



## **DIRECTOR'S ADDRESS – CHRISTMAS STAFF LUNCH - FRI. 7 DEC 2018**

Good morning everyone.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are holding this celebration today the 'Whadjuk' people of the Noongar Nation. My respects to their elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal people here with us.

It's great to see so many here and it certainly has the feel and look of a great celebration which, as you know, is one of Centrecare's values, so it's important that we do it well. I would also like to acknowledge some special guests. Loretta Drago and Leanne Nunn from Catholic Super, Father Stephen Truscott, Centrecare Chaplain and both Errol Goves and Patsy Hammer, two former long term Centrecare employees.

My thanks to Cherie Broers and our Marketing and HR Teams for organising this event and also to the Social Club Committee for their help and cooperation. Today would not have been possible without much individual and team effort.

We are rapidly coming to the end of another calendar year and we will soon be celebrating Christmas and welcoming 2019.

Reflecting back on this year, what came to mind is the substantial efforts and changes that have taken place. We've seen a significant growth in the number of staff, the addition of the Intensive Family Support Program, two Family Support Networks, the Goldfields Mental Health Portal and more recently the Settle In Program for newly arrived migrants.

We have continued to bed down the Youth and Adult Corrective Services Programs, as well as our housing support for the Humanitarian Support Program. Let's not forget the development of the RESILnZ App.

Our partnership with other organisations in the delivery of services such as Wungening, UnitingCare West, Save the Children, St Bartholomew's House, Zonta House, Communicare and Wirrpanda Foundation have been invaluable. These collaborations have added a new dimension to our organisational life.

The addition of over 40 staff to Centrecare has necessarily required a great deal of recruiting, training and significant logistical and financial organisation. My thanks to the Management and Administrations Teams for their substantial efforts.

In addition to the new, we have continued delivering over 70 other Programs across large tracts of WA. Centrecare has also remained committed to the ongoing development of the Valuing Children Initiative. A project intended to help us reflect on the place and experience of Australian children today and the impediments that stop us from creating a nation where all children can flourish. I would urge you to seriously engage in this reflection and become involved in promoting this important work.

We're an amazing organisation. Across our 11 branches, we have seen over 20,000 clients involving approximately 150,000 individual contacts. It's a fantastic effort. The question that often arises is what is the point of all this work given the ever presence of homelessness, the increase in drug use and abuse, the widening experience of mental health issues, the rising number of children in out of home care and the persistent gap between rich and poor and Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

To view our work in such terms is to largely miss the point. Our work is primarily to respond to the need created by individual and societal experiences and behaviours beyond our



organisational control. It is one of service to the community. We are there when familial and social systems have left people behind and in distress. To quote one of our clients:

*... thank you for helping my family. When I came to see you months ago, I didn't know where to turn. We had run out of money, food and options to get to out of our horrible situation... (now) the desperation has disappeared, we are happy again and looking forward to the future...*

What an amazing, invaluable contribution this was not only to the family concerned but to the society as a whole. This is not an isolated instance. Centrecare receives a number of such expressions of gratitude every year. You can read more of them in our annual report. I'm certain that those who take the time to write to us with their appreciation is only a very small percentage of those who don't write but are nevertheless greatly appreciative of what each of you do.

In a world that is increasingly defined by the use of violence as a means of resolving differences, where morality is seen as old fashioned and dispensable, where individual success and self-interest is the primary and only consideration for action and reaction, where fear is used to influence and often control peoples, it is heartening that so many of you are committed to a different view of society.

A society where care, compassion and respect have a place. Where love of others is still considered current, relevant and necessary. You continue to believe in the possibility of a different world. One in which individual wellbeing is intrinsically tied to that of a healthy community.

It's a worldview that accepts the interdependence of all things and that what we do to one of us has an impact on us all. It is to believe that destroying our environment, mistreating our children and elderly and abusing our fellow citizens are not singular, self-contained events with no connection or effect on the whole and its individual parts.

Such a worldview is not easy to sustain in a world that is often more concerned with economics than ecosystems, more committed to self than to others, where the good is seen as the enemy of success and where compassion is seen as weakness. It takes courage to go against the prevailing trend and to question the accepted norms. That you have chosen to do the work you do is an expression of that courage and I congratulate each and every one of you for it.

Our collective effort and mutual support gives us the strength to keep going and the hope of creating a better life for our clients and a more welcoming community. Our work is grounded in our values, passion, knowledge and professionalism. It is this combination of heart and mind that imbues our actions with meaning and soul.

If we believe that that we are interconnected, then look around and see how many hearts and minds are in this room. Now imagine those individual hearts and minds coming together in one heart and one mind and the shuddering impact of that on each one of us and on our community as a whole. In reality, that is exactly the effect we collectively have on the world around us through our work. Such an image and understanding is worth retaining as we each carry out our daily functions.

Thanks for all your hard work during the past year and more importantly for the caring and professional way you have done it.

My best wishes to you all and to your family and friends for a wonderful, blessed Christmas and New Year.

**Tony Pietropiccolo AM**

Director