SHELTER FROM THE STORM

T STREET

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THE SALVATION ARMY

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[TAP A TITLE TO GO TO THAT ARTICLE]

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A sorely needed service, done well

National commander **Commissioner Floyd Tidd**

The Salvation Army wants to congratulate the management and staff members of its Tranmere Street youth refuge, on its May 2018 anniversary – we solemnly and thankfully acknowledge 40 years of caring for so many young men and women who had nowhere else to go.

I note the hard work, dedication, pain and sacrifice that helped T Street emerge as a model of service delivery that has been honed over decades. The need for a place like T Street became clear to pioneers like Majors Graeme McClimont and Dave Eldridge, who as young men themselves saw the disadvantages and potential crises that came with placing young homeless men amongst mature homeless men.

Before Tranmere Street, teenagers lived on and off the streets, in and out of faulty and faltering crisis accommodation models, which had been mostly designed for hardened adults.

T Street forged a new way of doing things and blazed a new trail. T Street staff members do not judge T Street's residents by their behaviours, their addictions, violence or disruptions; they see young people in the light of who they could be. They know that God loves the residents, so they do too.

I note the words of Captain Jason Davies-Kildea, who states on this site that 'the goal of The Salvation Army is not to run the best homelessness services in the world – it is to have no homelessness…we want to look at reducing the need to provide services in the first place'.

If we can get to the point where support services are so effective, our communities so

supportive and well-adjusted, then one day we can 'close shop'. We are not there yet. But we can dream, and work towards that day.

As Tranmere Street's manager Paul Hogan says, 'young people without a home need somewhere safe and affordable to live… We must not stop looking for the best possible response. T Street will close when it isn't needed anymore; when there are no young people who have nowhere to live. The Salvation Army looks forward to closing T Street!'

In the meantime, The Salvation Army thanks God for T Street.

Remembering Jack

Major Jenny Begent says we can learn from a T Street resident.

A pleasant autumn day sends me out to sit and work in a little café in Fitzroy, when a familiar face sits down in front and says, 'How you doing, Captain?'

'Well,' I reply, 'it's Major now, I've gotten old; how are you, Jack?'

Jack was one of the many kids who wandered into Tranmere Street and progressed through many of The Salvation Army's youth services back in the early '90s. And, incidentally, wandered into our hearts.

His story is not only interesting, it is extraordinary.

From the age of about 13, Jack slept on the Melbourne streets, or on someone's spare sofa, as he escaped a violent and unhappy home life. The experience for Jack, as it is for the majority of young people who find themselves homeless, was isolating, demoralising and more often than not, unsafe.

While his relationships with his mother and siblings were good, the relationship with his father meant Jack couldn't live at home. Between sofas, a Collins Street doorway, the local McDonald's, and finally Tranmere Street, Jack passed his VSC.

The unconditional support he got at Tranmere Street made him determined to get out of the chaos.

Jack got himself a job waiting tables and washing up, using the down times to study and revise and write music. The hard work paid off and he won a scholarship to university.

From then on, whilst it wasn't all plain sailing, Jack began to slowly pull a life together for himself. Today, Jack works as a

Jack credits his achievement down to two things: his resilience, honed through his homelessness; and Tranmere Street, which was a place of acceptance, support and security.

policy advisor to both government and non-government agencies.

Jack credits his achievement down to two things: his resilience, honed through his homelessness; and Tranmere Street, which was a place of acceptance, support and security.

Jack often tells the story of learning to ride a bike for the first time when he was 18, and how embarrassed he was that he kept falling off. The lesson he learnt, he says, was not the falling off, but the encouragement from staff, to get back on the bike.

Jack will tell you that he's been doing that ever since.

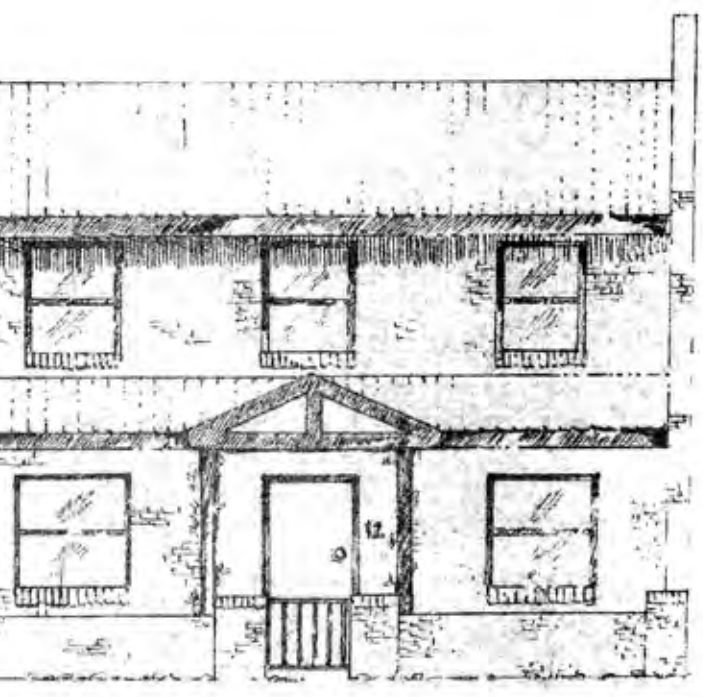
In prosperous Melbourne, repeatedly declared the world's most livable city, there is still little opportunity for homeless kids trying to find their way. Housing is at a premium, rents are out of reach, and services are stretched far beyond their capacity.

When Tranmere Street was first conceived, it was a grand dream of being able to meet more than a housing need; it was hoped that Tranmere Street would prove to be a place where kids learnt how to live well in the world; learnt they had support; learnt that they could get it wrong and still come back.

Tranmere Street was also a response to the tide of homelessness that was only just starting to flow. Today, kids just like Jack are particularly vulnerable. The need for services that are more than just a bed are more crucial now than in the 30 years since the Burdekin Report.

The challenge for The Salvation Army is to respond nimbly, with innovative solutions that are of real benefit to kids bereft of homes.

The challenge is to still provide Tranmere Streets, which, as Jack says, provide the bridge that saved his life and enabled him to think of having a future: 'I took their advice, and kept getting back on the bike.'



A house

There is a house in North Fitzroy,
Tranmere Street by name.
It's been a home for many a girl and boy
giving shelter from the rain.

No mother or no father,
to tuck them in at night.
No loved, significant other
to see they grew up right.

Now the one thing that a young man needs,
it's true for girls as well.
Is a safe place they can rest their heads
far from their stressed out hell.

Oh people tell your children
The race T Street has run,
Lettin' young kids know that they are loved
in the house where compassion's begun.

When you've one foot on the cliff face
The other edging close.
T Street is your safe place
to sleep as warm as toast.

Yeah, there is a house in North Fitzroy,
Tranmere Street by name.
And it's been the saving of many a youth
getting clean, keeping out of the game.

Hat-tip to Georgia Turner and Bert Martin,
and Eric Burdon and the Animals

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Who ends up at T Street?

This copy was written for the **2017 Youth Homelessness Matters Day**.

There are people who temporarily live at T Street. Some of these people have no contact with family, some don't want contact, and some just can't make contact. Some of their families don't want contact with them, and some of these people have no family.

Some of these people have drug and alcohol issues. Some have mental health issues, and some have an intellectual or a physical disability.

Some of these people have been abused and neglected.

Some of these people left school at an early age and some can't read or write. Some of these people have no qualifications and some have never worked. Some of these people have no money or income.

Some of these people are unhealthy. Some, initially, have nothing but the clothes they're wearing. Some of these people lack living skills, some can't cook or clean or budget; some have never been shown how.

Some of these people have no self-esteem or confidence and no hope for their future.

Some of these people have no friends and no one to talk to.

Some of these people have no idea where their life is heading, which direction to take, no goals, and no dreams.

Some of these people have been sleeping on the streets, in laneways, in parks, on couches.

All of these people have two things in common; they're all homeless and they're all young. Tonight there will be almost 7,000 young Victorians without a place to call home.

This house in North Fitzroy is a youth refuge. It's been here since 1978.

It provides temporary accommodation.

More than 2,000 homeless young people – between the ages of 15 and 25 - have lived in it.

This youth refuge is staffed 24 hours a day.

Workers try to create a safe and positive environment for the young people, whose ages range from 16 to 21 years.

When these people enter the youth refuge, they're in a crisis.

The youth refuge workers try to stabilise the crisis and prevent the person's life and circumstances from spinning further downwards and completely out of control. A plan is put in place to address each young person's needs.

The number one goal is to find suitable, affordable and secure accommodation. For some, it may be in a medium to long-term supported program. For some it's shared accommodation in the private rental market. Some are helped to go back home.

Some are linked into services that can address drug and alcohol issues or mental health issues. Some young people need counselling, some want it, some fear it, and some aren't ready for it.

Some young people return to education. Some get a job. Some improve their everyday living skills, like cooking, cleaning and budgeting. Some are helped to address other needs.

All are provided with options and support. All are treated with respect and compassion. All are encouraged. All are part of a community.

Becoming homeless is a process, it doesn't happen overnight. Getting out of homelessness is rarely quick and never simple!

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Closing time? We wish!

Paul Hogan is the manager of Tranmere Street.

In 1978, when the most popular song in the country was the Bee Gees' *Stayin' Alive*, a couple of concerned rookie members of The Salvation Army noticed a trend of young people trying to get accommodation at places that were usually only needed by adults. These young people did not have a home; the Salvos decided that an appropriate response was required.

Young people didn't invent abuse or neglect or intolerance or family violence or relationship breakdown.

Always in Fitzroy North, but in a number of iterations, the response is now simply known as T Street. It's a youth refuge – somewhere young people can temporarily live until they find something more suitable – and, these days, it's just one of about 20 in Victoria.

What a pity we need more!

Why? It's for young people who are homeless or experiencing homelessness or simply have no home. Thousands of young people have walked through its doors, have slept in its beds and been supported by its workers. What a pity it can still claim to be needed 40 years later!

What a pity that 'grown-ups' can still provide the reasons why some young people don't have a home. Young people didn't invent abuse or neglect or intolerance or family violence or relationship breakdown. Sometimes they replicate it though. What a pity grown-ups can't provide reasonable, remedial answers!

Lots of people have worked at T Street, and some have ascended to very important positions However, there are still young people without a home.

New youth refuges have been built and many, many reviews and reports have been written. However, there are still young people without a home.

A few years ago the physical space at T Street needed to be upgraded. This meant that there was a short period when there were no young people living at or visiting the property, although there was a worker on-site 24/7.

Halfway through this period a neighbour came to the front door asking to speak to the ' oxygen thief' who had sprayed graffiti on his van. The worker had the very rare pleasure of being able to confidently refute this allegation.

As an entity, young people living at the house are often accused or considered responsible for any undesirable event in the local vicinity.

There are some wonderful exceptions to this, though.

The experience of T Street is that the most obvious reason that some young people have no home is the breakdown of a family; or the breakdown of a relationship, usually with an adult, who is supposed to take care of the young person. Not sure who takes responsibility for that.

We wait to meet the young person who has no home and whose accommodation needs can be best met by comprehensive case management, a distinct privacy statement, informed consent and a clear complaint process.

For the most part, young people without a home need somewhere safe and affordable to live; and it will always be better with useful support. We must not stop looking for the best possible response though.

T Street will close when it isn't needed anymore; when there are no young people who have nowhere to live. The Salvation Army looks forward to closing T Street!

Time to heal

Major David Eldridge AM remembers how and why 'T Street' became a lifesaver for thousands of homeless kids.

In the late 1970s there were many young men living at The Salvation Army's Gill Memorial Home for Men which was not an ideal arrangement either for the older residents or for the young homeless.

Some staff members at the Gill were concerned about this and sought funding to establish an unemployment support group for under 25 year olds. Major Graeme McClimont, then a young lieutenant, suggested that rather than operate a group in the Gill it might be more useful to utilise the youth centre at the Fitzroy Corps as a drop-in centre for homeless young people.

A submission to the Commonwealth government was prepared, and, in the course of gathering information for the submission a partnership with the Jesuits was developed. They paid for six months rent of a house in Moor Street, Fitzroy. That way, young people using the day program would have somewhere to live other than the Gill.

We were working 90-hour weeks. We were employed for the employment scheme and we just worked the youth refuge, gratis; it was done for love, not money.

We didn't know that our Jesuit brother had signed a lease for four residents. On our first night we housed 6 young people but by the end of the week the number had risen to 17. The landlord evicted us, and Lieut McClimont approached the Herald-Sun about the 'homeless homelessness program'.

Colonel Bram Harewood was the Territory's property secretary and, without any fuss or talking to us, he bought a house the

day after the story ran – that house was in Tranmere Street, North Fitzroy.

We housed both young men and young women with a basic set of house rules that called for no violence or threats of violence, sex, alcohol or other drugs on the premises. Initially, kids could smoke inside the house but occupational health and safety eventually put paid to that, thankfully.

Back then nobody knew about homeless youth as an issue. Homeless people, stereotypically, were 'old drunks in the park'. We saw the emergence of a group of young homeless people who for a variety of reasons – exiting children's homes, or youth hostels, or families that had broken down – had found themselves adrift.

It took 16 years sometimes to make a homeless young person; it wasn't something that was going to be fixed in 16 weeks at a funded program.

This was in the days before waiting lists and referral protocols. If a kid was homeless we had them housed that same day.

It took an eviction to prompt some action to buy us a house but, to be fair, the Army didn't really know what we were doing, and neither did we. We needed time, we learnt on the run. The kids were teaching us about homelessness.

We didn't have a time limited length of stay at Tranmere Street. Even after the program was funded by government (the youth SAAP model was basically built around what Tranmere Street was doing) and they brought in a three-month time limit for accommodation we didn't necessarily stick to it. We thought kids could be there as long as they needed to be there, either in the house at Tranmere Street or in the flats we subsequently set up.

It took 16 years sometimes to make a homeless young person; it wasn't something that was going to be fixed in 16 weeks at a funded program.

A couple of yarns

Captain Mal Davies was an employee in the 1980s.

One day, in about 1987, I had to take a young punk named Zoran up to the social security office on Johnston Street to sort out some issues with his reporting, and get a counter check. He did an interview and filled in a form and was told to come back in half an hour.

Zoran was an intelligent and funny guy and I enjoyed his company.

I told him we'd walk up to the servo on the corner of Nicholson St and I'd shout him a drink. We arrived and went to the fridges at the back of the shop where we both grabbed a bottle of Coke; there were maybe three or four people in the shop.

Suddenly the conversation went like this:

Z: Sorry, mate, you want to do what?

M: What?

Z: How dare you say that?

M: What are you doing?

Z: You want to give me $100 to do what to you?

M: Zoran, what are you doing?

Z: Mate. You are disgusting.

Zoran walks out of the shop, leaving me holding two Cokes and everyone looking at me like I was the dirtiest pervert in Fitzroy. I walked up to the counter, quickly paid for the drinks and walked out. Zoran was around the corner, laughing his head off. I gave him his Coke, told him I hated him and we both walked back to Social Security, both laughing until we cried. It was very funny.

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At Christmas we gave all the kids an identical pack of presents so that everyone got the same and there was no jealousy. They all got a beach towel, some movie passes, chocolates,

deodorant, a wallet/purse etc.

One year we included a Walkman and earphones to play cassettes on. What we forgot was that Phillip was deaf.

They all began opening their presents when we realised our goof — we thought we were about to have a very insensitive moment that would be awkward for Phil. He opened his present, saw his Walkman and… smiled. He quickly put the headphones on and walked around holding his Walkman in one hand and clicking his fingers on the other hand, listening to absolutely nothing! We were relieved that Phil took our mistake in such good humour.

Court time

Darryl Arnett was a lawyer with Clancy & Triado in the mid to late ’80s. He now heads up Salvos Legal in Melbourne.

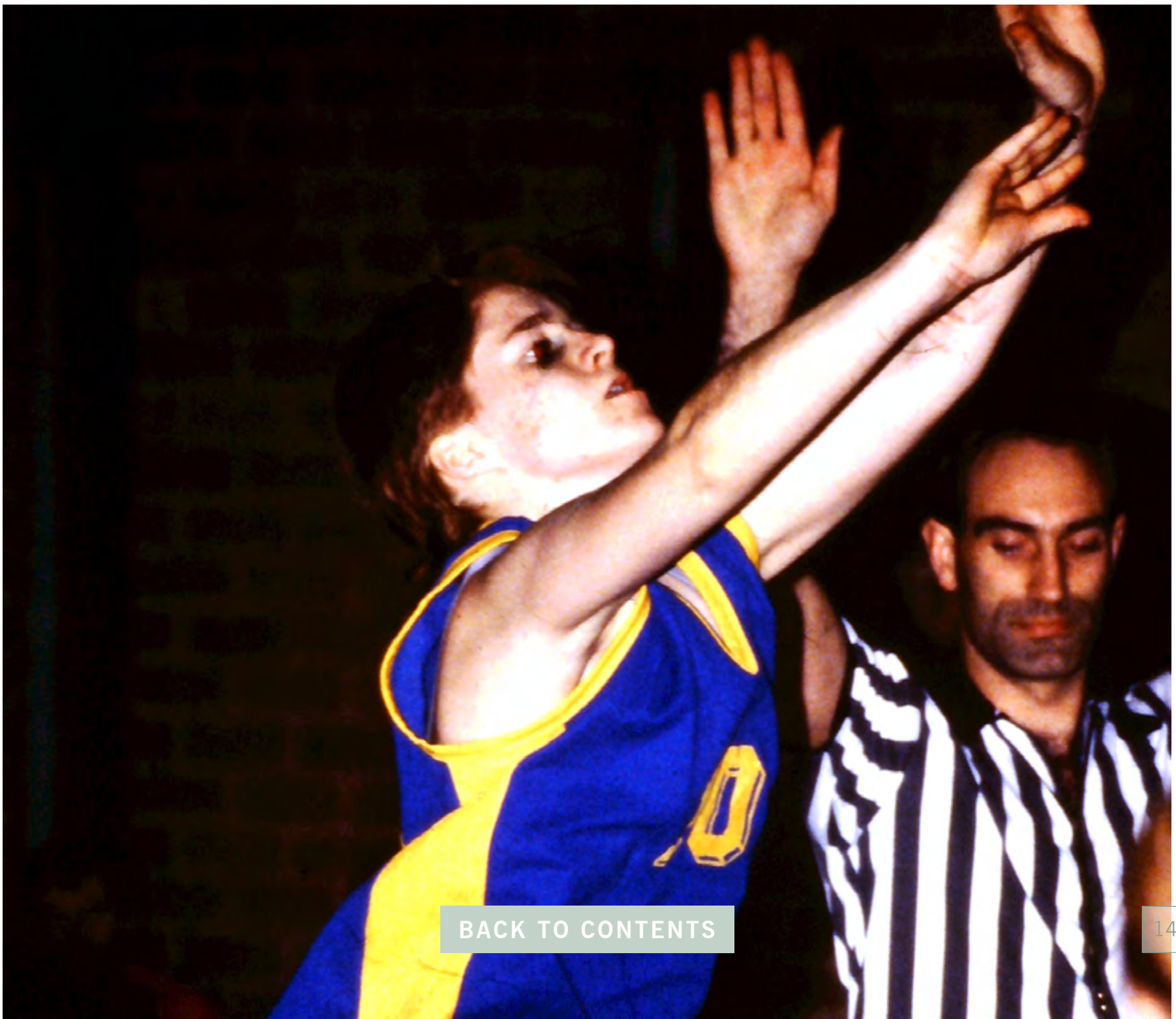
In the mid- to late-’80s I was practising as a defence lawyer with Clancy & Triado. A partner at the firm was Marilyn Head, who was a mate of Dave Eldridge. Things went from there.

They arranged for me to spend Wednesday arvos at Grey Street. That led, inevitably, to me having clients at Tranmere Street.

I lived in Northcote, so Tranmere Street became part of my routine.

I would call in regularly on my way home, to get instructions, and pick up charge sheets.

This led to Dave convincing me to become part of the Tranmere Street volleyball team. So, if I wasn’t in court with the T Street kids, I was on court with them playing volleyball.



Bridges are for building, not burning

Warren Hutchinson was a T Street youth worker

I was at T Street from 1977-1980. I was a youth worker. It was a very fast introduction to youth work, learning on the job. I learnt not to take things personally and to never 'burn the bridge' with kids.

A young female youth worker once answered a knock at the front door. On the other side of the door, two Mormons asked if they could come in and pray for the home.

On reflection, our worker said, well, this is a Salvation Army refuge and we have two Salvation Army officers appointed here. We also we have a Jesuit priest on placement, and I'm Jewish. So, thank you, but, no, we've got it covered from all angles.

Tranmere Street gave me the opportunity to change my vocation. Working with people over the past 30 years, making a heart connection with many on this journey, has been rewarding and a privilege. I have learnt that it is better to be had than hard.

These days I am teaching primary school kids how to play brass instruments for TSA 'Just Brass' program in Geelong.

My second lounge room

‘Waizea man’ – Wai – has been a T Street worker from 2010 to the current day (2018).

I completed my student placement at T Street around 2010, and I never left! T Street became my second lounge room.

From the outset it was very obvious T Street was not only a crisis refuge by name, but also in the real sense of being a refuge for young people in need of respite.

The open door, shared kitchen and genuine caring support of the staff creates a culture where young people continue to want to drop in and visit, have a cuppa and chat.

The strength in the reliability and longevity of these relationships is both priceless and again, completely genuine in the holistic creation of refuge spaces.

As to stories – where do I start? There are too many. T Street has taught me that change comes in unexpected ways and that the process will always outweigh the outcome.

I continue to drop in to T Street for cheese toasties and chats – T Street rocks!

Kids make their own decisions

Robyn Kennedy was a senior manager of youth and community recovery services from 2010-2015.

It was such a blessing for me to share time at Tranmere Street. Christmases at Tranmere Street are amongst my fondest memories!

One of them was on a Fathers Day. I'm not sure why I am at the refuge on a Sunday but I am here. The telephone rings, it's another call for the refuge manager. There seem to have been quite a few calls for the refuge manager today.

I ask a staff member who the calls are from. He enlightens me; they are from a number of young people, actually young men, who are incarcerated. The worker tells me, 'They always ring him on Fathers Day, he's the closest thing that they may have to a father.' The refuge manager does not seek this role but he and his staff provide the long term ongoing contact point and support for so many young people.

The refuge manager and his team become like the touchstones for young people in what for so many is a life bereft of touchstones.

Christmas Day at Tranmere Street is always surprising; well, for the five or six Christmas-es that I attended it continually surprised me! There was always lots of food, and usually the BBQ was on for lunch and the salads and cake and puddings were always there.

There may have been presents, I don't remember. What I do remember is the number of young people who popped in and out on the day. Some stayed for lunch, others for a cuppa and some came unsure how long they could manage just to be in one place.

Some of the visitors were no longer 'young people'. They came with their partners and their kids. They talked about their 'adventures' when they were in and out of Tranmere Street, in years gone by. They talked about those they knew who had not survived to see that particular Christmas.

Some came each year on their own; still seeking the comfort, the place to feel (even for a little while) that they were wanted and secure and safe.

Some years were quieter than others; that was a good thing. The expectation was that our young residents and those residents from the past may have better places to be, with family and friends.

Hopefully, Tranmere Street will always be there with its down to earth, no BS culture; available to some of the many young homeless people in and around our city – be it for a night or for a Christmas!

'Servant leadership' was key at Tranmere Street. The manager is just that; the servant to all and a wonderful example of an incredibly good heart. He is a man who is brave, wise and consistent. Consistency is so important. I don't think many people would understand what being consistent in your relationships with young people even means. Consistent over days and weeks and months and years and even decades!

Tranmere Street is non-hierarchical. Young people are making their own decisions. There is information available, they may question as many times as they wish and receive answers. But ultimately they will make their own decisions. Workers don't have to agree. They don't have to like it. They can be disappointed or scared that a young person may make a decision which may not be ultimately in his/her own best interest. But the kids make their own decisions.

Turbulence and tonnes of fun

Captain Sarah Eldridge's parents helped to start Tranmere Street – Sarah used to visit them there as a young child.

I have a vivid memory of having to hide under the kitchen table, because some kid was getting pretty agro.

One of the girls came and sat under the table with us, and made it feel like a cubby house!

Heaven compared to my hell hole

Paul Collins was a resident at Tranmere Street from 1986 –1988.

I first went to the St Kilda Crisis Centre and Paul McDonald saved my life by sending me to Tranmere Street – a massive thanks to Paul. It was heaven compared to the hell hole I was living in. The place was better than any home I ever lived in (besides my grandparents, which was no longer an option).

T Street was warm, friendly, clean, with heaps of food, unconditional care, and great, great staff. A special thanks to Con & Malcolm. T Street was the turning point in my life and meeting David Eldridge has been the greatest and biggest influence in my life by a very long shot – thanks Dave.

Dave changed my life; not straight away, but eventually. He helped make me a more caring and compassionate person. I am not anywhere near his level but tonnes more than I ever was, for which I will be forever grateful.

I think I was the longest serving resident. They tried to kick me out heaps of times but they couldn't; I wasn't going anywhere. When I first got there, Con was the manager, with his 360Z Datsun, so he was the coolest Greek boy in Northcote. A lovely bloke.

We did have some tough people at T Street, but times were different then. There wasn't the danger that there is now, you know what I mean? The fear that you had from people of today, you didn't have it back then. We had our fights and our arguments but there was never a fear of repercussions that comes with today's violence. There was probably a bit more respect back then. Well, I wouldn't say respect… we weren't exposed to violence of that nature. There wasn't any real violence on TV or in movies. There was no internet. The dangerous thing for us was Nicholson Street, I reckon. The Mafia was there, the Carlton crew which we all

knew about 15-20 years later. Way before Carl Williams; I am talking about Alfonse and all of them when they were younger; they used to run things from The Blue Room. We used to go and play pool there.

Tranmere Street was like a safe haven to me, coming from the streets. Flinders Street train station; hanging around there, living there and then going to the Crisis Centre in St Kilda.

David Eldridge is like God to me, he really is. He is a man who I could never ever, ever say a bad word about; and I have taken the pointy end of his size 12 boot up my backside and I deserved it. I love that man, I really do. But Paul McDonald, well, he was like Scotty Pippin to Dave's Michael Jordan; you know what I mean?

I had been going from hostel to hostel. I was probably a bit too aggressive and angry for your average hostel. From what I remember of the hostel circuit, Crossroads was probably more suited for the more streetwise kids.

The green kids didn't get sent there. I'm not saying that it was a bad place to be, because I loved the place and I was never a bad person. For crying out loud, Crossroads gave me a job and they supported me. Dave has the biggest heart in the world, but he was not going to keep someone around who was going to give him trouble.

I had to put on a persona, I must admit. I could throw down if I had to, but I was never a violent person. I played basketball with Crossroads and lot of sports with Salvation Army in the Salvation Army League. So you know I suppose I was a lucky kid in a way; I knew what I was doing was wrong, but I knew there was a limit. I had respect for people and I had a conscience too, you know what I mean.

Malcolm Davies, he was my guardian angel. He came to visit me when I was locked up; he kept in touch with me. I don't know how many times I yelled and screamed at him – he had that personality that was annoying – sometimes he just agreed with me and smiled never got angry, never got shitty with me. He just smiled, nodded his head and pushed his glasses up with his finger. I still remember that pushing his glasses back up his nose, but I love that guy. I really do.

I don't believe in God, but I believe in Christianity and I only get that from The Salvation Army.

I am now living in Gippsland; I'm happily married for 17 years now, with beautiful children. I have never been in trouble since I left Crossroads. I thank God for T Street, for the staff, for Crossroads and for the Salvos.

Off the streets

David Beech was a Tranmere Street resident in the mid-'80s.

Before Tranmere Street, I was living on the streets, in and out of crisis accom. It was crazy back in the day. I was dealing with a system back then that was mostly adult-based. There were youth refuges around, but none like T Street.

While I was at T Street, I learnt that there were people around who were willing to sit and listen, and to go that extra mile. It was foreign to me. They made time for me, while reserving their judgement about my substance use, and my behaviours.

It was what I needed in my life at the time. I still remember it to this day.

For the past 12 years I've been working with marginalised youth who experience homelessness and have a wide range of alcohol and other drug issues.

The Salvos helped me out in some of my darkest hours as a young person. David Eldridge was there from the beginning with me at T Street. He backed me, and eventually put me in charge of a temporary op shop in the late '80s, on Ascot Vale Road in Ascot Vale.

Unbridled youth work

Paul MacDonald, who worked at T Street, is now the CEO of Anglicare Victoria.

I think I started on student placement in the youth work course and then I was also employed; surprisingly I got the Friday night shift. So I did the sleepover the Friday night and worked during the week full-time there, in the days when you did your placement full-time for three or four months.

It was always eight or nine kids. The pot roast going in the office. We had four bunks in each of the rooms and it was a baptism of fire. I was left on my own with these kids and what the hell, I am just a student. But it was good. You had to learn on the run.

The kids were really diverse. It wasn't a core group of just street kids or drug users; the kids had very different backgrounds, all landing in Tranmere Street, and Tranmere Street was hard core. We always took them. 'No' was never considered; it was always 'yes'. The kids were backhandedly loyal to us, but we had some wild kids.

David Eldridge chose Philip Island for a camp for Tranmere Street one year. We were pulling kids out of the surf, off rocks, oh man it was all on the go, it was just unbridled youth work.

T Street was warm and homely, though all the kids were very different and very troubled. We had some of the most troubled kids even in my time. I have been running programs for 20 years now as part of the organisation that I am involved with now, but those Tranmere Street days were defining in the sense of the eclectic number of difficult kids we had under one roof, but also living together.

As a single worker, I had a few character building moments. I had to kick this kid out of his flat because the other tenants were going 'F-ing come and save me Paul,' but I have a house full. I settle that house, go around the corner and kick this guy out. Go back to the house knock, knock on the door and guess who is there at the door? The guy that I just kicked out, who wanted to have a red hot go. Anyway, we sorted that out.

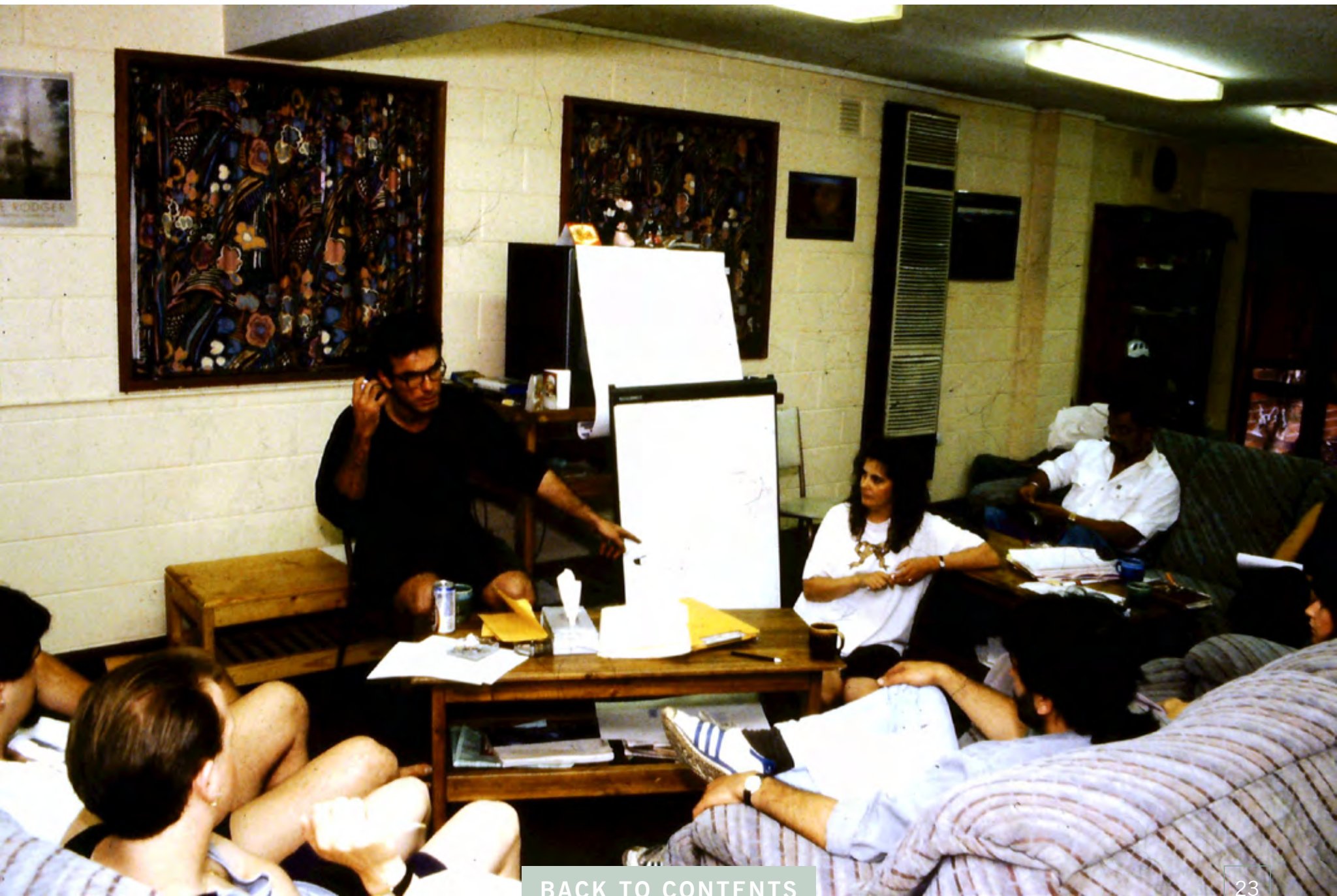
The reason that it was an unbridled youth work skill builder is that you are in all these tight moments. You just talk and engage with the kids and get them down off the roof – literally

off the roof. It was a pretty rollicking time; it was pretty wild.

I remember I woke up and saw this girl's face. She said she was feeling unwell; she was in the top bunk. I asked her what's wrong and she said she didn't know. I lifted up the sheet and there was blood everywhere – she had miscarried in the bunk bed. Let's get you sorted, I said. That wasn't in the manual.

I've stayed in the Child, Youth and Family welfare sector all my working life starting from Tranmere Street I am now running Anglicare Victoria. That is Child, Youth & Family welfare again, mainly with the statutory end. We have about 440 kids under our care every night of the week, in either resi. units, foster care units, lead tenant flats, houses, couple of youth refuges… comparing them to my time at Tranmere Street is like comparing a tractor to a Ferrari, but anyway…

It is a different time, there are regulations, but there is a certain type of human being that we still haven't eradicated out of the gene pool and thank goodness, because I can still employ them in youth refuges today, as we did in Tranmere Street all those years ago.



T Street was a sensational grounding

Major Brendan Nottle started working at Tranmere Street in 1984. He was there until 1988.

I was volunteering at Lyndon Lodge in Hawthorn and then I worked there full-time. Dave Eldridge rang and said there was a job at Tranmere Street, to replace David Cripps who took his own life. Then within three months the assistant manager's position was vacant, so I became the assistant manager. Within six months, Con Dimstas, who was the manager, resigned. I then became the Manager.

Tranmere Street was obviously really intense; the place was designed to accommodate 10 young people but there was often more there, between 12–15. People sleeping on couches and people sharing rooms and things like that, so it was an intense environment.

It was also a sensational learning opportunity for me, particularly in relation to the work that I am doing now at Melbourne Project 614. It created really good understandings about the importance of relationships.

In the early days at 614 (at 69 Bourke Street, Melbourne), when certain situations would blow up, quite often I would reflect on how we dealt with a similar situation at Tranmere Street. It's rare that we had situations at 614 that I had not experienced at Tranmere.

Tranmere Street was just a sensational grounding in a practical sense, about how to work with people that had real complex issues. It was set up to live out the true values of The Salvation Army. We are now ensuring those values are embedded in this work at 614. I saw those values lived out every day in the staff that were employed at Tranmere Street and at Crossroads, and to try to understand what our values should be (at 614) became much easier because of my experience at Tranmere Street.

The thing about Tranmere Street was that you had people around you that were experienced and they were always available. I never felt like I was ever on my own trying to work out

what do we do next in this crazy situation. There were always good people to guide me, which I think is critical.

I remember one Saturday night, 'J', a resident, was barbecuing at the back of the refuge, and Joe the next door neighbour came over the back fence with a shotgun and started waving the gun over the fence. He went nuts. We weren't doing anything wrong; there was a bit of music playing, but it wasn't loud. Joe completely lost it. It was J who told him to put the gun down and I got everybody inside to hide; she stayed outside until we could get her inside as well. She had to settle him down while I got everybody inside and got them locked up.

Tranmere Street created a deeper sense of community, a sense of family, for young people who were otherwise completely isolated. Tranmere Street and Crossroads modelled that, not just to those young people but actually modelled it to the boards of The Salvation Army — that this is how you best support people.

T Street changed my understanding of the importance of work ethics. So if you are going to have an impact then you have to really contribute a lot yourself; if you want to make a substantial impact. That was modelled clearly at Tranmere Street and Crossroads.

Dave Eldridge put me in contact with a volunteer… he says to me, I am a record producer, you tell me whoever you want me to get for a concert, tell me whatever venue you want and it is yours. So I start off with some small band and he goes no, no think bigger. So we started off with John Farnham because he was huge at the time and we were going for Festival Hall; it wasn't big enough so we agreed on Myer Music Bowl.

So, he comes back from the next meeting a fortnight later and said, we didn't get John Farnham – who else do you want? I said Little River Band. So every time we had a meeting he came back, with, Sorry, but we couldn't get Little River Band but what about this band?

In the end we went from The Myer Music Bowl with John Farnham to the Palace in St Kilda with 'I Spit On Your Gravy', a punk band headed by Freddy Negro, with no teeth. Oh, and they all wore nappies. We had the Painters and Dockers who we still have contact with today, and The Hollowmen, and Radio Luxembourg — bands nobody's ever heard of.

We turn up and they are all skinheads there so it was such a ridiculous sort of environment, I remember going to the toilet with David Eldridge standing at the urinal and these skinheads came in and said, 'This is amazing that the Salvos are doing this stuff' like — who would have thought?!

Then Freddy Negro got up to sing and it ended up on the front page of the *Herald Sun*. Freddy got up to sing and then Graeme McClimont stood up and said before we start I need to say a prayer. In front of all these punks and skinheads he got up and prayed.

The event raised about 4,000 bucks.

That was an amazing learning for me. I had just turned 21 and I am working with this radio producer and a record producer on this event, and I had no idea. It didn't turn out to be what we wanted it to be but it was good, and I learnt heaps from that experience.

We worked with a lot of creative and innovative people at Tranmere Street and Crossroads; that DNA gets really invested in you and imbedded in you and I think it really shapes who you are and in what you do. We are doing stuff at 614 that in some ways is a bid edgy. It reflects the stuff that we were involved with at Tranmere Street and Crossroads. We understand (homelessness) as an issue. But what we are dealing with has deeper problems; it is deeply entrenched. The only way we are going to get solutions is by doing things differently from the way things were done in the past.

Bureaucracy always works in the boxes. But if we are going to bring about significant social change we have to work outside the box. That doesn't always work for the organisation; it's not always comfortable. That was another learning from Crossroads; Crossroads certainly worked outside the box. So, seeing how they operated, and learning from that, having access to people that led that and created such a positive environment… Working with David Eldridge sort of really informs what we are doing now and I think with a couple of interesting things (at 614) such as Magpie Housing, which is in partnership with the Collingwood football club –we are literally trying to create housing stock for people that are homeless and we are trying to grow that.

The walk for homelessness to Canberra; speaking to politicians in Canberra… being comfortable with that sort of idea has come about because of my time in Tranmere Street, some exposure that I had at Tranmere Street.

Just kept on going and hanging out with the kids

Linda Rose was there at ground zero when T Street started.

I was involved in the St Kilda Crisis Centre many years after Tranmere Street. In 1978, I had done all sorts of different things and I was still working out who I was in the world, as I still am.

I saw an article in *The Age*, talking about a refuge the Salvos had in Moor Street, Fitzroy, where they were housing homeless young people. I didn't know anything about any of this. I'd done secretarial work, bar work, I'd travelled, but nothing like this.

I rang The Salvation Army and said I saw this article and wanted to do volunteer work. I thought, I go on the dole and be a volunteer. They told me to ring Dave Eldridge, so I did.

I went to the Citadel at Brunswick Street North. They were having a staff meeting, so I went in and they asked me a few questions. They had the drop-in centre at the back of the citadel there, and they said to just go up there and hang out there and see how it goes. That is what I did.

I was not trained, nor did I do any training as such. It was more responding. I grew up on a farm and I think it gives you a whole sense of responsibility. Talking to these kids, they needed income security so I took them there, talked to them about this and that, so it just worked. I was very grateful to Tranmere Street and David Eldridge and Graeme McClimont for launching my career of over 40 years. In the first year I did sleep-overs at Moor Street, with males and females.

I remember doing sleep-overs at Tranmere Street on my own before it was renovated. Until one night a client, one of the boys came into the room in the middle of the night and he said, 'Move over, I want to root you.'

I told him I'd count to three and if he wasn't out of the room I'd yell so loud that every kid in the house would be here. That worked. The next day I reported this to the guys; we worked it out as we went along. The guy was harmless, I don't know what he was thinking, he was probably not much younger than me. He was one of the older boys, and he had an acquired brain injury. Although in hindsight, he had done prison time and he had acquired a brain injury so it was probably a bigger deal than I realised at the time.

So from then they started to shift things around and I didn't do nights or sleep-overs on my own any more. A lot of practice now grew out of what happened then; I think we have

gone too much to an extreme the other way with risk management and risk.

We did a lot of things brilliantly and I am incredibly grateful to have been part of all that to have had the opportunity to do it that way. There are a lot of things I think we could have done a lot differently.

The message to kids was always, 'We love you but not your behaviour. We understand your behaviour, but it's not okay.' Now, I do trauma-informed apprentice training with all the staff; it's all this stuff that is now being articulated and people all trained in it. While we almost sort of intuitively knew what to do, and responded to people in that way, but still making it very clear what was okay and what wasn't; making them accountable.

We were innovative. I got on very well with David and Graeme so we could talk about what we were doing, there were other people who came in and stayed and moved on. There were some incredibly violent young men. While they knew that their behaviour wasn't okay, they would absolutely trash the place and explode.

You could say, 'Come outside mate; have a seat and have a cigarette and tell me what's going on.' I could always get it out of them; they would still lose it but at least it wasn't trashed. It was never directed at me.

We didn't have incident reports or debriefing. Of course, David and Graeme were in the house and they made sure we were okay. It was Graeme who actually convinced me to apply to Melbourne University and do social work. I am very grateful because this has got me into all sorts of different roles; I hated the course, as I felt so removed from the reality.

My role at Jesuit Social Services is staff capacity building, so I organise all of the staff training, reflective practice, etc.

After T Street I went to Crossroads. I was actually involved with the Salvos for years and years and years in different incarnations. But Tranmere Street is forever in my heart. It was an extraordinary experience.

It started with pizza

Debbie Taylor (Ellis) looks back.

When I first started at Crossroads, in 1985, Tranmere Street was being built… I didn't know Moor Street; I only knew Lester Street. I used to go over to Lester Street every Thursday night and cook pizza with the kids. That was voluntary; I never officially worked there.

Lester Street was around for less than 12 months, while Tranmere Street was built. When Tranmere Street was finished, we had the grand opening and the residents moved in.

I remember that Tranmere Street had this fantastic big massive table that somebody had made and donated. Everybody could sit together like a family, and they had this brand new kitchen.

I used to go and spend quite a bit of time there, just popping in. I knew all the kids because they used to come into Crossroads and work in the Crossroads Industries that Warren Hutchinson ran.

I was an admin person but part of my role was I would go round every afternoon and collect all the money from the op shops, where some of the residents worked. Tranmere Street was a unique place.

All the admin girls at Crossroads had so much to do with all the clients because they all came in to have a chat and say hi. You know I used to take some of the clients shopping for clothes, because they had a job interview or something else important. There was a young girl called Jody who lived at Tranmere Street, with her mate, Kelly. They were as thick as thieves.

Kelly married Alan in the end and they had a family.

Tranmere Street was interesting; there was always lots of laughter. The staff were relaxed and they engaged with the kids. The kids were as rough as anything; really wild. There were always 12 living at Tranmere Street.

I remember there were always head lice, there was always lots of fights amongst them all, they all had trouble with drugs, drug pushers — coming to the door; through the door.

David Cripps was a resident who became a worker; he moved through the system. Sadly, he took his own life. He was such a lovely guy. It really hurt Dave and Gloria Eldridge; they were absolutely gutted.

Dave and Gloria always had Christmas lunch at their house for Tranmere Street kids; Gloria used to make this huge big lunch and they would all sit there and have it.

Tranmere Street impacted my life; the whole Crossroads things did, but Tranmere Street was my first introduction to homeless youth. I was 21, and a really naïve Salvation Army girl.

When Dave hired me, and I got to work with both Dave and Gloria, my life really changed. I'd been at Crossroads, but Tranmere Street was my first introduction to that type of living and the clients; the young people who Crossroads helped.

A dramatic introduction

Steve and **Helen** from God's Squad and Foothills Community reminisce.

HELEN I was on duty and some kids had done something naughty, so I was growling at them while they were sitting on the couch. So, I was standing over them waving my finger, yelling. Aaaaaaand, then I passed out. I was heavily pregnant, and so angry that my blood pressure dropped. Then I dropped. To the floor.

They all went, Oh Helen! We will do anything! So for the rest of the day I was getting cups of teas and they were looking after me. They were eating out of the palm of my hand; I should have fainted earlier. They did everything I said! I was employed; Steve just used to come because crazy things happened.

STEVE In 1989, I think, Keith Waters had asked us to come and meet Dave Eldridge. So we were walking up the alley way on a Tuesday afternoon, en route to the back door. We were walking up and we didn't know what to expect and then, bang bang bang! F-bombs everywhere and stuff flying everywhere.

As we went past the window we saw this kid flying around and yelling, *I am going to bugger you, blah blah*, then this other kid comes past and then this guy puts him on the ground. We walk in and the man tells us, *quick, grab the knife*. It's Dave. He is sitting on this guy and preventing bloody murder, but the knife is still flying around. So we hold the kid's hand and get the knife out and this girl he was chasing is going, *Nah nah-nah nah nah*. Dave sends her on her way and he starts to calm down knifeboy. This goes on for another seven minutes or so.

Finally Dave stops and takes a breath and says *Hi there, you must be Helen and Steve. I'm Dave.* That is literally how we met.

Both kids were smack addicts and the boy accused the girl of stealing his smack; she probably did. The boy was out to kill her. I'll never forgot that story, it was a great introduction.

STEVE With the beginnings of RecLink (a recreation program)… there were Aussie Rules games between Crossroads and Sacred Heart and they were happening a little bit. It was formalised into Reclink with Crossroads, Sacred Heart, Brunswick Salvos and St Martin's Magpies…there were all the Turana kids and the Aboriginal kids from the hostels. We often used to get the Tranmere Street kids and kids from Malmsbury along to that.

Aim for the stars

Shannon Moore – Current day Tranmere Street Team Leader

I've been working with Crossroads Salvation Army for eight years and I started off my time as a case manager in the Leaving Care program which is connected to T Street.

Our case management is tailored around the young person, identifying their support needs, and supporting them with that.

My role here now is as one of the team leaders and I supervise staff but also hold a case load. I work with young people that are in an ongoing bed here at the refuge, but also in an outreach capacity. So that includes young people that have resided at the refuge and then gone on to live independently.

When I started I only knew that it was a youth refuge and it was kind of crisis accommodation where young people came, but I didn't know the ins and outs of how things operated until I started working here, I guess.

I love working here; I've been working in this field for the last kind of 10-11 years. But I just think working here is very different to working in any other program that I have worked with. All the staff here and the dynamics are really focused on the young people; we're all about supporting the young person in their best interests. Our case management is tailored around the young person, identifying their support needs, and supporting them with that. So giving them the information resources they need and empowering them, but then it's up to them, it's their journey, it's their case plan and we work with them, with what they want to work on.

Yeah, we ask questions like 'what are your goals for the future? What do you want to be when you grow up? How are you feeling right now?' So when they come in we try to get an overall picture. So in terms of health and education, what's your goal? We have it more in a conversation instead of having to sit down and write answers to questions. We just generally write down points of that conversation in the initial assessment and the case plan is goal specific so it's got different categories such as education, employment, health, leisure, legal, overall general wellbeing, hobbies, interests. Basically the young person identifies that they have a goal in an area and how they would like us to support them in achieving that goal. Who's going to do which part of the goal? What steps are we going to take? When would they like to achieve that goal by? And who would they like to support them with it? This

information is regularly updated so that they know we are working on things with them while they're residing here. It could be as simple as them not having any identification, so supporting them with getting their birth certificate, getting their key pass, getting their license, going and just getting a general check up from the doctors, these sorts of things.

It's a very good tool. It's a good reference point to look and see where I was at… 'Yep, that's what I needed to do…I was meant to organise the birth certificate.' It makes us accountable to follow up on things; it's also a plan that they can take with them. We are hoping, down the track, looking at doing something virtual and do it on a USB, then they take that with them. So it's not lost information and they continually have it.

What I've learnt over the years is that it's all about small steps and planting a seed, even if it's just a small seed. Could be just having that one supportive person that they say is vital for a short period of time or a long period. But if I'm role modelling and planting a seed and doing some sort of support then I think young people are taking some aspect of our support and building on that later on, because it's unrealistic to think you're going to see big changes in such a short time. So I like to look at it as just planting that seed and then that's a tool they can have.

For instance, I have a young person that is undergoing drug and alcohol rehabilitation. It took a long time; I've been working with him for about two and a half years. There were many conversations, many visits to detox. So I think that through building that relationship and rapport, to be able to have those in-depth conversations — and he obviously felt trusted and supported — planted some seeds in him. Now he wants to return to study and he'd like to become a youth worker himself. So since rehab he has enrolled in a Certificate IV in Youth Work course at Victoria University and he has been 'clean' (absent from substance abuse) for the past five months. I think that's a fantastic effort. Another, I guess, example of planting the seed and supporting them to take small steps.

We had a sibling group here a few years ago; they were Ethiopian brother and sister and they both studied at university and I worked with them. They would go to the library here and then go to their lectures; the young girl worked as well. She was doing aged care and was looking at getting casual work; I supported her with that. She moved out and got a job with an agency doing aged care work. I always say to young people aim for the stars because nothing is stopping you if you want to do it, you have got to reach high.

Relating makes for real change

Captain Jason-Davies-Kildea was a Crossroads employee who worked with Tranmere Street kids.

About 1990 I was working at Tranmere Street. I had spent some time within the Army's St Kilda Crisis Centre and then an opportunity came up to take on a new position at Tranmere Street, as the health and socialisation worker.

As far as I know it was a position that didn't exist before or never existed since, but it was a really fun role. I partnered with a health worker, Andy King, who I'd already done some work with on some other things. We were doing some stuff around health and nutrition, generally.

The socialisation part of it was essentially a recreational thing; taking kids out horseriding and go-carting and a whole bunch of other activity based things. That way, for kids, their entire time at the refuge is not spent in their room or in the lounge room. It gets people out and encourages them to have a bit of a life.

I'd had some contact with T Street kids before, but not in the intense kind of way where this is their house and they are living there, so you see them every day… there a whole range of people and situations that I hadn't been involved in before I started working with The Salvation Army, and even though the Crisis Centre had exposed me to parts of life, T Street was a step up.

I had started to understand a little bit of the homeless subculture at St Kilda. We'd worked with kids who'd been living in squats in St Kilda, and rough sleeping. I think, before I worked at T Street, I had no idea about how prevalent it was and how young people sometimes began

Living out a faith in Christ and being a Christian has got to be about more than turning up to Church on a Sunday. It's got to be about doing something about the disadvantage that cripples people.

that journey of disadvantage when they were as young as 12 years of age.

They were kids who were not in their family home, for one reason or another, and were living in really risky dangerous conditions. So moving them into a refuge environment at Tranmere Street at least gave me an indication; okay, this is where we can provide a stable environment.

At T Street, I learnt, we can help young people begin to put their lives back together in a way that doesn't have that kind of risk that is associated with living on the street.

I was really young; 19 maybe, when I started there. In fact, some of the kids staying at T Street were older than me. It intimidated me sometimes, approaching that kind of stuff. I am much older now and a tiny bit wiser; I think at one level there was a positive about being a kind of a peer with the T Street residents. I was probably the youngest staff member there.

At another level I probably didn't have the experience or the life maturity to produce, all the time, the kind of responses I would have hoped to give to kids now.

There were moments when I was genuinely a bit frightened and anxious about what was happening. But it always made sense to me. I said to myself, this is what being in The Salvation Army means.

Living out a faith in Christ and being a Christian has got to be about more than turning up to Church on a Sunday. It's got to be about doing something about the disadvantage that cripples people. About the world and justice, and ensuring that people get a fair go in life.

While I had gotten involved in The Salvation Army through music, the reason I stayed and got more involved was that Salvation Army connection to social justice; the Salvos' role in healing the world.

That kind of practical response to human need is absolutely what drew me to The Salvation Army and, really, it's why I am still here today. If I hadn't had those kind of roles with the Crossroads Network in my late teens early 20s, I would have understood The Salvation Army entirely differently and 'the Salvos' probably wouldn't have hung onto me like they have now, 30 years later.

I took a break from The Salvation Army for a while after that; I went and worked in the corporate IT world. From day one, the job in IT just didn't have the same kind of meaning attached to it. IT was much better paid, and it was a whole bunch easier on a whole lot of levels.

The disrespectful businessman who didn't want to be in the IT training class that day was nothing compared to some of the young people at T Street, and some of the stuff from Crossroads that I worked with; but at the end of the day you know it didn't really change the world in any meaningful, positive way.

At T Street I could go home at the end of the day having made a meaningful difference to someone's life; that made my own life more meaningful. That is what drew me back to The Salvation Army after that stint in IT. I really needed to do something that has meaning for me, and contribute something back to the world as well.

The best of what we did then is still the best of what we do now. It was strongly relational, so you had a capacity to build a relationship where a young person could trust you. Often that young person had come from a background where trust has been breached multiple times.

So the ability to trust an adult figure in their life or, in my case, a person who was only slightly more adult perhaps than they were, or close to a peer… trust was something that had been deeply fractured. So to build up those kind of trusting relationships meant that you had to consistently deliver on promises.

We need to be continually looking at the balance of the increased compliance load on staff and the chance to build relationships with clients. I have heard from youth workers and

others who say the requirement to spend a certain amount of time doing data entry or reporting or whatever directly takes away from the time they spend with young people. I am sympathetic to that position, and I would want to maximise the time that youth workers and other workers get to spend with people building those relationships, so they can deliver the outcomes we want to see.

The vast majority at The Salvation Army funding goes towards staffing, so we need to be using the staff to the best of our ability. Their key skill is usually relationship building like working with young people, engaging with them.

That said, in my job now, engaging with government to advocate for clients, if we have the data to demonstrate a particular client need or an issue that is a systemic issue — not a thing that applies to an individual person but actually a whole group of people — then that data provides an incredibly powerful voice to government.

Empirical data means we can tell governments, 'This is the problem we need to address as a society.' In the absence of that data, our arguments to government are trapped in our ability to tell the story of Joe who came to us one day with a particular circumstance. Those kinds of individual stories have always had an important role, but they cannot be our only tool in advocacy.

They know you'll stick by them. They know you keep your promises. They know you are actually on their side when their life is falling apart.

We need to be able to go to and expand beyond that anecdotal evidence – to say, here are 10,000 Joes who are facing the same situation; this isn't because Joe is slacking and cannot get out of bed in the morning and has a terrible drug problem. It's because we live in a social system that actually creates Joes everywhere and traps them in particular circumstances in which their options are limited.

The Salvation Army advocates with governments; that's my role in Victoria. We are at the front line of homelessness, family violence, gambling, drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues and disability, out of home care… all those kind of things are bread and butter of the front line social program work.

Apart from kind of delivering the best programs that we can, we also want to insure that in the future we can try to be in a situation where we didn't have to deliver those programs; where, in fact, we don't want to.

The goal of The Salvation Army is not to run the best homelessness services in the world; it is to have no homelessness. The attention that goes towards delivering homelessness

services while we have them is great. But actually, we want to look at reducing the kind of need to provide services in the first place. That is part of my role.

My advocacy role today is still informed by the people that I interacted with as a front line worker many years ago. To this day, I still interact with people who share those kinds of anecdotal stories. Not as much as I used to when it was an everyday thing for me, but I think that The Salvation Army's reputation is built on pragmatic, practical responses to peoples' needs. If you are homeless, we need to find you housing… our advocacy has to be consistent with that, so we have to be able to tell real human stories that sound like real human stories that relate to the experience of that front line service.

Tranmere Street taught me that you really have to build solid, deep relationships with the people you are working with during the good times, as well as the bad times. If you wait until something bad happens to do something, and someone's life falls apart, then your intervention has come far too late.

The quiet times where things appear to be going well… that's when you build up relational credits with people. You ensure that the moments that are a bit quieter or better, when things are going well, are times when you can build those relationships. Because at the end of the day if things fall apart, as they so often do, it's then that the credits you've built up after demonstrating that you are trustworthy will count.

They know you'll stick by them. They know you keep your promises. They know you are actually on their side when their life is falling apart.

In the middle of a crisis, you need to be able to use the strength of that relationship to do what you can to help pull a person out of the middle of that; you need to get them back on track again.

The Dawn of T Street

Les Smith talks to **Majors David Eldridge, Graeme** and **Helen McClimont.**




DAVE I reckon the young people we have worked with have taught us about homelessness. We didn't have a clue.

HELEN We were middle class people.

DAVE It was their world, not ours.

GRAEME Homeless people teach you about life. I used to watch homeless people who were at the Gill Memorial Home when I worked there and the way they used to look after each other. I thought, something very special is happening here. They would come in tears, saying the green van is in the park and picking up all our mates and taking them off – can you do something? The concern for each other, the way they sort of sat there… they were mates, a lot of these old guys would have been in the Gill since the war (WW2). They were shell shocked veterans. There was a group of guys in one area there who were all on the same ship that went down. They had the bosun and he was sterling, sort of the leader amongst the six blokes that occupied that area on D floor of The Gill Memorial Home for Men on A'Beckett Street. They cared for each other.

DAVE If you went up on D floor in particular and bit of E floor there would be guys bringing in bombers and there would be guys back in New Guinea hiding in the jungle from the Japanese. Increasingly a number of young people started appearing at the Gill. The mix of ages wasn't working and this led to the development of the Tranmere Street program for homeless young people.

GRAEME You learnt or you died. One day this guy came to the front door of Tranmere Street, Sharkie. He had sharks tattoos from his eyes to his ears. Nobody had tats on their face back then. For some reason or other, he was set off, with a bike chain. He was going to take

me down with his bike chain. I had the kids down the back and this bloke in the front. I'm thinking, What do I do now? It was in that instant that I learned how to deal with a situation like that. I reckon it took me about half an hour to talk that guy down, old Sharkie. But I did talk him down and I realised what I had done. Nobody ever taught us. If I had been angry with him or got aggressive with him, he would have wrapped that bike chain around my neck.

From left: Major David Eldridge, Colonel William Roberts, Major Graeme McClimont.

DAVE Many young people used Tranmere Street to escape dangerous family circumstances. It was sometimes used as a place to hide. Once we were hiding a kid from a really aggressive stepfather who was in the Painters and Dockers Union. He rings up and says, you've got my kid there. No, we say, we don't think we have, but I cannot tell you who is here. He said I will come and bomb your place and don't think I can't do it. You are thinking, Oh you could… but you don't back off. We did risky things like that all the time.

People would turn up trying to get the girls in the house to go and work in brothels, particularly if they had known the girls before… you were always alert to keeping the house as a safe place. You had to try to build good relationships with the police both as additional protection for the residents and also because some of our residents were involved in illegal activities. They could always charge our kids for something and you wanted to make sure that if they were arrested they would be treated fairly. We would tell our kids to tell them the truth if they were being questioned but don't tell them about everything you had done since you were 12. Don't admit to every crime you have ever committed in your life. We tried to teach kids how to communicate in stressful circumstances. Admit that you had stolen the car but be cautiously respectful. We taught them that they did have rights

but that there were ways of dealing with police that reduced the likelihood of serious charges being laid. You had to teach them to stand up for their rights but do so in a way that they would not place themselves at higher risk…

If a young person mouthed off at a policeman in South Fitzroy, back then, they sometimes got the living daylights beaten out of them. We used to say, Look kids, if the police pull me over then I don't say, listen, copper, I have rights! I say, Constable, was I speeding? Oh I am really sorry, I must have missed the sign. Do what you can to get out of being charged. You tried your best to teach kids how to survive in life.

One night a young guy who was staying with us came to the front door of the house with his mouth all smashed open and eyes cut. I said, What happened? Talking through puffed lips he said we picked up a couple of older women in the pub and we went back to their place and then their husbands came home and punched the crap out of us and I think they are coming to get us here. They just got themselves into trouble so easily. You teach kids lessons on the run, how to behave publicly and how to protect themselves. Teaching them about all of those issues that can put them in dangerous situations. Looking back, it's really remarkable we didn't lose more kids.

Good outcomes are the product of sustained work with people. We used to say to people when they talked about Tranmere Street and said, 'Oh, you keep kids for a long time, well, we would say, It's taken 16 years to screw the kid's life up and you're not going to fix it up in the 16 weeks we are funded to work with them.

LES The thing that I keep hearing from talking to people at Tranmere Street is they talk about being faithful and steadfast; these really old church words. But they are actually about really hanging in with people. I hear that again and again when I hear the stories. It is a challenge for us in the Salvos to be thinking that way again, instead of thinking about outcomes in terms of increasing our numbers. It's about being faithful and doing what you were called to do, whether it's successful or not.

GRAEME I maintain that we did get beyond Moor Street, to get to Tranmere Street, and it did survive, and it did thrive, because, in some way, God was in and amongst all of that. It

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was raw and all that was happening… there was probably a sense in which God sustained it just as much as in any of the stories that we are talking about here… perhaps more so.

HELEN I remember many times perhaps, but not specific details… times when there was desperation and the thought that this is it –it's all finished. And then something would happen and you really felt it was only because it was happening in God's Spirit.

GRAEME Thinking back to the Gill… When you went up there at night when they were asleep… the smell was overpowering, and the noise was something you never heard. You had 80 people sleeping in one space and you had teenage kids coming into that.

DAVE And that worked in both ways… sometimes the kids were victimised, but often the kids victimised the older guys didn't they? Rolled them for their pension cheques and things like that. It was an unhealthy environment. I worked in the Gill for six months or so before Graeme was there.

HELEN It was his first appointment out of college.

DAVE I mean in those days it was awful, wasn't it? When I worked in the Gill Rob Wilson and I looked after the canteen. We stayed up overnight with some of the night shift guys. They used to sell smokes in the canteen then, and I never forget there was a huge donation of cigarettes and lollies for Christmas… someone decided to sell them in the canteen rather than give them to the guys and he stored them at the bottom of the extra wide staircase. Any way … we may have advised the boys on Christmas Eve that there were smokes and lollies there, and if you open this door and go down two flights… they all disappeared and that staff member went berserk. The Gill residents smoked them all and ate the lollies. That is the way it was; it was a classic –almost closed – institution. There were 300 guys.

HELEN There were 300 guys living in the Gill.

GRAEME The big challenge at the Gill was to prevent grog from getting up the narrow stairs at night, so they had somebody sitting on the back door to check every bag that was going…

GRAEME In the day, it was government policy that 16-year-old boys could manage on their own, now it has gone back to 18. But at that particular stage it was 16. So you had all these kids kicked out without care plans, without anything for their future. They just said, you are 16, you are on your own. So that created problems, didn't it, Dave?

DAVE Yes. There was no homeless youth system. There was the out of home care system and some hostels for working girls or boys. The Army managed a large hostel for young women in Spring Street and Lynden Lodge in Hawthorn. They were primarily for young people

who had come down from the country, although they would have taken kids from Bayswater on occasions.

DAVE There was no homelessness system. No SAAP funding. We were flying by the seat of our pants and what tended to happen at Moor Street was that Graeme or I would tend to do most of the nights during the week – two or three nights a week each.

GRAEME 90 hours a week.

LES So you worked during the day and slept over.

HELEN I wouldn't see Graham for three or four days. He just didn't come home.

DAVE Gloria and I had just got married, so a couple of nights she would do a sleepover with me so she could just say hello. We had just taken a flat in Kew. Honestly, people don't believe it but I reckon 80 hours a week was a short week.

GRAEME That's right.

DAVE So we did all those hours and you, Graeme, were doing a uni degree on top of that.

GRAEME Yeah, that is right.

LES John Cleary told me a story that, while he never worked at Tranmere Street, one night he was visiting the refuge he was king hit by one of the resident.

DAVE There was this young resident of the refuge who had been bashing guys in the Gill, if I remember rightly, and we (Graeme, Hutch and I) were giving him the real rounds of the kitchen. 'That is a gutless, weak act, rah, rah, rah, rah'… We were all still in the Fitzroy hall and John went around to the house and they said Graeme and Dave are around at the hall. So he walked up that lane and the kid we had chastised just walked past and went whack! John comes in and says some kid just hit me for nothing.

DAVE Wow, for nothing, I said. John was actually in a play called 'The Bandmaster' starting the next night. He had to wear inch thick makeup over his eye for the week of the play.

DAVE One day, we decided we would have a role reversal day – based on the Salvo musical *Takeover Bid* – where the kids would run the refuge and we would be the kids. So both groups had the chance to send up each-other's behaviour. It proved to be an incredibly positive experience. Tranmere Street residents acted like staff members and vice versa. They had us off to a T. They would be doing things like "well Les tell me what you are thinking, are you saying that I'm saying" - they were mimicing counselling approaches used by staff. The kids loved it and we gained some useful insights into how we were being understood. We also learnt

heaps about kids just by getting them out of the refuge. Camps and day outings were particularly useful in this regard.

GRAEME I remember very clearly, the memory that sort of sticks with me, was with a young girl we shall call J. She was a very tall elegant girl from an Italian background with wavy red hair and a quite dynamic personality. I'm sitting on the floor up against a wall with her at about 1 o'clock in the morning and we were just having a chat. J had a job and she worked at it for a little while and she said to me "when the money comes to me hard like this I value it, so I'm looking after this job." She said 'when the money comes easy, when I'm turning tricks, then I don't value it and that is when I do drugs'. They had insights, they weren't stupid you know they understood, they were bright and intelligent people. We always have to understand that, very few of them were people with huge intellectual disabilities or any of that kind of issue.

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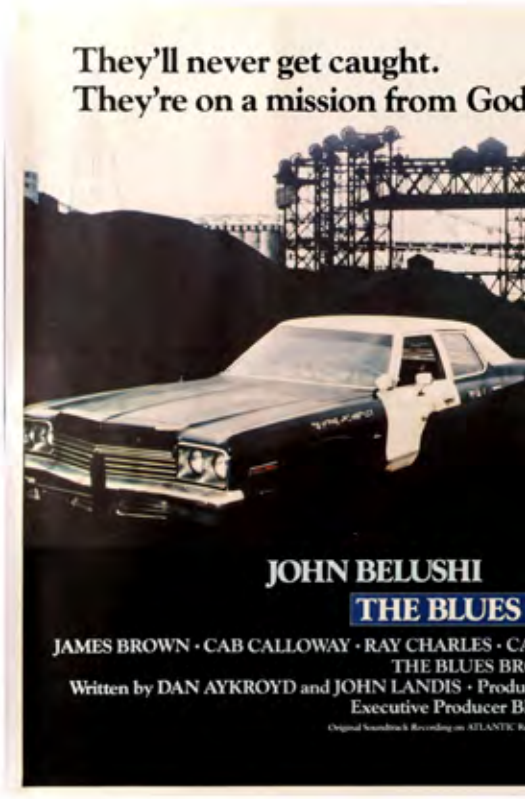
DAVE They had very agile minds. Not always well educated but they had agile minds. I think the other thing that we understood was that sometimes these kids had to let off steam. If a resident did explode we tried to put it into context and contained it away from the other kids. I used to do Friday nights sleepovers most weeks. Firstly because it was cheaper (I was on a Corps officers salary) and we didn't have to pay overtime rates, but also because I wanted to allow the kids let off steam. We would do the same thing every Friday night. We would go out on a bus, go somewhere and do something stupid then we would end up watching Blues Brothers midnight show at the Valhalla. The kids loved it because they wanted some structure that they understood so they knew that on Friday nights they would go to Blues Brothers, but beforehand we would go out and have fun



because the Blues Brothers wasn't on till 11 or 12pm. We would do things like go down to St Kilda and have water fights — somewhere where they could run wild and let off steam. We always tried to do something physical on a Friday night, unless it was freezing cold, because they just needed to let off steam. I used to try to wear them out so we never got to bed till 2 or 3am. I figured it was better wearing them out and a weekend for homeless kids is a still a weekend. I knew that if you wore them out you are going to get 4 hours of sleep but if you don't wear them out you are going to get no sleep. They would be up all night watching telly or carrying on and having little dramas.

From green naivety to grateful grace

Les Smith is the senior chaplain at Crossroads.

I started work at Tranmere Street around 30 years ago. Dave Eldridge attended the same Salvation Army corps (church) as me and he offered me a position at T Street under some scheme designed to attract young Salvationists to the work (I didn't know this at the time; I thought he was just offering me a job).

I thought I was fairly open minded and worldly wise; looking back, I was as green and conservative as they come.

For the first three months I was told that I was just to observe what happened there; I was not to make any decisions or intervene in any situations. Just watch and learn. So this is what I did. I watched and listened as conflicts and language and behaviour I had never seen or heard before unfolded in front of me.

Staff constantly put out spot fires that otherwise could have led to dangerous and volatile situations. I saw some of the meanest, toughest and most frightening young people I had ever met before; to be honest it was pretty scary. I soon learned that you had to develop a poker face and not react to things too quickly, or else the residents would see the fear in your eyes — they could almost smell it.

Once they recognised you were scared they would zero in on it, like a heat-seeking missile. For the first three months my head was spinning but I had somehow managed (maybe due to the skill of the staff) to get through unharmed.

After the first three months I was told to do another three, because the centre I was going to work in (St Kilda Crisis Centre) was still under construction and not ready for staffing yet. I suspect now that they knew I was still scared, and weren't so sure yet as to whether I could cut it.

My next three months at Tranmere Street, I was still there as an 'observer'. The residents picked this up really quickly, nicknaming me 'The Phantom' — and reminding me of this whenever they were acting up. But over this time I adjusted to the environment and started to get to know some of the residents and hear something of their stories.

These were stories that shocked and saddened me deeply, challenged my understanding of God, shaking up my whole way of seeing the world. These stories were horrible, tragic (and unimaginable to me at the time), stories that seemed to be the stuff of hardcore movies and fiction, rather than reality. I was starting to enter a world where pain, violence, injustice and betrayal were commonplace.

These were stories that shocked and saddened me deeply, challenged my understanding of God, shaking up my whole way of seeing the world. These stories were horrible, tragic (and unimaginable to me at the time), stories that seemed to be the stuff of hardcore movies and fiction, rather than reality. I was starting to enter a world where pain, violence, injustice and betrayal were commonplace.

This went well beyond my conservative Christian upbringing. But by now my head had stopped spinning and my feet had started to hit the ground. Just as I thought I was getting the hang of it all, it was time to move on.

My next real involvement with Tranmere Street was probably around 20 years later when we had a Crossroads volleyball team in the Salvation Army volleyball competition (SAVA). My son (who was around 12 at the time) and I used to swing past T Street on Monday nights to pick up any kids that wanted to play; we even had dinner together a couple of times as a team beforehand. During the year we managed to scrape together enough wins to make the B-grade finals but I was ineligible to play so we were down to only five players. Having won our first final we made it through to the grand final only to lose in five sets. We were devastated, particularly because we felt with the six of us it would have been a different story.

After the game a couple of the boys stormed off and I was concerned that they might do something they would later regret, so I followed them outside. They were at the van waiting to go home.

I told them we had to go back inside for the presentations, which they begrudgingly did. When we re-entered the stadium each member of our team received individual runners-up trophies and suddenly things changed. These young people were a bit emotional when they received their trophies and I thought it was because they were disappointed. Afterwards one of them then told me they had never ever won an award or a trophy in their life, this was their first ever trophy and (even though it was runners-up) they were enormously proud. Incredibly so.

Somehow, it seemed to make all the difference in the world. I would like to say it was the reason why, a few weeks later, two of these young men reconciled with their family and moved home. But I am sure that it was probably really due to the incredible work of the staff at T Street. However, I do like to tell myself that our volleyball triumph played some small part in it all.

It has been my privilege in the last few months to hear the stories of Tranmere Street from a small number of the staff and residents that shaped this place. It has been an inspiring and uplifting time to catch up with them and hear little snippets of what it was like way back then – back when they were at T Street.

When Tranmere Street started it did not start with business plans, quality improvement frameworks, church growth principles, service strategies, or the raft of business type approaches that permeate service delivery and church responses today.

They had a singular focus – everything they did was about responding to the needs of the young person that was in front of them, in the here and now. They made a commitment to really get to know the young people they were working with and to be available to them. It wasn't just a job to them, or a romantic missional notion, it was a singular purpose — a response to need. A small group of people took the teachings of Jesus — to care for the marginalised and forgotten people – seriously and felt compelled to do the same.

There was no road map, no existing frameworks and few policy documents to follow. It was really about intentional engagement. Through trial and error and through a desperate desire to be 'real' with people (which meant talking to the people they were trying to assist)

genuine quality care was provided that was life changing.

Today, we would look at what occurred and describe it with terms such as quality improvement, policy frameworks, best practice approaches, client feedback systems, risk management strategies and so forth, but each of these things seemed to develop organically at T Street.

These occurred as a result of working closely with people, rather than having things imposed from outside. Through caring responses that were genuine and engaging, these things occurred organically. In fact there was a kind of 'praxis' approach that occurred, involving both the young people and the staff equally. It was to lay the foundations for much of the professional practice that occurs today.

This approach, building genuine relationships, needs to continue to be the foundation of our work today. As frameworks and approaches constantly change and develop it is important that our fundamentals remain solid.

Over the course of decades, the work done at T Street would reshape the face of service provision in The Salvation Army and across the broader community sector. T Street would develop a bunch of young, enthusiastic workers into future organisational leaders, many of whom have gone on to become CEOs and senior leaders across the broader sector.

> (Jesus) was not so much about gathering people together so much as he was about engagement, genuine engagement. He was particularly interested in engaging with people who had been rejected from mainstream society and to bring purpose and meaning back into their lives.

T Street was the birth place of Crossroads, perhaps Melbourne 614, and many other innovative current day Salvation Army programs. But most importantly it engaged with young people on the margins, gave them hope, possibilities and changed lives forever.

I think it has a lot to teach the church today.

Today the church is confused about its role and purpose. It seems that the focus of church is to recruit as many people as possible, to sign them up as card carrying members and to all gather together in one place. The 'successful' churches are seen to be those that recruit the most people, or that have the most entertaining church services.

If we read the stories of Jesus we see that he was not so much about gathering people

together so much as he was about engagement, genuine engagement. He was particularly interested in engaging with people who had been rejected from mainstream society and to bring purpose and meaning back into their lives. Through encounters with Jesus these people found healing and restoration. This was at the heart of the gospel so it should be at the heart of the church today.

I think we, the church, can learn a lot about our purpose by looking at what has, and still does, occur at Tranmere Street. A group of young (at the time) people started out with a genuine desire to care for those who were homeless and rejected by society. They accepted and engaged with them, hanging in there with them through tough times, building trust and ultimately building genuine relationships that were healing and restorative.

This seems to be more in keeping with the stories and teachings of Jesus than a lot of stuff that the church does today. Certainly our founder William Booth understood this ensuring that his evangelical work was always under pinned by his care for the poor and marginalised of society. Caring for others is not an optional extra for those professing to follow Jesus, it is at the very core of Jesus teaching and ministry.

Today things are a little more complex of course with professional standards that include such things as 'duty of care', child safety, mandatory reporting, risk management and a raft of other very important measures that are required in providing quality responses. It is easy for us to sit back and leave it all to the 'professionals' rather than see it as a requirement of the church. And yet I am inspired that 40 years ago a small group of (predominantly) young people saw a need and made a response. They really didn't know what they were doing or where it would lead but they knew that they could not just sit back, sing a few hymns and feel good about their 'personal salvation'. They had to make a response, and so they jumped into the unknown and learnt on the run.

Respond to the need that comes across your path; find ways to genuinely engage with those on the outer, you just never know where it will lead.

I hope that this Tranmere St anniversary inspires you to make a response; a response to those around you who are needy, or isolated, or marginalised, or for some reason find themselves on the outer. Perhaps in doing so you will find that God's Spirit exists in the dark and difficult places, on the fringes of society, as much (if not more so) than in church pews and worship events. Perhaps in doing so you will find God in more deeply meaningful ways than you could imagine and, in the process find yourself standing on sacred ground. I would encourage you to follow the example of this small group of Salvos from 40 years ago and take a risk. Respond to the need that comes across your path; find ways to genuinely engage with those on the outer, you just never know where it will lead.

Congratulations Tranmere Street and staff on 40 years of incredibly amazing care, services, and hope. You brought life to people who would otherwise have been forgotten.

The Salvation Army Crossroads Tranmere Street is supported by the Victorian Government.