

WINTER 23

ROSIES

Friends on the Street



SHARING FRIENDSHIP CREATES BELONGING. DARE TO REACH OUT TOGETHER.

INSIDE ROSIES

A message from
OUR CEO
and reflections with
FR MICHEAL

SATISFACTION
from helping others

REACHING OUT
to our youth



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A MESSAGE from our CEO

At Rosies we are often asked, 'What do we see on the street?'

The news of the rental and housing crisis is everywhere, and we are all feeling the impact of interest rate increases and rising prices of essential items and services. People generally do not think or talk about the very human toll this takes, and the emotions that come with constant struggle. The ongoing battle to feel hopeful, worthy, and accepted is unrelenting when you are mired in uncertainty, worry, fear and disconnection. The impact on mental and physical well-being can be crippling. This is very real and what we see every day.

On outreach we bring along material necessities – noodles, hot drinks, snacks or food, blankets, and connection with other services – but the vital, life-changing work of Rosies is what happens beyond the hospitality. It is the friendly face.

It is the hope, compassion and genuine connection that happens every night

of the year. It is the ability to provide a safe, dependable, consistent space that is respectful, judgement free and welcoming. It is a place that allows worthiness, courage, and connection to grow and flourish. And, sometimes, it is just a good place to go to get a hot drink, a blanket and a smile.

Many outreaches are now operating with more than a 30% increase in people attending, with supplies flying out the door and demand for our services greater than ever. It is only because of the generous support of our volunteers, donors, members and supporters that we are able to ensure that we are out on the street in every one of our branches across Queensland. Your support, now more than ever, is vital to assist the increasing number of people in need and we thank you for your care, compassion and being a part of the Rosies community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jayne Shallcross'.

Jayne Shallcross

CEO

Rosies – Friends on the Street

FAREWELL Fr Joe

It is with great sadness that I share with you that our Rosies Chaplain, Fr Joe Antony OMI, is coming up to the end of his tenure with us.

Fr Joe has been a wonderful addition to nearly every one of our teams statewide, as well as to head office. His infectious smile, great sense of humour and the genuine love and care that he shares with patrons and volunteers has been a joy to witness.

Fr Joe came to us from India via Melbourne in December of 2020 and was eager to get to outreach and learn more about Rosies, our patrons, our volunteers and the Australian way of life – and he has been a regular at outreaches across all of our Branches ever since.

Fr Joe is now heading to Mazenod College in Western Australia to undertake further studies and offer pastoral support to the school community. We wish you all the best Fr Joe, your Rosies family will miss you very much.



REFLECTIONS with Fr Micheal

O JESUS, MAKE OUR SMILES SO HUMAN

In reading Ian's story in this edition, I was moved by his mention of the smiles of the Rosies volunteers.

The smile of that volunteer represents the smile of the entire Rosies Mission and I thought it might be good to reflect on the spiritual, physical, psychological and social benefits of the smile for Rosies and beyond.

Usually, our first smile happens when we are a baby and people have been mesmerized about their meaning for centuries. Are they instinctive? Are they imitative? Do they reflect the smile of their doting parents? Do they emerge from some primitive intuition? What sort of emotions does the smile express? What really is a smile?

I recently saw the photo to the right of Eddy, who is the brother of an Iona student who volunteers with Rosies as part of the Youth Engagement Program (YEP).



Baby Eddy showing off his smile

In his smile, I see the expression of joy, pure joy, wonderment, and a radiantly abundant sign that all is well. It is also clear that the person he is engaging with is giving and receiving pure love. I see every outreach of Rosies in the same light.

Even during the pandemic, and covered by masks, a true smile was still available at Rosies. I believe that Ian's reference to the smile in his story is a wonderful example of its presence within every outreach and one worthy of some reflection.

It is true that in the midst of incredible challenges a smile can help remind us that there is more to come and more to experience.

Another reason I've found myself thinking about the smile is that so much of social life, human interaction, identity, and meaning is underpinned by the smile.

A Christian understanding of the smile, places it alongside the wonderful concept of Glory, especially the Glory of God. There are few obvious Bible references that make use of the smile, so we must search a little deeper.

We know, of course, that Jesus enjoyed being with others, table fellowship, feasting, and the celebration and festivity of weddings – all the things that would bring joy to hearts and put smiles on faces. It's hard to imagine Jesus doing all this without giving and receiving smiles. But then again, the smile might not have carried the same social meaning that it does in Australia today.

The Bible also refers to God's face "shining", and some have understood that to also translate as God's face "smiling." It's why we might refer to a "beaming" or "glowing" smile.

St Eugene de Mazenod OMI, found great comfort in a smile he experienced from Mary the mother of Jesus. This smile became a huge moment in his life that eventually led to the founding of Rosies 200 years later.

Our Rosies prayer makes great reference to the heart of Jesus and maybe it also invites us to substitute the word heart with smile and see how it transforms us.

O Jesus,
make our smiles so human,
that others may feel
at home with us,
so like Yours,
that others may feel
at home with You,
so forgetful of self
that we might simply
become the place
where You and they meet
in the power of
Your love and the joy of
Your friendship
Amen



Thank You to every single member of our Rosies family who gives and receives smiles. They are needed, appreciated and a real strength and treasure of Rosies.

Take Care and God Bless
Fr Michael Twigg OMI

SATISFACTION FROM HELPING OTHERS, MEET IAN

It was the promise of a hearty meal served with a smile that first drew Ian to Rosies in Caloundra.

"It was a Tuesday night, and I heard the local Bowls Club provided hot meals to Rosies. I was struggling financially, so went down and it was good to be around people and share a meal," Ian remembers. "The food drew me in, but I stayed for the conversations," he said.

Four years on, Ian still comes down to Rosies to see familiar faces and help those who are socially isolated or newly homeless. "When I come down now, I might be given a meal, but I don't need it, so I'll take it to a few older people that I often go and visit. One man who I visit, I first met through Rosies, but he's got health issues and often sits in his flat alone, so I make sure I go and visit him, take him to the beach or the Monday breakfast put on by the church," he said.

Ian continued, "There are a number of people in town who are homeless or lonely and a lot of the older people come down for companionship and the volunteers always ask after them if they are not there. One thing I really admire is the commitment volunteers put into making Rosies what it is, a community. The altruistic nature of the people who go there is great to see – the general vibe is good."

Ian was first introduced to Rosies in 2000 when he arrived in Caloundra with his wife and new baby, "I'd see the van out on the streets on a Friday night and think isn't that something, but it wasn't until much later that I went to visit them myself," he recalled. Ian worked as a roofer until an injury in 2001 caused him to break some vertebrae and lose sight in one of his eyes, "If you've only got one eye you can't work on a roof, it messes with your depth perception. All of a sudden, I couldn't do the trade I was trained to do."

After his accident, Ian found it hard to manage living on a pension, "I was used to working and having money, so I found it difficult to support our family on a pension and wasn't good at budgeting with limited resources.



Eventually, my marriage broke down in 2005 and I moved to Hervey Bay."

Ian moved back to Caloundra in 2006 and eventually became homeless in 2015. "I was living in my car at this point, and it broke down one Thursday in front of a church that was serving an evening meal and they invited me in. That was my first introduction to the number of services that operate in Caloundra," he said.

There are a number of services that support the Caloundra community and over the last three years Ian has gotten to know them well, "I've gotten to know the volunteers at the Salvos, Vinnies and the Caloundra Community Centre and I have some flyers printed up about the different services available here and I hand them out to new arrivals. I live in my van so I move around a bit, you can't stay in one place too long, so I meet a lot of people"

Ian acts as an unofficial ambassador for Rosies, encouraging those who he meets to come down to Felicity Park for a cuppa and a chat. "I know people who are working and are lonely, they just sit in their homes, and I say come to Rosies and they'll say, 'that's for poor people' and I say don't eat just come for a chat."

One of the biggest challenges facing people who are experiencing disadvantage or social isolation is the stigma that often comes with it, Ian does what he can to try and remove that from the people he meets. "A lot of people don't want their situations to be broadcast

- single mothers, young people, old people, people struggling with mental health and drug addiction. Rosies is nonjudgmental and if you're doing it tough, Rosies can and will help you. There is a lot of drug addiction in town and the young people don't know how to work and they feel a bit hopeless, but Rosies keeps showing up. These people reject society, but they always come to Rosies."

Rosies is something that people who go there like to look after and they (the patrons) especially look after the people who are volunteering. It's a good gentle caring vibe. It's not just a meal, it's about connection and friendship, I love catching up with the volunteers and the other patrons and making sure they are OK.

While Ian might not be able to build houses anymore, he's found other ways to occupy his time and help people in the process. "Last year I did a survey with the Caloundra Community Centre around disaster management preparedness for homeless people with the local council. All around Australia people are becoming aware that homeless people don't have much of a voice and I'm helping to change that."

After his work on the survey, Ian was invited to complete two courses, one through the University of Sydney around disaster management and preparedness and the other through the Council to Homeless Persons in Melbourne. "The disaster course is really focused on getting people to prepare a plan on how they will manage a disaster, particularly those who have a disability. Homeless people often aren't thought of during a natural disaster as they have no fixed address, might have a lack of information on what's coming or where to go, especially if you're living in a tent out bush and have no way to charge your phone."

Ian continued, "The second course is basically public speaking for people with lived experience. After I finish the course I'll go into places like Centrelink, the banks, the Housing Department, and local councils and chat to them about some of the reasons people are homeless and the

common issues we face like losing your bank card or ID or not having your birth certificate etc. People who work in these fields can get compassion overload and they can switch off, so educating and meeting them is very important."

The work that Ian is doing at the Caloundra Community Centre is vital for improving the lives of those who are experiencing disadvantage. Though his life in Caloundra looks different than when he first arrived in 2000, Ian has a unique outlook and a genuine desire to help those around him.

Homelessness is a big problem and there is money being thrown at it but it's a societal problem. There are a lot of reasons that people need services like Rosies, you take a step down one path and it's really hard to get back from. You don't have to do this by yourself. I used to get satisfaction out of building someone a house but now I get satisfaction from helping others.



REACHING OUT TO OUR YOUTH

For 25 years, small groups of Rosies volunteers have made the trek to Youth Detention Centres in an effort to show young people that they are valued and that someone cares about their wellbeing. Roises YDC outreach operates very differently from our street outreach program and gives an incredibly unique insight into our Youth Detention Centres.



To better understand the importance of our YDC outreach, we spoke to three volunteers who travel over an hour each way to attend, and the Programs Support Officer at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, Tracy Shortland.

The YDC team exists as part of the Brisbane City branch but operates very differently to our street outreach model. "We aren't in YDC with tea, coffee, and a chat – there is nothing to offer them to help break the ice like we would on street outreach. We are just there to listen and maybe play a game if they want us to join. It can be challenging to build a relationship with the young people. We go into a wing one week and come back four weeks later and it might be all new faces - very different to seeing the regulars on the street" said Cathy a 4-year veteran of the YDC outreach.

"I find YDC can be a lot more personal than street outreach and I feel I have a closer bond with the young people.

In Toowoomba there are a lot of people on outreach, and you can't always get to know them very well, and we sometimes get busy offering food and drink but can't talk

as much, especially with so many more people in need. At YDC we just sit and talk and it's often a one-on-one experience, a lot of the young people hold their cards close to their chest until they get comfy. You've got to work a little harder to get to know them, but it's worth it," said Anne, who joined the YDC team just over a year ago.

Breaking down barriers isn't always easy though, many of the young people have had traumatic experiences and have been let down or abandoned by the adults in their life.

I remember attending outreach once and for the whole hour not one of the young people acknowledged my presence, they were happily chatting with Cathy and Anne but weren't interested in me. As I was leaving a big fella came up to me, stuck out his hand and said, 'Thanks for coming' and I was shocked. I hadn't spoken to anyone, but my presence still made a difference to him. - Pete

Cathy, who comes from the Sunshine Coast along with Pete, had a similar experience with one of the young people.

"We went into the unit and the worker said this chap probably won't talk to you because he's been let down by so many that he's not gonna waste his time talking to you. That was a big reality check. I hadn't thought about the fact that these kids had been let down so many times by people – I thought I would be a fresh face to talk with, but he'd been hurt too many times by others he just wasn't willing to put himself out there," she said.

While it can be hard to make the initial connection, once the volunteers have earned a young person's trust, wonderful things can happen. "We were in a very serious wing, no one was talking but they were doing an exercise circuit, so I joined them. I made the mistake of doing a push up on my knees and they all started shouting at me and calling me soft but it broke the ice and they were more interested in chatting then," Pete chuckles.



Cathy, Pete & Anne at YDC

He continued, "I don't blame them for not talking to me, we are only there for an hour, and they are used to people abandoning them so why would they give me the time of day. They think what's the point they are just gonna leave me. I don't take it personally. If my presence helps one kid, then it's worth it."

"In the wings they have communal areas where they can play cards, watch TV, shoot hoops or just sit and talk. I'm hopeless at cards but I'll ask if I can join them and sit and watch and they are OK with that. I always ask for their permission first though. I think it's important that they have a choice whether I join them or not," Cathy remarked.

She continued, "One time I was there with another volunteer, Jodie, and the boys weren't overly interested in engaging so we started shooting hoops. I think I made 1 in 25, and the boys were laughing at how bad I was. I didn't mind, I am bad at hoops, but Jodie turned to them and said, 'You can laugh but this lady has travelled two hours just to come and see you, and you don't even want to chat.' They were astonished – why would someone come all that way to see us?"

It's heartbreaking to hear that someone so young could have such a low opinion of themselves that it's a shock that another person would go out of their way to spend time with them and show them some much needed love and care.

"The young people like building relationships with outside community members. They are not program staff or

authority figures, but just people that they can meet and play games with, people who can mentor them and that they can look up to without any judgement," said Tracy Shortland, Program Support Officer for the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

“

It's important to introduce the young people to agencies like Rosies that can support them once they are released, and the visits help improve their interpersonal communication skills, and their chances of rehabilitation. - Tracy Shortland

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Anne has seen firsthand the positive impact of YDC visits in her own family, "My foster son was in YDC, and he benefited a lot from external visitors; having a visitor that is not just family can have such a positive influence. The young people are more likely to share if its someone they don't know - if they want to talk, they can, if not they don't have to."

"We don't encourage them to talk about their situation, the less we know, the less opportunity to judge. We don't know their situation or how they came to be here, only that they are and it's our role to be there for them," Cathy continued.

"For some, YDC is their safe space. Often, they re-offend because they know at YDC they have a bed, a hot shower, 3 meals, company, and an education. It's awful to think that compared to what they have on the outside, detention is their safe space," Cathy said.

Anne shared a similar experience with one young person that she was very fond of. "I met him for the first time and he was so excited because he was getting out the next day and he was telling me about all of the things he was going to do and I felt happy for him. When I came back the following month for outreach, he was there. I asked him why, and he answered, 'My parents are both in jail and I got tired of sleeping in a shopping trolley, so I stole a car and came back. Where else is safe for me?' It made me so sad to hear him say that; he was too young to feel like he didn't matter."

Anne continued, "I get really upset when people say, 'Just lock 'em up.' They don't understand what these kids have gone through. Some are here because they should be, but many are victims of circumstance and generational trauma has not been considered. I want to show them that there is a better way of living, that people care about them and that I am their friend."

Rosies volunteers often speak about the importance of community, connection and friendship shared between patrons and volunteers, but this is often built on the single common factor that these volunteers live in the area where they outreach. This is not so for Anne, Cathy, and Pete. Each month they drive an hour and a half from Warwick and the Sunshine Coast respectively to chat with young people at YDC.

"It's just what we do," explains Cathy. "It is really no different from street outreach when you think about it. We travel to the hub and then from the hub to the street and then back again – it's just part of being a Rosies volunteer. We travel to be with people where they are."

Pete continued, "YDC outreach is a necessity – Brisbane City is a big branch, but they were struggling to get the numbers for YDC, so I joined. Even if I had to travel an extra hour, I'd still do it. Being there is important, and as a bonus I made friends with Cathy and Anne."



Volunteering with YDC can be challenging and some days you walk away in tears, but if we help one young person to feel better on that day, it's worth it. - Cathy



We are so grateful for every volunteer who has spent time with the young people at YDC over the past 25 years and for the support of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs in allowing us to be there for young people in need.

If you would like to support our work in youth detention, the courts, and on the street **please donate now.**

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