

COMMUNITY  
INFORMATION  
GLEN EIRA



**A Brief History  
1970—2005**

***Community Information Glen Eira 1970—2005***

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**COMMUNITY INFORMATION  
GLEN EIRA**

**A BRIEF HISTORY  
1970—2005**

**Compiled and Written by  
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When acknowledging the contributions of individuals there is always the danger that some contributors will be overlooked. I can only apologise for any omissions and blame inadequate records or memory. This has been a rewarding task; one I would not have undertaken without the prompting of John Thompson. My thanks to Laurel Thompson for her support and provision of details of recent developments. I hope this history will provide information and interest in recording the wide role the Centre has played in the Caulfield/Glen Eira municipality during the last 35 years.

Mavis Edwards





## FOREWORD

Community Information Glen Eira offers a wide range of services to provide information, referral and support to residents of the local community.

Operating from a room at St Catherine's Church, Caulfield, the then Community Information Bureau had its beginnings in 1971 as a telephone referral service. Volunteers were recruited and trained in community services, and interview and counselling techniques. The service was promoted in local newspapers and by letter boxing of information leaflets.

The 'wise old owl' was chosen as the logo to indicate the availability of knowledge, help and support, and hopefully a touch of wisdom to anyone who used the service.

Between 1973 and 1996 the service was relocated twice and underwent three name changes. Now located at Oak Tree House (opposite the Glen Eira Council building), Community Information Glen Eira has grown and developed far beyond its small beginnings. The Centre now offers a comprehensive and broad range of services to meet the changing and growing needs of the community. Over the years services have ranged from social support to legal advice, tax help, community buses and emergency relief.

The commitment and dedication of the Management Committee, and a small army of skilled and experienced volunteers and paid staff has played a major role in making the service what it is today. This is their story.





**PART 1**

**THE FIRST  
THIRTY YEARS  
1970—2000**





## In The Beginning

The move to develop a Community Information/Citizens' Advice Bureau in the Caulfield municipality came through the initiative of an inter-church council in Carnegie/Murrumbeena, which first met in 1966. In 1968 the Caulfield Welfare Council, with Albert Fisher as president, was formed with the aim of providing welfare and emergency aid in the area. With awareness of interview/referral services being established in Box Hill, Ringwood and central Melbourne, this council decided to investigate the possibility of providing a similar service in Caulfield.

At a public meeting in October 1969 a committee was elected to explore the viability of an interview/referral service. The committee reported its findings to a further meeting in April 1970. The proposal to establish a Telephone Referral Service was presented to a public meeting on 16th September 1970. A draft constitution was drawn up, a management committee elected and February 1971 selected as the opening date for the service. In the meantime volunteers were recruited and completed training offered by the Social Welfare Department. The 13 week course covered an awareness of community services, interview techniques and 'low-key' counselling.

An appeal to Caulfield Council for help with an office and a telephone was rejected because of Council's plan at that time to establish its own Welfare Department. St Catharine's Church in Kooyong Road offered the use of a room. A telephone was installed and the *Caulfield Community Information Bureau* opened as a telephone service only on 22nd February 1971. For finance the service depended on donations, fund raising efforts and contributions made by volunteer workers.

A Management Committee representing both community and volunteers was elected. Four sub-committees responsible for Training, Rosters, Directory Information, Staff Supervision and Statistics assisted the committee.

At opening, the service had 30 trained volunteers, with opening hours of 10.00am to 1.00pm, and 7.00pm to 9.00pm, from Monday to Friday.



The service was advertised in the local press and by letter-boxing in the Caulfield area, with the help of scouts, guides and church youth groups. Some 26,000 "HELP AVAILABLE" cards, outlining services and using the wise old owl as a logo were distributed.

The 1972 annual report covering the first full year of operation shows that 427 calls were answered by operators and 476 calls were recorded on the answering machine.

An aggressive publicity campaign was undertaken using letter-boxing, posters in shops and buses and signs at local railway stations. A speakers' panel was established and the service listed in the telephone directory.

Monthly on-going training sessions, which volunteers were expected to attend, were established. An advisory panel was formed, membership of which included a solicitor and a social worker who gave valuable help in relation to queries involving legal, social work and welfare fields.

When an Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaus was formed in 1971, Caulfield became one of the 12 member-Bureaus. The organisation was based on the Citizens' Advice Bureau scheme which had been established in England during the Second World War to provide information for travellers and local inhabitants. At the 1973 Annual General Meeting the Caulfield Community Information Bureau was renamed the *Caulfield Citizens' Advice Bureau* in line with the Victorian Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaus Inc.

Alan Trevorrow had been a member of the committee which worked to establish the Caulfield Bureau and was its enthusiastic, cheerful and hard-working secretary from 1970 to 1980. Albert Fisher and later Alf Knee as presidents and Bruce Davenport as treasurer gave many years of service on the Management Committee in its early years.

In 1978 the constitution was amended limiting the terms of the executive to three consecutive years. Those mentioned, along with Jack Field as vice-president had given sterling service on the committee and it was



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difficult to imagine adequate replacements. The new policy did however encourage greater participation by volunteers in the management of the Bureau and Caulfield has continued to have a strong Management Committee, though community representation has at times proved difficult.



## Service Growth and Development 1974—1980

The service continued to operate from St Catharine's Church until May 1974 when an offer, from Caulfield Council, of accommodation at the City Hall was accepted. The location was in the then Centenary Hall at the rear of the City Hall. This meant that face-to-face interviews could now be offered and daytime hours of operation were extended to 3.00pm. The effect of this is reflected in the 1975 Annual Report which records an increase in calls from an average of 450 per year to 1670 between July 1974 and June 1975. It was estimated that volunteers had given 6,700 hours of service during that year. Location at the City Hall also gave day workers the opportunity to meet council workers involved in related work.

A re-organisation of Council buildings led to the Bureau being relocated to Oak Tree House in May 1980. Advantages for the Bureau were more space, better interview and administrative facilities, and access from the street to clients. The building was at that time shared by Council's Human Services Department. This brought Bureau staff in daily contact with council staff whose work was often closely linked to that of the Bureau. When the Bureau's phones were linked to council's phone system in 1978 contact with council departments was simplified. A percentage of calls received by the Bureau have always concerned council services, so such calls could now be transferred directly to the appropriate department or the Service Desk. Conversely, calls to Council are frequently referred to the Bureau.

*Caulfield Citizens' Advice Bureau* continued to offer an evening service from Monday to Friday until 1982. There was little demand for the evening services and it was becoming increasingly difficult to staff the Bureau five nights per week. It was therefore decided to open only on the nights when other services such as legal advice were offered.



## **Formalising and Extending Services 1980 –2000**

Since its foundation the Victorian Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaus (VACAB) has become an increasingly active organisation and developed a set of standards and policies which associated bureaus were expected to follow. In the early eighties the advantages of incorporation were promoted and after some further adjustments to the constitution, the Caulfield Bureau was formally incorporated in August 1985. By 1987 Caulfield was one of 65 bureaus in metropolitan and country Victoria. While each bureau was considered autonomous the Association expressed concern that basic standards and policies were not being met in some bureaus. Consequently in 1990 VACAB began the process of monitoring all bureaus. This process forced each bureau to look critically at its constitution and procedures and consider whether it was operating in accordance with its own and the Association's guidelines. Caulfield's main requirements were to formalise job descriptions for volunteers and paid workers, establish policies regarding on-going training and complaints against or within the Bureau and to set appraisal procedures.

Changes forced on local government by the state government in the early 90's brought, among other things, changes in municipal boundaries with resulting changes for the Caulfield Bureau. The new municipality of Glen Eira now included a largely residential area in the south-east of the municipality, an area previously part of the former City of Moorabbin. Because it is a considerable distance from the City Hall access by public transport is difficult for residents from this area. At Council's request, and after consultation with Moorabbin CAB, Caulfield CAB agreed to extend its services to the area. In July 1997 an annex was opened at the Godfrey St Community House in Bentleigh. The service operated for four hours a day, two days per week. Because the house and office were shared with other organisations there were a number of challenges, but the service was gradually used by an increasing number of local residents. It is interesting to note that Godfrey St clients were almost entirely clients seeking Emergency Relief and therefore attended in person. Staffing this extra service put a strain on Caulfield CAB resources but there was success in recruiting volunteers from the area.



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State Government funding policies had also forced changes within VA-CAB. The broadening of its role was reflected in its new title – *Victorian Association of Community Information Centres (VACIC)*, which it adopted in 1995. Caulfield CAB, now situated in Glen Eira, took the opportunity to assess its role in, and relationship with the community and in 1996 was renamed *Glen Eira Community Information and Resource Centre*. This was reviewed again in 1998 and the simpler *Community Information Glen Eira* adopted. It is interesting to note the similarity to the original title. The Association had earlier simplified its name, now operating as *Community Information Victoria (CIVic)*.

Further revision of the constitution was undertaken in 1999 in order to meet the requirements that would enable us to apply for public benevolent institute status (status as a charitable institution). This meant establishing the increased role that relief work plays in our contact with clients, a situation readily supported by our statistics. We were pleased to receive this exemption early in 2000.



## Partnerships and Support Services

From the time in 1974 when the organisation was invited to occupy premises in the Council complex, Caulfield and subsequently Glen Eira Council has been most supportive. In addition to providing accommodation and related services, Council made funding available for a co-ordinator position and approved periodical grants to support our role in emergency relief.

### **Service Coordinators**

Our first coordinator, Bev d'Argaville was appointed in 1976 to work 2 hours per day, 5 days a week. The value of this role in providing continuity and support for the volunteers was soon apparent and the hours were increased to 15 per week the following year. Council continued to fund the co-ordinator position with the provision of funds for 33 hours a week over many years.

In 1978 Dorothy Trevorrow, a founder volunteer of the Caulfield Bureau and a trainer for the Association, was appointed coordinator, a post she held until the end of 1981. Judyth Mills as coordinator from 1982 to 1986 oversaw the change to storage of information on computer. Since 1988 we have been fortunate to have stability of leadership with Laurel Thompson as co-ordinator.

### **Council—Centre Liaison**

We are both independent of and yet dependent on Council for our successful operation; independent in that our policies and procedures are governed by CIVic, dependent on Council for financial support and accommodation. We like to feel that we repay this support through the service we provide to the community.

Council was represented on our Management Committee, mainly through its Welfare/Human Services Department, between 1978 and 1998.



In 1998 a consultant was appointed by Council to develop a strategic plan for the Centre. This resulted in a service agreement between the Centre and Council. Regular liaison is maintained through this agreement which looks at all aspects of our role in the community. Areas addressed in the service agreement included a review of our information policy, management of information resources, review of emergency relief procedures and exploration of funding.

### ***Information Management***

Central to the work of the Centre is the provision of accurate and up-to-date information. Frequently this is in the form of referrals to other appropriate organisations. The selection, storage and updating of information is a continuing process. Initially information was recorded on cards which were cross-referenced to enable quick access. Early annual reports indicate that assistance relating to pensions, health services, legal matters and home services was in greatest demand.

In 1975 Caulfield adopted the categories proposed by the VACAB both for the classification of information and for compiling statistics. VACAB, through its Infocab was a regular source of relevant material.

The move from cards to computers was begun in 1982 when the Caulfield Bureau was linked to Council's Services Information System. We believe we were one of the first Bureaus to computerise our information. As with the card system, computer entries are supported with brochures and other printed material which can be given to clients.

In 1981 Caulfield Council produced its first annual Resource Guide. Distributed to all residents in the municipality, the guide contained information relating to all spheres of government as well as council services. It also listed educational, religious and community service organisations that operated in the municipality. From 1992 to 1994 the Bureau, through special funding, undertook the preparation of the Resource Guide – a huge but rewarding task.



When Council's Human Services Department was relocated to the Town Hall in 1991 we gained not only a waiting area for clients, but an area where we could display a wide range of brochures relevant to client needs.

VACAB had for several years hoped to make a relevant Database available to bureaus and finally in 1995 purchased an INFOCOM software package from Datascape. Infocom provided a database of our community information, supplemented by appropriate local information.

It can never be assumed that information held is completely accurate. Through regular reviews we kept computerised and printed material as up-to-date as possible. The work of the Information Officer is never-ending and we must pay tribute in particular to Florence Burton and Maisie Johnston who initially established the information system, to John Chapman who was Information Officer from 1987 to 1998 and to Sheila Enderlin who worked on keeping computer entries up-to-date from 1996 for several years.

An appeal to the community in 2000 for volunteers to help with information and administrative tasks brought a most encouraging response. Joan da Silveira, a trained volunteer took on the job of Information Officer, with the support of other volunteers.

Statistics based on the categories of client needs designed by CIVic were collated monthly and supplied to CIVic's central office. Glen Eira's statistics, over the ten years 1990 –2000, were dominated by requests for material aid. Enquiries related to family and personal support, home services and community organisations also rated highly. Information related to problems with neighbors; issues with fences and trees and body corporate concerns were a continuing line of enquiry.

In July 2000 a revised list of categories was adopted by bureaus associated with CIVic. Individual workers were expected to take more responsibility for allocating enquiries to the appropriate category. David McVilly took on the role of Statistics Officer, a role carried out for several years by John Hocking and John Chapman.



### ***Volunteer Training and Rosters***

Volunteers who work for the Centre as interviewers are required to undertake a course of training. Initially this course was conducted by the state's Social Welfare Department with many trainers being accredited CAB workers. In 1983 the VACAB combined with the Social Welfare Department to plan a new course. From 1985 till 1999 this course was offered through TAFE colleges. Successful volunteers were asked to make a commitment for regular service on roster and to participate in on-going training.

Juggling names and spaces for the volunteer roster is not an easy task. As well as juggling the days on which volunteers are available, the roster convenor must cope with illnesses, volunteer and school vacations and religious festivals. Apart from the period between Christmas and early January, and public holidays, the Centre opens every week day. It is policy that at least two workers are present when the Centre is open to the public. That the Glen Eira Centre was only rarely forced to close because of unavailability of staff is a tribute to the commitment of all volunteers, and in particular to those who on occasion worked two or more sessions per week. Among these are former workers Sam Lambert and Dorothy Hession.

Mollie Grist as the first roster convenor was followed by Valda Lechte, Sam Lambert, Mavis Edwards, Dorothy Hession (1988-1995) and Lane Shmerling from 1996.



## Services Provided By The Centre

The work and services offered by Community Information Glen Eira changed and expanded to meet the variable and growing needs of clients. Services offered by the Centre included:

- Social Support
- Legal Advice
- Community Buses
- Emergency Relief
- Accounting Advice
- Tax Help

### **Social Support**

The Management Committee continually looked at ways in which the Centre could help to meet the needs of the wider community. In 1974, Wenzel Oxenbould, a founder volunteer and a trainer of volunteers, organised a group of helpers to provide assistance for some of the many frail elderly residents in the Caulfield area. This assistance, known as Voluntary Aid, helped residents with shopping and transport to medical or other appointments. Volunteers also visited residents in their homes, providing company and a friendly chat. While some of helpers already worked for the Centre, for most part it was an extension of the volunteer scheme, with Wenzel making most arrangements between volunteer and client. The demand for this service increased steadily over the years with clients often referred by Council's Human Services Department or through hospitals. In 1985, through a grant from the then Family and Community Services (FACS), the salaried position of social support service co-ordinator was established for 10 hours per week. This enabled visits to prospective clients to assess their individual needs and allowed for more personal contact with volunteers. The co-ordinator aimed to 'match' the client and the volunteer. While most volunteers offered their services on an individual basis, volunteers from St Mary's Church, 'St Mary's Task Force,' worked on a group basis. For many clients help was on-going and several volunteers helped more than one client. In 1989 the co-ordinator reported that 19 volunteers had assisted 58 clients during the previous year.



At this time Home and Community Care (HACC) became the funding body for the service and an increase of hours to 15 per week for the co-ordinator was possible. In 1995 the funding body requested that the service adopt the title of *Social Support and Monitoring Service*. With the change in municipal boundaries in 1996 and an extension to southern Glen Eira, there was a rise in demand for the social support service. The co-ordinators position was extended to 21 hours per week to help manage the extra workload.

Many social support service clients were over 80 years of age, lived alone and had some disability. Over the years volunteers were invited to participate in workshops to help them to deal with frail and elderly clients. Because of its scope and flexibility this program, at its inception, was considered unique not only in Melbourne but perhaps in the whole of Victoria. Much credit for the continuing success of this service must be given to Jean Bannister as co-ordinator from 1985 to 1997.

The following volunteers gave outstanding long-term commitment to this service: Audrey Tyrrell, Rosa Klinger, Norma Nicholas, Frances Murphy, Joan Mansfield, Brian Oliver, Phyllis McLean, Tom Rosauer and Ian Anderson

### ***Legal Advice Service***

In February 1977 a free Legal Advice Service provided by local solicitors was offered through the Bureau. The late Simon Kiven represented the solicitors in organising the scheme. Initially two solicitors attended for consultation on Wednesday evenings, with appointments made through the Bureau and Bureau staff in attendance. In the first five months the solicitors saw 266 clients. As the title suggests, the service was limited to advice; clients were advised of other options if further action was needed. Family matters, traffic offences and property disputes formed the majority of the problems presented by clients.

Over the years arrangements for the service varied. From 1984 to 1986 the service was offered two evenings per week, but because of lack of demand was reduced to one evening a week in July 1986. Because the service operated at night only, some clients were unable to attend. We



were able to refer such clients to the St Kilda Legal Service or the Peninsula Legal Service which had an office in Bentleigh. The latter operated from 1983 to 1997 as the Southern Community Legal Service, in conjunction with the then Chisholm Institute (now part of Monash University), with an office at Caulfield Plaza. During 1984-85 Marilyn Beebe was available, during the day on Fridays, at the Bureau for legal advice.

Perhaps the peak use of the service came between 1979-80 with 395 legal appointments recorded. Demand for the service decreased sharply in the mid 90's. Only 134 clients used the service in 1996-97 and 85 in 1997-98. During 1998 the service was reduced to fortnightly with only 54 clients attending during 1998-99.

There was no apparent reason for the decline in the use of the Legal Advice Service. However, free legal advice was available through telephone services such as Dial-a-Law, while some radio programs dealt with listeners' problems on a weekly basis. In addition solicitors were sometimes more willing than in the past to give one-off free advice preparatory to being engaged to act.

While clients were asked to confirm their appointments and the availability of the solicitor was checked, failure of a client or the solicitor to attend did occur on occasions. Lack of access to the Bureau resulted, on one occasion, in interviews being held in the solicitor's car. On the whole, though, solicitors associated with the service showed great loyalty and dedication. George Erlichster, Herman Folkers, Michael Kraus, Michael Oliver and Andrew Romer were on the legal roster for many years from the mid-eighties.

### **Community Buses**

In 1979 the Caulfield Lions' Club donated a 12 seater bus to Caulfield Council for use by community groups. In September 1979 Council offered to fund a part-time co-ordinator to organise use of the bus and requested that the service be run from the CAB office. Vi Marshall who had been a CAB worker was appointed to the position, working 10 hours per week. Rules for use of the bus, eligibility of groups as clients and arrangements for maintenance and repair of the bus had to be established. Council hostels and neighbourhood centres were among the main users.



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While some groups were able to provide their own drivers, it was soon evident that there was a need to recruit volunteer drivers and jockeys. Because the bus was a 12 seater drivers did not need a special license.

The co-ordinator was responsible for allocation of the bus, the recruitment and rostering of drivers and jockeys, and the supervision of maintenance and repair of the bus.

The popularity of the bus led to the purchase of a second bus in July 1981, again partly funded by the Lions' Club. In 1982 weekly shopping trips to Chadstone Shopping Centre were arranged for elderly citizens unable to travel there independently. Clients were picked up from and returned to their homes. Sunday 'mystery' tours also proved a popular innovation.

In 1985 it became necessary to charge a fee to help defray the costs of running the buses. Initially the charge was \$5.00 for half a day and \$10.00 for a full day's use of the buses. Charges were regularly reviewed and in 1991 a graduated schedule of fees was introduced. Under this scheme non-profit employing bodies and sporting clubs paid \$15.00 and private enterprise groups \$30.00 per half day.

During this time all council staff and volunteers who drove the buses were required to undertake RACV driving assessments. The buses had also been fitted with retractable seat belts and hi-riders for children. In 1993 a third bus, with wheel chair facility, was added to the fleet. This enabled clients with disabilities to participate in outings.

As co-ordinator of the buses from 1983 to 1990 Yvonne Kay proved to be popular and competent. Yvonne initiated social outings for her volunteers, enabling them to get to know one another and become part of a team. Training sessions in emergency procedures and first aid were organised for volunteers during 1994. At this time too, bookings were put on a computer system.

The organisation of the community buses continued to operate from the CAB office until the end of 1997 when Council resumed control preparatory to the proposed development of a regional community transport system.



Some indication of the use of the buses while they operated from the CAB office can be gained from annual reports. In June 1980, some nine months after she was appointed co-ordinator, Vi Marshall reported that 30 different organisations had used the bus. Yvonne Kay reported some 9,000 passengers had traveled 50,000 kilometres in the community buses in 1984. In this, as in other areas of our work, volunteers played a vital role. Among those who helped as drivers or jockeys for ten years or more were Frank Durra, Ann Gild, Doreen Grewe, Harry Hawker and Audrey Tyrell while Harry Nicholls, Thelma Coad and Dianne Simmonds each served terms on the Committee of Management of the Bureau.

### ***Emergency Relief***

The establishment of the Caulfield CAB had in part resulted from recognition that there are always some people in need of material assistance in an emergency. In 1974 the state Social Welfare Department made funds available to VACAB to establish a 'last-resort' fund. Caulfield's share of this money, \$50.00, was used to found a Samaritan Fund. This was administered by the president with clients referred through the Bureau. Extra funds were raised by the 'Lamington Ladies' under the leadership of Wenzel Oxenbould. Demands on the fund were few as the annual reports from 1975 to 1982 indicate. Amounts in the fund ranged between \$138.00 and \$334.00. Examples of help to clients at that time were \$95.00 to three clients in 1978 and \$14.00 to one client in 1982.

This was however a time of world-wide economic downturn. The loss of employment for many citizens was exacerbated by their heavy financial commitments, while high inflation and high rentals decreased buying power, particularly for pensioners and those in the private rental market. The 1983 Annual Report shows a 400% increase in requests for material aid. The federal and state governments acknowledged this crisis by making funds available for emergency relief. In the absence of organisations such as the Salvation Army or St. Vincent de Paul in Caulfield, the CAB was asked by Council to administer these funds. In December 1983 \$8,000.00 was paid to the Bureau for this purpose. The Management Committee decided that such help should be given in the form of food vouchers, with cash help restricted to travel money. A policy for frequency of help and amounts to be given was established.



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The increased demand for help over the years is shown through the annual statistics. For example in 1987 \$9,700 was distributed to 369 clients, in 1991 this increased to \$24,000 to 718 clients, in 1995 \$59,985 to 1897 clients and in 1999 2,955 clients received food vouchers to the value of \$82,900. Clients were also made aware of other entitlements such as rent assistance or energy concessions.

The emergency relief aspect of the work was undoubtedly the most stressful for volunteers. It had the tendency to make them feel that the help given was inadequate for the client's needs or that they were required to make judgments regarding the level and frequency of assistance.

As more Bureaus became involved in emergency relief VACAB (in 1990) convened an Emergency Relief Task Force. The final report of this group stressed the importance of confidentiality and upholding the dignity of the client.

While government grants have increased over the years they provide only part of the funds distributed. For the year 1998-99 the government grant was \$60,000. Glen Eira Council has for many years been generous with additional funds raised through special functions, while local churches and recreational groups regularly assisted through donations of food or cash. The Caulfield Lions' Club and Voluntary Workers' shop helped with clothing and other goods on request. Further funds were received through the Court System. While we received funds through the Melbourne Magistrates' Court, the closure of local courts such as Elsternwick and Prahran was a blow to local communities.

With a surge in demand for material aid it was felt that some clients could benefit from one-off financial assistance or by help with organising their finances. Peg Corden and Dorothy Rogerson undertook a Budget Advisory Course and a sub-committee, the *Budget Advisory Service* was established in 1984. Clive Mander and later Dorothy Hession also helped with this work. Clients who came frequently for emergency relief or who had a specific financial problem were encouraged to make an appointment with a member of this committee. Some clients sought and received help. Some, whose problems were outside the skills of our workers, were referred to professional financial counsellors. Help was on occasion gained through organisa-



tions such as the Queen's Fund. Response to the scheme was on the whole disappointing as clients often did not keep appointments.

Figures quoted above show that although unemployment decreased the demand for help did not. This may have been due in part to greater community awareness of help available or that the decrease in unemployment did not impact directly on clients seeking emergency relief.

There is no doubt that involvement in emergency relief brought a dramatic increase in the number of clients visiting the Bureau. In 1983 the ratio of phone calls to visits was 6 to 1, in 1984 approximately 3 to 1. Gradually the percentage of visits increased. By 1996 visits exceeded phone calls. This trend was maintained. The primary reason for seeking help may have been shortage of money, however, discussions with clients often led to other forms of assistance.

### ***Tax Help***

Other financial services offered to Glen Eira residents were Accounting Advice and Tax Help. Between 1992 and 1994 local accountants were available on a weekly basis to give financial advice but through lack of support the service was discontinued.

In the mid-nineties the Taxation Department ran a training course for volunteers so that help with tax returns could be given to eligible clients. Our volunteers did not feel that the course was satisfactory so did not continue with the service. A revised tax help service was established in 1998 and was more successful. The Taxation Department made accredited taxation helpers available to visit the Bureau. Alf Amery, who undertook special training and organised this service which, in 1998-99 assisted 91 low income earners.



## **Working Toward Access and Equity**

The municipality of Caulfield like all areas of Melbourne has had its share of settlers from post-war immigration programs, many coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. The 1973 Annual Report notes that 16% of calls were from migrants, with approximately half of these from people who spoke little or no English.

In the early nineties as part of her studies in Community Development, Mary O'Reilly, one of our volunteers undertook a study of migrants in the Caulfield area. Her aim was to create an awareness and understanding of the needs of migrants and the compilation of a Services Directory for people of non-English speaking background. This involved identifying ethnic groups in Caulfield, establishing their needs and how an organisation like CAB could best help them. Mary was at that time a member of VA-CAB's Ethnic Liaison Network and also liaised with Caulfield's Adult Literacy Service. Her work was largely concerned with the considerable number of settlers of Russian-Jewish origin then coming to the area and also with local Polish speaking citizens.

A successful submission to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs provided funding for Mary to produce a Directory of Services for newly arrived migrants and refugees in the southern region. A series of pamphlets dealing with health, education and welfare in six community languages was also produced. The project presented a number of challenges, particularly in relation to the reluctance of some organisations to share information, but the directory was published in 1996 and arrangements made for information to be updated.

In dealing with non-English speaking clients volunteers are able to make use of the Translating and Interpreter Service available by phone through Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.



## Volunteer Recognition

### Glen Eira Council Service Awards

Recognition of the work of volunteers in various aspects of community life is acknowledged annually by the Glen Eira Council through its Community Services Recognition Scheme, which was established by Caulfield Council in 1988. Volunteers who have given 500 hours, 1000 hours or 2000 hours of service or who are considered to have made a special contribution are given awards. Many volunteers associated with the Centre, either through their work as trained interviewers, in providing social support or as drivers or jockeys of the community buses, have received one or more of these awards.

### CIVic Certificate of Service

The governing body, CIVic, also acknowledges years of service given by trained volunteers. In 2000, 33 of our volunteers qualified for 10 year certificates and 4 volunteers were eligible for 20 year certificates. Several volunteers from the early years of the Bureau would have qualified for a years of service award but had retired before its introduction.

### Volunteers Recognised For 10 Years Service

Iris Burston, Irene Capek, John Chapman, Pet Corden, Fay Coutts, Dulcie Davey, Kitty Doble, John Field, Mollie Grist, Dorothy Hession, Lillian Hind, John Hocking, Ken Jacombs, Maisie Johnston, Valda Lechte, Arthur Lukies, Noela Lukies, Marie McCarthy, Phyllis McLean, Tallilah May, Glad Miles, Ellen Moser, Irene Popper, Ray Poynton, Elizabeth Richardson, Dorothy Rogerson, Betty Splatt, May Stewart, Nancy Telford, Marion Thompson, Alan Trevorrow, Dorothy Trevorrow, Norma Whittaker.

### Volunteers Recognised For 20 Years Service

Mavis Edwards, Margaret Hicks, Sam Lambert, Joyce Moorrees

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### **Community Information Glen Eira Life Membership**

The Management Committee of Community Information Glen Eira also gives recognition of service by granting Life Memberships. The following trained volunteers were awarded Life Memberships between 1985 and 2000:

- 1985** Mollie Grist, Arthur Lukies, Noela Lukies, Wenzel Oxenbould, Alan Trevorrow, Dorothy Trevorrow. Alan and Dorothy Trevorrow are also Life Members of VA-CAB
- 1994** Dorothy Hesson, Sam Lambert, Mavis Edwards
- 1996** John Chapman
- 1997** Margaret Hicks
- 2000** Jean Bannister, John Hocking

### **Citizen of the Year**

The following citizens have been associated with the Centre and named as local Citizen of the Year: Irene Capek, Betty Snowball and Wenzel Oxenbould.



## Advertising and Promotion of Services

Effective advertising and promotion of the expanding and wide range of services provided by Community Information Glen Eira is integral to the successful access and delivery of services to residents who need it most. The Centre used a range of promotional strategies including the following:

- As mentioned previously in its early days the community information service was publicised through letterbox drops to residents. Promotional information and appeals for volunteers were also conducted through local newspapers, the Council *Glen Eira News* and the earlier *Contact*.
- On many occasions representatives of Glen Eira Community Information spoke to community groups.
- From time to time we used the council caravan in shopping centres to raise awareness of our services to the general public.
- Bookmarks and pamphlets were distributed to local libraries, doctors' waiting rooms and real estate agent offices.
- We frequently participated in Council Community Day.



## **2000 and Beyond**

In the year 2000 the Centre had 35 volunteers working as interviewers and 10 volunteers who helped with backup tasks such as administration and updating information. Twenty volunteers gave their time for the Social Support and Monitoring programs.

Recruitment of volunteers for training as interviewers was generally successful though not all recruits completed the course or stayed on as volunteers. Over the years some volunteers found the training course a stepping stone to employment in related areas. Records show the splendid commitment that many volunteers made since the Centre opened in 1971- 35 worked with the Centre for 10 or more years, while 4 had given 20 or more years of service.

It was in 2000 that we became involved in the Volunteer Resource Project. A study carried out by Glen Eira Council to promote volunteering in the municipality led to the establishment of the project, to be funded by Council. Council requested that Community Information make a submission to receive funding for the project. Our submission was accepted and Anita Mummé was subsequently appointed as project worker. A steering committee was formed to facilitate development of the project.

Community Information Glen Eira was in a healthy position both financially and in the number of people who worked in the Centre in 2000. It is sad to report that some older bureaus such as Melbourne and Bendigo were forced to close.

Our continuing successful position was due to a variety of factors; good relations with Glen Eira Council, a strong management committee, a high standard of service to the community and a friendly, co-operative group of workers who felt secure through the leadership of the co-ordinator Laurel Thompson.

The Management Committee of Community Information Glen Eira is appreciative of the support the City of Glen Eira has given to the Centre both through the provision of accommodation and financial support. This enabled the Centre to concentrate on its primary purpose; to offer a free, confidential impartial and independent service to the residents of Glen



***Community Information Glen Eira 1970—2005***

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Eira. Everyone who has been associated with the Centre in any way during the last thirty years can be justly proud of their contribution to the service it has provided. May this be just a milestone in our story.



**Executive Members of Management Committee  
1971—2000**

**President**

1971-1973	Albert Fisher
1973-1981	Alf Knee
1981-1982	Nance Needham
1982-1983	Alf Knee
1983-1985	Ken Jacombs
1985-1987	Mavis Edwards
1987-1989	Betty Snowball
1989-1991	Joyce Moorrees
1991-1992	John Hocking
1992-1993	Joyce Moorrees
1993-1994	John Kamer
1994-1997	Anne Helman
1997-2000	John Thompson

**Vice President**

1971-1973	Alf Knee
1973-1977	Jack Field
1977-1981	Nance Needham
1981-1982	Alf Knee
1982-1983	Nance Needham
1983-1984	John Fooks
1984-1987	Betty Snowball
1992-1995	Wendy Mence
1995-1996	John Kamer
1996-1997	John Thompson
1997-2000	Judy Morgan



**Executive Members of Management Committee  
1971—2000**

**Secretary**

1971-1980	Alan Trevorrow
1980-1983	Arthur Lukies
1983-1984	B Burleigh
1984-1986	Jean Ravenscroft
1986-1987	Carol Green
1987-1989	Mavis Edwards
1989-1991	John Chapman
1991-1992	Joyce Moorrees
1992-1994	Anne Helman
1994-1998	Joanne Gubieski
1998-2000	Tom Rosauer

**Treasurer**

1971-1978	Bruce Davenport
1978-1983	Jack Fooks
1983-1984	Val Kaye
1984-1986	Arthur Lukies
1986-1989	John Hocking
1989-1994	Fay Coutts
1994-2000	Dennis Preston





## **PART 2**

# **COMMUNITY INFORMATION GLEN EIRA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM 2000—2005**





## **New Millennium—New Challenges**

### **Community Information Glen Eira**

### **2000-2005**

Part 1 '*Our First Thirty Years*' set out to record the story of Community Information Glen Eira (known for much of that time as Caulfield Citizens' Advice Bureau), and its contribution to the Caulfield/Glen Eira community. Part 2 documents the service developments at the Centre in the five years 2000 to 2005.

For the Management Committee the new millennium brought many new challenges and changes to how services were administered and what services would be available. This was due to the introduction of new strategies and procedures by state and local government and the continuing and growing necessity for services by the community.

Challenges and changes were seen in:

- Funding
- Volunteer recruitment and training
- Association with CIVic
- Information management
- Printed material
- Services

#### ***Funding***

Decisions made by the State Government in the 1990s put pressure on Councils to adopt policies of economic rationalism. Strategies such as compulsory competitive tendering meant that many services previously performed by Council employees were now contracted out. For the Community Information Centre this meant that funding was tied to a Service Agreement. Initiated by Council in 1998 and periodically reviewed, this Agreement required the Centre to develop an organised plan of service and to become partially self-funding.



As highlighted in 'Our First Thirty Years', helping clients in need of emergency relief became the area of greatest demand in the Centre's operations. This is funded mainly through a Commonwealth Government grant and for a time Council felt that the Commonwealth should also provide management costs. However only a small amount of funding can be claimed for administrative purposes.

### ***Volunteer Recruitment and Training Initiative***

A major challenge affecting the Centre during 2000-2005 was Council's wish to be involved in the wider aspects of volunteering. Council invited the Community Information Centre to establish and manage a volunteer service. The Centre was successful in obtaining Council funds to set up a Volunteer Resource Service. This involved providing a focus for local volunteering, creating a database of volunteering opportunities, assisting potential volunteers to access this information and developing a network of managers of volunteer organisations. Anita Mummé was appointed project co-ordinator and successfully developed this new service. Council requested that the service become self-funding. Anita was able to obtain a substantial one-off grant from Perpetual Trustees for the service but no alternative ongoing funding was discovered. Anita also obtained one-off funding, to provide a training program for volunteers in the community, through the Stronger Families and Communities Program. Angela Russell was the project worker who developed this most successful program which delivered training to both volunteers and volunteer managers. A training manual of the program was developed and widely distributed. It is now available on the internet on the National Volunteer Skills Centre site. Louix Chazique also played an important role developing a brochure for the Volunteer Resource Service and helped to produce attractive Annual Reports for the Centre.

After several years of separate funding Council called for the Community Information Centre to encompass the work of the Volunteer Resource Service (VRS) within its own operations. This meant that funding for both the core services of the Centre and the Volunteer Resource Service was restricted. A compromise was reached, although the funding arrangements were not sufficient to run both services at an optimal level. The valuable



work of the VRS is continued with the help and support of the Centre volunteers.

In most instances inquiries from new volunteers are initially directed to Community Information volunteers, who also deal with day to day queries on volunteering opportunities. The Co-ordinator of the Centre is responsible for updating of volunteering information, volunteer training, maintaining the Glen Eira network of managers of volunteers and contact with Volunteering Victoria and Volunteering Australia.

### ***CIVic***

Glen Eira Community Information has maintained its association with CIVic, the peak organisation for incorporated community information centres. A significant change in CIVic's policy was its acknowledgment of the importance of emergency relief in the work of member centres. In December 2001 CIVic reported that community information centres were the third largest group in Victoria involved in the distribution of emergency relief, behind only the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul.

### ***Information Management***

Accurate and up to date information continues to be an essential aspect of the role of information centres. Between 1995 and 2005 centres were able to use a statewide Infocom Database (Datascope) package available through CIVic. When CIVic discontinued its use of the package Community Information Glen Eira entered into a contract with Datascope, who maintain a Community Referral Directory Database and continually develop the software.

While most information can be accessed quickly on computer, it is still necessary to have up-to-date printed material. This requires constant checking to ensure accuracy and availability and the Centre is indebted to Pat Schmit who has maintained printed materials since early 2002.



## **Changes To Services**

There have been inevitable changes in services offered by the Centre, and the way in which they are offered. Significant amongst these are as follows:

- **Legal Service**

Because of a decrease in demand the legal service was discontinued in 2000. Several of the solicitors on roster had supported the service for many years and their contributions were greatly appreciated.

- **Closure of Godfrey Street Annex**

The annex at the Godfrey Street Community House, which opened in 1997, provided for the residents of the South Eastern area of the expanded municipality. The service was not sufficiently used to warrant the necessary staff so it was reluctantly decided to close the annex in August 2001.

- **Emergency Relief**

The demand for material aid has remained high throughout the municipality. The Annual Report 2000 records that \$81,925 was distributed to 4,388 residents. The 2004 Annual Report records that \$74,944.00 was distributed to 4435 residents. In addition non-perishable foodstuffs to the value of \$49,209.00 were distributed in 2004. While some foodstuffs are donated by local individuals and organisations, the bulk are obtained through the Victorian Relief Committee. The enduring efforts of Val Gershman in collecting and organising this food is to be commended.

Further assistance was made available to clients when the Centre became part of the Telstra telephone voucher relief scheme in 2003.

While Government statistics show a marked decrease in unemployment, these figures are not reflected in the number of people seeking help. Many clients are single parents, are on disability pensions or are employed only on a casual or part time basis.



The closure of the Malvern Community Information Centre in September 2002 added to requests for assistance for emergency relief from residents living near the Stonnington-Glen Eira boundary. This created an additional strain on resources at the Glen Eira Centre and created difficulties for residents of Stonnington. Our concerns regarding the situation were brought to the attention of both the federal funding body and the City of Stonnington.

- **Tax Help**

The tax help service, which the Centre first offered to low income earners in 1999, has become increasingly popular. The Annual Report 2000 recorded that 83 residents were helped by this service. By 2004 the number of residents assisted had grown to 240. Thanks for the organisation of this service between July and October of each year must go to Alf Amery and Terry Puno who are assisted by other volunteers. It is hoped that this year (2005) electronic lodgment of tax returns will be available to clients.

- **Volunteers**

Volunteer numbers have remained steady with new volunteers replacing those who have retired. There is usually a volunteer prepared to do extra duty when vacancies occur. The Centre is fortunate to have such a loyal band of workers. Lane Shmerling continues the unenviable task of Roster Convener. Regular training sessions provide the opportunity for volunteers to get together and to keep up-to-date with current trends. Guest speakers providing specialised knowledge alternate with in-house discussions. Newsletters and notice boards provide further means of keeping volunteers informed. Jan Muir coordinated the volunteer training program from 2002 to 2004. Sonia Zyntek and Sue Hocking took over management of the training program in 2005.



• **Social Support and Monitoring**

The requests for a friendly visitor or assistance with activities such as shopping, which help frail elderly residents to stay in their own home, continues at a steady rate. Approximately 25-30 volunteers provide help for 50-55 clients on a regular basis. There has been a welcome increase in the number of younger volunteers and an extension of the services offered, such as help with gardening and walking dogs. The Social Support Co-ordinator visits all new clients and every effort is made to 'match' client and volunteer. Regular reviews are made of existing clients. Opportunities for volunteers to get together are arranged on a regular basis, along with workshops to assist volunteers in their contact with clients. Volunteers provide over 3000 hours of service each year. The co-ordinator also maintains contact with a network of related aged care organisations in the municipality. Susan Rutherford has been the co-ordinator of the service since 2000. Having one person in the position for such an extended period has given a sense of continuity to both clients and volunteers. Susan's initiatives include the creation of a volunteer manual and the development of comprehensive policies and procedures for the service.



## **Statistics**

Statistics reflecting all enquiries made to the Centre are important to insure the service reflects the needs of the community and that those needs are being met. In addition CIVic, the peak body, and government funding bodies all require relevant statistics.

Because of changes in the recording of statistics over the years, a comparison between figures shown in the earlier history and the present time may not reflect the true picture. Personal visits to the Centre by clients continue to exceed phone enquires. Requests for material aid continue to account for more than half of all enquiries, and occupy approximately two thirds of volunteers time. Figures for the year 1999—2000 show an all time high with 11,121 enquiries. The number of enquiries for 2003—2004 was 7,856 which is more in keeping with most years.

The task of collating statistics is a demanding one and thanks are due to those who, over the years, have performed this duty. Among these are John Hocking, John Chapman, David McVilly, Terry Puno and currently Diane Rolfe, Mari Fisher, Fay Coultis and Margaret Armidstead.



## **Advertising and Promotion**

From time to time special efforts are made to publicise some aspect of the Centre's work. The most recent of these was related to volunteer recruitment. A display was assembled and circulated through the Councils libraries. Fliers outlining the Volunteer Resource Service and procedures in the event of violence were also developed and distributed.

## **Policy and Procedure**

A safety manual has been developed to inform workers of conditions and procedures related to workplace safety. Policies relating to the service as a member of CIVic are reviewed from time to time and new policies emerge as change demands.

## **Volunteer Self Assessment and Service Review**

The Centre conducted a Volunteer Self Assessment and Service Review in June 2005. The aim of the review was to help determine current levels of performance and indicators for future direction.



## Community Representation

Since its inception the Centre has been fortunate in having community representation on its Committee of Management. Those members not involved with the day to day running of the Centre provide valuable input and important contact with the wider community. It is not possible to name all who have served in this way, but the contribution of the following is acknowledged:

- |                  |  |            |
|------------------|--|------------|
| • Alf Knee       | President  | 1973 –1981 |
| • Betty Snowball | Committee Member<br>(including a term as<br>President and Vice<br>President) | 1985—1992  |
| • Geoff Patience | Committee Member   | 1993—2004  |
| • Jack Fooks     | Treasurer  | 1978—1983  |
| • Dennis Preston | Treasurer  | 1994—2005  |
| • Erwin Ross     | Auditor  | 1992—2004  |



## **Volunteer Recognition**

### **Glen Eira Council Awards**

Glen Eira Council continues to acknowledge the work of volunteers through its Community Services Recognition Scheme. Between 2000 and 2005 10 volunteers received special awards with many others qualifying for between 500 and 2000 hours of service.

### **Community Information Glen Eira Life Membership**

The Management Committee of Community Information Glen Eira also continues to give recognition of the service of volunteers by granting of Life Memberships. The following trained volunteers were awarded Life Memberships between 2000 and 2005:

<b>2001</b>	Joyce Moorrees, Betty Splatt
<b>2004</b>	Tom Rosaver, John Thompson

### **CIVic Certificate of Service**

Betty Splatt was acknowledged for 20 years of volunteer service by CIVic. Ten year service certificates were awarded to Cath Britton, Joanne Gubi-eski, Shirley Groat, Phyllis McLean, Geoff Patience, Dennis Preston, Tom Rosauer, Lane Shmerling and John Thompson.

### **Special Recognition**

Tallilah May, a volunteer from our centre, has also served as a management committee member of CIVic since 1993.



## **The Future 2005 and Beyond**

As a service organisation the future of Community Information Glen Eira looks promising at a time when many similar organisations have been forced to close.

The Centre and the services it offers will be influenced by the changing needs of the community, government policies and available resources. It will also be heavily influenced by the continuing commitment to excellence of the staff and volunteers who work toward the delivery of a seamless, comprehensive and practical support and referral service.

A feature of the service in the coming year (2005-2006) will be a project funded by the Department for Communities Volunteer Unit. To obtain this funding the Volunteer Resource Service devised a project to celebrate the diversity of volunteering in Glen Eira. The process of creating the celebration together will generate collaboration, partnerships and the general enhancement of the volunteer sector in the City of Glen Eira.

We are also in negotiation with Hanover Housing, the local transitional housing managers, who have expressed the wish to operate from our office for one session a week. This would facilitate access to their invaluable service to clients in the Glen Eira area.

The Committee of Management, staff and volunteers have been integral to the significant growth, development and success of Community Information Glen Eira in the past 35 years. With the future of the Centre in their hands, continued success is guaranteed.

Special tribute should be paid to Tom Rosauer who was president of the management committee during difficult negotiations with Glen Eira Council, and the stability provided by Laurel Thompson as co-ordinator.



**Executive Members of Management Committee  
2000—2005**

**President**

2000-2003	Tom Rosaver
2003 - to date	Jacquie Wissenden

**Vice President**

2000-2002	Maung Thit
2002-2003	Joan da Silveira
2003 - to date	Bet Warland

**Secretary**

2000-2002	John Coates
2002 - to date	Lydia Minty

**Treasurer**

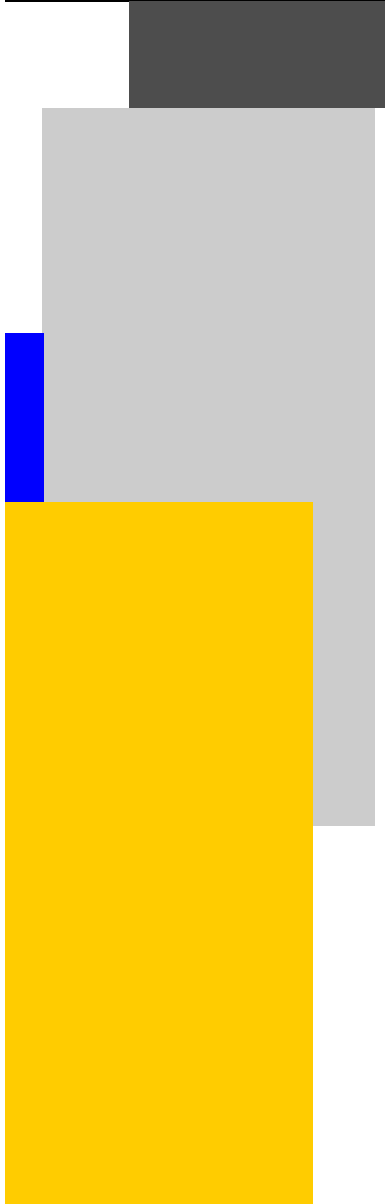
1994-2005	Dennis Preston
2005 - to date	Phyllis Eddy



**About the author: Mavis Edwards**

*Mavis Edwards joined the Caulfield Citizen's Advice Bureau in 1975 on its then evening roster. She became a member of the Committee of Management in 1976. Mavis then served in various positions on the Committee including President, Secretary and later as Minute Secretary over the period from 1985 to 1996. Mavis also represented the Bureau on committees, wrote newsletters, prepared the roster and convened the Voluntary Aid Group; she was also a member of the peak body's Membership and Policy sub-committee for many years. Mavis was the obvious person to write the history as she has not only been an integral part of the organisation for so long but has kept meticulous records on all aspects of our personnel.*





**Community  
Information  
Glen Eira  
1970-2005**

A Brief History of  
Community Information  
Glen Eira Inc.  
(formerly Caulfield  
Citizens' Advice Bureau)

