

# Service learning in Lutheran schools

## Snapshot! Service learning stories from our schools Luther College Croydon Vic

### Background

Luther College is located at Croydon, Victoria. It is a Secondary School with approximately 1135 students.

### Context

Service activities play an important part of the culture at Luther. Michael Kleidon, the college's principal, says that involving students in service activities provides opportunities for them to share Christ's love.

'In the act of serving, students learn to utilise their God-given gifts and talents', he says. 'At the same time they gain an appreciation of the God-given gifts and talents in the people they serve.'

Students have the opportunity to participate in a range of service activities including:

- Year 9, three-day service program as part of the 'Rite Journey'
- Year 10s being introduced to realities of homelessness through visits to the Salvation Army and Urban Seed in the city.
- Year 11 Service Trip to Central Australia
- Wednesday Afternoon Service Program with over 49 students involved in working with an organization called The Dining Room, assisting students in local primary schools both socially and academically and working alongside refugee children assisting them with homework.

The following reflections are based on The Dining Room service opportunity. A special thanks to Linda MacQueen (editor of The Lutheran) for allowing sections of her article.

### **The Dining Room (located in the Anglican Church hall in Croydon)**

Christian social worker David Knoop, who runs The Dining Room, says that the weekly evening meals offered here is not merely providing food for homeless people, 'It's replacing fear with hope.' 'This is not a "soup kitchen". This is a home, a place where people can enjoy a substantial meal, experience social inclusion, belonging and a connection to community and to God.' What students have to say about their Dining Room experiences: A Year 11 student says that exposure to homeless people has helped him to understand the challenges they face. 'The people I've met here are not lazy. Many people's circumstances make it hard for them to gain work or opportunities in life that many of us take for granted.'

Another student says that The Dining Room experience has made her 'a better listener, a better communicator and a more compassionate person'. She has learned that most homeless people are not homeless by choice. 'The general preconception is that it's their own fault and they should just go and get a job.' But since she's been working with homeless people she's discovered that 'it's never that simple'.

Year 11 student says: 'I have learned not to judge people by their appearance, because you don't know the story as to how they arrived at this point'.

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David Paech, Luther's Christian Education Coordinator says that such opportunities to serve are teaching students not only how to be Christ to others but also how to recognize Christ in others.