

'CHRISTMAS 2008'

by Tony Pietropiccolo

Good morning everyone. It feels like we are ready for a celebration. The end of the year is always a time for looking back and also for looking forward to the New Year. It is also helpful to have Christmas come before the years end to remind us of the values that have underpinned what we do and how we do it. The Christmas message, reported to have been spoken by angels, of “Joy to the world and peace to people of goodwill” resonates just as meaningfully today as it did two thousand years ago.

The joy relates to having in the world a presence that exists to support us and to assist with our suffering and concerns. To Christians this presence is Christ. Non-Christians find this joy in other beliefs of great meaning to them. There is little doubt that for people experiencing significant concerns in their lives to have someone to turn to for guidance and understanding can be life giving. To quote from our most recent annual report, a Centrecare client writes:

“Dear Centrecare

During the time I have had contact with you I have received kindness, compassion and good service.

The work you did for me was extensive and without compensation to yourself.

I cannot forget this and will not throughout my life, please accept my thanks and appreciation.”

Of course Centrecare’s kindness, compassion and good service is expressed through you, each of you. You are expressions of the “Joyous Presence” in our world. You are essential, important and of great value to others. We cannot forget this as we do our jobs. It is a humbling thought and humility is something we must always keep in mind for we are both the recipients and dispensers of a great gift. This gift is of course the gift of love. In a recent speech given by Justice Kirby, a justice of the High Court of Australia, he told his audience of law graduates that the most important thing that needs to underpin our lives whether at work or elsewhere is love. For it is this that makes the banal become fascinating and what is routine become exciting. There is little doubt that our work is an opportunity to both express and receive love and we need to do that both with our clients and with one another.

That peace will be experienced by “people of goodwill” is also a part of the Christmas message that we must not lose sight of. There is an interior peace that necessarily accrues to those of us who are determined to live a life that is inspired by generosity, helpfulness and kindness. Lives that seek to transcend self-centeredness and

aggrandisement. These are people who seek the wellbeing of others as well as their own. They believe in the common good and are keen to achieve it.

I know that these are your ideals and you can take great comfort from this. Allow yourselves to acknowledge the significant contribution you are making to individuals, families and to our community in general.

In 2008 we have achieved a great deal. As you know, we have continued to look after young children at Djooraminda, have provided support to refugees, have housed many homeless families, have provided support to young people through a number of programs, have continued to provide counselling and support to people experiencing a myriad of difficulties, we have provided mediation and dispute resolution to hundreds of couples and to workplaces, we have maintained services to the corporate world and to remote Aboriginal communities. I won't list the 88 different programs we provide. Suffice it to say that we have provided assistance to tens of thousands of clients and have had close to 100,000 contacts with them.

We have retained the agency's accreditation as a quality assured organisation, we reviewed staff wages and conditions, finalised the Gosnells office, the agency was awarded the " Excellence in Organisational Management Award" in community housing, we established the Child Contact Centre in Kalgoorlie and associated services and the list goes on. You have done all of this and you can be proud of what you have achieved. Thank you for all your hard work and commitment.

2009 will no doubt bring its challenges and achievements and we look forward to those.

Before I finish, allow me to also express my appreciation to the Executive Managers and their assistants for their hard work and their generosity of spirit. They are great support to me personally and I know that they are keen to also support all of you. Their effort and contribution has been outstanding.

Allow me also to make a special acknowledgement of Peta Slocombe who, as you know, has reluctantly decided to no longer lead Centrecare Corporate. I want to acknowledge the wonderful contribution she has made to the development of Corporate over many years. She has been exceptional in that role and we are sad that she can't continue in it. Luckily we will still have Peta to assist us in her role in Professional Excellence and we look forward to that.

Finally, let me wish you and your families and friends a wonderful Christmas and a great 2009.