



CENTRECARE CHRISTMAS LUNCH
TUESDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2009
by Tony Pietropiccolo

Good afternoon everyone and it's great to see so many of you here. It allows us to spend some time together enjoying each other's company.

Firstly let us acknowledge the traditional owners of this land both past and present, the Nyoongar people.

Christmas and the end of the year are nearly here. They each provide us with an opportunity to reflect on who we are, what we have done and how we have done it.

The Christmas story reminds us of those things that are fundamental to the full expression of our humanity. The Christmas message speaks of joy and of peace. It is an opportunity for us to move beyond everyday concerns and to reach out to each other in a spirit of mutual regard and unconditional love.

During this past year all of you have continued to reach out to those who have sought Centrecare services in a manner that is consistent with the Christmas message. Your work continues to make an important difference to the people you see every day. Please do not underestimate the contribution you make to the lives of those you deal with for it is substantial.

What makes the difference of course is not the techniques we use or the practical assistance we provide. As much as these are important, what makes the greatest difference to the lives of people is to be touched by someone whose spirit is genuine and whose words are true and honest. It is only when we communicate to someone's heart and soul that truly wonderful things happen. It is our relationships that have transformative power, either for bad or for good.

If we genuinely practice Centrecare's mission and values then there is no doubt that those who approach us will experience something truly special and so will we. Let us always keep in mind our shared humanity so that we may always approach our work with true compassion, respect and humility. St Bonaventure writing in the 13th Century stated that humility was the "guardian and the ornament of all the virtues". It is easy for us to become arrogant and uncaring if we don't remain focused on the fact that we all have our limitations and strengths irrespective of whether we are the healer or the healed.

The approaching end of year helps to think of what we have achieved in 2009. The past year has seen Centrecare continue to provide services to thousands of individuals and families. We have offered relationship services, assistance to those experiencing domestic violence, programs to assist the mentally ill and support for those who struggle to keep their tenancies. It provides housing, drug and alcohol programs, victim support services, prisoner re-entry programs, post separation services such as mediation and child contact centre.

We have continued to provide employee assistance programs, youth and family support programs, out of home care for Aboriginal children and a number of services focused on the provision of support for Aboriginal families. We have also provided a range of services to migrant and refugee families. Centrecare staff cover large areas of the State with services being delivered to communities beyond Warburton. In total, we currently provide approximately 90 separately funded social programs.

We have continued to contribute to the development of government policy at both State and Federal level by participating in a number of significant boards and committees. We have also contributed significantly to the effort to improve working conditions for workers in the non-government sector. The

registration of CEWA as an industrial organisation is an important part of this effort. CEWA has currently 90 plus member organisations.

Centrecare has also sought to respond to the increasing pressure on families and young people to afford housing by beginning the process of establishing a housing company that will be focused on providing affordable housing. It is hoped that the company will be formally registered in the New Year. We are already in the processes of finalising a major housing project in conjunction with Mirvac and the Department of Housing. A very exciting development in the history of Centrecare.

Other events during the year:

- § Launch of the John Connor Youth Fund 2 December 2009.
- § Centrecare Goldfields celebrated 20 years of service in 2009.
- § Centrecare Gosnells branch officially opened 9 Jun 09 by Honourable Robyn McSweeney MLC - Minister for Child Protection; Community Services.
- § Building works have started on the new Egan St, Kalgoorlie office.
- § Donations to bushfire victims - the awful Bushfires in Victoria created a wonderful response from across Australia. An appeal to Centrecare staff to help support Centrecare, Melbourne in its efforts to meet the needs associated with the bushfires resulted in approximately \$2,700 being raised.
- § Centrecare participated in the Abruzzo earthquake appeal.
- § The tenth anniversary of two staff members – Kathryn McIntyre and John Green.

It was also a very important milestone for me as this was my twentieth anniversary at Centrecare. The kindness shown to me during the various celebrations that took place remain truly memorable and were lots of fun. Thank you to all who made this year so special for me.

Finally, let me thank you for all your efforts and for the wonderful contribution you have made to our clients, our organization and to the community as a whole. Let me also wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a satisfying and fun 2009.