

PARADISE COMMUNITY SERVICES

13 February 2008

The Hon. A.L. EVANS (15:58): Paradise Community Services (PCS) is a welfare branch of the Paradise Community Church. This year PCS will celebrate its 10 year anniversary. Although PCS is church based, the majority of its work occurs outside the church environment with people who have no other connection with the church.

The clients of PCS are usually doing it tough on their own, have experienced prolonged hardship, are desperate for answers and are consumed by hopelessness and thoughts of suicide. Many of the clients have had family breakdowns, and the only people they have in their life are in similar circumstances. It is little wonder people give up.

There is often a misconception that people who access welfare services must be mismanaging their resources or making unwise decisions about their lives. There are a few such unwise people, but many others are simply struggling through illness and disability, particularly mental illness. There are people who grew up in fractured or abusive homes or alternative care placements and have never learnt how to manage a home or how to develop healthy family relationships. These people struggle to gain employment and have been unemployed for so long that they have no vision for stable employment.

PCS has found that the common denominator in most people who access the services is isolation, loneliness, fear, hopelessness, low self-esteem and little confidence in their own ability to survive. The process of restoration can take years to undo the damage that has been done in people's lives. PCS provides a range of services, including the provision of welfare in the form of items such as food, furniture, clothing, household goods and so on. From the welfare services it provides social and recreational programs, recovery and life skill programs and

volunteering opportunities. Clients have support to address issues in their lives or advocacy to help deal with needs that require greater intervention.

Services are provided at the three branches of PCS, namely, Paradise, Elizabeth and Hendon, and also at juvenile training centres, prisons and other sites (on invitation). Last year PCS incorporated its home care service to provide in-home respite care for clients of all ages who are impaired through illness, ageing or disability.

Last year PCS provided assistance to over 15,000 people, and the demand for services increases every month. It is estimated that about 80 per cent of its clients have been affected directly by abuse. PCS provides training, child protection and child abuse notification to all volunteers in Australian Christian Churches (SA) who are involved with children or young people in their paid or voluntary work. In 2005 PCS was acknowledged with a highly commended award in the category of Services to Service Providers at the National Child Protection Awards.

PCS is financed primarily through donations of goods, finances and volunteer hours. The rewards for the team are to be welcomed into the lives of people who are struggling and see people restored with resilience that comes from security, stability and significance from relationships, positive occupation of time, and a change of lifestyle.