

much as we're able, and it's appropriate, we try to let them know. That's where our pastoral care program comes in.

What is pastoral care?

Helen: Holding somebody's hand. Literally visiting, talking, getting to know people. Helping them in a crisis. Listening. Giving comfort. There's a huge range. Befriending and supporting.

Ten of us have been trained via the Hospital. We've been trained to do pastoral care with people – at the moment we're doing it at the Hospital and Narbethong and in the near future this will be extended to home visits in the community.

The Hospital is working to expand its palliative care services within people's homes and we are discussing with them ways that our volunteers may support this. I think it's wonderful that we will be able to be involved in a new thing. We aim to be there for emotional support for the person and their family afterwards, which to me makes so much sense.

With all the types of pastoral care we offer, we take a non-judgemental role.

Peter: Primarily it's not our place to make moral judgements, but we are all

moral beings and it's impossible not to bring a set of moral awarenesses into your interactions. In a pastoral care situation, if a person indicates they wish to talk about a particular issue, moral or otherwise, then it's up to the pastoral carer to listen to that and share on that level. Our carers don't make judgements. It might turn out to be their job to refer someone to, for example, a counsellor.

Do you have professionals within the organisation, or do you use professional contacts?

Peter: There are ten members on the committee and they bring a wide range of skills and backgrounds: professional counselling, government skills, financial management – the wonderful thing about the Braidwood Life Centre is that it is all-inclusive, with all the churches involved and representatives from the whole of community as well.

Helen: We don't take the role of professionals when volunteering at BLC. For example, my background is in counselling but I'm not using that in this role, I'm just a volunteer and refer people on to appropriate professionals as needed.

What are the youth services provided by Braidwood Life Centre?

Peter: We are currently running the Duke of Edinburgh award program. And that broadens our scope beyond people who live in poverty, to people within our community – young people who need broader experiences and greater challenges in life.

Another thing we do is try to identify any community education needs, and one that Helen identified through the community support group is Parent Effectiveness Training. Recently a woman has created an online course, and Braidwood Life Centre offered to subsidise any Braidwood parent who wanted to do the course. To gain our subsidy, the parent needs to be on some kind of government support or proof of limited income.

Helen: When I was a young mum, I did this course, and I found it so helpful. I'd love to have people get in touch about that.

Tell us more about your youth work.

Peter: Jo Parsons was involved in developing the centre from the very beginning, and came with a passion for youth. And that's why the youth subcommittee remains an integral part of Braidwood Life Centre. Jo and Ted Younger have been very involved with the youth side of things. First thing,

the Duke of Edinburgh scheme – they have nine people doing the Bronze Level Award. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme helps young people to grow in self-awareness and self-esteem through voluntary community activities which are part of the program, as well as team work on group hikes, overnight camping excursions. As you go up the scale of bronze, silver and gold levels they become more intense in the scope of what you do. It's a great way for people to start in that program. There's a range of volunteers involved with that, as well as some young Braidwoodians who've gone away to university, but they come back and help.

Then there's been a coffee catch-up group for Year 11 students, to provide some mentoring over coffee. During school holidays, day trips to Canberra have been organised, to give local kids an opportunity to go to Canberra with some of their friends. We fully support the creation of more facilities for young people in town and are actively working towards that goal. Youth can get in touch with us via the mobile phone, or through Helen or me or Ted or Jo.

Who started the Braidwood Life Centre? Why and how was it started?

Peter: Prior to Braidwood Life Centre there was Braidwood Care. I'm not certain when that started but it was at the instigation of churches in town. It provided, as far as I'm aware, emergency relief. It handed out funds when needed. It reached a point where Jim Warman, who was running Braidwood Care at the time it wound up, retired. In the lead up to all that, Geoff Hoad, who was Anglican Minister at the time, started talking to Helen about needs within the community, and what would help meet those needs. It was Helen and Geoff who came up with the original concept for the Braidwood Life Centre.

Helen: This was about 2009 or 2010. I was new to living in town and had come from a counselling business in Sydney, so I was very aware, looking about the place that there was a need. Geoff and I started talking. We had lots of ideas and put some of them together, and really, Geoff left just as we were setting up. He set up the concept of the three churches and the rest of the community. We wanted it to be the whole of the community, not just isolated in one area.

Peter: Geoff wanted to look at how to address peoples' need, and to do so in the best way. It was fairly obvious to him and Helen that resources in this

town are limited, so the only way to really be effective is to get everyone on board and working together.

Helen: As well as the churches, we get regular help from the Lodge of Truth, the Lions Club, Braidwood Community Bank, and lots of individual donations. We are very grateful for all the donations we receive.

Peter: ...and it's tax deductible! We haven't yet been successful with government grants. The restructured State system means you would have to take responsibility for a huge geographic area, and we of course can't do that, so we have to seek to partner with other organisations.

How can someone in need reach you? For example, if they're having a crisis on a Monday night?

Peter: People can use our mobile phone to get in touch any time. It really is a 24-hour number: 0437 989 993. Otherwise they can visit us at the Anglican Hall on a Thursday between 10.00am and 12 noon.

How many people are helped?

Peter: To give you an idea, we started our voucher system in August 2012, and we've given more than 500 vouchers since then. It has increased substantially each year. It's a combination of greater need and greater awareness that we exist. In the 2011-2012 financial year, we gave \$3,000 of direct support. In 2012-2013 it was \$8,500. In 2013-2014, the year just finished, it was \$20,000. In that time, we've got ourselves better organised and better known, so there's no doubt that's a factor, but equally the kinds of things people are presenting with speaks of an increased need.

Do you expect various elements of the Federal budget might affect you?

Peter: If what comes to pass in the budget, cuts support to people on low incomes, you'd have to imagine that will increase the pressure on those individuals.

Helen: A lot of people who visit us think that things are going to get worse.

Peter: If you live on an income that is already insufficient and not able to meet all your needs, then if government puts extra costs on you it's only going to increase that pressure.

How do you decide what you can realistically help with?

Peter: Our guiding ethos is to do the things within the community that aren't currently done. We do our best to fill the gaps of need. Those gaps will change over time, we try to keep our

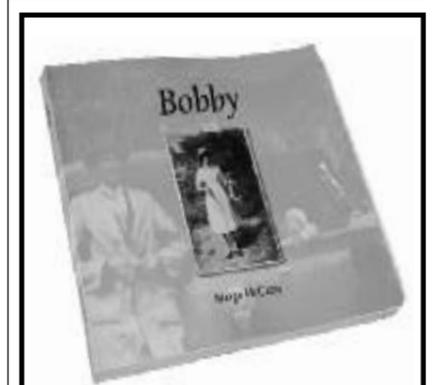


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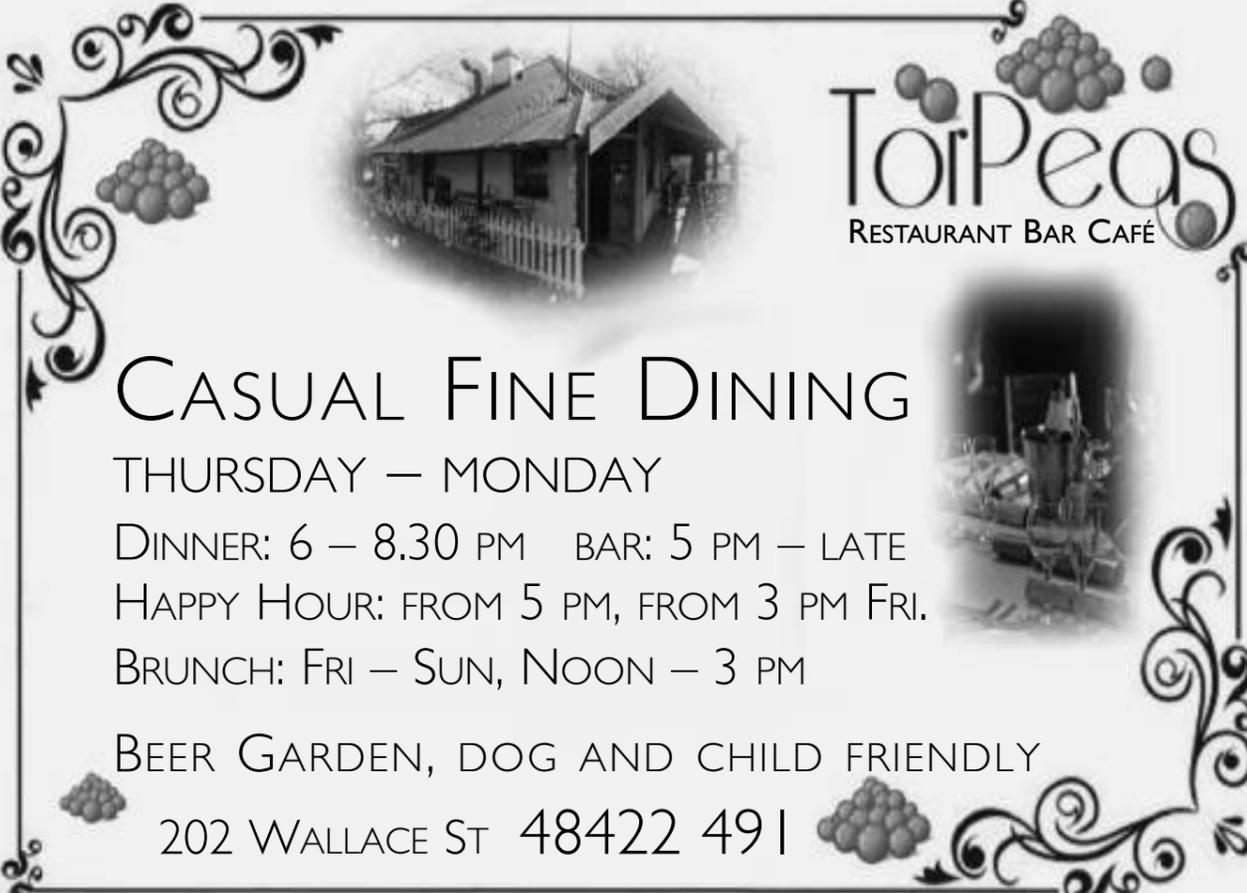
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RESTAURANT BAR CAFÉ

CASUAL FINE DINING

THURSDAY – MONDAY

DINNER: 6 – 8.30 PM BAR: 5 PM – LATE

HAPPY HOUR: FROM 5 PM, FROM 3 PM FRI.

BRUNCH: FRI – SUN, NOON – 3 PM

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