

# Archbishop's Christmas Appeal for LifeLink 2017

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB, Archbishop of Perth



## Editor's Introduction

In this special issue of our newsletter, we focus on the wonderful work of Centrecare Inc.

Originally established by the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth in 1946, today Centrecare is a functionally independent Incorporated Association which continues to be a modern expression of the Church in today's world, and is thus deserving of our support.

As one of Western Australia's most well established, professional and innovative providers of counselling and specialist social services, Centrecare delivers vital services including: Accommodation & Support; General Counselling; Family Domestic Violence Counselling; Family Relationship Counselling; Gambling Help; Indigenous Specific Mental Health; Migration Advice; Financial Counselling; Youth & Family Counselling and many more.

**Each year, Centrecare reaches out to help more than 25,000 Western Australians throughout the Perth metropolitan, Goldfields, Esperance and South West regions of WA.**

We spent time meet and chatting with staff and clients from the Gosnells and Perth offices and learning more about the important services the organisation provides, and the positive impact it is making in the lives of its clients.



# Learning to Smile Again... *thanks to Centrecare*

## Kashindi's Story:

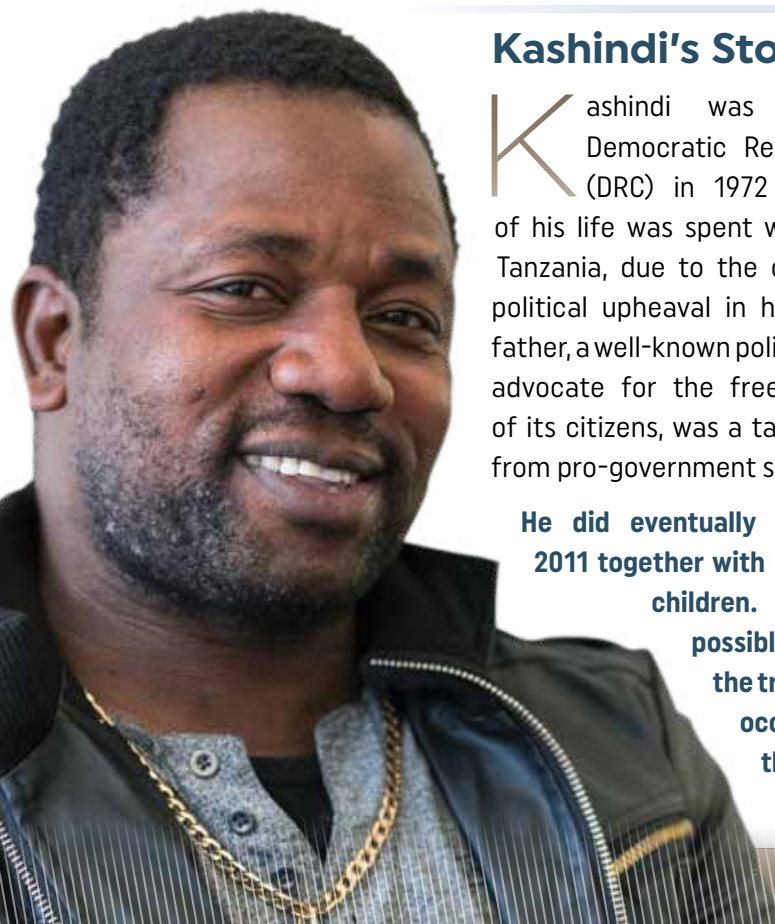
**K**ashindi was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1972 although much of his life was spent with his family in Tanzania, due to the ongoing war and political upheaval in his homeland. His father, a well-known politician and a vocal advocate for the freedom and rights of its citizens, was a target for violence from pro-government supporters.

**He did eventually return home in 2011 together with his wife and four children. He could not possibly have foreseen the tragedy that would occur as a result of this decision.**

Kashindi said "A few months after returning 'home', my father was brutally assassinated by government forces. On that same day, my beautiful wife and two of my children (aged 1 and 5) were also tragically killed. Only me and my son (aged 7) escaped the violence. What I did not know at that time, was that my eldest daughter (10) had also survived, but we were separated from that moment on.

I fled with my son to a refugee camp in Kenya. We spent the next five years in that camp, improving my English language skills, undertaking training courses and trying desperately to find a better life for us somewhere in the world.

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**I** eventually heard from a woman I met in Tanzania when she was visiting refugee camps with her Church group. She was also born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and had migrated to Perth some years earlier. After a lot of telephone calls and emails over the next 18 months, we realised our friendship was growing into more. She came to visit me in Kenya in 2013 and our love blossomed. We were married that same year. My son and I arrived in Perth in August 2016. We were so happy. It is such a beautiful place and the people so friendly" said Kashindi.

Unfortunately, this is where the happy story takes a sad turn for the worse.



Kashindi and Debra Guiney

**Debra the Team Leader of Centrecare's Settlement Services Program explains:**

"Once in Australia, the marriage did not go well at all, and through no fault of their own, Kashindi and his son became homeless. The son's school contacted **Centrecare's Settlement Services** for assistance.

It firstly referred them to **Centrecare's Entrypoint Perth Service** which provided emergency accommodation for that evening and also referred Kashindi to the Red Cross for assistance in obtaining documentation for a Centrelink Special Benefit Payment.

Our case worker helped Kashindi apply for Centrelink special benefits. Entrypoint provided access to two more nights' accommodation, a Transperth card and Coles food vouchers. Our Settlement Services helped linked Kashindi in with the Fremantle Multicultural Centre (FMC) Crisis Accommodation Program, where after negotiations, Kashindi and his son were accepted and able to move immediately to a secure property.

During the initial three day period in emergency accommodation, Centrecare's Settlement Services helped linked Kashindi with a St Vincent de Paul Migrant and Refugee Committee Member for financial support for bond and rent money for four weeks. St Vincent de Paul also arranged payment and organised for the local conference members to connect with them for support with food hampers, transport vouchers and clothing. They will remain in contact with Kashindi and his son for as long as they need support.

Over the next 10 days, our Settlement Services Case Worker helped Kashindi obtain his Centrelink Special Benefit Payment and with other settlement issues as they arose. He received assistance from a Migration Agent from the Multicultural Metropolitan Resource Centre (MMRC) regarding his visa. His son was supported by the school's Counsellor and he attended the **Settlement Service's Youth Camp** during the school holidays. Kashindi has been linked to **Centrecare's Counselling Service** and he is seeing a counsellor each week. FMC started working with Kashindi on his long term goals of attending the Adult English Migrant Program at TAFE and looking for rewarding employment, whilst continuing to support him in a tenancy whilst he secured a home in the private rental sector.

All agencies are monitoring, supporting and assisting as required. Kashindi appears determined to forge a good life in Australia for himself and his son where they say they will become proactive and productive members of the community and Australian society" said Debra.

We'll leave the final words to Kashindi. He said:

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**"Oh, I am so happy now. My son is smiling and I am smiling all the time. The people here at Centrecare have been so wonderful. They have helped us so much, and are still helping us. We are so grateful – thank you".**

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# Sweet Dreams

Emma really loves making and decorating cakes and dreams of one day starting her own bakery business. Unfortunately, mistakes made when she was a young girl have been holding her back.

Emma explains *"When I was 16, I made the biggest mistake of my life by admitting to police that I was responsible for drugs they had found in my possession, drugs which weren't even mine. I was trying to protect someone else and the end result was that I spent the next two years of my life in prison. When you're young, you just don't think how one wrong decision can affect you so dramatically... I've certainly learned the hard way.*

*It has been difficult for me to find a job because when I go for interviews and tell them of my past, they just aren't interested in giving me a go. When you don't have a rewarding job, it's difficult to find somewhere to live or to afford somewhere to live"* she said.

Now, Emma is getting the help she needs thanks to **Centrecare's 'Assisted Rental Pathway'** project.

This pilot project, funded by the Housing Authority, is a four year program which seeks to provide eligible social housing tenants and waitlist applicants with supported opportunities in the private rental market.

Participants receive a financial subsidy to help them secure their own tenancy as well as ongoing support to help them achieve their goals. **Centrecare's Housing Engagement Referral Officers** (HERO's) are assisting 90 participants in this pilot program which is now at maximum participation levels. They also provide financial counselling.

Emma said:

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**"My HERO has been an absolute angel. I've never met anyone like her. She has been so helpful and so supportive. I don't know where I'd be without her. She has guided me through the program and assisted me to secure my own rental home.**

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*I'm now looking at enrolling in a cooking course at TAFE and for the first time in a long while, I feel as though I have a plan for my life and that I will achieve my dreams. I am motivated, enthusiastic and have a great person like Maria guiding me along the way."*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If you own a bakery or interested in providing employment opportunities for Emma we'd love to put you in contact. Please call the LifeLink office on telephone: **6014 3636**





## *Lifting the Burden of* FINANCIAL DISTRESS

**R**obert, a retired public servant, and his invalid wife Evelyn, had been suffering with the burden of financial distress for more years than they care to remember. As pensioners, they could barely afford the necessities of life, let alone clear the significant credit card debt they had accrued.

Robert said *"For almost five years all we could manage was to make the minimum monthly payments, but the interest rate was so high and it just seemed to get beyond our control. It was such a worrying time. In 2015, Evelyn suffered a stroke which I believe in part brought on by due the amount of stress she and I were under.*

*A social worker at the Armadale Hospital referred us to Centrecare's Financial Counselling Service to see if they could help us find a way out of the dreadful financial situation we found ourselves in. I met with Robert Evans and he took down all our information and offered to advocate with the banks on our behalf.*

*After less than 10 days, Robert contacted me to say that he had been successful and the banks had waived our debt entirely on compassionate grounds. I couldn't believe it, after just a matter of 10 days, Centrecare had achieved what I couldn't in 10 years.*

*I can't tell you what a relief it has been for us. To not have that worry, that weight on our shoulders. What Mr Evans achieved for us is a miracle. Evelyn and I can now focus on getting her well again and simply enjoying our lives" he said.*

Robert Evans, a highly experienced Accredited Financial Counsellor from Centrecare's Financial Counselling Service said:

*"This was a wonderful outcome for Robert and Evelyn and I know it's meant a great deal to them. They are a lovely couple, and with Evelyn's poor health, they have enough on their plate.*



Robert and Evelyn with Robert Evans

*In 2015/16 year, Centrecare's Financial Counselling Services (including Gambling Financial Counselling) assisted a total of 255 new clients. In 2016/17, we helped more than 519 new clients. It demonstrates the very real financial hardship people are experiencing in the community right now.*

*It is the result of the mining boom ending, under employment growing and the mortgage stress people are now finding themselves in.*

*I encourage anyone experiencing financial distress, either from gambling or personal financial reasons, to reach out to us at Centrecare – were here to help" said Mr Evans.*





# *A Long Journey* FROM SOUTH SUDAN TO SERVICE

*W*hen Yousif and his family arrived in Australia, it had been a long journey for his Mum and Dad, his three brothers and only sister. As refugees from war torn South Sudan, their escape had taken almost 10 years to achieve.

It began in 1995, when Yousif's mother left the family to work in Lebanon and then Egypt as a domestic worker. She did this to raise money the family needed for a better life. In 1999, Yousif and the rest of his family escaped from South Sudan and joined his mother in Egypt. As registered refugees, the family was provided care by the Salesian Missionaries.

Yousif kindly agreed to share with us his remarkable story:

*"Even as a young boy in Egypt, I would volunteer to help pack food hampers and other small jobs at the local Catholic Church, as I wanted to give back something to those who were helping my family. It was something I really enjoyed. I never thought this introduction of 'service to others' would shape my life so much. Finally in 2005, my family was granted Visas to move to Australia.*

*Landing at the Perth Airport was daunting for all of us as we did not speak English and did not know what to expect. A caseworker from Centrecare's Migrant Services picked us up and accompanied us to our first home in Australia. We were extremely happy as there was so much food, the house was large and everyone had a room. We felt safe to be in Australia.*

*I embraced the learning opportunities Australia had to offer, initially undertaking English Language studies at TAFE. I then completes year 12 at North Lake Senior High School. Having mastered my English, I studied many courses that would potentially help me gain work opportunities in the future. I was very proud to receive my Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care in 2016, and in 2018 I will complete my Bachelor of Youth Work at Edith Cowan University.*

*I started working for Centrecare, the very organisation which had welcomed and cared for my family and I when we first arrived, as a casual Bilingual Worker in Centrecare's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy in March 2006, helping to support newly arrived refugees which included welcoming refugees upon arrival, assisting with orientations, providing lessons in public transport, linking with essential services and skill development. I also interpreted for clients, as I speak three languages including English. Working with newly arrived Refugees helped me heal the wounds from my own separation from my native land and gave me a purpose to help those who are finding their feet in a new land.*

*I was then offered the position of Support Worker in Centrecare's Status Resolution Support Service, supporting Unaccompanied Minors. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to guide and support youth who had left their home countries and families behind to commence a challenging journey in a new country.*

*I saw the fruits of my labour when in December 2016, I took up my present position as a Youth Worker in Centrecare's Settlement Services Program.*

**I love Australia and I love Perth. I am so happy to be working at Centrecare with such a wonderful group of people. Every day, I get to make a difference in someone's life. I am so blessed to be able to help people – people just like me and my family"**

said Yousif.



# Centrecare

## Providing A Vital 'First Response To Homelessness' in WA



It's a sad but very real occurrence that every day, right across Western Australia, there are far too many people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They may be living on the streets or in their car, couch surfing, perhaps facing eviction from existing accommodation or escaping family and domestic violence.

So who can they turn to for help? **Centrecare's Entrypoint Perth Service** offers a free assessment and referral service to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in WA to access accommodation and support options.

Access is available via a **Statewide call line** operated **Monday – Friday 9.00am to 7.00pm and Saturday from 9.00am to 5.00pm.**

**Assessment and Referral Officers** are on duty to provide an absolutely confidential first point of contact for people in need, helping families and individuals to find safe refuge, supported and crisis accommodation.

The work they do is just so important as it provides people with hope, someone to lean on when they most need it, someone to show that they do care. Centrecare's Entrypoint service is a 'triage' unit. When someone makes contact, their "immediate and urgent need" will first be addressed. Centrecare staff will then undertake an assessment with the caller in order to help them further by referring them to other government and social service organisations who may be able assist them to sustain their accommodation or help access other accommodation.



For individuals and families living in the Perth area, Centrecare's Assessment Referral Officers will:

- ▶ assess individual circumstances on the phone or in person
- ▶ provide information on accommodation and support options to increase their chances of securing accommodation
- ▶ if eligible, provide formal referrals to specialist homelessness services and other accommodation or support options
- ▶ set up a time for an assessment and then refer to the most eligible appropriate services
- ▶ assess individual circumstances of people and families experiencing domestic violence and, if eligible, provide formal referrals to crisis accommodation and support options



For individuals and families based in regional Western Australia:

- ▶ provide information on accommodation and support options to assist people to seek their own accommodation
- ▶ assess individual circumstances of people and families experiencing domestic violence and, if eligible, provide formal referrals to crisis accommodation and support options.