



# ANDREWS CENTRE

## ENDEAVOUR MINISTRIES

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## QUARTERLY NEWS APRIL – JUNE 2024

This is the thirtieth year for Endeavour Ministries Inc and the most challenging time we have ever experienced in terms of the demand for emergency relief services. High utility, rental and general living expenses have meant that many are really struggling to keep a roof over their heads. Even amongst those who work - many struggle because their work is only casual and their pay therefore inconsistent.

### EMERGENCY RELIEF AND REFERRAL

With the increased demand for our services this year, we have been most grateful to welcome two new volunteers who are specially trained to work as part of the emergency relief and referral team. People are coming for help – not only for food and vouchers but -for a whole variety of reasons including help with unexpected medical bills, upfront specialist fees, pharmaceutical costs, rent arrears or motel costs, utility expenses, back to work expenses eg work boots, education costs etc Over \$50,000 has been spent in the first five months of this year just on emergency relief, helping around 120 families each month.

Thank you to the students of Emerson College for their very kind donation of food to support our emergency relief program Thank you as always to the Uniting Church, Narre Hills Community Church and to those individuals who provide a very much valued supplement to the supply of food handing out each day to families in need.



Thanks to a grant from the City of Casey we have been able to supplement our supply of bedding to help the most vulnerable stay warm over the winter



“Jenny” has four primary school aged children and is currently living in her car because she could not find suitable accommodation for herself and her children. She is hoping that she will be able to move into rental housing next week but at the moment this is the only option she has. The Andrews Centre organised for herself and her children to stay at a local motel until this housing became available, as well as helping her with food and

vouchers. She was most grateful and no doubt relieved to not have to spend another unsafe, very cold and very uncomfortable night in her car.

“Mary” is a single mother with shared custody of her only child. She was in share accommodation which, on a jobseeker payment, is all that she could afford. Unfortunately, the man she was sharing with turned out to be quite abusive and she had to leave. The shortage of any accommodation – even shared- meant that she was left homeless and living in her car. Understandably, she was reluctant to try another share option -even if she could find one – after her bad experience. She asked permission to park her car at the Centre, given that at least here she felt a bit safer. The Centre provided her a place to sleep in the building, until we could work out a better option for her. After that she spent some time in the home of one of our volunteers until emergency accommodation became available. The Centre has also helped her gain confidence to overcome all the past traumas impacting her ability to seek employment.

“John” is critically ill with kidney failure in the Monash Medical Centre. He lives in Lakes Entrance with his partner who is also on a disability pensioner. She was really struggling to work out a way where she might be able to afford the cost of a motel to stay in whilst she visited him. The Centre was able to cover the cost of weekend accommodation in a nearby motel so that she could be by his side at this difficult time for them both.

“Elizabeth” and “Jean” are both grandmothers who have had to take on the care of their very young grandchildren and are waiting for appropriate supports to help them afford all the expenses related to their role. The Centre has been able to provide nappies, toiletries, school uniform, baby clothing, food and vouchers to help them and have also linked them to supports provided by Centrelink.

“Steve was in a local boarding house when an electrical fire meant he was displaced and all his possessions lost. He was able to secure another room in a boarding house in Endeavour Hills but had no bedding and only the clothes on his back. The Centre was able to provide him with sheets, blanket and a warm doona, as well as clothing and food to help him recover and survive after this ordeal!

## EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Endeavour Ministries has four accommodation units available to families in need. Over the past three months we have had two units occupied by single mothers with children impacted by family violence. A third unit has housed a small family where the father has a significant disability and is being cared for by his two daughters who are both university students. The unit has been made available until the end of their academic year so that they do not have to worry about where they can live and look after their father at the same time as pursue their studies. The one bedroom unit has been used to house a single homeless father who has now moved on. It was then occupied by a single homeless male. Currently it is providing temporary accommodation to a single mother and her daughters who have not been able to find any accommodation apart from motels. One daughter is currently in Year 12, so this is particularly hard for her to pursue studies whilst having to constantly move around.

As many would be aware, there is a critical shortage of available accommodation for many of the most disadvantaged in our community. For those who have achieved private rental, the rise in rental costs mean they are at threat of imminent eviction when even the most simple unexpected expenses (eg car repair, illness) leave them short of the rent they must find each month. Families are paying anything from \$450 - \$650 a week for a 3 or 4 bedroom home in Endeavour Hills or Doveton. Wherever possible, the Centre has provided financial help to families in rental stress due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Centre has also provided motel accommodation to help families and where this is not possible the Centre has also provided tents, bedding and warm clothing to the homeless as well as hot meals and a shower. Two homeless individuals have been housed in our own emergency accommodations.



Very sadly a welfare check on one of our emergency accommodation residents led to the discovery of him deceased on the kitchen floor, following a medical episode. All at the Andrews Centre were very sad to hear the news of his death, as he had become a very popular figure at the Centre. Originally homeless, he spent quite a time at the Centre before we were able to find him accommodation in one of our units. He was happy just to have a safe place to come to rest, get a hot meal and a shower.

Thanks to the contribution of one of our volunteers, we were able to create a special memorial garden at the Centre in his honour. The Men's Shed made a special plaque and the Op Shop team built the garden around this and we held a special memorial service on Sunday 28 April at the Andrews Centre. Around 40 people attended – people who knew and loved him from the Centre, the local neighbourhood and shopping centre and even his old football mates. It was a real celebration of his life.

## LOAN CARS

The Centre has currently two cars that we have loaned out at no cost to families in need so that people can get to work or medical appointments.

## MEALS

The Monday Meals team continue to provide a nutritious and delicious meal every first Monday of the month at St James in Dandenong, providing around 145 meals each time with desserts also provided and extras such as take home fresh fruit.



Sue continues to come at least once a fortnight to make up a variety of very well received meals for the homeless and those living on their own in boarding houses. The meals are stored in the freezer and heated up as needed.

It just means that when homeless people come to the Centre we can at least provide them with a hot meal and shower as well as other helps where needed such as bedding, swags and support to find accommodation.

## NILS



Under the auspices of Good Shepherd, we continue to provide no interest loans for people struggling financially but needing to purchase whitegoods, furniture, educational supplies etc . The loans are now also available for car repairs, registration and even rent in advance where this is needed to secure accommodation

*Geoff and Bill – our Nils workers.*

Most participants can borrow up to \$2000 (\$3000 for rental) and they repay their loan through a direct debit from their Centrelink payments. Geoff and Bill are our two volunteers providing access to this scheme.

## OP SHOP



The work of the shop is absolutely central to all that is done as part of emergency relief. Not only does the shop provide valuable funding towards the costs involved in running our services, but they also provide clothing and household goods for many of the families seeking our help.

Thank you to all who donate goods to the shop and thank you to all our dedicated Op Shop volunteers under the leadership of Liz and Peg who dedicate so many hours serving, sorting and pricing to make the shop work well!

## COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGY

Supporting mental health remains a very key part of the work of the Andrews Centre and our counselling team continue to be in high demand. There are currently five part time psychologists at the Centre and three counsellors. (One psychologist remains on leave following a road accident). Sadly, this term, we have had to say goodbye to one of our long- term counsellors, Elizabeth Keecherer who has retired after 19 years. We will miss her valuable contribution.

As part of this work, a whole range of issues across a very broad range of ages, are addressed to help individuals and families seeking to recover and manage better in their particular circumstances. Counselling covers areas such as trauma , grief, relationship challenges, anxiety, stress and depression issues, as well as dealing with diagnoses such as autism or ADHD or bipolar disorder etc Though this service is provided at a much reduced cost to many, The Centre continues to supplement even this cost for many whose limited income makes any payment difficult.

## PEERS

On 14 May three of our counselling/psychology team began the PEERS course at the Andrews Centre. It is a 14 week course designed to give teenagers who struggle socially the practical skills to create and keep good and healthy friendships with their peers. The course also involves concurrent sessions with the parents of these teens who are trained to be “social coaches” reinforcing all their teens have learned within their group. This group is going really well and we held a similar course last year with great feedback from all the participants. It is especially important in our current climate where so many teens are really struggling with the impact of social media, bullying and often the consequent school refusal and social isolation. For teenagers with high functioning autism, social skills are particularly challenging and learning how to relate well and keep good friendships has an enormous impact on their mental health and sense of well being.

## KEY ABILITIES GROUP

One of our psychologists also runs a monthly group for older teenagers who have a ASD diagnosis and intellectual disability. In April they went to Circus Soliel as a special outing which was greatly enjoyed by all! They have also met the challenge of climbing the 1000 steps and reaching the top together! This group is a really important outlet and a place where they can learn to interact well with their peers and others.

## AL ANON

The Al Anon group supporting families of alcoholics continues to meet every week at the Centre – a group which has been running now since the Andrews Centre first started 24 years ago.

## NEW SUPPORT GROUP – FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY PERINATAL TRAUMA

ON 7 June one of our experienced counsellors Amorelle, supported by Jenny Thompson RNA will be starting this support group for anyone struggling to cope with the significant trauma associated with unexpected loss of a child at, before or shortly after birth.

## COMMUNITY GARDEN



Winter crops and now in and we are currently enjoying an abundance of oranges and lemons from the fruit trees surrounding our gardens! Sue Wild ( with the help of her husband Phil) has taken over management of the garden and has been hard at work organizing pruning and sorting out the three composting bins. New members are very welcome to join our group of keen gardeners with wicking beds available to grow winter crops.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations whose financial support makes this whole ministry possible. Your continued support has made possible a place where people in crisis can find help, hope and the comfort of knowing that there is somewhere they can go at their time of greatest need.

Thank you most sincerely on behalf of all who have directly benefitted from your kindness and generosity!!

Judy Martin

Manager – The Andrews Centre

*We acknowledge with thanks the following organizations who have provided valuable funding to support the work of Endeavour Ministries Inc in 2024*

*The Andrews Foundation, Peter and Lyndy White Foundation, City of Casey, Department of Social Services, Endeavour Hills Neighbourhood Centre , Specsavers, Kogo, , Alfred Felton Bequest, Endeavour Hills/Dandenong Rotary*

*Churches including Endeavour Hills Uniting, St Matthews Anglican, Victory in Jesus, , St James Church Dandenong*

*Schools including Gleneagles Secondary School, Maranatha Christian School, and Emerson School*