



**Jesuit Social Services
ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER
28th March 2009**

**Introduction to DVD presentation on the African Program
by CEO Julie Edwards**

Good evening. It's great to see so many friends and supporters of Jesuit Social Services here with us tonight.

In some ways it's a gathering of the tribe.

We're a broad church. I know that we're made up people of different cultures and backgrounds. Of different faiths and no faith. People who are churched and unchurchd.

We ARE a broad church. But if we're HERE I'm sure we have THIS in common: a desire and a commitment to build a just society.

And I'm sure too that we share this: an unerring belief in the inherent value and dignity of each person and the right of each person to participate in making a contribution to our world.

So this is something to celebrate. It's something to cherish. A gathering of such a tribe.

Tonight in a special way we are celebrating that.

Most of you know the work that Jesuit Social Services does through Brosnan, Gateway, Connexions - with young people who have a whole set of complex problems – offending background, mental illness, drug abuse, homelessness...young people who've suffered trauma, violence and neglect from their earliest days – you know about the work we do to reconnect them, to family, the community, to put them on a pathway to education, training and employment.

Many of you will be familiar with the very deep and special work we do with people who've had someone in their family suicide. People in desperate situations.

Or you'll know the solid research and advocacy work we've done – with and on behalf of young people, families and disadvantaged communities.

But tonight I want to share with you some of the work we're doing in the public housing estates here in Melbourne. And in particular this evening our work with the African communities.

This work began some 6 or 7 years ago when some of their elders approached us – asking for help, especially for the new arrivals. They'd seen the work we'd been doing with the Vietnamese community for many years – they saw the *WAY* we worked, not coming in as experts, but entering into relationship, learning from each other, building partnerships. This is what they wanted. It's what we wanted too.

WHAT we're on about at Jesuit Social Services is responding to intractable problems, unmet needs, emerging needs, going for the gap – but **HOW** we do that is always in and through relationship.

Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Jesuits in 1540, urged his followers to 'live with one foot raised' ready for action. To "go, always go" – to be prepared to set out without a script, without a blueprint – but steeped in a *WAY* of doing this. Because **THAT** way will show you the way – it's the way of listening, heart to heart, to what's said and what's unsaid.

This heart relationship is what characterises our partnership with the African communities - a partnership that is vibrant, respectful and enjoyable!

Tonight we have a short DVD that gives a glimpse into that work, and into the world, of the people we work with – their journey from refugee camp to public housing estate, to our wider community.

The footage you see at the beginning was shot by one of our staff Berhan Berhan...Before coming to Australia he lived for 8 years in the refugee camp that you will see. We employed Berhan to work with us because he is passionate and dedicated and he wants to help people who've been on the difficult journey he's been on. Berhan never forgets where he came fromand he doesn't want us to forget either. That's why he's not here

tonight – he’s back at that refugee camp right now and he sent us this footage.

This short presentation gives a sense of where the people we work with – and some of them are here tonight - where they’ve come from; some of the difficulties they face.

It’s a story of struggle and challenge. But ultimately it’s a story of triumph and hope.

About the difference it makes when we reach out – a difference not just in their lives, but in ours as well.

Julie Edwards
Chief Executive Officer
Jesuit Social Services
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