishment had every reason to feel great pride in the part they played.

# HILLS COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP

"Trust, dignity, and respect"

The decision taken in 1994 to place the HCSG on a more professional foundation was a sound one. The following year would see the beginning of a fundamental change in government funding of not-for-profit organisations. The introduction of competitive tendering and contracting in place of the previous system of grants presented a frightening challenge to these organisations. In addition to imposing a greater administrative burden on them, the purchaser/provider model of service agreements between the Government and the organisations also meant they now had two customer groups: the government agency which awarded the contract, and the consumer who received the service.

#### THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The HCSG was not only experiencing the general insecurity abroad in the welfare community about the ability to survive in a competitive environment, but also worried about being able to remain focused on the values and goals on which it was founded. The administrative structure established the year before gave it a solid base from which to work, but it decided it needed an organisational service plan which clearly spelled out the philosophy and future direction of the Group. In line with HCSG policy and practice, wide consultation took place involving the Board, staff, consumers and their families, volunteers and funding bodies. The outcome was a Service Plan developed at workshops facilitated by Ron Dullard, who had been involved in the founding of the HCSG in 1983, and who volunteered his services on this occasion. The Service Plan was adopted by the Board of Management in June 1997. Later renamed The Strategic Plan, it embraced a Purpose Statement, defined the HCSG values of Trust, Dignity and Respect, and established a whole- of-organisation

focus of seven major government-funded programs covering the target groups of frail aged, people with disabilities, carers and youth at risk.<sup>1</sup>

#### PURPOSE STATEMENT

"A Conscious Involvement with and on behalf of the Community to identify opportunities, and to develop and implement initiatives, and provide quality services which enhance community wellbeing."

#### **VALUES**

In order to provide a quality service in a caring manner, the HCSG undertakes to promote the following values in its dealings within its structure and the broader community:

**TRUST** by being reliable, truthful, discreet, loyal, accountable and promoting an environment of mutual agreement, participation and support.

**DIGNITY** by recognising individuals' rights to be informed, to participate in planning and decision making, to have access to an open complaint mechanism, and a right to privacy and confidentiality.

**RESPECT** by listening and responding, showing compassion and recognising rights of individuals in relation to their lifestyle, culture, beliefs and needs.

The Key Goals, with their objectives and strategies clearly enunciated in the Plan, served to guide the thinking and operations of the HCSG well into the future.

The next five years became a period of growth and development for the HCSG, despite the fact that within this period there would be calls upon the organisation to deal with increasingly complex and time-consuming responsibilities. These included unit costing and implementation of National Service Standards for both HACC and Disability Services programs, endless consumer data gathering and

processing, keeping abreast of industrial legislation and legal obligations, introduction of the Goods and Services Tax and preparation for the new millennium or "Y2K" as it became known.

To be able to handle these challenges and, in fact, take on more or expanded programs, the HCSG took some important strategic steps. One was to move beyond the boundaries of the Mundaring Shire and to include the local government areas of Swan and Kalamunda. This gave it a regional profile and enabled it to successfully tender for more services.<sup>2</sup>

#### HAMILTON HOUSE

The organisation's expansion in both geographical area and programs led to the purchase of two units in Hamilton House in Midland in 1999. Funded by a \$150,000 self-supporting loan taken out through



Hamilton House, Stafford Street, Midland.

the Mundaring Shire and a \$100,000 Lotteries Commission grant, the acquisition of Hamilton House was looked upon as a milestone in the history of the HCSG. In addition to establishing the regional credentials of the organisation, an additional base in Midland provided easier access for many consumers and accommodation for a number of HCSG programs. These were Gesundheit, Rainbow, Leisure Focus, Youth Services, the Get Away Club and Work Options, which later moved to its own base at 67 Great Northern Highway in Middle Swan. The rent some of these had been paying at the Enterprise Centre would now be used to pay off the loan. The staff of these programs, delighted to have a secure and convenient home, moved in towards the end of 1999, in time for an enjoyable opening on 1 December by Lloyd Stewart, Chairperson of the Lotteries Commission.<sup>3</sup>

It was not long before the services being provided from Hamilton House had outgrown the accommodation. To solve the problem, another adjoining unit was purchased at a cost of \$127,300 with a self supporting loan, this time through the City of Swan.<sup>4</sup>

#### INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

By 1999, the HCSG had also begun to review its basic infrastructure and whether it was adequate for what had become a relatively major business in the Eastern Metropolitan Region with substantial administrative responsibilities. The Board of Management came to the conclusion that, for the organisation to continue to develop along professional lines, there needed to be a restructure and upgrading of administrative resources.

Over the next three years four new staff positions were created which would have a whole-of-organisation focus.

In May 1999 Eleanor Gwilliam was appointed Resource Services Coordinator with responsibility for risk management, occupational safety and health, privacy legislation, human resources, staff support, policies and procedures, administrative support and management of the vehicle fleet.<sup>5</sup> Gwilliam already had a long history in the HCSG having joined in 1986 and worked for two years as a volunteer in the office at Nichol House. As with others in the organisation, volunteering led to a part-time position and finally a full-time one. With the exception of a two-year break to undertake study, she had worked for HCSG since that time.

Eleanor Gwilliam's story seemed to epitomise the way in which staff in the organisation were appreciated and encouraged to reach their full potential. Commencing in a shared secretarial job, she had over the years been able to develop skills and the confidence that would on one day see her writing a policies and procedures paper on risk management and on another representing the HCSG in the Industrial Relations Commission.<sup>6</sup>

That's what life's about

Eleanor Gwilliam talks about developing self-confidence:

Helen has the ability to say 'Hey, you can do this. I know that you can do that.' And that goes an awful long way. I know it always has with me from the time she first sat me in front of that

electric typewriter I mentioned and I thought 'My goodness, what do I do with this?' and she was saying 'Of course you can use it don't be silly." And you think well I can't be silly can I. This person had faith in me. So that's gone a huge way for me, absolutely huge. It's always 'You can do that.' Even last year when we were off to the Industrial Relations Commission, and I'm going 'Hey, this is way outside my bounds of experience'... 'It's alright, you'll be able to cope with it. It'll be fine.' So now when she says to me 'Do you think you'll be able to cope with things?' I say 'Of course I will, don't worry about it, we'll get there.' So her philosophy has sort of come onto me over the years; that's how I treat things: Yes, of course we can cope with that. It's not a problem. It might be a bit scary, but that's what life's all about, isn't it.

#### Interview by author 13 February 2003

In the same month that Gwilliam was appointed, another decision was taken by the Board to employ a part-time occupational therapist to work with the frail aged, disability and mental health programs. Over the next year, Lee Roberts who was appointed to the position, became involved in managing special projects which highlighted the benefits of a whole-of-organisation approach to staff professional development and other issues. It was therefore decided by the Board to create a new position which, in addition to staff professional development and skill maintenance training, would also include research, submission writing and supervision of occupational therapy and field placement students. The position of Project Officer was offered to Lee Roberts and commenced on 1 July 2000.<sup>7</sup>

In 2000, Joy Morey, who had been the Finance Coordinator for HCSG for eight years, indicated she would be leaving. As the Group's financial affairs had grown enormously and were now more complex, it was time for some attention to be paid to the staffing of this area. A review of the situation resulted in a decision to employ a Finance Manager. David Rattigan, a bank manager who had been the Group's Treasurer for three years and had worked closely with Joy Morey, was the successful applicant, and commenced his duties in June 2000.8

In the same month, following a review of its position, the Board of Management decided to move to the Carver Model of Governance, which set out more clearly its role and responsibilities in the more complex business environment. It would now be known as "the Board" instead of the "Board of Management."

The fourth significant staffing initiative occurred in February 2002 when the Board appointed an Information Technology Manager. Steve Williams, like Eleanor Gwilliam, had begun his association with the HCSG as a volunteer, in his case as a handyman and volunteer driver in 1991. This led to his employment later that year in Centre-Based Respite and eventually, in 1997, to his becoming Assistant Coordinator in a position which was combined with responsibility for the rapidly growing area of information technology, due to his expertise in this field.

By 2001, the data systems necessary for HACC and other programs, for financial accountability and communication between Wahroonga, Hamilton House and Centenary House, demanded a full-time position. The Board's decision to make that appointment resulted in HCSG being able to develop a very efficient and useful Information and Communication Technology system.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE HCSG STAFF

From a paid staff of two in 1987, the number employed by HCSG in 2002 had grown to some 200, including part-time and contract workers providing services for over 1500 consumers.  $^{11}$ 



HCSG staff enjoy a day out. From left: Elizabeth Small, Ann Palmer, Eleanor Gwilliam, Lee Roberts, Jill Mackenzie, and Colin Johnson, 2001.

Over the years, the organisation had built up a reputation for providing quality services. There were a number of reasons for this

achievement. The HCSG went to a great deal of trouble to employ the "right" people. It was not enough for someone to have certain practical skills; that person also had to demonstrate the right attitude for the job. When staff were employed, they were expected to be both competent and caring and to observe the ethos of the HCSG and the Staff Code of Conduct. The Code outlined the policies of the organisation in respect to workers based on a foundation of mutual trust, dignity and respect, and was a guiding influence on them.<sup>12</sup>

The HCSG also observed these principles in its dealings with its staff, showing in a practical way how they were valued. An extensive program was undertaken providing staff development and training opportunities through workshops, seminars and conferences. There was a democratic policy of staff participation in important decision-making, for example in the drafting of the Strategic Plan and through ongoing regular consultation between coordinators and the CEO or Board, or the Coordinators and their staff.<sup>13</sup> Support was available in the form of professional counselling for staff when necessary, and a special personal development day was held each year, referred to by HACC Coordinator Colin Johnson as "spoil the staff day."<sup>14</sup>

The staff felt "so buzzed and valued."

Elizabeth Small talks about why the staff feel appreciated.

One of the best things every year is that we have a Staff Development Day where the whole agency is closed except for the supports where HACC might have some supports going out or in the hostel packages [or Community Living Program], but the day is organised...to start at 10 o'clock and it might finish at 2.30 so people can pick up and drop off children...and that's every year. Helen addresses all the staff, really makes them feel valued, tells them where the Hills are at, where they're going, what changes have happened, and it's a day – like we had at the Hills Forest this year. We had a walk where we all walked in different groups so that we walked with staff that we'd never seen or heard of before...Then we had lunch and Helen just did this great spiel on where we were at and everything like that, and the staff go away from a day like that just feeling so buzzed and valued, they really do. And sometimes you'll do things, new initiatives here, and a couple of weeks later there'll be a little letter to say that the Board has noted it and how much

it appreciated it. And I think that is role modelling for me to make sure I do that with my staff, so it all comes down. If you didn't have it up there you wouldn't do it down here.

Interview by author 16 July 2002.

The duties of Coordinators and other workers varied considerably according to whether it was a program for youth, the aged or people with disabilities. However, it seemed in all areas there was dedication and a sense of pride in the quality of service being offered. Staff went out of their way to make sure the consumers or carers received the most caring service, whether it was Gesundheit support workers braving difficult environmental conditions in remote areas, or the Youth Coordinator accompanying a young participant to court, or a respite worker coping with a consumer's challenging behaviour.<sup>15</sup>

It's the little extra bits and pieces

Colin Johnson praises the support workers:

I think what makes this place tick is the little bit extras the support workers actually do out there in the field. If we were to tie them up so rigidly and say you're not allowed to do this it wouldn't be the place it is, and I think it's our ability to try and manage that little bit extra that they do, keeping in mind the professional boundaries – you know workers who will, if they think someone's unwell and they've been there and cleaned the house, I know that they'll pop back the next day and see how they're going. I know that they'll run up the shop and do that little bit of, you know, get a little bit of bread and milk which is not normally part of what they need to do. They do all those extra things, or they might even take them out on their birthday, and those little extra bits and pieces which I always want people to record and make sure that we capture all that, but there's a whole lot of those extra bits and pieces they do over and above what we expect of them here, and which I think makes Hills Community Group pretty special.

Interview by author 17 July 2002.

The close cooperation between Coordinators facilitated by regular meetings and working in close contact created both a camaraderie and an excellent basis for what was described as a "wrap around service," delivering the best outcome for the consumer. A measure of the quality of the services provided could be found in the regular highly rated assessments undertaken by government funding bodies and in the number of programs that achieved Preferred Provider status. As the CEO stated in her 2000/2001 Annual Report "Staff go the extra mile to make things happen, always giving 110 percent to seize new opportunities and turn them into realities." <sup>177</sup>

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

While HCSG employed 200 paid staff in 2002, volunteers, who now numbered 48, were still essential to the smooth running of a number of the services provided. The two primary areas where their help was particularly important were in transport and centre-based respite. Because of the poor public transport in the Hills, the volunteer drivers filled a great need for consumers in the target groups who had long distances to travel to hospitals or other appointments, or to other activities like shopping. The Day Centres also still relied on their volunteers to help out in the kitchen, collect fees, fill in daily registers, assist on the bus, or just to sit with an elderly consumer and chat. They gave hours of service, week after week, providing much pleasure and care to consumers and making a huge difference in their lives.



Corry Barbour, volunteer transport driver, right, with a consumer, Marjorie Dickenson

There were times when the lack of volunteers reached crisis point, particularly for Day Centre activities, when the HCSG had to undertake a campaign to recruit more. There were now less people prepared to commit to long-term volunteering like Corry Barbour who, after two decades, was still a dedicated volunteer working in the Day Centre or driving people to necessary destinations, some as far away as Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. It seemed people were still prepared to volunteer their services, but "the baby boomers" who were retiring at a younger age than the previous generation, and, by and large, had other interests in life, preferred short-term projects. However, volunteers generally were greatly valued and HCSG was proud of their caring reputation in the community. Description of the strength of the community.

They were included in staff training workshops and other functions or activities like the Personal Development Days and Whole-of-Organisation Induction Days. In 2001, the International Year of the Volunteer, a special dinner was held in August to honour HCSG volunteers. The presentation of certificates in recognition and appreciation of their valuable contribution to the organisation and to their community served to enhance the happy occasion.

By 2003, it was estimated that volunteer hours over twenty years had reached approximately 250,000, equalling a dollar value of over \$3.5 million contribution back into the Shire of Mundaring.<sup>21</sup>

### THE COMMUNITY

In addition to the regular volunteers at HCSG, there were many community groups or individuals who collectively contributed a great deal to the organisation. These included Freemasons, Rotary, Lions, Apex, women's groups like the Country Women's Association, Inner Wheel and the Soroptimists, Sacred Heart Care, the Scouts, the Girl Guides, local businesses, students on practicum placement, and even school children. Their generous support may have been financial or in kind – a casserole cooked for a family in crisis, a load of wood, a fridge, wheelchairs and outside furniture, help in making useful or decorative items for one of the Day Centre programs, or gardening at one of the HCSG properties.

Although HCSG in 2003 was an organisation fit for the twenty-first century, it had clearly not lost touch with its principles, and because of this people were proud to be associated with it in some way.

### **HELEN DULLARD**

### "That's what Helen created"

In 1983, Helen Dullard played a prominent role in founding a community organisation with an annual budget expected to be about \$690. Twenty years later, as CEO she was presiding over that same organisation, HCSG, with a budget of over \$5 million. In addition to providing a multitude of services for over 1500 people, it had built a solid reputation for quality, integrity, and innovation.

While many people and funding bodies had contributed to this remarkable achievement, it was universally recognised that the main driving force was Dullard, whose vision and philosophy were an inspiration to others.

Her philosophy was a simple one that stayed with her from 1983, and it was that there were vulnerable people in the community who needed "a light at the end of the tunnel." She wanted to make a difference in their lives by providing that light. Individuals were all different and had diversified needs. They were the ones in the best position to express those needs, and should be given the opportunity to do so and be listened to. The HCSG Purpose Statement "A Conscious Involvement," conceived by Helen Dullard and her husband, Ron, laid the foundation for this philosophy, and it was reinforced in future years by Consumer Advisory Committees and individual consultations.<sup>2</sup>

However, while the basic principle was one of a consumerfocused organisation, under Dullard's stewardship, HCSG would also develop an ethos of trust, dignity and respect in its dealings with others both inside the Group and outside. A part of this would be the philosophy of social role valorisation, which emphasised the right of every individual to a valued social role in society.

In 1983, Helen Dullard was a young mother with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English. This tertiary education helped her considerably when researching and writing submissions to funding bodies like HACC in the early days of HCSG. She would later achieve a qualification in

counselling, something she valued highly because of the difference it made when she was dealing with industrial issues or staff counselling. She also undertook educational courses which created a greater understanding of the needs and rights of the elderly and people with disabilities.<sup>3</sup> Her broader community contribution included serving on National HACC Workshops in Canberra, the Board of the Council on the Ageing, the DSC Council of Funded Agencies, the W.A. Network of Home Care Based Services and as a Board member of the Midland College of TAFE. In September 2000, she became a Councillor of the Shire of Mundaring .<sup>4</sup> In April 2003, she was awarded the Prime Minister's Centenary Medal for contribution to Australian society.<sup>5</sup>

From a somewhat apprehensive novice in 1983, Dullard had by 2003 acquired the knowledge and confidence to become a polished public speaker, meeting with Ministers of the Crown, business leaders, representatives of funding bodies and other agencies. She became a very successful advocate for her organisation. Her well-informed and diplomatic approach won her respect and the reputation of a quiet achiever who got things done. In 1998 when the Service Plan was adopted, her expanded responsibilities were recognised and her title was changed from "Administrator" to "Chief Executive Officer."

Helen Dullard developed a reputation for having the ability to select the right staff who were committed both to HCSG's ethos and to their consumers. While this may have been one factor in the organisation's success, there were others equally important. The flat structure of HCSG, together with Dullard's administrative style, resulted in significant job satisfaction for Program Coordinators. Unlike many large organisations which were run through a hierarchical structure, HCSG staff found they could make things happen and achieve an outcome fairly quickly. The degree of autonomy given them allowed them to make decisions at their level in consultation with consumers and carers. People were accessible; the channels of communication between the administration and the Program Coordinators and their staff worked extremely well. There were fortnightly business meetings between Coordinators and the CEO, where Program information was shared and new initiatives explored. These meetings created a camaraderie among staff and served to unite them. There were also regular bimonthly meetings between Dullard and individual Coordinators and an open-door policy which welcomed staff at any time. Her approach was to encourage innovation and creativity, and the support Coordinators received from her and the Board for new ideas led to what they regarded as a vibrant and stimulating environment in which to work.6

Helen Dullard became a role model in that the trust and support she offered Coordinators flowed through to their staff.<sup>7</sup> The spirit of mutual support and cooperation that made HCSG such a unique organisation was a tribute to her passion to "make a difference."

Everybody just helped everybody else

Carole Martell gives her opinion on the reason for HCSG camaraderie:

If we were stuck in the Day Centre, and you had nobody to go in the office because volunteers hadn't turned up or staff were sick, you know you could pop your head in the office and someone would hop on the bus with you and do the run. If you were stuck in the kitchen, and it happened numbers of times, Colin might run over to the shop and get the milk for you, or everybody just helped everybody else. And I think the fact that the Day Centre was the hub of the whole Support Group then, because back then that's where everybody operated out of, they were all involved in that program and enjoyed it, I think too. It gave them the opportunity to have a bit of hands on every now and then, rather than just sitting at their desks, and I'm sure that it still is a very supportive environment. That's what Helen created, and I doubt very much whether that will ever change, even as it grows. It might be done slightly differently, and they may have lots of bases now, but I'm absolutely certain that each base would still have that feeling and support.

Interview by author 29 November 2002.

### **APPENDIX**

### HCSG SERVICES PROVIDED WITHIN MUNDARING SHIRE

Respite Relief is offered to Carers giving 24 hour

support. This service works extensively with frail older people and people with disabilities. A trained support worker provides a much needed time-out

opportunity for Carers.

<u>Crisis Respite</u> Respite for Carers. Available 24 hours

per day to give relief in emergency

situations.

Milperra Cottage Respite Crisis, emergency, and planned respite

is available seven days a week in a country cottage setting. Includes daytime, overnight, and weekend

respite.

<u>Centre-based Services</u> Respite for Carers and opportunity

for social interaction for participants. Includes group excursions/activities conducted by centre staff away from

the centre.

### **Transport Services**

To doctors, shopping, community activities, assistance with bill paying,

etc.

### Home Maintenance

Use of Handymen and local tradespeople to carry out repairs, gardening, rubbish removal, etc to keep homes safe and practical. A subsidy is available for this service.

### Personal Care

Assistance with daily self care eg: showering, grooming, toileting, dressing and meal preparation.

### **Domestic Assistance**

Assistance in everyday chores in the home eg: cleaning, cooking, shopping, washing and ironing.

### **Library Reading Group**

Discussion and book exchange opportunities at Mundaring Library.

### Yallambee Program

Providing a contact point for services to residents of Yallambee Village.

### Youth Services

Provides support and activities for youth of Shire from centre based in Swan View. An outreach program works with individual young people with specific issues.

# HCSG SERVICES EXTENDED BEYOND MUNDARING SHIRE INTO EASTERN METRO AREA

<u>Carers Group</u> Meetings to provide support, information

and socialisation for Carers.

Get Away Club An opportunity for "well" seniors to

meet and enjoy new experiences with

people of like-interests.

<u>Community Aged Care</u> Placements available to frail older

people, eligible for hostel care who wish to remain in their own home. Variety of

services available based on individual

need.

**Packages** 

<u>Individual Options</u> Support for adults with an intellectual

disability to maintain independent

living in their community.

<u>Community Living</u> Full-time support to people with

moderate to severe intellectual

disabilities to live in the community.

<u>Rainbow</u> Landlord responsibilities for adults

with a severe and enduring psychiatric disability. Social support for budgeting, health, leisure and general wellbeing in community living. Respite for Carers living with a person with mental health

issues.

### **Craft Groups**

Centre-based activities for women with intellectual disabilities. Provides social interaction, craft activities and skill development.

# Support Group for Women with Physical disAbilities

Meetings for women with physical disabilities to provide support, socialisation and information sharing. Transport is available.

### Leisure Focus

Supported participation in recreational activities by adults (16-60 years) with disabilities to promote community inclusion and integration. Respite available.

### **Open Options**

Provides, promotes and advances quality individualised community access recreation and centre-based opportunities for both young adults and older people with disAbilities.

### **HCSG** - Enterprise East

Identifies, develops and provides individual holistic support whilst offering work experience, job ready training, traineeships and employment pathways to young adults in the community who experience personal barriers in sustaining meaningful and valued work opportunities.

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

CACP Community Aged Care Packages

CD Compact Disc

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CEP Community Employment Program

CROP Community Reference Group for Older Persons

CWA Country Women's Association

DSC Disability Services Commission

HACC Home and Community Care

HCSG Hills Community Support Group

LGCHP Local Government Community Housing Program

TAFE Technical and Further Education

WADOT Western Australian Department of Training

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- BUTLER, Don: Father of Amanda, a participant in the HCSG Leisure Focus Program. Interviewed in Jane Brook on 24 November 2002.
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- MACKENZIE, Jill: Coordinator, HCSG Aged and Disability Services. Interviewed in Mundaring 23 July 2002.
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- MELDRUM, Craig: Manager, HCSG Enterprise East. Interviewed in Middle Swan on 22 July 2002.
- MELDRUM, Maureen: Former President, HCSG. Interviewed in Mundaring on 11 November 2002.
- PAUL: Businessman and former participant in the HCSG Work Options Program Interviewed in Middle Swan on 6 November 2002.
- PEETOOM, Jopie: A founding member of the HCSG and former Community Development Officer at the Shire of Mundaring. Interviewed in Mundaring on 26 September 1995.

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- ROBERTSON, Jane: Coordinator, HCSG Gesundheit Program. Interviewed in Midland on 15 July 2002.
- ROSEMARY: Tenant, HCSG Rainbow Program. Interviewed in Midland on 12 November 2002.
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- SMALL, Russell: Coordinator, HCSG Leisure Focus Program. Interviewed in Midland on 25 July 2002.
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10	Hills Gazette
11	The Reporter (Community Newspaper Group)
13	Laurel Hartnell
16	Hills Gazette
18	Mark Hickey, Photographer
26 (lower)	Mark Hickey,
29 (top)	Mark Hickey
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### **NOTES**

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#### CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS

- <sup>1</sup> Interview with Jopie Peetoom; Interview with Ron Dullard; Interview with Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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- <sup>5</sup> Minutes Shire of Mundaring Council meeting 19 July 1983.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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- <sup>9</sup> Minutes HCSG Volunteers' Meeting 28 August 1983.
- <sup>10</sup> Minutes HCSG Volunteers' Meetings 25 October 1983; 28 February 1984.
- <sup>11</sup> Minutes HCSG Volunteers' Meeting 25 October 1983.
- <sup>12</sup> Minutes of various HCSG meetings held at that time.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview Edith Hickey.
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- <sup>15</sup> Interview Corry Barbour.
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- <sup>17</sup> Minutes HCSG Meeting 22 July 1986.
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- <sup>20</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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### CHAPTER TWO: GETTING ON WITH THE JOB

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- <sup>3</sup> Minutes HCSG Meeting 24 June 1986.
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- <sup>6</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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- <sup>9</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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- <sup>11</sup> Minutes Shire of Mundaring Council meeting 18 August 1987
- <sup>12</sup> Minutes HCSG Meetings 26 May 1987, 25 August 1987, 22 September 1987, 28 October 1987.
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### CHAPTER THREE: WAHROONGA

- <sup>1</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995.
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### CHAPTER FIVE: THE METAMORPHOSIS BEGINS

- <sup>1</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94
- <sup>2</sup> ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG Annual Reports.
- <sup>4</sup> Interviews with HCSG Coordinators.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview Helen Dullard 28 September 1995; Interview Petoom.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview Peetoom; Interview Eleanor Gwilliam 26 September 1995

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- <sup>1</sup> Wolfensberger; Banks and Kayess.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>4</sup> Minutes HCSG Executive Meeting 18 March 1994.
- <sup>5</sup> Minutes HCSG General Meeting 28 June 1994.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG Board of Management Meeting 22 February 1995.
- <sup>7</sup> Interview with Jill Mackenzie
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Philippa Catchpole
- <sup>9</sup> Interview Catchpole; HCSG BOM Meeting 3 May 1994; HCSG Annual Report 1993/94.
- <sup>10</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 16 November 1994.
- <sup>11</sup> Interview Catchpole.
- <sup>12</sup> In fact, as Pyrton shed staff and finally closed, a number of them sought employment with organisations like the HCSG. They were welcomed into these organisations because of their experience and good reputation. One of these was Jill Mackenzie who would become a future Coordinator of the HCSG Aged and Disabilities Services; Interview Catchpole

- <sup>13</sup> Interview Catchpole; Interview Mackenzie.
- <sup>14</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 20 September 1995.
- <sup>15</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 21 February 1996; HCSG Annual Report 1996/97
- <sup>16</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 27 August 1997; 26 November 1997.
- <sup>17</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 28 January 1998; 22 April 1998.
- <sup>18</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 30 May 2001; Interview Mackenzie
- <sup>19</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 27 October 1999; Interview Mackenzie.
- <sup>20</sup> The Disability Service Standards, introduced in WA in July 1993, were to be observed by all agencies providing services to people with disabilities and embraced the principles of individual needs, decisionmaking and choice, privacy, dignity and confidentiality, participation and integration, valued status, complaints and disputes resolution and service management
- <sup>21</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94
- <sup>22</sup> HCSG BOM 24 February 1999; HCSG Annual Report 1998/99
- <sup>23</sup> Interview Mackenzie.

### CHAPTER SEVEN: THE GESUNDHEIT PROGRAM

- Len Syme, Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology, University of California [Interview by Normal Swan *The Health Report*, Radio National, "Mastering the Control Factor, Part One" 9 November 1998]. [on-line] WWW:http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/helthrpt/stories/s 14314.htm:4-5.(Accessed 28 December 1999); Interview with Colin Johnson; S. Gattuso, "The Meaning of Home for Older Women in Rural Australia," *Australian Journal on Ageing* 15(4) 1996; reprinted in The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia *Attitude, Lifestyle & Community Support Discussion Paper.* (Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2000) 15.
- <sup>2</sup> Gattuso.
- <sup>3</sup> Community Aged Care Packages in Australia 2000-01 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2002); Interview with Jane Robertson.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Maureen Meldrum; Interview Robertson.
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- <sup>8</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1994/95; Interview with Linda Smith; Interview Robertson.
- <sup>9</sup> Aged Care Act 1997; Interview Robertson.
- <sup>10</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 28 January 1998; HCSG Annual Report 1997/98.
- <sup>11</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000.
- <sup>12</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 28 March 2001.
- 13 Interview Robertson
- <sup>14</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 22 August 2001.
- 15 Interview Robertson.

### CHAPTER EIGHT: THE RAINBOW PROGRAM

- <sup>1</sup> Maryann D'Alton, B.A., M.S.W., *My Home My Choice* (Kwinana: Support In-site Inc., January 1996)
- <sup>2</sup> W.A. Mental Health Act 1996; Interview with Sandra Vidot.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 15 November 1995; 21 February 1996; 17 April 1996; HCSG Annual Report 1995/96.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 27 November 1996.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 22 January 1997.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 26 February 1997.

- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*; HCSG Annual Report 1996/97.
- 8 Interview Vidot.
- <sup>9</sup> Formerly Sandra Stanley.
- <sup>10</sup>Interview Vidot;. HCSG Annual Report 2000/01.
- <sup>11</sup>HCSG BOM Meeting 25 March 1999
- 12HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000.
- <sup>13</sup>HCSG BOM Meeting 27 March 2002
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- <sup>15</sup>HCSG Annual Report 2001/02.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview Vidot.
- 17 Ibid.

#### CHAPTER NINE: HACC FUNDED SERVICES.

- 1 Morris.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98; Interview Helen Dullard 19 December 2002; Interview Robertson.
- <sup>3</sup> Older Australians at a Glance (Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2000).
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1994/95; Interview Vidot; Interview Johnson.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000
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   Foskett
- 8 HCSG BOM Meeting 29 November 2000; Interview Foskett
- <sup>9</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98; Noreen Townsend, Secretary, MARC, Letter to HCSG 2 January 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> The title "HACC General Services" was changed to "HACC Support Services" in 2000.
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- <sup>12</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1996/97; HCSG Annual Report 1997/98.
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- <sup>1</sup> Interview with Damir Lendich.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG General Meeting 23 November 1993.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1993/94; HCSG BOM Meeting 17 August 1994.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1995/96
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid; HCSG BOM Meeting 26 June 1996
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- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*: Interview Lendich.
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- <sup>21</sup> HCSG Annual Report 2001/2002.

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- <sup>1</sup> Interview Dullard 19 December 2002, HCSG BOM Meeting 26 February 1997.
- <sup>2</sup> Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts (World Health Organisation. International Centre Health and Society, 1998) [on-line] WWW.who.dk/health-cities/. (Accessed 7 November 2002) 20-21; Stephen A. Stansfield, "Social Support and Social Cohesion," Social Determinants of Health, ed. Michael Marmot and Richard G. Wilkinson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 23 July 1997.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.; HCSG Annual Report 1997/98.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 23 July 1997; 27 August 1997.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 22 July 1998.
- <sup>7</sup> The "Get Away" Gazette, September 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Sally Roberts.
- <sup>9</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 24 November 1999.
- <sup>10</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000,
- 11 *Ibid*.
- 12 HCSG Annual Report 2001/2002.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; HCSG Annual Report 2000/2001; Interview Roberts.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview with Jean Sutcliffe.
- <sup>15</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1998/99.

### CHAPTER TWELVE: LEISURE FOCUS

- <sup>1</sup> The Leisure Buddy concept is to match volunteers with people with moderate to severe disabilities with a view to sharing common recreation and leisure interests. Programs are funded by the Disability Services Commission (recurrent) and Gordon Reid Foundation (nonrecurrent).
- <sup>2</sup> Lyn Hunter, President HCSG, Letter to Max Williams, General Manager, Shire of Mundaring, 18 July 1994.

- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.; HCSG Special BOM Meeting 18 July 1994.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Don Butler.
- <sup>5</sup> Don Butler, Chairperson, Mundaring Leisure Buddy Assn. Inc. Letter to Chairperson, HCSG, 19 May 1997;
- Maureen Meldrum, Chairperson, HCSG Letter to Don Butler, Mundaring Leisure Buddy Assn. Inc., 20 May
- 1997; HCSG BOM Meetings 23 April 1997; 28 May 1997.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 23 July 1997; 27 August 1997; Eleanor Gwilliam, Acting Coordinator, Leisure Focus.
- Report 28 July 1997; Interview Butler.
- <sup>7</sup> Leisure Focus Neswsletter Vol. 1 (September 1997).
- 8 Leisure Focus News Vol. 1 (2) (October 1997) Note: The name of the publication changed from "Newsletter"
  - to "News."
- 9 HCSG Annual Report 1997/98
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Interview with Russell Small.
- <sup>12</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98; HCSG BOM Meeting 16 December 1998
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- <sup>14</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1998/99; HCSG BOM Meeting 26 August 1998.
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# CHAPTER THIRTEEN: HCSG ENTERPRISE EAST AND WORK OPTIONS

- <sup>1</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 25 March 1998; 24 April 1998; 20 May 1998.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 28 April 1999.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 25 November 1998; 24 February 1999; HCSG Annual Report 1998/99; HCSG
- Enterprise East Report July 2001.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 24 February 1999.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 26 May 1999.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 23 June 1999; 28 July 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 25 August 1999; 22 September 1999; HCSG Annual Report 1998/99.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Craig Meldrum.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Interview Dullard 19 December 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> HSCG General Meeting 22 February 2000 amended the Constitution to drop "The" before "Hills Community Support Group."
- <sup>12</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 22 March 2000
- <sup>13</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 2 May 2001; Interview Meldrum.
- <sup>14</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 28 June 2000.
- <sup>15</sup> Helen Dullard, C.E.O., HCSG, Letter to Brian Hunt, Statewest Survey and Planning, 23 June 2000.
- <sup>16</sup> HCSG Board Meetings 31 January 2001; 28 February 2001.
- <sup>17</sup> Interview Meldrum; HCSG Enterprise East Report July 2001

- <sup>18</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 25 July 2001.
- <sup>19</sup> HCSG Board Meetings 22 August 2001; 28 November 2001; 27 February 2002; HCSG Interim Board Report January 2002.
- <sup>20</sup> HCSG Board Meetings 25 July 2001; 27 February 2002; 27 March 2002; 20 May 2002.
- <sup>21</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 26 June 2002.
- <sup>22</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 24 April 2002.
- <sup>23</sup> "Support Group wins prestigious award." Hills Gazette 9 November 2002.

# CHAPTER FOURTEEN: OPEN OPTIONS AND POST SCHOOL OPTIONS

- <sup>1</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 28 February 1998; HCSG Annual Report 1997/98; Interview with Elizabeth Small.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 22 July 1998.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 26 August 1998; 28 October 1998; 16 December 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview Elizabeth Small
- <sup>7</sup> HCSG Annual Report 2000/2001; Interview Elizabeth Small; Leisure Focus News May 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview Elizabeth Small; HCSG Board Meeting 25 October 2000.
- <sup>9</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 28 February 2001.
- <sup>10</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 2 May 2001.
- <sup>11</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 27 June 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview Elizabeth Small.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; Author's attendance at Launch on 3 December 2002.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview Elizabeth Small
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Carol Baker.
- <sup>16</sup> HCSG Annual Report 2001/2002.

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN: CENTENARY HOUSE

- <sup>1</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 23 June 1999; 28 July 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 25 August 1999; 27 October 1999; 24 November 1999.
- <sup>3</sup> Helen Dullard, CEO HCSG, Letter to Mr. Bob Thomas, General Manager Housing, Ministry of Housing, 22 November 1999
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 23 February 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Interview Martell; Interview Gwilliam 13 February 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 26 April 2000.
- <sup>7</sup> HCSG Board Meetings 28 June 2000; 23 August 2000; 27 September 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 28 March 2001. Interview Dullard 19 December 2002.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview Dullard 19 December 2002; Interview Martell.
- <sup>10</sup> HCSG Annual Report 2000/2001.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; HCSG Board Meeting 31 January 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 28 March 2001; Interview Martell.
- <sup>13</sup> HCSG Board Meeting 24 July 2002; HCSG Annual Report 2001/2002.

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN: HILLS COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP

- <sup>1</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 23 April 1997; 28 June 1997; HCSG Annual Report 1996/97.
- <sup>2</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1997/98; Annual Report 1999/2000.
- <sup>3</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 24 March 1999; 24 April 1999; 27 October 1999; 15 December 1999.
- <sup>4</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 28 February 2001; 22 August 2001.
- <sup>5</sup> HCSG BOM Meeting 26 May 1999.
- <sup>6</sup> Interview Gwilliam
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- <sup>11</sup> HCSG I.T. Development Officer. Communication to author 22 November 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> HCSG Code of Conduct Brochure; Interview Mackenzie.
- <sup>13</sup> HCSG Annual Report 1999/2000; Interviews Coordinators.
- <sup>14</sup> Interview Johnson.
- 15 Interviews Coordinators.
- 16 Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> HCSG Annual Report 2000/2001.
- 18 Interview Martell.
- <sup>19</sup> HCSG BOM Meetings 21 February 1996; 26 April 2000.
- <sup>20</sup> Interview Dullard 19 December 2002.
- <sup>21</sup> Figures supplied by Helen Dullard 4 May 2003.

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- <sup>1</sup> Shire of Mundaring Council Meeting 19 July 1983; Information supplied by HCSG office 22 November 2002.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview Dullard 19 December 2002.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> John Howard, Prime Minister, letter to Helen Dullard 9 April 2003.
- <sup>6</sup> This information came from interviews with Coordinators and others, and from a government project officer who wished to remain anonymous.
- 7 Ibid.

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### THE NEXT CHAPTER 2003 - 2008

The following section was researched and written by Alice Nelson.



### THE NEXT CHAPTER

As HCSG embarked on its 25th year it was decided to commission a writer to document the HCSG story from 2003 to the present; from where the original *Next of Kin* left off up to the current day.

This was no small task. The past five years have been a time of enormous growth and development for HCSG. New programs and initiatives have been implemented; old programs have evolved or consolidated. Funding, staffing, volunteers and participants have increased exponentially every year. New sites have been acquired; others have been extended or redeveloped.

It is not any of these markers of growth however that gives a true picture of HCSG's success and achievements. Instead it is the ongoing HCSG spirit – the promise of a conscious involvement for a stronger and more caring community - that has made the organisation strong; that binds staff, volunteers, participants and friends together in a common purpose.

It was that spirit that 25 years ago brought a small band of idealistic volunteers together to create a much needed community service organisation. It is that spirit that has allowed HCSG to expand so successfully while remaining true to its original vision. And it is that spirit that will see the organisation forge ahead to embrace the opportunities and challenges of the future.

It has been an incredible privilege to learn the story of HCSG; a story that is continually in motion and development. Based on what I have seen on my learning journey of the past year, I am confident that HCSG's story is one that will continue far into the future.

Many thanks to all those who have given so freely of their time to contribute to this project. I can only hope that perhaps in five years time we will have another exciting chapter to write!

Alice Nelson October 2008

### ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

"It appears that the desire to improve is the best indicator of future improvement. It seems to make little difference where one begins as long as there is a commitment to getting better."

Stan Hutton, Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation, USA.

One thing that has been a constant in the HCSG story, from its earliest days to its current position as a lighthouse community services organisation, is the sincere desire to improve – to do things better for consumers, staff and the community. Deeply embedded in the HCSG culture is a commitment to proactively enhancing service delivery, to transforming policies and practices to benefit consumers, and to planning innovatively for future developments and challenges.

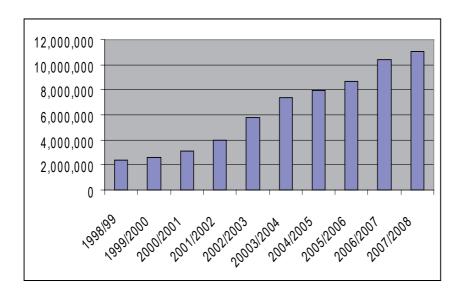
The overwhelming themes of the years from 2003 to 2008 have been growth, learning and improvement. There has been a continuing expansion of the organisation, an increase in innovative and imaginative new projects and programs and creative and effective responses to emerging needs. Established programs have grown enormously and new programs have been developed to allow HCSG to better meet community needs. Through all this growth and diversification, HCSG has consistently maintained the belief that consumer-specific services build on consumer, family and community strengths. Significant budget growth has seen HCSG's overall income nearly double in only five years, staff numbers have grown to 290 and volunteers to 98 and new sites have been acquired and developed.

The income overview below indicates the incredible growth of the organisation in a short period of time.

HCSG Income Overview 1998 - 2008

1998/19	9 1999/2	2000 20	000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
2,367,6	3 2,595	,651 3	,122,013	4,007,153	5,791,720	7,375,798

2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/07	2007/08
7,972,512	8,656,629	10,428,403	11,045,160



### A Changing Landscape and a Changing Face for HCSG

HCSG had undergone significant growth and changes both administratively and operationally. We needed to pay attention to the business aspects of our operation without losing the sense of who we are.

Frank Kelly, Board Chair

One of the fundamental factors underpinning HCSG's incredible growth has been the organisation's ability to respond flexibly and successfully to an ever-changing landscape. The years from 2003 to 2008 have seen significant changes in government priorities and funding arrangements, evolving models of service delivery, a heightened focus on accountability and reporting and increasing expectations of service providers.

HCSG has had to balance the need to continue to respond flexibly to emerging community needs with the pressures it faces to meet government accountability requirements and find more effective and efficient ways to provide services without losing its identity.

### CEO Helen Dullard comments on HCSG's ongoing success:

As we continue to grow and put in place the internal systems and infrastructure to enhance and manage that growth, we are investing in our future. We don't know exactly what transitions or challenges lie ahead. The only certainty is that change will continue. And organisations like HCSG, which have embraced the challenges during their growth, will be better prepared for the new, inevitable, challenges which await.

We've constantly made sure that we keep up with sector issues and keep abreast of changes and developments at the state and national level. We've also been consistently willing to put ourselves up for pilots to try new ideas, to be at the forefront of new initiatives. We're also very aware of the value of opportunities that produce evidence for embarking on new ideas.

This is paying off in the fact that we are now being sought out for our expertise and experience. Staff are regularly being invited onto panels, working parties and to present workshops. Part of HCSG's continuing success lies in its innovative adaptation of management practices that originated in the private sector including values driven strategic plans that identify goals and objectives, the development of business improvement projects, the streamlining of services and a focus on quality assurance and accountability. The increased emphasis on accountability for outputs and outcomes has resulted in an organisation-wide focus on improving efficiency and effectiveness. All of this has been applied without loss of the flexibility and attention to individual needs that had become HCSG's hallmark.

### A Focus on Organisational Excellence

As HCSG continued to expand and develop, the Board and management began to realise that, while the organisation had an ongoing commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, this area needed a greater professional focus to ensure HCSG would continue to flourish in an increasingly complex and challenging milieu. Concepts of quality management, lean thinking and organisational excellence models were increasingly embraced by organisations in all sectors and it was agreed that HCSG too, needed to explore this aspect of organisational development.

To this end, a number of initiatives were developed and implemented to improve the support and services provided by HCSG; the effectiveness, safety and wellbeing of staff; the management and operation of the Board and strategies and processes to address the growing complexities of governance.

In 2006 the role of Organisational Development Manager was created. This position, filled by Lee Roberts, was designed to be a 'big picture' whole-of-organisation role with an emphasis on both internal development and the enhancing of HCSG's connections with the community.

### Organisational Development Manager Lee Roberts describes her role:

My role sees me constantly looking for opportunities to develop HCSG's relations with our community and to contribute to the community's wellbeing. We believe that if the community is strong and people are integrated and supported by it, they are less likely to need our services. For that reason I have been actively involved with the Mundaring Shire in supporting its

community development efforts, including acting as Chair of the Active Ageing Network. There's a real spin off for us in that sort of work because we can't do everything so we need to engage in creating opportunities for people to be more involved in their community.

There's also an internal focus to the Organisational Development role. My brief is to keep an eye on whole-of-organisation issues such as communication, policies and processes. I'm always looking for efficiencies — making sure that we don't have to recreate everything in every program. Having many different sites, it's important for someone to have a watching brief on how we work as an organisation.

In 2007 another new leadership role was created to assist HCSG to further develop and maintain its focus on continuous quality improvement. This new Quality Manager role was designed to be a crossorganisational position with a focus on quality reporting and identifying and monitoring evidence-based outcomes for the work of all programs. Jane Roberts, who had previously worked in the Aged Care program, was appointed to the role. Part of the challenge for this new role was to create opportunities for greater staff input into service direction and policy development. The position was also designed to provide HCSG with the capacity to contribute to external quality framework workshops and be involved in sector initiatives to develop clear and consistent quality reporting guidelines.

### Quality Manager Jane Roberts talks about her role:

My role is about expectations and standards. It's about not only having satisfied consumers, but making sure we are delivering the service in the most efficient and economical way. It is about having the answer to the question — How do we really know the consumer is getting the best service possible based on their individual need? In a nutshell, it's about making sure that what should happen does happen, and happens consistently. It's also about continually looking at ways of improving things. In many ways the creation of this role is an extremely innovative and forward-looking development.

### The Power of Partnerships

As a community organisation, HCSG has always been aware of the integral role of partnerships and collaboration at all levels in helping it to fulfil its mission. The connections made with individuals, communities, government, business and other organisations have helped to transform the services HCSG is able to provide to its consumers and its local community.

As HCSG has developed, it has become an active facilitator of productive community partnerships. In the years from 2003 to 2008, HCSG and its partners have experienced firsthand the power of collaboration as existing relationships have been strengthened and new partnerships entered into in a range of areas.

CEO Helen Dullard speaks about the importance of partnerships for HCSG:

Partnerships are about building communities, finding additional resources, preventing duplication and waste, working as a team and pooling skills and expertise rather than 'going it alone'. Healthy partnerships also have the capacity to create a renewed sense of community involvement and ownership.

We're always looking for partnerships with business and industry groups, professional organisations and associations and community groups in our region and across the state, to see how we can improve our service delivery, to see how we can become more flexible and responsive to community need and to help us to be a leader in our industry.

Clearly though, it is not enough for two organisations to simply state that they are partners and then strike out to do an activity together. We're always working to ensure that we jointly explore our separate and common goals and strengths for the greater good of the partnership.

The HCSG-Midland Brick partnership continued to be a mutually beneficial collaboration and was recognised for its innovation and effectiveness in 2003 when it was announced as the state winner in the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships. The partnership went on to gain national recognition when it became a national winner in the Longevity Category of Large Business Partnerships. The partnership was profiled as a 'lighthouse' initiative by Philanthropy Australia in the Autumn/Summer 2004 edition of its national magazine.



Helen Dullard at the award ceremony for the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships.

### **Mundaring Arts Centre Partnership**

Since its early days, HCSG has looked for new ways to implement its firmly held belief that direct participation in and increased access to the arts can contribute significantly to the wellbeing of people with a disability and their families, friends and community. Over the years a range of successful art projects had highlighted the diverse artistic talents of HCSG consumers and proved that cultural inclusion can be an effective means of achieving social change with a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

In 2008 a partnership with the Mundaring Arts Centre was developed to create further opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the arts. Mundaring Arts Centre was successful in receiving Lotterywest funding to employ an artist in residence to work specifically with people with disabilities and invited HCSG to collaborate in bringing the venture to fruition. HCSG agreed to identify consumers who would benefit from the project and to provide support workers. Plans are also being developed to involve special education students from Eastern Hills Senior High School and members of the community in the project. Further partnerships are being explored with local businesses to provide funds for materials for a range of art projects.

This new initiative represents two significant firsts: the first time a renowned, mainstream arts centre has employed an artist to work exclusively with people with disabilities and the first time that HCSG has collaborated officially with the Mundaring Arts Centre through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

CEO Helen Dullard talks about the importance of inclusiveness in the arts:

Art created by people with a disability makes a unique contribution to the cultural life of our society. One of our great dreams is to have a sculpture done solely by people with disabilities as a gift to the community. The arts are one of the ways we can help show the wider community the value and skill of people with disabilities.

### **Human Resource Management at HCSG**

With the ongoing growth of HCSG, there was a pressing need to further develop the organisation's management infrastructure. Now a multi-faceted service organisation with ever-increasing numbers of staff, HCSG lacked a dedicated human resources department. The need for a more strategic focus on recruitment, industrial relations, occupational health and safety and other aspects of human resources management was becoming more and more obvious.

In February 2004 the role of Human Resources Manager was created and Brendan Marrion was appointed. The focus of this new position was to develop a more strategic organisation-wide approach to human resources, as well as taking charge of all industrially-related responsibilities and monitoring legislative changes and their impact on HCSG. Brendan Marrion immediately set about creating a proactive, future-focused approach to human resources for HCSG, with an increased emphasis on risk management, training and development and innovative and expanded recruitment strategies.

By the end of the year, the need for greater support in the newly-created Human Resources Department became obvious. The role of Human Resources Officer was created and Helen Mangnall was appointed to the position. Around this time, a Risk Management Audit of HCSG's human resources was conducted. The Human Resource Officer's primary role was to assist in the implementation of more streamlined practices and approaches to all aspects of human resource management.

The new Human Resources Department set about revamping the recruitment and induction program with a more rigorous focus on mitigating employment risks through a strategic approach to conducting pre-employment checks and monitoring probation periods. Occupational Safety and Health was also significantly professionalised with the introduction of databases for recording incidents and increased training for staff. Training and development for staff was also streamlined so that all professional development was managed by the Human Resources Department.

Human Resources Officer Helen Mangnall speaks about her work:

Working in this area, you get an overview of the whole organisation and what is going on in all of the programs.

HCSG has supported me in studying in this area and I've completed a Foundations of Human Resources qualification with the Australian Human Resources Institute. The more you study, the more you want to learn. I find the legal side of HR fascinating.

I enjoy the workers' compensation element of the job and the work I do in helping people to come back after an accident or illness. I like to see the rehabilitation – slowly they come back on light duties, working at their own pace until they can eventually get back to their pre-injury duties.

I also enjoy my recruitment responsibilities. It's really satisfying when we can assist people to come on board. We've had single mums applying for jobs and our challenge is to work with them and try to be flexible and cater for their family circumstances as well.

### **Training and Development**

In 2008 HCSG's first dedicated Training and Development Coordinator was appointed. Charlotte Howell, who had been with the organisation since 2002 and has extensive experience in this area, was the successful applicant. The creation of this role is part of HCSG's commitment to both its staff and consumers and its recognition of the importance of strategic workforce development. As the organisation grew, it became apparent that a dedicated Training and Development Coordinator was needed to help focus priorities and identify innovative solutions for development of HCSG's most important asset: its people.

The Training and Development Coordinator will develop targeted training and development plans for all staff, as well as exploring new professional learning options and coordinating external training packages for greater cost efficiency. It is planned that the Training and Development Coordinator will also support the Human Resources department in developing and implementing talent management and succession planning strategies to sustain HCSG's strong infrastructure position.

### **Information and Communication Technology Development**

It has been particularly difficult to come up with a new ICT proposal because technology keeps improving (there is always something better just round the corner) and the growth of HCSG continues to change the goalposts.

Steve Williams

As HCSG continued to grow, so too did its information and communication technology (ICT) requirements, with the ICT network estimated to have trebled in size over the last five years. A grant from Lotterywest in 2003 assisted in the development of a network linking HCSG's sites, which lead to more cost efficient and timely communication and information sharing. Over five years HCSG invested \$163,000 of its own funds towards ICT upgrades.

The increasing emphasis by funding bodies on statistics of service delivery has seen the Service Management System (SMS) go through multiple upgrades to enable the storage and processing of huge volumes of data.

HCSG has developed a partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding with BizLynx Information & Communication Technology and their expertise and technical support has played a major role in the design, installation and maintenance of HCSG's ICT systems.

Another funding proposal for a major network upgrade through Lotterywest will see HCSG's ICT requirements met through to 2012.

### Focus on the Future: The HCSG Strategic Plan 2005 – 08

With the continuing growth of HCSG, the need for a new strategic plan to guide the work of the organisation became clear. A strategic plan based on the idea of building on the strengths of HCSG, creating new abilities and opportunities and ensuring the organisation thrived into the future was needed.

An independent consultancy, Optimise International, was engaged to lead a rigorous organisational review and strategic planning exercise focused on identifying HCSG's strengths, opportunities and challenges. The planning process was extremely inclusive and input was sought from consumers, volunteers, staff, community members and funding bodies.

### Board Chair Frank Kelly talks about the strategic planning process

The whole process of creating the Strategic Plan was an example of the way that HCSG works. The people who would be using the Plan were the ones that put it together. The planning and visioning process really did involve everyone in the organisation, from top to bottom. We had meetings at Enterprise House with reams of butchers' paper and everyone

writing down their ideas. The buzz was amazing. I'd never seen anything done that way before. It was really another example of the total involvement of everyone in this organisation.

This inclusive planning process and innovative visioning exercise led to HCSG being named the winner of the Community Services Industry Award for Organisational Excellence in 2006. HCSG was recognised as an outstanding role model for change management and organisational development.



Cherie Ward, Lee Roberts and Helen Dullard receiving the Community Services Industry Award for Organisational Excellence

The Strategic Plan 2005 - 2008 captured and reinforced HCSG's strengths and sense of identity. It brought to the fore the principles and drivers that would ensure the best possible processes were followed when negotiating individual care plans, program development and community inclusion.

Several 'Points of Difference' were identified to highlight and communicate the unique character and vision of HCSG. These points of difference underpinned the creative visioning and planning processes and helped to reaffirm what HCSG stood for.

### Points of Difference

A conscious involvement demonstrated through:

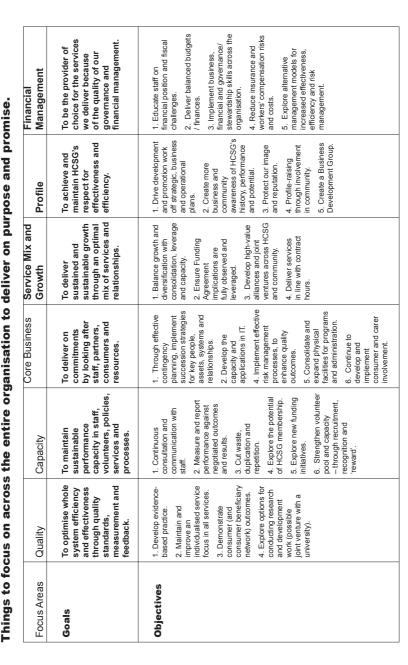
- 1. Our flexibility and responsiveness in meeting current and emerging community needs.
- Our commitment to 'value add' to program outcomes/packages of care.
- 3. Our decision to become a key provider in the area of challenging behaviours for people with disabilities.
- 4. Our proven and determined will to anticipate and address community challenges related to HCSG's Purpose.
- 5. Our ability to network and develop the community which enables HCSG to:
  - be a provider of excellence within the geographical parameters of the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
  - negotiate successful and sustainable business partnerships.
  - secure a diverse range of funding.

### **Key Directions**

A number of focus areas, goals and objectives were developed to guide HCSG's work into the future.

## HCSG Strategic Plan

# Focus Areas, Goals and Objectives 2007/08





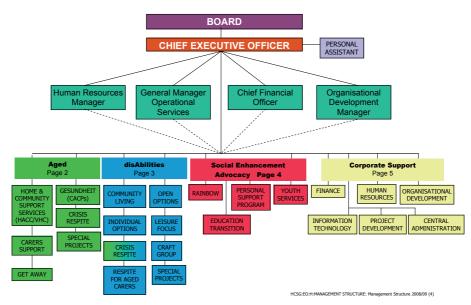
### **Organisational Structure**

Accompanying the roll-out of the new Strategic Plan was a redevelopment of HCSG's organisational structure. Designed to further streamline HCSG's services, the restructure grouped all programs into three key focus areas: Aged Services, Disability Services and Youth Services. The new design gave HCSG a clearer framework for service delivery and allowed for involvement from a greater number of program Managers and Coordinators. Financial responsibility and management was also devolved to program level and a number of Business Improvement Projects were developed to address specific organisational needs.

Over the years further refinements were made to the organisational structure to allow for greater efficiency and flexibility. A significant structural development occurred in 2008 when the decision was made to create the role of General Manager, Operational Services. This integral position, which was filled by Coralie Flatters (previously of the Gowrie), was designed to have an organisation-wide focus and take responsibility for strategic and operational objectives.

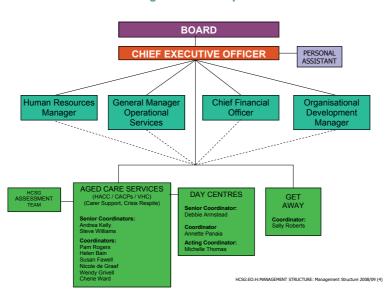
The following chart shows HCSG's streamlined structure in 2008:

### **HCSG MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE 2008/09**



### **HCSG MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE 2008/09**

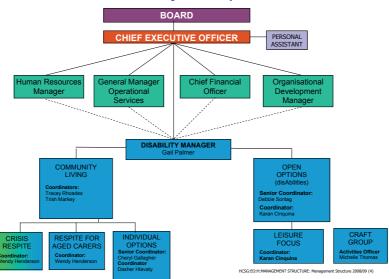
"Aged" Core Group



Page 2

### **HCSG MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE 2008/09**

### Disability Core Group



### **HCSG MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE 2008/09**

### **Social Advocacy Enhancement Team**



Page 4

HCSG:EO:H:MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE: Management Structure 2008/09 (4)

### **HCSG MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE 2008/09 Corporate Support BOARD** PERSONAL ASSISTANT **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER** Human Resources General Manager Chief Financial Organisational Officer Manager Operational Development Services Manager **FINANCE** INFORMATION CENTRAL HUMAN **ORGANISATIONAL** PROJECT **TECHNOLOGY** ADMINISTRATION RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT DEVELOPMENT Chief Financial Officers Reg Armstrong Events Project Manager: Bernie Werder **Executive Officer:** Manager: Brendan Marrion Officer: Kirsty Williams Wahroonga Reception: Maxine Nimmo HR Officer: Quality Manger: Jane Robertson Assistant Accountant: Margaret Fernandez Hamilton Office Coordinator: Dawn Ardley Training & Development: Charlotte Howell Volunteer Coordinator Sam McDonald Bookkeepers: Emma Korrel Cathy Gebbetis Hamilton Reception: Moni Taplin Pinewood Reception: Peta Firth (p/t) HCSG:EO:H:MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE: Management Structure 2008/09 (4) Page 5

### Volunteers

Volunteers continued to play a crucial role in helping HCSG to fulfil its mission of making a difference in the community. As an organisation started by volunteers, HCSG had always recognised the importance of volunteering, but as the organisation grew, a range of measures to promote the growth and vitality of its volunteering program were introduced. In 2008 a volunteer committee was formed to explore ways of attracting, supporting and retaining volunteers. In July 2008 a new Volunteer Coordinator position was created and Samantha McDonald was appointed to the role. For the first time, HCSG would have a dedicated staff member to focus on recruitment, management and support of its volunteers. By the end of 2008 HCSG had 98 dedicated volunteers working in a wide range of areas.

Board Chair Frank Kelly talks about the importance of volunteers to HCSG:

What creates that commitment to going above and beyond? I wish I knew. Then I could bottle it! It's certainly not something that exists in every organisation. The contribution these people make cannot be under-estimated. Without them, some aspects of what we do would simply fail to exist. I'm continually amazed by the selflessness and generosity of the volunteers. There's an atmosphere of total dedication to the job and an unquestioning loyalty to the organisation and the consumers. I remember a while back there was a gentleman at one of the Day Centres who had suffered a massive stroke and was paralysed. The absolute care and dedication the volunteers showed him was incredible. They'd willingly support him to be fully involved in all the Men's Shed activities. That's just how it is with the volunteers.



Volunteers and participants enjoying a day at the Men's Shed at Wahroonga

### Tributes to Helen Dullard and to HCSG

Two significant national tributes received by HCSG's CEO Helen Dullard can also be viewed as a recognition of the organisation, its achievements and its profile on a national scale.

In 2004 HCSG's CEO Helen Dullard was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours. This prestigious recognition was for 'service to the community through a range of organisations, particularly the Hills Community Support Group'. The submission for this award was prepared by members of the Get Away Club, who were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support and letters of recommendation from individuals and organisations from every level of the community.

Get Away Club participant Vicky speaks about preparing the submission for the award:

We started work with some trepidation. Perhaps we were engaging in something too great for our capabilities. We were, after all, without any experience in this field. But we believed the cause to be immense and so worthwhile. Helen Dullard has long been known, not just in the hills but much further afield, as a remarkable leader in community affairs, as a compelling advocate for those in the community deserving of extra help. It was for us a logical consequence that she would be recommended for a national honour.

In her acceptance speech, Helen remarked that she did not see the award as a tribute to an individual, but as a recognition of the whole organisation.

> Former Board Chair, Maureen Thomson, speaks about the significance of Helen Dullard's Order of Australia Medal:

> I believe the award is a tribute to the regard in which both Helen and the organisation is held in the wider community. The extent and variety of the programs provided, the number of successful tenders and the number of joint ventures and partnerships with government and various other organisations and institutions continues to stand as testimony to the success, innovation and effectiveness of HCSG. I continue to be amazed at the vision, complexity and diversity of the organisation, the achievements and growth it continues to make and the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of all associated with HCSG.

In 2008 Helen Dullard received another enormously significant tribute in the form of the John Curtin Medal. The Medal, which is Curtin University of Technology's most prestigious non-academic award, is presented annually to one or two outstanding people who: embody the attributes and values of John Curtin and Curtin University; have given outstanding service to the community and who have made a significant impact as agents of change within the community.

Curtin University's recognition of these qualities in Helen Dullard is also a testament to the achievements and success of HCSG. The Medal, which places Helen among the ranks of outstanding community change agents such as Dr Eric Tan, Dr George O'Neill, Brother Olly Pickett and Gerard Neesham, is also a recognition of the achievements HCSG has made under her leadership.

Helen's words when she was informed about the award are perhaps the best summary of the spirit of HCSG: *The achievements that seem to come to one person are only possible because of the community and the people around you.* 



HCSG's founder and CEO Helen Dullard with her husband Ron.

### PROGRAM UPDATES

### AGED CARE SERVICES

HCSG continued to cement its reputation as a leading provider of aged care services in the Mundaring, Swan and Kalamunda catchment areas, delivering high quality and flexible services to ensure that older people in the hills community have a broad range of living options and opportunities to expand their social activities and skills. By 2008 over \$3 million worth of aged care services was being delivered by HCSG, providing employment to over 200 people.

The Home and Community Care program continued to grow as HCSG's reputation for delivering quality and cost-efficient care increased. By 2008, 1174 people were being assisted to live independently in their own homes and participate in community activities. A further 144 people per year were assisted under the Veterans Home Care program, and Community Aged Care Packages were provided to 140 people throughout the hills area. The main area of need in community aged care continued to be domestic assistance, with 636 consumers needing this service to maintain independence in their own homes. Other services included social support, gardening, transport and home maintenance.

The importance of creating and enhancing community links as a vital part of the journey to enjoyable and independent living for older people became an increasing focus for HCSG as its aged care services continued to grow. Community development had always been a fundamental part of HCSG's mission, along with the firmly held belief that action to promote social activity and participation in the life of the community was an indispensable part of any effective strategy to promote healthy ageing. In keeping with this philosophy, HCSG continued to focus on linking older people back into their communities through active engagement, creating opportunities for older people to share skills and experiences.

CEO Helen Dullard speaks about the importance of community connections:

What I would really like to see is HCSG developing a kind of virtual support service. What I mean by that is that we need to move away from the bricks and mortar notion of effective retirement communities and create the kind of community networks that will allow people to experience that kind of friendship and security in their own home. Our focus needs to be on facilitating those community links, creating innovative community programs, bringing more and more people in from the community. That is what the way forward needs to be for aged care and I think it's incredibly exciting.

The challenge of attracting quality staff for aged care programs continues to be an ongoing issue for the various aged care programs. Despite sometimes being put under extra pressure because of shortages, staff and volunteers continue to display extraordinary talent and commitment to their work.

Senior Coordinator of the Day Centres, Debbie Armstead, talks about the dedication of staff and volunteers:

I can't say enough about the staff and the volunteers and their absolute dedication to their work. They are integral to everything that happens here; without their more than 100% support, nothing would come to life. The thing that is so incredible is that these people are here because they want to make a difference, not just because it's a job to them. So much work goes on behind the scenes and in people's own time. There is such a willingness to support and to learn, to adapt to change and to go forward.

Support Worker Pat Cahill talks about how one consumer was helped to get a new lease of life:

A passing comment led to a new lease of life for one elderly consumer. One of the carers in the Gesundheit Program mentioned to Helen Dullard that Madeleine was in need of a computer. Madeleine is an eighty-four year old published writer, but her typewriter no longer worked. She was handwriting letters and articles and photocopying them before sending them off. This was a long, tedious process for Madeleine and she was about to give up.

Helen Dullard referred the carer to ICT Manager Russell Small who arranged for a computer to be given to Madeleine. Russell and his colleague, Mark Oszinski, delivered the computer to Madeleine's home and set it up for her. Madeleine couldn't believe that she was now the proud owner of a computer and that her days of writing letters to the editor in longhand were finished.

In a short time, Madeleine has mastered the basics of computing and now regularly wins at the computer game of Solitaire. She reckons she has the computer beat! Madeleine has also learned the basic concepts of Word and recently had a letter to the editor of The West Australian published regarding the dangers of anti-depressant medication. It featured as the star letter of that particular day. Madeleine is currently working, in her usual professional style, on a letter to the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

The computer has made the writing process so much easier for Madeleine. She is very grateful to HCSG and would like to give special thanks to Russell and Mark for their encouragement and support. The other day when Madeleine had trouble with the computer mouse, Russell immediately jumped into his car and delivered another mouse to her home. Such efforts go beyond the normal expectations and have not gone unnoticed by Madeleine. HCSG has certainly made a difference to Madeleine's life and there's no stopping her now!

### Centre-based Day Care

The Day Centres, which had always been such a fundamental part of HCSG's mission to create community, flourished and grew along with the organisation. By 2008, over 200 frail aged consumers were accessing the centres. The Men's Shed at Wahroonga continued to be an attractive alternative to social isolation for male consumers.

Under the leadership of Senior Coordinator Debbie Armstead, a number of positive changes were introduced to the way the program was run. The most significant of these was a drive to involve Day Centre participants more in the running of the program. The aim was to create an inclusive service where consumers could be actively involved in the planning of activities, meals and events. These changes complement the 2004 HACC 'Way Forward' document, with its focus on consumer-driven management and the empowerment of the individual.

# Debbie Armstead, talks about some of the changes:

We are trying to change the way we deliver the services so that it becomes much more of an independent process. We've now got the consumers sitting down with us on a monthly basis and saying 'this is what we want to do next month'. The response has been amazing — the consumers are really loving being more involved and coming up with their own ideas. In keeping with this focus on a more independent service, we've also tried to make meal times more of a smorgasbord where people can get up and get their own meals and morning teas.

The Day Centres also began to expand their links to the wider community and a number of successful partnerships were created. A particularly fruitful relationship was formed with Helena College when students began coming to the Day Centre to work on a memoirs project with some of the older people. A student would be matched with a consumer and spend time with them recording their stories, looking at photographs and conducting interviews. The students and consumers both remarked on how interesting they found the experience.

The Darlington Playgroup also began to visit the Wahroonga Day Centre once a month to share a cup of tea and conversation with consumers. This 'intergenerational' initiative to bring children and older people together proved to be a wonderful success for all involved.

### Debbie Armstead commented that:

The young mums get as much out of it as the old folk. It just gives them a chance to sit around and chat about parenting issues and life in general. And it gives the older folk a real sense of purpose because they can often feel that they have no real place in the community anymore. They love coming together to engage with other people in the community.



Bonding across the generations at the Wahroonga Day Centre.

Links were also formed with Eastern Hills Senior High School and students from the Special Education Program began to visit the Day Centres, helping to serve morning tea and talking to the consumers.

Evelyn Moss, a long-time Day Centre participant who celebrated her 97th birthday in 2008, comments on the family feel at the Wahroonga Day Centre:

I walk in here and I think 'this is my second home'. You come in and there's a nice cuppa and a nice meal all ready for one. Out comes the rumikin bag and we play all morning until they're ready to set up for lunch. Of course there's the craft but I feel like this is my day off so I just join in the games with our group. And of course there are the outings. We've been to Lake Leschenaultia for a lovely coffee overlooking the lake. Fish

and chips in Fremantle was much enjoyed and then there was the day down at Burswood. I can even remember being put in a wheelchair and running in a race down at the big gym hall in Midland.

Dedicated Day Centre staff and volunteers continued to 'go the extra mile' to provide a range of greatly enjoyed special activities and events for consumers. One particular event that went down in HCSG's history as a spectacular success was the staging in 2004 of a 'Fairy Tale Mock Wedding'.

On Wednesday 28 April, Centenary House and Wahroonga joined together to host a Fairy Tale Mock Wedding. This proved to be an outstanding success and a fantastic day for all. Both centres joined in the preparations (making wedding invitations, decorations for the tables, place settings, attending rehearsals and even the making of the garter!). So by the time the wedding day came, all were very excited about this big event! Everyone turned out in their very best clothes.



The Fairy Tale Mock Wedding was an enormous success

## **Mobile Day Centre**

The Mobile Day Centre for older consumers who needed some social support but did not yet feel ready to actually come to Wahroonga or Centenary House, also expanded. By 2008, four separate groups of up to ten participants were meeting on a monthly basis for excursions out into the community. Trips were arranged to Government House, The Rose Gardens, movie viewings and many a morning coffee outing. One of the most remarked upon benefits of the Mobile Day Centre was the strong and enduring friendships that were formed between participants.

### **Get Away Club**

The Get Away Club continued to provide a range of exciting trips and activities to help seniors maintain social connections and encourage a positive attitude to ageing. By 2008, 68 'well' aged seniors were participating in a range of events and activities.

The focus on ownership and personal value continued, with participants dreaming up and designing their own activities and trips. Some of the members' activities included visits to Midland Workshops, Dowerin Field Day, Swan River Jazz Cruise, Red Hill Waste Disposal, Government House and a twilight sail on the Leeuwin.

In 2004 the Get Away Club walked the Cape to Cape track in the south-west as a relay in small groups. The groups walked over 140 kilometres with members selecting their own distances, which increased as the week went on. Weekly training walks were held for three months before the big trek, which increased members' fitness levels and created great camaraderie.

Participants in the Cape to Cape trek share their recollections of the trip:

This enabled me to have an experience I never dreamed of, nor would have had the opportunity to partake...

Perhaps for some of us it was a life-changing experience – probably the nearest most of us will ever get to Everest – but this was our Everest – our own Cape to Cape experience.

Another highlight for the Get Away Club was the 2005 summer trip to Tasmania. With the outstanding services of an environmentally-aware local tour service, the group spent 15 days travelling and falling in love with the island state.

The young Tasmanian tour guide's words after the holiday really sum up the theme and the mission of the Get Away Club:

I became very aware of the preciousness of life...I realised that age doesn't have to stop one at all from living wildly, laughing happily, being cheeky and exploring curiously.



The Get Away Club enjoying a day out at the races

## **Carer Support Program and Respite Services**

The Carer Support Program, which was initiated in 2001 to provide much-needed support services to carers, continued to grow over the years. The passing of the Carers Recognition Act in 2004, which aimed to recognise the important contribution of carers and to ensure their active involvement in the provision of services that impact on them, was in many ways an affirmation of the work HCSG was already doing with carers. The inclusive and participatory approach taken to service delivery had meant that carers, families and relationship networks were included as much as possible in the process.

The Carer Support Program initially provided reflexology and massage services to carers, however the value of the informal counselling and networking functions soon became apparent. More and more carers began attending the program for the support it gave them; for many it was their only chance to debrief and relax.

The program was forced to move homes several times in its early years. Originally operating out of Centenary House, it was relocated to a rented cottage in Koongamia in 2003, with the rent being subsidised by Carers WA and a Family Initiatives Grant from the DSC. In 2006, when Open Options moved to the newly opened Pinewood, rooms became available at Centenary House and the Carer Support Program moved into its permanent home.

As well as the popular massage and reflexology treatments, the program began to facilitate a range of other services to promote the health and wellbeing of carers. Coordinating short breaks away proved to be an invaluable initiative for carers and trips to Mandurah, Ledge Point, Yanchep, Busselton and Toodyay were organised.



A group of carers living it up on a short break away.

Samantha Harris speaks about the value of short breaks away for carers:

We do everything. We coordinate the whole holiday, set up the itinerary, make all the arrangements. All the carers have to think about is packing their bags. They just don't ever get that sort of respite, that time away. So much planning has to be done just for these people to be able to have a few days away. We find that they come back feeling so rejuvenated. That little bit of time away means so much. And they also get the chance to connect on a much deeper level with other carers. They can share their common role and spend time with people who really understand what it's like.

The program also extended to include 'learning circles' where carers could come together to listen to a presentation on a particular topic of interest to them. Informal seminars were held on topics including communication skills, managing emotion, relaxation and self care. The aim of the learning element of the program is to give carers the skills and support to manage their caring role.

In 2008 the decision was made to merge the Carer Support Program and the Carer Respite Services to create a Family Support Program. The aim was a seamless provision of services to carers. By this time the program had grown to include over 200 carers and employed three staff members.

We try and create a safe place for carers to 'say it as it is'. They may be frustrated or angry and don't feel they are able to express that to the person they care for or to family and friends. Here they know that we're not going to judge them. There's always a listening ear and a positive environment.

Samantha Harris

# Norma shares her journey as a carer and a volunteer:

Every working mum is faced with the challenges of juggling work and home duties and for those of us with special people in our lives the juggling act means there are an amazing number of balls in the air at any one time. I recently was thinking about how a carer brings this package together and thought it might be useful to share some of my experiences.

I had found trying to work almost impossible, there always seemed to be so many pressures for me to be proactive in my child's therapy. For most of his school years he was not strong enough to attend full-time as he was often in hospital requiring more therapy, swimming, massage, yoga, riding for the disabled and bike riding, all needing high levels of support. This was a time of major intervention from child psychologists, neurologists, speech therapists, physios and occupational therapists. Sometimes it was overwhelming with programs for exercising both a damaged brain and unresponsive body but we persevered...every day involved hours of therapy and assistance with dressing and eating and to try and fit paid work in with this regime seemed impossible. What I really wanted to do was to study but there didn't seem to be time for that either. I remember most of that period being spent in survival mode and those of you still living that life will know what I mean.

During this period of intense therapy I discovered the joys of hand therapy and crafts that encouraged bilateral hand use. Without realising what we were doing a life long relationship with textiles was born. I was looking for anything that would stimulate and encourage eye hand coordination. Sometimes we worked with fabrics and made quilts. I put a sewing machine next to his bed because that's where he spent a good deal of his time and his job was to match the fabrics, put a dark triangle with a light coloured one and I would sew them together. He enjoyed doing this. I taught him how to use a needle and thread and he started doing simple long stitch designs on circular frames. He

enjoyed this too and became very precise. I just had to keep threading the yarn. One day I came across an activity that used both hands and with time he became a rug maker. I had finally found something that offered therapy, stimulation and an enjoyable hobby.

It was also around this time when I became a single mum with three teenagers, that taking a real job was the only option available. This was crunch time. There was a part time job going in a Community Centre as a crèche supervisor and I thought I might be able to manage this. There was just one problem. I had no previous experience, no work history, no resume and no references. Being desperate I sat down and wrote down all my volunteer experience. It was more extensive than I realised. I had been a scout leader, had my first aid certificate, worked in special education as an assistant, ran a folk club and of course there was my caring experience of about 13 years to add to the list. I added to this mix my love of children's literature and the ability to play the guitar and sing 'Bananas in Pyjamas' at the same time. I was sure I had sat through more hours of Play School than Big Ted and convinced the interview panel that I would be an ideal candidate for the Crèche Supervisor job. As luck would have it I got the job and life ticked along with many happy hours immersed in kids' stuff.

During this time I realised what was missing from my life...people contact. I loved meeting the mums who came to help on rosters. I delighted in their company and began to realise just how much I had to offer and just how much experience I had gained as a volunteer and a mother. The area that grew the most was my confidence and this is the wonderful thing about work...self worth.

When my son left school, (that's where that big word 'transition' comes in) my world changed enormously. He needed full time care and I couldn't take him to work. It was a time for major change and I found myself falling back on 'recognition of prior learning' and using all the skills I had gained from working with my son to offer art therapy classes. The only way I could see I could provide him the

support he needed was for us to work together and think outside the square. It was a huge step of faith starting our own small business but here we are 10 years on and it's been the most fulfilling, creative time of our lives.

So why am I sharing all this? Hopefully to empower some of you to realise the amazing contribution you as carers bring to the community. I'm not sure why it took me so long to realise that I was more than just a carer. I think for the most part it's because we get so caught up in the day to day stuff and we envy those with real jobs in the so called real world. I'm just here reminding each and every one of you what a great job you do and if you are looking for work don't undervalue all your volunteer history and of course your role as carer.

# Yallambee Village and Hostel

In 2008 Baptist Care officially took over full management and ownership of Yallambee Village and Yallambee Hostel. HCSG agreed to continue to provide ongoing support to the Village by working with Baptist Care until a new process was developed.

#### **DISABILITY SERVICES**

By 2008 HCSG had become one of the state's most respected providers of services for people with a disability, with a continued focus on meeting individual needs and fostering community connections. As with the workforce climate in general, one of the biggest challenges for HCSG continued to be attracting staff.

# **Open Options**

The Open Options program continued to provide a range of integrated services to participants with a diverse spectrum of disabilities. The move to the new Pinewood site in 2006 provided an improved facility for the provision of centre-based programs. By 2008 Open Options was catering for 62 participants.



Canoeing trips on Lake Leschenaultia proved to be a firm favourite with Open Options participants.

# **Open Options Gets Creative**

In 2004 a \$28,000 grant from Lotterywest allowed Open Options to embark on a highly-successful creative arts project. The aim of the project was to give people with high support needs the opportunity to explore a range of creative techniques and processes to create individual artworks.

Swan TAFE generously donated the use of its art rooms and artist Nicholas Broughton was engaged to work with Open Options participants. The group produced some of the most exciting art that has been created by people with disabilities in many years.

The art pieces were entered in the Citizen Advocacy 'As We Are' Art Exhibition for people with intellectual disabilities and won both first and second place in the People's Choice Awards. The project culminated in an incredible exhibition at the Darlington Hall where over \$3000 worth of art was sold. The proceeds went back to the program to help fund future projects.

### Leisure Focus and Craft Group Streamlining

Over the years, the Leisure Focus program was absorbed into Open Options, which continued to offer an exciting range of activities and events to consumers.

In 2004 the Craft Group celebrated its tenth anniversary with a gala luncheon for the groups' members, staff, family and friends. The success of the Craft Group has been another testament to the enormous benefits of artistic exploration and skill development for people with disabilities. In 2008 the Craft Group was incorporated into Open Options.

### **Individual Options**

The Individual Options program continued to provide much needed support to people with disabilities living in the community. By 2008 the program was supporting 26 individuals.

### Rainbow Program

The highly effective partnership between Rainbow, the Office of Mental Health and its local branch at Swan Adult Mental Health Centre, and the Department of Housing and Works has continued as the Rainbow program goes into its second decade. In 2007, Rainbow was managing 67 houses - home to 84 adult tenants and 47 children - in the area between Morley and Northam. The Program had very rapidly become a leader in supported accommodation for people with mental illness, with state and national recognition by the sector. In 2004 the program received the inaugural State Award in Community Housing for 'Excellence in Services to Tenants and Communities' and in 2005 Rainbow won this award nationally.

The program has not been immune from the impact of the housing crisis in Western Australia. Despite the apparent strength of the partnership arrangement, in recent years it has become increasingly difficult for HCSG to secure its allocation of houses. Conscious of the worsening housing situation in WA, HCSG has begun to proactively explore new ways to increase its ability to provide housing for those who most need it without having to rely solely on the Department of Housing and Works' ability to supply them.

In 2007 the continuing difficulty in obtaining dwellings suitable for the many people on the waiting list led to the development of an arrangement with Foundation Housing and the Department of Housing and Works in which HCSG exchanges stable (from a mental health perspective) tenants in situ for empty houses provided from Foundation's housing stock, into which Rainbow can place people on the waiting list. Rainbow aims to make at least ten such exchanges a year but is still limited by the availability of suitable housing.

As well as increased housing advocacy and support services, the years from 2004 to 2008 saw a growing focus on the delivery of recovery-oriented psychosocial services. In 2008, housing allocations increased to 71.

# Spring Park Road Drop-in Centre

Staff of the Rainbow Program were growing increasingly concerned about participants' lack of opportunities to meet and socialise in a friendly environment easily accessible by public transport. In 2007, in response to this need, a drop-in centre was established for Rainbow participants. The Anglican Church of the Ascension offered the use of their parish hall at a low weekly rent to trial the concept of a user-led drop-in event. The initiative has proved extremely valuable to Rainbow tenants, with up to 30 people attending each week. As well as providing an opportunity for social interaction, the drop-in centre enables easy weekly access to the HCSG Property Officer, so that tenants can informally discuss any housing concerns they have. Rainbow staff stay in the background as activities are planned by participants. The Drop-In Centre has proven extremely effective in creating friendships, developing support networks and a diversity of options for a significant number of people.

Rainbow Coordinator Marjorie Caw talks about the Drop-In Centre's first large-scale community event in 2008:

The Drop-In Centre took a leap into the public eye yesterday when we ran a Homeless Person's Week event that happily coincided with the Centre's

first anniversary. The main feature of the day was the Spirit of the Streets Choir, a remarkable group of men and women who are doing a very successful job of emulating the eastern states' Choir of Hard Knocks. About 30 usual droppers-in came along to help and to enjoy, and large numbers of others also arrived for the singing, the food (admirably prepared by Mat,

Erin, Pissame, Sue, Vivien, Jean, David, Daniel and others) and the company.

Guests included the Mayor of the City of Swan, Charlie Gregorini; Helen Dullard, our CEO; David Axworthy, our contract manager from the Office of Mental Health; Gary Kleyn, Policy Officer from CHCWA; Clare Bestow and Jane O'Donnell from Swan Adult Mental Health; several students from Central TAFE; many staff from Richmond Fellowship and a group of people from Honeybrook hostel; and friends and relatives of the Rainbow staff, the choir, the droppers-in and the Ascension Church. It was wonderful how many people knew each other and were pleasantly surprised to meet up in this setting. Almost all the sausages were eaten, and everyone seemed to have a happy time.



The Spirit of the Streets Choir performing at the first anniversary of the Drop-in Centre.

### HealthRight Peer Advocacy and Support Service

As part of its increased emphasis on recovery-oriented services and support for tenants, in 2007 Rainbow embarked on an innovative project to increase the general health and wellbeing for people with mental illnesses. The HealthRight Peer Advocacy and Support Service (PASS) project, jointly run by the University of Western Australia's Community, Culture and Mental Health Unit, Rockingham & Kwinana MHS, Ruah Community Services, the Midland and Morley Street Doctor (now Mobilegp) and Rainbow was designed to support participants with a mental illness who wished to embrace a more healthy lifestyle. This trial project funded four part-time workers to support participants in the Swan and Rockingham and Kwinana health districts.

The trial project, which resulted from research conducted by the University of Western Australia (Lawrence, D., Holman, D. & Jablensky, A. (2001), Duty to Care) that indicated that the serious physical needs of people with a mental illness are often overlooked by the health system, was so successful that in 2008 it was re-funded on an ongoing basis, through HCSG. As well as paying for two full-time PASS workers, the project granted research and development funds to plan and implement research projects testing the efficacy of the work and developing ways both to do it better and to extend it into other organisations.

Marjorie Caw speaks about the success of the PASS project:

It is an amazing journey and at this stage is really successful. It is wonderful what moral support and encouragement from someone who knows what you are going through does for people. The day to day work of the PASS workers has been inspirational: recovery workers now all address the physical as well as the mental health needs of the people with whom we work. Recently, an arrangement with City of Swan, through its new Access All Areas program, has allowed participants to engage freely in a variety of sporting activities.

## **Work Options and Enterprise East**

In 2006 the decision was made to transfer management of the Work Options Program and Enterprise East to Ecosystems Management

Services. This organisation, sponsored by Work Power, was better equipped to provide recurrent employment options supplemented with the intensive support required by participants.

### **Personal Support Program**

The Personal Support Program (PSP) continued to expand its client base, with the program growing from a case load of 25 when it began in 2002, to a 2008 case load of 80 participants. In 2007 a second full-time staff member was employed, which enhanced the capacity of the program further.

Participants with a wide range of issues including mental health problems, drug and alcohol use, family breakdown and low literacy are met on a regular basis to identify non-vocational barriers to employment and establish goals and plans. PSP staff have continued to ensure that participants are the leaders in this process, determining the issues of concern, the goals they wish to realise and the way they wish to do this.

Over the years the program has seen many successes. Most participants complete the program having made substantial gains including improved self-esteem, connections with appropriate services, a greater ability to maintain healthy relationships, improved financial management skills and an ability to cope adaptively with life. Many PSP participants have been successful in achieving and maintaining employment, allowing them to further engage in the life of the community. HCSG successfully re-tendered for the 2006 – 2009 contract.

The economic boom of recent years has been positively felt by PSP participants. The increased availability of jobs means that it is easier to gain employment, thus freeing up places for others to enter the program. 'Welfare to Work' reforms implemented by the Government in recent years have meant that new groups, including single parents and people with a disability, now have access to PSP services. This has provided the program with further opportunities to respond flexibly to need as it grows.

### YOUTH SERVICES

Over the years the Youth Services program, which was developed to provide a range of urgently needed support services to at-risk young people in the hills area, underwent a significant transformation in the range and type of services provided. The program expanded greatly, with an increasing focus on outreach and on developing partnerships

with other agencies. HCSG's commitment to responding flexibly to changing needs of individuals saw a range of initiatives and innovative responses developed and successfully implemented. By 2008 the program was supporting up to 73 young people through the Health Department funded Intensive Support Service.

At the Swan View Youth Centre a range of exciting initiatives were implemented to encourage young people to develop confidence and improve their self-esteem through positive learning experiences. Music and music-multi-media workshops were provided in collaboration with the Mundaring Arts Centre and Rip it Up Music. Circus workshops were introduced to promote fun-filled learning experiences. One of the most successful initiatives proved to be the Hip Hop and Urban Art Program, which was developed out of suggestions from young people about their preferred activities.

As the various events and activities coordinated by HCSG for young people continued to expand, the poor condition of the Swan View Youth Centre became an increasing problem. HCSG continues to advocate for the development of a new youth centre to provide a vital hub for the young people of the area.

In 2007 Youth Services took an active role in developing a local networking group. This group, the Swan and Surrounding Suburbs Youth Network (SASSY) includes 23 different agencies that meet regularly to discuss issues affecting young people and how to work collaboratively to pool resources and develop initiatives to address emerging issues and gaps in services.

#### **Youth Services in Stratton**

In 2007 HCSG expanded its work with vulnerable youth into the area of Stratton. Local police had identified the area as one of high need, with both police and the local community stressing that the lack of activities for young people and resultant boredom needed to be addressed. As a local leader in the provision of effective youth services, HCSG entered into a partnership with the City of Swan and the Police and Citizens Youth Club in order to provide centre-based services from the Stratton Community Centre twice a week. Additional funding and staffing support for this expanded service was provided by the City of Swan. The initiative has been highly successful, with around 25 young people attending each session.

## A Changing Landscape

Over the years staff working in the Youth Services area noticed a marked increase in the complexities facing young people in the region.

Manager of Youth Services Megan Richards speaks about the changing needs of young people:

Over the years our services have become more targeted at the extreme end. It just seems like the complexities of young people's lives are so much greater. We are seeing large numbers of young people in crisis and dealing with a whole range of problems from homelessness to substance abuse to domestic violence. It means that we need to be providing much more intensive support and doing more outreach.

Once again our biggest challenge is assisting young people to find and secure long-term accommodation. The resources boom in Western Australia continues to put pressure on rental vacancies and to drive up the cost of rentals. In the 2008 March

quarter the vacancy rate in the metropolitan area was 1.6% and the median rental price was \$660 per fortnight. The combined Youth Allowance and Rent Assistance for a young person under 18 years old is currently around \$440 per fortnight highlighting the inability of young people to access the private rental market. Even sharing a house is out of reach for most young people due to the low vacancy rates and the competition that exists for rentals in the more affordable range.

Compounding the issue, the waiting list to access priority housing through the WA Department for Housing and Works has blown out to 18 months and placement in crisis accommodation is short-term and difficult to secure. Staff are faced with trying to secure accommodation for families living in homes owned by landlords cashing in on the rental crisis and charging exorbitant rents for unsuitable or uninhabitable houses. We have worked with one family who was accommodated in someone's out-house laundry, and another family who were living in a home where they were unable to use many of the

lights in the house as rain was leaking through the light sockets. However the unfortunate reality for these families is that they have no option but to accept rental properties that should be otherwise condemned. This issue is severely affecting the health and well being of each and every person living in these conditions. The inability to access stable accommodation has ramifications for both the physical and mental health of young people. Some young people have resorted to prostitution and stealing as a means of securing a place to sleep; these actions quickly begin to erode the young person's sense of self-respect and self-worth.

To address this growing community need, a number of innovative initiatives and programs were embarked upon, seeing HCSG taking a much more active role in working with young people in crisis.

# **NEW PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES**

In order to meet its mission to respond proactively and flexibly to changing community needs, HCSG has embarked on a wide range of initiatives, programs and projects to enhance the lives of its consumers.

### The Intervention and Diversion Project

In 2003 HCSG was awarded \$331,000 by the Attorney General's Office and the Justice Department as part of their National Community Crime Prevention Program to implement a two-year Intervention and Diversion program for young people 12 to 25 years of age who had been, or were at risk of, becoming involved in crime. Two new staff members were appointed to develop and implement this exciting new concept.

# Based at Enterprise House, the 'ID' project had five key objectives:

- 1. To engage, through early intervention, at-risk young adults whose personal barriers lead them to criminal activity.
- 2. To break the cycle of criminal activity within the identified target group.
- 3. To identify activities recognising the value of Indigenous young adults re-establishing their identity and moving forward as leaders in the community.
- 4. To address mental health and attendant issues related to drug and alcohol use which lead to criminal activity.
- 5. To maintain involvement and commitment of community groups, business and government agencies to the ID project to ensure sustainability of ID principles.

The vision of the ID project was to create a collaborative community that is responsive to the issues leading to young people's involvement in crime. The project focused on building strong local networks to help break criminal pathways for at-risk young people and introduced a preventative framework based on community strengths and capacity building methodologies. A case support model was developed for work with 13 young people referred to the program. The ID program also worked extensively with other agencies to provide a range of group activities and programs for the target group. More than 140 young people participated in group activities and programs.

Over the course of the project, 18 different community initiatives were developed to respond to issues that contribute to the antisocial and offending behaviours of young people. A wide range of promotional activities were carried out to raise community awareness of these issues and staff engaged and networked with over 60 government and community agencies as part of its vision to mobilise a united community.

In 2006 a partnership was entered into with Curtin University to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the ID project. The ID project was an incredible success in its own right, but it would also be a watershed for HCSG's increasing focus on vulnerable young people in the community.

### **Education Transition Pilot**

The extensive consultation, collaboration and advocacy to identify and address issues for at-risk young people by the staff of the ID project led to the creation of a follow-on breakthrough initiative to work further with these young people. With the raising of the school leaving age in 2007, ID project staff, together with the newly-created Swan Participation Team (Department for Education and Training) identified that there would be a number of high risk young people with significant barriers to their capacity to maintain participation in an approved combination of education, training and/or employment.

In February 2007, HCSG received funding from the Department for Education and Training to run a two-year pilot program to provide support to these at-risk young people and the Education Transition Program was inaugurated.

The program provides support to young people (aged 16 and 17) referred by the Swan Participation Team who require intensive support to help them engage in meaningful education, training and employment options. Education Transition staff entered into a collaborative relationship

with the Swan Participation Team to develop a best-practice model of service delivery which was to be externally evaluated. In recognition of the intensive level of support required, the program was initially set up to cater for 14 - 20 young people each year.

After an intensive focus on developing outcome objectives, recruiting an additional staff member and developing working processes with the Department for Education and Training's Participation Coordinators, the Education Transition Program was ready to accept its first referrals.

Much work is done to engage participants and build trust. For many, their experience of education has been overwhelmingly negative, with a high number of participants not having attended school successfully for several years. Staff work holistically with the young people and their relationship circles to identify personal interests and set realistic goals. Extensive work has been undertaken to develop positive relationships with schools, TAFEs and alternative education and training providers, allowing HCSG to forge links between education and community services. Through the Swan Alliance, program staff have also participated in a variety of forums to assist business to develop proactive strategies to provide opportunities for at-risk young people. While primarily focused on service delivery, the program has also taken opportunities to participate in planning processes that identify gaps in services and to work with others to facilitate the development of new options.

Education Transition Program Manager Sue Theunissen speaks about some of the challenges and successes:

Some of these kids are facing enormous barriers. We see young people facing a huge range of issues — it might be drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, mental health issues, the lack of a supportive family. And there will often be a justice involvement there as well. Our challenge is to link them into programs that actually work for them.

We've had some great success stories already. One young bloke came to us from a family heavily involved in criminal activity. He was very much brought up in that sort of environment. All his family members had been incarcerated for various periods of time. But this kid managed to resist that and we've helped get him into an apprenticeship doing something he really loves. He's going to classes to improve his literacy and numeracy

in the evenings. His whole family is just watching him in amazement.

And then there was a young girl in the program who was recently awarded a place at a national dance academy. She had always loved dancing and wanted to pursue it. Being part of the program was the first time someone has actually put faith in her and shown her that it is possible to make your dreams come true.

The Education Transition Program has opened the door for HCSG to the provision of further education support services and the future development of productive community partnerships in this area.

## Moorditj Mia

One of HCSG's aspirations had always been to increase its provision of culturally appropriate services to the local Aboriginal population. In April 2005 an Aboriginal Day Centre was established out of Enterprise House to cater for Aboriginal people in the community. The group, which decided to call itself Moorditj Mia (excellent home), is based around art and craft projects and social outings with an overall health and wellness focus. It has proven to be an invaluable forum for empowering people to feel part of their community, to build relationships and trust and to develop a sense of belonging. Moorditj Mia allows this group of older Aboriginal women to come together to address their personal, social, health and general issues. Their networks extend throughout the community and their knowledge and experience is providing direction for realistic initiatives to address local problems. In 2008 a new Coordinator, who is herself a local Aboriginal woman, was appointed to manage Moorditj Mia.

# Debbie Armstead speaks about Mooditj Mia:

The group is successful because suddenly these women realised that they had something to give. They had a place. They were being sought out to share their life's journey with others and to engage with something. And that's helped to empower them more in their community.

The group has attended a wide range of events including a Breast Cancer Awareness Day in Kings Park, a Butterfly Ball at Burswood Casino and a Sports Day at Brown Park. One of the most popular group events is the Melbourne Cup Lunch, complete with handmade hats and delicious fare.



Moorditj Mia participants socialising with CEO Helen Dullard.

Barbara Kickett Rose (Maarli) talks about her experience of Moorditj Mia

It's like extended family, coming here, like one big family. We all call each other sister. It's about our background and where we come from. And it's about togetherness. At home I'm on my own, but here it's all about connections. And the crafts we make are amazing. We've done

jewellery, butterflies, mobiles, wind chimes and collages. We also made funeral wreaths. With them there are some colours you can use and some you can't use – we teach the staff about Aboriginal culture that way.

A lot of us ladies have to look after our grandchildren and you need something like this for a break. Just to have a rest and take care of yourself. One of the best things we did was just go down to the river for morning tea and then for fish and chips. It was a beautiful day and we just sat and watched the world go by.

### A Garden in the Hills

In 2004 the Shire of Mundaring granted permission for HCSG to use the block of land next to Wahroonga in Mundaring until it was needed for a new precinct. The vision was to create a flourishing community garden that could act as a hub for HCSG staff and clients. A submission was made to Lotterywest for funding for a shed, gardening equipment, fencing and fertilisers. \$8800 was granted to the project and development of the community garden kicked off with great excitement.

From the very beginning there was a huge and incredibly inspiring involvement from the whole community. "In kind" donations were made by community members and also by Swan TAFE, who wanted to involve their horticulture students in the creation and maintenance of the garden. The momentum continued as local real estate agent Earnshaw and Mattock chose to sponsor the community garden.

By the end of the year, HCSG had a vibrant community garden filled with flowers, plants and benches. The garden was both an inviting and peaceful setting for staff and consumers, and an exciting and motivating practical project that the whole community could contribute to.

### The Hills Connection

In 2006 a new quarterly publication was developed to further connect consumers and their families, friends and neighbours to the work of HCSG. The inaugural issue of 'The Hills Connection' was distributed to over 1700 families and gave an overview of the work of

HCSG, its funding arrangements, structure and service sites and events and activities. Generous sponsorship from Bowra and O'Dea Funeral Directors in Midland, the Mundaring Branch of the Bendigo Bank, Bassendean Pharmacy, Caltex Glen Forrest and insurance brokers OAMPS helped subsidise the cost of the publication.

The Hills Connection also included a donation form and an invitation to contribute funds to assist HCSG with services over and above the government funded programs. Program Managers and Coordinators drew up prioritised 'wish lists' and consumers were also invited to give their input on the best use of any funds raised.

Since its inception, The Hills Connection has been enthusiastically received and is credited with strengthening links between consumers, carers and HCSG. The call for donations has been overwhelmingly successful, with \$2500 in one-off payments and an ongoing commitment of \$90 per month received after the launch of the first issue. By the end of 2007 an amazing \$6835 had been received. Donations have continued to come in with every issue and have been used to benefit consumers in many different programs and areas.

This community generosity enabled HCSG to build a new storage shed at Pinewood. For many years a large, waterproof storage facility had been needed to store the many furniture and household items donated to HCSG for use by program participants. Previously, the costs of building such a facility were too much of a barrier but as community donations continued to pour in, the dream of a shed at Pinewood became a reality. Donations from Hills Connection readers contributed significantly to subsidising building and materials costs and in summer 2007, the Pinewood Shed was officially opened with a community celebration.

From Helen Dullard's foreword in the inaugural issue of The Hills Connection, Winter 2006:

HCSG works in many areas of the community, building partnerships and establishing some lasting friendships with families, businesses and people in the community. We have been called 'the quiet achievers' on many occasions.

HCSG is the largest employer in the Shire of Mundaring, employing a total of over 400 people, offering traineeships and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Three hundred of HCSG's employees live in the hills. Over 20 students per annum from the local high schools choose HCSG for work experience. Our 'buy local' policy means that we spend

approximately \$82,000 per annum on food for daily meals for consumers, use local tradespeople and businesses and generally have a huge multiplier effect on the community.

I trust this publication will prove useful to you, your family, friends and neighbours. We have included an additional page to show HCSG's size and structure to give you a clearer picture of the extent of our services. We want the broader community to know who we are, to have a greater understanding of what we do and to support us wherever possible. Government funding buys specific hours of service from HCSG, but it is community funding and support that will enable HCSG to be a flexible and responsive organisation, working alongside local groups and developing new initiatives together.

#### A Safe Place: Kira House

Despite the work of HCSG and other organisations in the area, the Eastern Metropolitan Region suffers from a serious shortage of services in some areas to meet the needs of the population. Staff working in youth services became aware that there were no services in the area for young women aged 14 to 18 years attempting to escape from domestic violence.

Recognising the need in the community, HCSG decided to establish a Safe House for young women. Fundraising began to raise the necessary capital to build and furnish a suitable house.

In 2007 longstanding partner Midland Brick agreed to grant HCSG a 20 year lease on three adjoining blocks of land to facilitate the building of the Safe House and other associated HCSG accommodation. A donation of \$12,000 was received from Automotive Holdings Group and an offer of pro bono expertise came from architects Bruce Callow & Associates.

The Safe House dream became a reality with initial operational funding through Department for Child Protection to develop a model of support for the first such facility in WA. The Department later committed to providing increased and recurrent funding to enable the house to be staffed and supervised 24 hours a day for the next four years. In its 2007 budget, the Department of Housing and Works committed to building the Safe House, which will be a purpose-built home to accommodate up to six young women and their children.

The name 'Kira House' was chosen in honour of a young woman who presented to Youth Services staff in 2004, trying desperately to escape her partner's violence. The vision for the service is that, as well as providing a safe haven for young women, it will equip them with the supports, esteem and skills to develop an identity and recognise their right to live free from the fear of violence.

Kira House is the first service of its kind in WA and its acquisition served to bring community, business, government agencies and local groups together to address a serious gap in support for vulnerable young women. After three years of advocating and justifying requests for funding, HCSG can look forward to working with a wide range of agencies in the development of "wrap around" model of support. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between The Eastern Region Domestic Violence Service Network Inc and HCSG in acknowledgement of the expertise both agencies bring to the table to sustain a strong and viable option for young women seeking freedom from domestic violence.



CEO Helen Dullard accepts hand-knitted rugs donated by members of the Zonta Club of Swan Hills for the new Safe House

# ROOM TO GROW: THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

As HCSG continued to expand, implement new programs and projects and reach out to more people in the hills area, it soon became clear that more physical 'room to grow' was needed. The years from 2004 to 2008 saw HCSG expand its operations through the purchase and development of new office space and residential facilities. By 2008, through a combination of partnerships, minor fundraising and visionary property ventures, HCSG was providing services from 16 different sites across the hills area. The organisation had certainly come a long way since its early days.

#### Pinewood: A New Home

As the Open Options program continued to increase in size, outgrowing both The Studio and Centenary House, it became clear that bigger premises were needed. The program had also spread into the Shire of Kalamunda and surrounding districts, so a property in this area was needed. For more than two years, an exhaustive search was conducted to find a building that was large enough to house Open Options and that would be suitable for people with disabilities.

In February 2005 a chance conversation with a local real estate agent revealed that Pinewood Lodge in Maida Vale had just come onto the market. Pinewood had been operating for many years as a function centre and was particularly popular for local weddings. Its two and a half acres of grounds included gardens, lawns, two huge gazebos and a waterfall feature. Pinewood also included a large kitchen, a disability accessible bathroom, ample parking and most importantly, the space for Open Options to continue to grow.

The first of many meetings with Lotterywest to secure their financial assistance to help raise the \$590 000 needed to purchase Pinewood was scheduled. Negotiations also commenced with the Shire

of Kalamunda to discuss rezoning Pinewood to include programs for people with disabilities. This included discussion and consultation with immediate neighbours and the local community. Staff were thrilled to find that the community was overwhelmingly supportive of HCSG's plans for Pinewood.

In the seven months from Monday 21 February, when the dream of buying Pinewood first started, HCSG worked extensively with both Lotterywest and the Shire of Kalamunda to secure the property. Finally, after months of hard work, at 3:30pm on Friday 30 September, the news came through: Pinewood was secured for HCSG use.

Just two days later, the first DSC-funded disability inclusive community function was held in the grounds of Pinewood. Staff and volunteers worked around the clock to get the gardens in order for 'Walkabilities on the Zig Zag 2005', a joint community function with the Shire of Kalamunda. It was a day of great celebration and excitement as the 150 people who took part were able to see what was to become the new home for Open Options and a number of other programs.

HCSG now had the perfect premises but there was still an enormous amount of hard work to be done. Pinewood needed



Staff member Belinda Herring lends a hand in the mammoth effort to revamp Pinewood

to be comprehensively revamped so that it would be ready to house Open Options as well as the HACC and Gesundheit programs from 1 February 2006.

HSCG launched into a range of fundraising efforts to cover the cost of remodelling toilets, ramping doorways, installing new lights, cleaning and repairing the guttering, painting the walls and ceilings, remodelling the ante room (previously the predinner drinks area) into an administration and reception area, and a whole range of other renovation tasks.

Families, carers, community members and local businesses were overwhelmingly generous in the quest to transform Pinewood. Members of the local community cheerfully donated their time and energy to build a disability accessible path to the Open Options entrance and to revamp the pond and waterfall. An Equipment for Living grant from the Independent Living Centre assisted in modifying the interior of the building. DSC funding enabled clean and spacious toilet and shower facilities.

An enormous amount of hard work and effort went into making Pinewood a safe, secure and attractive centre for people with disabilities to be proud of. With the move into Pinewood in 2006, program staff and participants began to make their own mark with a huge range of creative activities that add texture and dimension to the centre. Pinewood is now home to three HCSG programs: Open Options, Gesundheit and HACC.

### Elizabeth Small wrote this about the Pinewood story:

The Pinewood story really is never-ending. There will always be the capacity and space to develop new and creative ideas and initiatives. Open Options has finally found a home where they can come together with their community and be involved in joint projects that will break down barriers to allow people with disabilities to be accepted as valued and contributing members of society.



The official opening of the new Pinewood site in May 2006



Eric Ripper and HCSG receptionist Pip Firth at the opening of Pinewood

# **Enterprise House**

In 2006 Enterprise House was faced with the prospect of finding a new home. Midland Brick, which had generously donated the use of the Great Northern Highway site, needed the property back. Fortunately Midland Brick, who have been consistently supportive of Enterprise East, offered HCSG the use of the old Middle Swan Primary School site as a new home for Enterprise East and other related programs for youth. The new Enterprise House also provides a home for the Moorditj Mia Day Centre.

### The Studio

In December 2003, Open Options received \$18,000 in DSC/ACROD disability access funding which enabled extensive renovations of the Studio in Middle Swan. The bathroom was completely refurbished to make it accessible for people with disabilities and a ramp was attached to the front veranda of the building. A shade house was purpose-built to allow access for people with disabilities. In 2004 an additional grant provided funds for the purchase of a change table and manual hoist.

### **Respite Services**

There is never going to be enough accommodation for people with disabilities. One of the best things we can do to help at the moment is to provide the best and most flexible respite services we can.

Helen Dullard

The provision of respite services for consumers and their families is an integral aspect of HCSG's work. Respite services are vital for families and caregivers, helping to reduce stress and provide much-needed support. As HCSG expanded, so too did the need for respite services, which brought with it the pressure to find more physical space to accommodate these service.

## Milperra

The increasing demand for respite services at HCSG's respite facilities meant that extensions to Milperra cottage were necessary.. In 2008 extensions were undertaken to provide much-needed extra space to allow HCSG to meet the ever-growing demands for respite services.



The rejuvenated Milperra garden provides a peaceful space for respite.

## Lara's Cottage

In 2007 another respite cottage was opened when a young local couple, Lara and Vince, donated the use of a property in Mount Helena. After an energetic renovation campaign 'Lara's Cottage', as the new facility was named, was transformed into a welcoming and comfortable retreat.

Board member Lara Bandarian tells the story of her involvement with HCSG:

I've been a hills resident since the early 90s and my partner Vince since 2004. I had heard about HCSG and their work in the community but I have to say I didn't really know much about the organisation. When Vince and I bought a new house in Mount Helena we weren't quite sure what to do with our other property. We could have sold it or rented it out but we thought 'let's do something nicer and something for the community'. We thought that we could donate the use of the house to a community group.

For me, I feel that I'm lucky to be in a position where I can do something. I've been very fortunate in my life, and for many years Vince and I have believed that financial gain is not what life's about. I don't believe that making money is all there is to life — we're always looking for ways to do good and make a positive contribution to society. Perhaps you can't save the world, but you can change some things.

We didn't know who might want the house or what it could be used for but when we contacted HCSG we got a call back saying that they were definitely keen and that the CEO would love to meet with us. It turned out that the house could be a really useful site for respite care, either for consumers or carers.

One of the things that helped us to realise that we'd made a good choice in donating the use of the house was the spirit of the people who got involved; the enormous effort they put into renovating. They were there scraping paint, ripping up carpet, organising busy bees.

When I saw how excited the first three ladies who came to the house were, that was our reward. I'm absolutely delighted to have become involved with HCSG. As I get more involved and learn more about the organisation, I see what an incredible job they do in the community. I look forward to being able to do more.



The inviting new lounge room at Lara's Cottage

# A Place to Call Home: Housing and Residential Options for HCSG Consumers

Accessible, comfortable and stable housing is essential to any person's financial, emotional and physical state. HCSG has always recognised that people with disabilities should have the same opportunities as other people in the community to live in a range of accommodation types which best suit their requirements.

Gail Palmer, Manager Disabilities

An integral part of HCSG's work over the years has been a commitment to helping people with disabilities and their families and support networks to address issues relating to housing. As housing affordability and availability continues to decrease in Western Australia, HCSG has taken up the challenge of developing innovative housing options that offer new and improved choices for people with a disability.

Joint venture initiatives with government and business are an important part of HCSG's campaign to develop better accommodation options for one of the most vulnerable groups in the community. In 2008, the Department of Housing and Works' consolidation of its housing services saw HCSG flagged as one of only 12 preferred providers statewide. This important opportunity meant the organisation would be much better placed to enter into joint housing projects and partnering arrangements to make a strategic difference to the supply of housing for people with disabilities. By the end of 2008, HCSG was providing 92 units of accommodation, with significant increases planned.

Helen Dullard speaks about some of the challenges ahead:

We need to work on many fronts to lay the foundations of development and to identify how we can best increase the supply of appropriate housing in the longer term. HCSG needs to be a leader in exploring and developing new models for increasing and improving the range and type of housing available for people with a disability. There are clearly many challenges ahead and perhaps the greatest of these for us is finding innovative and alternative ways to secure funding. There is only so far government funding can go and one of our biggest challenges is going to be in sourcing alternative means of support for us to venture into affordable housing options.

The years from 2003 to 2008 saw significant extensions made to several existing accommodation options and new ventures are currently in both planning and building stages. Substantial development in facilities and property allocation has given HCSG a unique opportunity to engage in housing options specifically designed to reduce challenging behaviours.

HCSG's dual role as a housing provider and a strong advocate for better housing options for people with a disability will continue to serve consumers well into the future.



HCSG remains committed to improving housing options for people with disabilities

## Buckland House / 'The Grove'

In 2008 much-needed extensions and renovations to Buckland House were undertaken. Extensions included an additional two bedrooms, living area and bathroom with toilet. The Buckland House renovations increased the capacity for people to live together and yet retain their own space.

The building works meant that the gardens needed to be upgraded. A group of local scouts volunteered to complete this task and set to work dismantling a fence to open up the garden space. A water feature and aviary were built and lawn, a vegetable patch and a selection of aromatic plants planted.

Staff and residents were so thrilled with the rejuvenation that the decision was made to rename Buckland House 'The Grove' to celebrate a new stage in the life of this group home.

## Ageing in Place: Parkerville

In 2004 HCSG purchased 2.5 acres of land in Parkerville with the dream of designing and building an 'ageing in place' facility for up to 12 residents with high support needs. This initiative reflects the recognition of a number of residents' 'ageing needs' and the concern that mainstream residential care is not ready to accommodate intellectual disability ageing alongside general ageing. In 2008 construction began on the facility, which will be named 'Andrew's Place' to honour long-time consumer Andrew Catchpole and his family's contribution to the growth and development of HCSG in the area of disabilities. Andrew's Place was a plan for Andrew's long-term future with HCSG as he aged and his needs changed.

Andrew's Place will be HCSG's flagship for 'ageing in place', community inclusion and eco-consciousness. This facility will challenge community stigma around people with disabilities. Special design features will be incorporated and appropriate staff ratios put in place. Community partnerships of every description will be its mantra.

An Australian Government Community Water Grant from the Department of Environment and Heritage was received to install a water treatment unit which will recycle grey and black water to maintain landscaping and gardening projects, including an orchard. Local school children will work alongside residents to help maintain the orchard. Through this partnership participants will see benefits of water recycling and learn the art of fruit growing. Andrew's Place will indeed have a number of unique features.

#### Midland

A ten unit housing facility is currently being planned for a site in Midland. These purpose-built units will be offered to people whose disabilities result in challenging behaviours that prevent them sharing accommodation.

## **Kedining House**

In 2007 HCSG opened a new purpose-built group home in Midvale. The result of a parnership with the Department of Housing and

Works, Kedining House accommodates four young men with disabilities. The house was designed with two separate living areas and extensive outdoor living spaces to break down behaviour clashes. Kedining House was officially opened by Jaye Radisich, MLA, Member for Swan Hills, in August 2007.

Bethlyn, mother of one of the residents, speaks about what Kedining House means to her family:

Today we are privileged to witness the wonderful end of a long story, and the beginning of an exciting stage for our son, Johnathon. Johnathon joined our family when he was 2½ years old, unable to walk or do anything for himself. Our three children were marvellous and it wasn't until they left home, one by one, that we realised how much we relied on them to enable us to lead normal lives.

My husband, Keith, worked full-time and I found respite working as a nurse during the hours that Keith was home to care for Johnathon. Shopping, cleaning and outside appointments had to be slotted into just 15 hours of respite a week - none of it on weekends! Johnathon is noisy, wanders aimlessly and behaves erratically. Generally the community is unaccepting of him, so, except to meet Johnathon's needs, we rarely took him out. If Keith or I wanted to attend anything, one of us went alone while the other cared for Johnathon. We could go out together if we could organise a "sitter" for Johnathon, but mostly we stayed home - it was just too hard!

Things began to fall apart. Keith's mother had a stroke and while she was in hospital, Keith had a heart attack and a bypass three months later. While Keith was still in intensive care, his mother fell and fractured her hip - on Easter Sunday of all days. With Keith an only child, responsibility for Mum's care had to take priority, but how impossible it was to find respite or sitters for Johnathon at short notice!

At 20 years old, Johnathon was at an age when many young people leave their parents' home. So, following these events, we approached 17 different agencies to try and find a permanent home for Johnathon. We had countless, time-consuming

interviews and assessments and the answer was always the same: "Johnathon's needs are too high - we can't take him." After Johnathon had been a part of our family for 18 years, you can imagine how we felt when one organisation reported to DSC that with no formal training, Keith and I were not adequately qualified to care for Johnathon.

The day after that distressing interview, I went for a routine x-ray to come out four hours later with a diagnosis of renal cancer. My kidney had to be removed, a huge operation, and thus I would be unable to care for Johnathon. Enter HCSG into our lives. By the time I came out of hospital, Johnathon had a home with HCSG. On our first visit to Johnathon, we were delighted to find his housemate was his old school mate, Michael.

The rental home wasn't very suitable for the boys and after six months they moved to a better rental, but there were still difficulties with making the house safe and suitable. Then the news came through that a nearby block was available for a purpose built house by the Department of Housing and Works. We eagerly watched this house being built and finally the young men moved into their own beautiful home in January this year.

The young men each have a bedroom of their own; the bathrooms are carer friendly with a special height bath complete with bars and rails, and a shower area suitable for a wheelchair and a carer. The kitchen is isolated for safety but has two viewing areas so the boys can watch meal preparation and maintain contact with the staff. The light switches are low enough to be reached by people in wheelchairs. There is a separate staff room and office inaccessible to the young men. The backyard is large enough for exercise, and safe and secure for the boys to run around independently. There are fruit trees out the back and plans in the pipeline for some animals to keep the weeds down. All the young men's needs have been met and, bit by bit, the staff have acquired tasteful furnishings and décor. Kedining House blends into the street and the young men live in a normal community setting.

Keith and I visit weekly and are always made welcome. With the second lounge area, we are able to have private quality time with Johnathon. Some of the staff have been with the young men since they came to HCSG and, along with newer members, are very caring and dedicated. We can visit Johnathon, or take him out at any time and we are always kept up to date with what's happening at the house. Whilst HCSG has total care of Johnathon, we are still part of his life.

This is only one story. There are thousands out in the community that haven't had the lucky break we have. Johnathon is very happy and well cared for and, although he visibly loves and welcomes us, he knows this is his home. As for Keith and I - we have been freed from a huge burden of constant care for a severely disabled person and, in retirement, are pursuing some of our lifelong dreams. We will always be there for Johnathon, and will never cease to strive for better conditions and assistance for people with disabilities.

Thank you very sincerely to the Department of Housing and Works and to HCSG for making this possible. Thank you too, to the angels, our friends, the staff, who care so diligently for the young men. Johnathon, Michael, James and Jamie are very happy with their new home and, if they could, I know that they too would say 'Thank you very much'.



The residents of Kedining celebrate the opening of their new home in August 2007.

## **HCSG Sites in 2008**

## **Administration Sites**

- 1. Wahroonga (Mundaring)
- 2. Hamilton House (Midland)
- 3. Enterprise House (Middle Swan)
- 4. Pinewood (Maida Vale)
- 5. Centenary House (Koongamia)

## **Service Sites**

- 1. Pioneer House (Mt Helena)
- 2. The Grove (Mt Helena)
- 3. Nobel House (Mundaring)
- 4. Kedining (Midvale)
- 5. Kiara House (Kiara)
- 6. The Studio (Middle Swan)
- 7. Milperra (Mt Helena)
- 8. Enterprise House (Middle Swan)
- 9. Lara's Cottage (Mt Helena)
- 10. Pinewood (Maida Vale)
- 11. Andrew's Place (Parkerville)
- 12. Youth Centre (Stratton)
- 13. Tamarine (Swan View)
- 14. Wahroonga (Mundaring)
- 15. Centenary House (Koongamia)

# A TIME TO CELEBRATE: HSCG COMMEMORATES 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

The year 2008 marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of HCSG – an organisation that was to go on to have an immeasurable positive impact on thousands of people in the hills community and beyond.

A 25th Anniversary Committee was formed to consider how best to commemorate this important landmark. After wide consultation, the committee developed an exciting year-long program of events and activities to celebrate not just 25 years of operation, but a contribution to the community that goes beyond what can be measured. The celebrations were designed to act as a forum for reconnecting with the local community, highlighting partnerships and drawing in as many people as possible to be part of the ongoing HCSG story. The theme for all events was "Thanking the Community."

## **Quiz Night**

The program of celebrations kicked off in February with a local business-sponsored community Quiz Night designed to raise funds for a series of anniversary art workshops and to increase awareness of HCSG and the role it plays in the community. The event was a great success on both fronts, with people coming from all over the metropolitan area to join in the fun and raising over \$4000 toward the art project.

# Giving Back to the Community

In April a gala community concert was held as a way of expressing HCSG's gratitude to the many individuals, organisations and groups that have assisted the organisation over the years. Sponsored by Midland Brick, the concert featured the Eastern Hills Senior High School Band and guest artist Joel Smoker and the Firebrands. MC Peter

Holland, previous ABC commentator and local identity, told the HCSG story during the evening. Guests included local businesses, service organisations, community groups, police, Shires and other friends whose support has helped HCSG go that extra mile for consumers. In return, HCSG donated \$500 to the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade in recognition of their tremendous contribution to hills residents.



HCSG Board Members and CEO Helen Dullard

As well as providing a night of 'hills-style' camaraderie and entertainment, the 'Giving Back' concert also served to enhance HCSG's partnership with Rotary, which had significant input into the planning of the event. Both so deeply committed to developing the communities they are part of, the two organisations saw firsthand the power of working together to achieve more for the people they serve. It was decided to collaborate on a 'Local Heroes' regular feature in the local newspapers and to join together again in 2009 to stage another community concert. A joint venture to canvas new volunteers is also being developed.

## **Celebrating Volunteers**

The enormous contribution of volunteers to the work of HCSG was honoured in a 25th Anniversary Volunteer Dinner held at the Uniting Church in Mundaring. The dinner was held on 12 July – the exact date 25 years ago that a small band of volunteers decided it was time to 'make a difference' in the community and the birth of what was to become HCSG.



Concert organiser Patrick Crichton and MC Peter Holland

More than 60 volunteers attended the 'silver-themed' appreciation event intended to celebrate the work of volunteers and to express the high value HCSG places on its community volunteers. At the dinner, the appointment of HCSG's first Volunteer Coordinator was announced, further demonstrating the organisation's commitment to its many wonderful volunteers.



Volunteers Brian Eley and Paul Woods at the Anniversary Concert

## **Embracing Art**

The power of art was an important part of the 25th anniversary celebrations.

Local artist Jacqui Crossley was engaged as an 'artist in residence' to work with young people from the Open Options program and older people from the Day Centres.

Jacqui worked closely with consumers over a three-month period, supporting them as they explored their creative abilities using a wide range of media. The workshops provided a number of consumers with the opportunity to discover their ability and interest in the visual arts. For many participants, the workshops represented their first engagement with the arts; for others they were the continuation of an ongoing passion. Many participants remarked on the great enjoyment they experienced in exploring their creative side and expressing their thoughts and emotions through art.

The workshops culminated in an extraordinarily successful three-day exhibition at the Mundaring Arts Centre. Opened by Dr Ron Chalmers, Director General of the Disability Services Commission and entitled 'Garden of Hearts', the exhibition showcased the considerable talents of consumers.



Artist Jacqui Crossley and HCSG CEO Helen Dullard at the 'Garden of Hearts' exhibition opening

The works on display at the 'Garden of Hearts' exhibition revealed what is possible when older people and those with disabilities are supported to develop their talents, to make choices about self expression and life direction, to find opportunities and not to be limited by narrow social categories.



HCSG staff member Kirsty with Michael, enjoying the opening.

## Hooked on Hessian

Another creative activity to celebrate HCSG's 25th anniversary was an intergenerational art project that took place between the Special Education students of Eastern Hills Senior High School and Day Centre consumers at Wahroonga. The group met weekly and with the help of local artist Norma Hatchett, produced an incredible wool tapestry to commemorate the 25th anniversary.

The tapestry was officially launched in March and a DVD showing the project from beginning to end was screened. The tapestry depicts many aspects of life at HCSG's Mundaring base, Wahroonga. The 'Hooked on Hessian' project offered participants the opportunity to develop skills such as creativity, coordination, self expression and

initiative. It also fostered positive social interaction between the elderly and young people with disabilities.



Day Centre consumers working on the tapestry

# **Celebrating Felix**

The 25th Anniversary year also saw the passing of a very important member of HCSG – Felix the cat. Felix (who was only discovered to be a female after being named) adopted Wahroonga as her new home almost 20 years ago. Although staff tried to ignore the young black and white cat, assuming that it belonged to someone close by, Felix soon became a fixture at Wahroonga and proved to be a great favourite with staff and consumers. She led a very contented and pampered life in the grounds of Wahroonga and will be greatly missed. Felix is just another example of finding 'home' with HCSG!



Felix was a much-loved part of life at Wahroonga

# A ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE

As a community service organisation recognised locally and nationally for its innovation and excellence, and valued by its community for its outstanding contributions, the future for HCSG looks exceedingly bright. This does not mean, however that the future does not hold significant challenges. HCSG is affected by nationwide workforce issues resulting in chronic staff shortages. In addition, a housing crisis and soaring rental prices coupled with a lack of appropriate housing for people with disabilities poses an enormous challenge to the organisation. Demographic changes also affect HCSG. An ageing population means that services for older people will be increasingly in demand in the years and decades to come.

From its very inception HCSG had developed an impressive record of anticipating change and attempting to prepare for and shape it. To continue proactively forging its path into a complex and uncertain future, an innovative and far reaching Strategic Plan was needed. With the 2005 – 2008 Strategic Plan due to expire, HCSG embarked on the development of a new Strategic Plan to carry the organisation forward; a new road map for the future.

This work involved long-range planning for HCSG with an integration of the founding vision and mission; it was a process of looking into the future to determine what would constitute success for the organisation years down the road. Staff across all programs approached the planning process with great enthusiasm and a shared sense of optimism. Extensive and inclusive visioning and planning forums were held across several months to ensure that input from a wide range of stakeholders was included.

The HCSG Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011 identifies the following whole-of-organisation focus areas and goals:

Focus Area	Goals
Responding to individuals	Work with individuals, making a positive difference through flexible, respectful services that inform, advocate and access other services as required.
Effective collaboration	Work in partnerships for the benefit of HCSG consumers and community
Valuing colleagues	Position HCSG as an "employer of choice" providing a safe work environment, competitive conditions and training that supports staff.
Viability and sustainability	Demonstrate financial and quality accountability
Building community	Meet community needs by working with and responding to community members in a manner that provides benefits, respects local culture and strengthens a sense of belonging.
Public relations	Promote HCSG's purpose, opportunities for involvement and support services to consumers, community members and funding bodies.
Growth and innovation	Seek to be creative and initiate new ways of working that will build and strengthen the organisation.

Each of these broad goals has a number of focused and measurable objectives that will be met over the three years of the plan. Taken together these objectives can be seen as an ambitious and forward-thinking attempt to take HCSG's vision and work to a new level. The plan's ultimate value lies in providing a comprehensive road map for the future that will enable HCSG to step up to the challenges and opportunities of the years ahead. It will build on HCSG's strengths, create new abilities and ensure that the organisation thrives.

'We cannot walk alone,' said 2008 American presidential candidate Barack Obama, 'And as we walk we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.' The Hills Community Support Group is in no danger of turning back; not with a history of such success and achievement; not with a future full of so many more challenges and opportunities.

There remains a lot to do. However, we have a clear direction; we have an excellent reputation with funding bodies, other key players and peak bodies; we have great staff who want to be involved in the bigger picture and who are dedicated and committed and so clearly there for those they work with. Finally, we have skilled Board members who are demonstrating a keenness to know and understand the organisation. There are exciting times ahead.

Helen Dullard