

'BROPHY'

The story of Father Tom Brophy, the Catholic priest who gave his life to help troubled young men and inspired generations of care at Brophy Family and Youth Services.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks all current and former Brophy Family and Youth Services staff, volunteers and supporters who have provided information and recollections about Father Brophy and the organisation.

Particular thanks goes to the `Brophy's Boys' who shared their experiences.

Father Brophy's nieces and nephews, particularly Lyn Merritt, also assisted with background details.

Information has been obtained from personal recollections, newspaper reports, annual reports, the Warrnambool Standard, Warrnambool Library, the Ballarat Diocese Archives, and particularly from the memorabilia retained by Bob Myers.

“WE’RE REALLY TRYING TO GIVE THE BOYS A NEW START, TO HELP THEM FEEL THEY ARE ACCEPTED FOR A START AND REALISE THAT THEY CAN LIFT THEMSELVES UP”.

FATHER TOM BROPHY

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PART ONE

THE BROPHY STORY





INTRODUCTION

THOMAS MARTIN BROPHY WAS BORN ON AUGUST 19, 1931 AT MOONEE PONDS AND DIED ON MAY 2, 1974 NOT FAR AWAY AT HIS MOTHER'S HOME IN HEIDELBERG.

In less than 43 years Tom Brophy left an enduring legacy, not only with his name that lives on in Brophy Family and Youth Services but through the lives of the people he touched with his wisdom, compassion and dogged determination.

His life was short but his heritage has been long.

Father Brophy was in Warrnambool for just two years but in that time his connection to the community became so strong that he was buried in the city and his funeral was one of the biggest ever seen.

While others steered clear from troubled young men who had left home for various reasons or found themselves in strife with the law, 'Brophy' saw them as his mission in life.

He established youth centres and boys' homes in Ballarat and Warrnambool and worked day and night to help 'wayward' young men.

These lads became known as 'Brophy's boys', a title that might have had some stigma back in the 1970s but a tag worn with pride today.

Father Brophy is remembered with respect bordering on reverence by the boys he helped and the supporters he rallied to his side.

Not all those helped by Father Brophy were able to turn their lives around. Some have died in accidents, from illness or from years of hard living, but many have survived and thrived thanks to Tom Brophy.

His early work in establishing a youth centre and home for boys has in many ways come full circle, with Brophy Family and Youth Services overseeing similar modern-day activities, along with many other programs designed to help young people, families and those facing disadvantage.

Father Brophy believed a local community should look after its young people, especially those in greatest need. He didn't want to see young lads sent away to prison or to out-of-town institutions. He inspired the Warrnambool community

to help his cause, a tradition that has grown over the past four decades as Brophy Family and Youth Services has expanded to meet the more complex needs of young people, families and children in the region.

He was known as Father Tom or simply 'Broph' and his stamina and dedication were legendary.

Some think Father Brophy worked himself to an early death with his relentless workload and nocturnal habits. His church, his family and his supporters would warn him to slow down but he took no notice. If someone needed help, 'Broph' would be there.

His death reduced many – including dozens of seemingly tough teenagers – to tears. Even today there is raw emotion about his premature death, but his spirit lives on and continues to inspire a new generation of people to care for those most in need.

Boys' home founder dies suddenly

Founder of the Warrnambool Home For Boys, Fr Thomas Martin Brophy, died suddenly at his mother's home, Oriel Rd, West Heidelberg, on May 2.

He was visiting his mother before leaving to take up his new post as parish priest at Merbein.

Aged about 42, Fr Brophy was best known for his youth work.

He helped numbers of young people with various problems providing sympathy and accommodation for them.

Soon after he came to Warrnambool two years ago he set up a home for

wayward boys in Kepler St, Warrnambool, which continued until April last year when the present premises in Ardlie St were acquired.

He also helped set up St Paul's Youth Centre in Kepler St, called the "Freedom Zone" to provide entertainment and a meeting place for young people.

Assistant supervisor of the Warrnambool Home For Boys, Mr Bob Myers,

said much of Fr Brophy's work was done in hundreds of homes where he solved marriage and family problems.

"He spent most of his time in the presbytery parlor sorting out marriage cases," Mr Myers said.

Mgr L. S. Fiscalini of Warrnambool, said his death was a great loss.

Fr Brophy had recently been under the care of a doctor.

Article from 1974

"HE ESTABLISHED YOUTH CENTRES AND BOYS' HOMES IN BALLARAT AND WARRNAMBOOL AND WORKED DAY AND NIGHT TO HELP 'WAYWARD' YOUNG MEN".

EARLY YEARS

TOM'S PARENTS WERE THEA AND TOM BROPHY AND HE HAD ONE SISTER, JOAN. WHILE BORN IN MELBOURNE, YOUNG TOM SPENT MOST OF HIS CHILDHOOD IN WARRACKNABEAL AND AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL HE WORKED FOR A FEW YEARS IN THE MEN'S WEAR DEPARTMENT OF E.C. PARSONS PTY LTD IN THE WIMMERA TOWN. AT THE AGE OF 21 HE RETURNED TO ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE, BALLARAT, TO MATRICULATE.

The Brophys weren't particularly religious and there were no others in the wider family who pursued the priesthood.

Father Brophy's niece, Lyn Merritt, was only 13 when he died but has clear memories of the priest who taught her the value of compassion and importance of family.

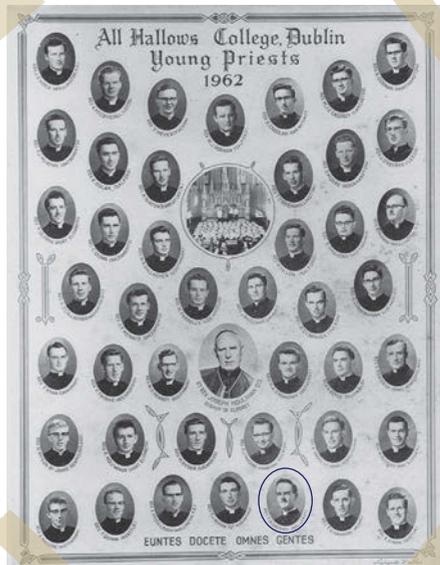
"The family was probably typical at that time when it came to religion. They went to Mass on Sundays," Lyn said.

Not much is remembered of Tom Brophy as a child. His only sister died about 10 years ago.

Father Brophy's remaining nieces and nephews have no insight into what led him to become a priest, but they recall that he was very dedicated to his calling.

After completing secondary school, Tom pursued his education at Corpus Christi College at Werribee where he spent three years. He finished his studies for the priesthood in Genoa, Italy and at All Hallows College in Ireland in the early 1960s. He worked at a boys' home in Ireland, an early indication of where his interests would develop.

From Ireland, Tom went to Rome where he studied law for two years. He returned home to Australia via Boston USA where he spent six months studying welfare and gained experience in matrimonial tribunal work.





He was ordained on June 17, 1962.

Upon his return to Australia, Father Brophy started work in Ballarat and it wasn't long before his interest in helping young people came to the fore.

He pioneered a youth centre at O'Collins House, established homes for wayward boys and girls and worked tirelessly with troubled young people and their parents.

Father Brophy also became a probation officer and worked closely with the courts in Ballarat and later in Warrnambool.

The Ballarat youth centre and hostel set the template for what was to follow in Warrnambool.

The youth club was established in conjunction with St Vincent De Paul on the corner of Lydiard and Mair streets in central Ballarat. The building was purchased by St Vincent de Paul for \$18,000 in 1970 and the club had 16 honorary supervisors.

One of the central figures in the establishment of the youth centre, St Vincent De Paul stalwart Tom Donohue, remembers that from the start Father Brophy was dedicated to helping young people.

"He was working with the youth on the fringe," Tom, now 85 and still living in Ballarat, said. "He told Bishop O'Collins the young people wouldn't go to the church but they might go to some place down the street. The Bishop agreed and wanted to do something for him."

St Vincent De Paul had a shop on one corner of Lydiard and Mair streets and later invested in the building on the opposite corner for the youth centre.

"Not all the priests agreed with his views on things, helping these people on the fringe," Tom Donohue remembers. "They wanted St V's to do something else, but they went back to the Bishop and he decided to do something for Father Tom."

A youth committee was established so young people could contribute ideas on how the centre would run.

Father Brophy set up a room where he could talk to the boys, but he also joined in the activities. "He would wrestle with them," Tom said. "He'd talk to them while he was wrestling. He was a strong fella."

Tom said Father Brophy was very strict about morals but had a great rapport with the young people. "He was respected by them all. He helped them and represented them. He was a man who did tremendous work."

The youth centre was open three nights per week and attracted an average of 230 young people over the week.

Most were seen as well-adjusted and stable but a report from the State Department of Social Services and retained in the archive records of the Ballarat

Catholic Diocese, said that among the remainder “are shades of physical character, mental attitudes and those who have demonstrated delinquent or irresponsible behaviour”.

Sporting activities at the centre included boxing, wrestling, basketball and many forms of gymnastics. There was a small cafeteria and a quiet room for counselling, though it appears to have been rarely used.

“It is common to see Father Brophy with groups of boys near the vaulting horse or the side of the boxing ring engaged in earnest conversation,” the report states.

Questions like ‘how can we build a better world together, how can we help each other, how can we work through problems, how can we best equip ourselves for manhood’ were commonly heard.

Pre-marital sexual intercourse was also a common subject, the report states.

The youth centre continued for about five years.

FIRST HOSTEL

In May 1970 Father Brophy unveiled his plan to open a hostel in Ballarat. It was to be in a rented house in a normal street and based on ‘Boys’ Town’ principles. Within weeks it became a reality.



Father Brophy's Hostel Ballarat. 1971

The hostel started on June 8, 1970 at 310 Eyre Street to meet the accommodation and social needs of 11 youths, most of whom had received court sentences. A small section of the hostel was set aside for what was generally termed prevention cases. Occasionally a youth undergoing training at a youth training centre would stay during his weekend leave.

The first boy officially assigned by a court order to the home was on December 9, 1970 after he appeared in Ballarat Supreme Court.

The offender was convicted of robbery and sentenced to a two-year period of probation. He was also ordered to undergo psychiatric treatment at a mental hospital and after six months to reside at the hostel operated by Father Brophy.

The report from the State Department of Social Services noted the fast acceptance of the hostel concept after early concerns.

“So it was that within a period of seven months, Father Brophy’s hostel for probationers and ex-youth trainees had moved from a beginning at which many responsible people exercised considerable caution, to acceptance by a Supreme Court Judge as a useful community residential program in which an offender can receive help,” the report states.

The document ‘A brief look at hostels and halfway houses in general with particular reference to hostels established in Ballarat’ dated January 25, 1971 and written by Derek Forster, goes on to explain some of Father Brophy’s philosophies.

The report, kept in the Ballarat Diocese archives, provides interesting insight into the operation of the Ballarat home. Many of the methods were later adapted to Warrnambool.

“Father Brophy believes that to be fully effective in both educational and supportive roles, residents should be exposed to and successfully meet the same community pressures as any other adolescent.

“Residents’ progress also includes a responsible attitude to employment, improved personal hygiene standards, (although type and standard of clothing is not considered of major importance), a modification of their early aggressive attitudes towards authority, particularly the police, improved relationships with peers and older people, and a reduction in tensions and frustrations.”

The ability of residents to meet these guidelines would determine how long they stayed at the hostel “without fear of residents developing over-dependence”.

Father Brophy made himself available for guidance to both residents and family members.

Residents who had gone through the hostel and moved to private accommodation were also welcomed back with their friends for an evening meal.

Up to 11 boys were in the home and given help in securing suitable work. Each had an adult figure as a mentor to obtain support and encouragement with their rehabilitation program.



“THE MINIMUM AGE WAS 15; MOST BOYS WERE AGED 16 TO 20 AND THE HOME HAD RESIDENTS UP TO 22 YEARS OLD”.

Some of the original “Ballarat boys” after moving to Warrnambool with Father Brophy.

“Father Brophy considers the facilities as a buffer between society’s pressures and the inadequacies of probationers in residence, while for youths from training centres he sees the hostel as a decompression chamber, which gradually prepares a resident for the pressures of society,” the report states.

Private home placements had been in operation since 1967 and continued to be closely connected to the hostel and used as additional stepping stones for “transition back into the society from which the boys had felt rejected”.

The minimum age was 15; most boys were aged 16 to 20 and the home had residents up to 22 years old.

Nationality, colour, creed or religious persuasion - or lack of it - had no bearing on acceptance as a resident. Educational attainment and maturity were likewise ignored when a young lad was in need.

Residents on leave from youth training centres would stay only on weekends. Residents who failed to adapt stayed less than a month while those who settled into work tended to stay at least three months and move out as their problems subsided and their competence increased.

However, Father Brophy set no definite time on duration of stay.

Offenders ranged over a wide spectrum from break and enter, stealing, sexual

offences, illegal use of drugs and larceny.

No type of offender was automatically excluded.

Residents were referred from probation, parole officers, courts, police, social workers and sometimes from parents. Some boys had sought out the help themselves.

RESPECT AND DISCIPLINE

When bringing together a group of boys from troubled backgrounds, discipline was always going to be a consideration.

Father Brophy was known to be a tough disciplinarian from the early days, but the boys quickly came to respect his approach.

When caught fighting, for whatever reason, the boys were taken by Father Brophy for a car ride to the country and told to walk back. On their return, their impulsiveness for fighting passed. The same method was later used in Warrnambool.

Discipline was also exercised when new residents failed to maintain reasonable levels of hygiene, with showers administered and clean clothing supplied as a solution to the problem.

Those who returned late to the home were given early curfew hours over the next seven or 14 days.

“Remarkable as it may seem, Father Brophy explains there is little need for discipline,” the report adds.

Two or three boys slept in each room, though when the 1971 report was written Father Brophy was looking for larger premises to accommodate at least 15 boys.

Close relationships were established with the Commonwealth Employment Bureau and with a variety of businesses and industries to create job opportunities. It was rare that a resident was unemployed for more than three days while in the hostel.

There were no staff in permanent residence at the house but Father Brophy visited each day and a student priest, Eric Bryant, was a frequent visitor and offered help and guidance.

A group of Catholic women worked a roster system to prepare meals, although by the time the formula was adapted to Warrnambool more denominations were involved.

A variety of guests visited the house, including youth leaders from an adjacent club to talk mainly about sport, and a group of young women who took it

in turns to visit and talk with the boys, sharing their dreams and offering encouragement with rehabilitation.

The report noted that the hostel appeared to be remarkably free from personality clashes between staff and helpers and residents.

Residents in consultation with Father Brophy made their own rules, including curfew hours, and accepted responsibility for domestic duties.

The home was rented for \$25 per week and more than \$50 was spent each week on food and incidentals. The residents paid board on a sliding scale, depending on earnings, of between \$8 and \$13 to cover meals and laundry. Concessions were made for 15 year olds still at school who were kept for \$3 per week.

The hostel operated at a loss but was kept out of the red by donations from charities, church groups and various card and coffee parties.

Despite changes to social welfare, state government funding was considered unlikely in 1971.

An insurance kitty existed for youths who had outstanding fines on arrival at the hostel. Money was loaned interest free, the fine was paid and then the youth reimbursed the kitty.

Most residents handed over their unopened pay packet to the hostel treasurer. Allowances were then returned for personal expenses, and deductions made for board and lodging. Contributions were made into medical benefits schemes and a portion into holiday accounts.

As residents demonstrated competency and maturity, they were allowed to control their own finances.

No actual records were kept of the residents but Father Brophy had a mental note of all the young people who passed rough the hostel. During the first eight months, one youth left without notifying anyone of his intentions. However, no serious difficulties had been experienced with the other residents, some of whom had moved into private accommodation.

The report summarised that Father Brophy's hostel was started as a provision of emergency accommodation for 11 youths, but grew to engage prevention, home leave and rehabilitation work.

"The rented house is inconspicuous in a normal street and within an acceptable social climate. A wide range of support is received from many community organisations, with more than 200 helping with the hostel. Boys' Town principles apply involving residents in management and domestic responsibilities. The hostel now provides both a home-like atmosphere and limited counselling services. Strict discipline is rarely used.

"When residents gain confidence, acquire suitable employment, accumulate

some savings, develop interest in constructive leisure pursuits, show reduction in their earlier aggressive behaviour, especially towards the police, they are moved to approved private accommodation, which is a stepping stone back to complete responsibility.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The work of Father Brophy was already making a difference.

His family was aware of his passion and his work with troubled young men.

“He was associated with the courts in Ballarat and established a home for young working men who had left home, or who had been entrusted to his custody through the law courts,” his niece Lyn Merritt recalled.

“He was trying to start a boy’s home there but I think he was having trouble getting support for it.”

From the outset Father Brophy’s religious commitment was complemented by his dedication to helping young people, even if his passion wasn’t shared by all those in the church.

No-one can really say what it was that inspired him to look out for ‘wayward’ young men.

“I don’t really know what it was,” Lyn Merritt said. “Possibly he thought the boys in trouble needed support and guidance rather than punishment or jail.

Kids need role models, someone to talk to and guide them. No doubt he was influenced by his experience working with the youth in Ireland.”

“It was just the way he was. It was his life’s work,” Lyn said.

His ‘boys’ and his supporters are likewise unable to give much insight into what made him so dedicated to helping young people, but they never doubted that commitment.

Father Brophy was famous for his relentless enthusiasm and ability to work at a furious pace.

He was noted as a tough disciplinarian but with immense tolerance and good humour.

He also had an uncanny knack of knowing when the boys were in trouble or likely to get in trouble.

One incident in Ballarat was recalled when one of the boys stole a grader and crashed it into the side of a shop. The boy ran away with two others who had watched the incident, and eventually found his way back to the home. “So which one of you took the grader?” he asked as soon as they arrived home

Somehow he always knew.

The Catholic Church's Light newsletter paid tribute to Father Brophy in its June 1974 issue.

"He drove his none-too-robust body relentlessly, worked long hours, and, in later years, in torment of physical pain," the tribute states.

"He was all priest and the toughest of his boys saw and respected in him something of the Alter Christus."

The extended Brophy clan were a close knit family and there were regular visits to and from Warrnambool or Ballarat.

Lyn Merritt said Father Tom was a "typical uncle" who was "always on the go".

She remembers his "flying visits" to their home in Melbourne and that he was always "happy, calm, fun, and positive".

"Family was important to him," she said.

Former Warrnambool probation officer Jack Daffy recalls Father Brophy as "very driven and he knew how to drive people".

"He never tired...he was always on the road running backwards and forwards to Melbourne or running somewhere with them," Mr Daffy said.

Father Brophy's methods didn't always win support from the church.

Lyn Merritt believes that his quests were generally supported "though at times there was opposition from both the Church and community".

"But he fought for his belief that it was important. He knew it would make a difference to young lives and therefore benefit society as a whole."

The Catholic Church itself recognised this friction in the Light newsletter tribute.

"His methods were unorthodox, rousing at first opposition from experts in clerical, welfare, psychiatric and police departments, but he pressed on, persistent and unembittered, having only the soft answer that turned away wrath and a transparent, unassuming selflessness that removed him immeasurably from the dilettantes and dabblers in trendy social works."

There were concerns within the church that Father Brophy was becoming burnt out by hectic workload in Ballarat due to dedication to the boys that involved hours of work on top of his usual parish duties.

It is widely believed Father Brophy didn't like being moved from Ballarat to Warrnambool because it would sever his connections to the lads he was helping. However, with typical tenacity, he found a way around that and not only kept those Ballarat links but dedicated himself to helping young Warrnambool people in need.

FREEDOM ZONE

FREEDOM ZONE WAS A PLACE OF ITS TIME.

In the post-Woodstock era of the early 1970s, long hair, flared jeans, heavy rock and rebellion were all the go.

Young people needed a place to let off steam.

A place called St Paul's Youth Centre might not have the right name to attract the 'in crowd' but Freedom Zone sounded just right.

Freedom Zone was the first notable achievement of Father Tom Brophy after he was moved from Ballarat to Warrnambool. He was apparently reluctant to make the move but it didn't take him long to adjust and fall in love with his new surroundings where he developed an even stronger connection with the local community.

Like in Ballarat, establishing a youth centre and a home for wayward young men was at the top of his agenda.

Freedom Zone was in a sprawling building at 121 Kepler Street Warrnambool.

The St Pauls Youth Centre had been owned by the Catholic Church for some years but it wasn't used much.

After arriving in Warrnambool, Father Brophy came up with the Freedom Zone name and concept and suddenly it became the place to be.

"Basically every teenager in Warrnambool at some point would go there on Friday and Saturday night," Basil Fogarty, later a resident of the Warrnambool Home for Boys, remembered.

One of the youth centre helpers and later Brophy director, Bob Myers, said it was a big hall with many rooms.

It was a place of fun, music and sport, and just occasionally a rumble of trouble.

The main hall was marked out as a basketball court and there was a small stage at the east end.

Between the stage and Kepler Street there was a large room with three little office-size rooms down the north side. In the early months, the large room housed a pool table that was donated by a hotel in Ballarat and later a boxing ring filled up the rest of the room. On the other side of the building was a music room, a servery and counter outside a large kitchen.

Father Brophy organised young people to run the centre, mainly students from Christian Brothers College and St Ann's in Warrnambool.

Bob Myers said it was well organised and the teens did a good job, but Father Brophy wanted more adult supervision and actively recruited supporters.

"All the young people wore a dustcoat 'uniform' so others would recognise them as 'staff'," Bob said. "There was a group of adults rostered to be there as supervisors. I was one of them."

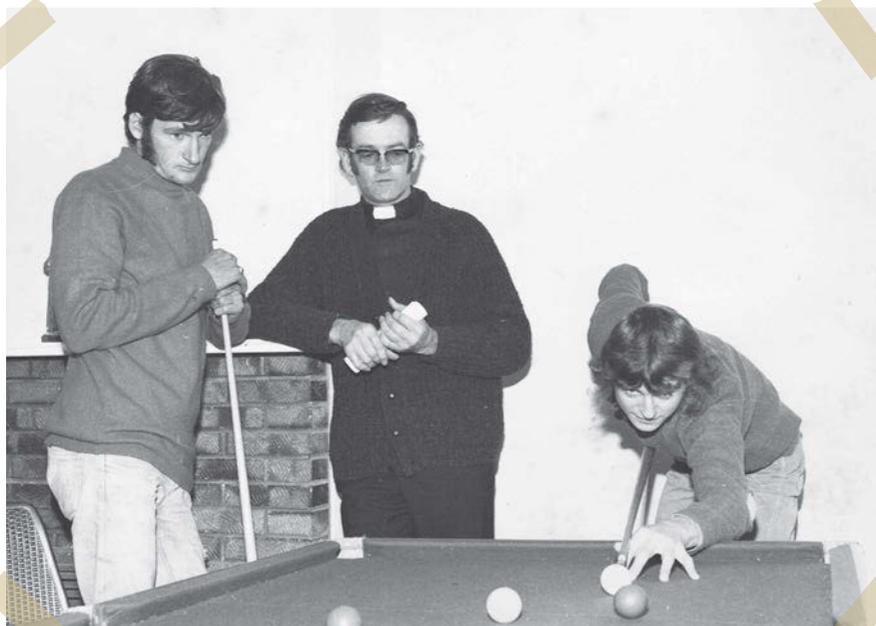
Bob said the Freedom Zone name was chosen to reflect the era's love of peace and freedom.

"I think Broph chose the name to give the kids a sense of freedom from too many rules and, as supervisors, we tried to avoid being too judgmental but at the same time we were there to give a sense of security," he said.

"It was just a place for kids to meet on Friday and Saturday nights," Bob said. "They would play pool, play music in another room that was fairly dark and had cushions around all over the place. Some of the kids would sit down and have a bit of a cuddle but that was as far as it went. The adults would go around reminding them to come up for air.

"There were a lot of kids and they were usually pretty well behaved."

Even with adults on site, young people continued to take an active role in running the place, including the domestic duties.



Freedom Zone 1973

"After the Freedom Zone shenanigans the kids then had to set up the main hall for the mass on the Sunday morning. They had to clean up after themselves and they did a good job too," Bob said.

While sport was a big focus, the venue also occasionally hosted bands.

"Way back we had a big show with Brian Cadd where the speedway is now. Jim Clapham and I were the security people and we were supposed to keep the peace. I was sitting there watching this bkie. He had a chain and was obviously looking for trouble. There was no way I was going to get involved," Bob recalls. Luckily the event passed without incident.

At the Freedom Zone venue itself, the 'security' people had to be alert. "We used to have a lot of kids at Freedom Zone try to smuggle alcohol in," Bob said. "It wasn't that prevalent, only occasionally. I remember one night smelling this strong methylated spirits smell. I tracked it down to a can this kid was carrying with orange juice. He must have mixed it with metho!"

But mostly it was a positive vibe. "Most of the time it was just fun and we'd only interfere if they got into a fight, which only happened occasionally," Bob said.

Father Brophy attended most nights, but not always. Tommy Hudson and Bob Myers were the regular supervisors.

At one stage Father Brophy broke his leg, after falling off cushions at the Freedom Zone.

He spent time recovering at the home of Tom and Margaret Hudson, taking some rare time off...even if it was enforced and despite being incapacitated he still saw boys for counselling and ran things from afar.

In a radio interview with Warrnambool station 3YB, Father Brophy had to explain what happened after rumours erupted that he was hit and injured.

"I was in the building but I wasn't touched. I snagged my leg in a cushion we had on the floor. Nine years ago in Ballarat I had trouble with the same leg. It was mainly due to back trouble, it will probably happen again," he said.

Rumours about the boys or Father Brophy were not uncommon. He told another story to the radio interviewer. "I was playing squash in Ballarat. I got a very nasty gash on the forehead. By the next morning the story had circulated that I was hit over the head with a bottle or attacked by a gang. At one stage I'd even heard I was abducted (from the Freedom Zone)."

Father Brophy said the Freedom Zone and Warrnambool Boys' Home were separate entities but people still linked the two, especially if they were looking to blame someone for some community incident.

He said there were rarely problems inside the centre. "Usually it's outside for refusing someone admission, probably because he's had a skinful. Inside it's usually all right."

When the centre was facing an uncertain future, the committee started a public relations campaign to attract more attention. Bob Myers has retained tapes of radio interviews done to promote the centre.

"It's a place to go and meet up with your friends," said one regular.

Another user was more direct. "I don't know what I'd do if it closed," he said. "I really enjoy coming down. I'd prefer to come here than stay at home."

Bob himself said in a radio interview that the purpose of the centre was to provide young people with activities that keep them off the streets. "The hard part is to find out what they want. We offer wrestling, boxing, roller skating, weight lifting, basketball, but unless we provide what we try not to - booze - we don't get the crowds."

There were also discussion groups every Friday night. Topics ranged from drugs and alcohol to sex and religion.

Ivan Boyer, the first live-in supervisor of the Warrnambool Home for Boys, said the Freedom Zone played an important role in establishing Father Brophy in the community and making connections.

"That was where he made contact with the kids. They came to respect him there," Ivan said.

Basil Fogarty said it opened every Friday and Saturday night "from memory until 1.00am".

'Broph' would attend throughout the night at times, subject to his priest duties," Basil recalled.

"You could see him casting an eye over various persons, no doubt trying to establish their background and perhaps even their needs. If he didn't know a person, he'd introduce himself."

Hugh Crawford was also a regular at the Freedom Zone.

"I'd go with a few mates from CBC and hang out. We'd throw a few basketballs around and there was boxing and they said masses there. I went to my first rock mass there. Shane Howard (former Goanna lead singer) sometimes used to sing at them," Hugh said.

Father Brophy always had his eye on things.

"There was one night we were just sitting back watching," Hugh recalls. "There was a bunch of guys on one side and another bunch of guys on the other side. In the middle was Broph, walking up and down saying 'boys if you're going to fight you're going to have to go through me first'. Not one of them moved."

Like most venues frequented by young people, Freedom Zone was only a success on the whim of popular opinion.

Bob Myers says its popularity had subsided before Father Brophy died and the decline continued. "We tried to keep it going for a while afterwards but it was never a success," he said.

"Rhonda and I kept it going just as a youth centre, mainly people playing sport. Its heyday was over when he died."

In the meantime, Father Brophy was dedicating his life to the boy's home. Some think he gave his life because of that dedication.



Freedom Zone site today

"AFTER THE FREEDOM ZONE SHENANIGANS THE KIDS THEN HAD TO SET UP THE MAIN HALL FOR THE MASS ON THE SUNDAY MORNING. THEY HAD TO CLEAN UP AFTER THEMSELVES AND THEY DID A GOOD JOB TOO."

WARRNAMBOOL HOME FOR BOYS

WHEN FATHER TOM BROPHY ARRIVED IN WARRNAMBOOL IN EARLY 1972 HIS THOUGHTS IMMEDIATELY TURNED TO HELPING WAYWARD YOUNG MEN.

Some suggest he was moved from Ballarat to Warrnambool by the church to break his link with the boys' home and youth centre he had established there.

If that was the motivation behind the move, it didn't work.

Others think the church may have moved him to reduce his exhausting workload which was impacting on his health. That didn't work either.

While dedicated to his church, Father Brophy was equally committed to the Freedom Zone Youth Centre and the Warrnambool Home for Boys.

His instinctive desire to help young people in need could not be quashed by relocation or some in the church hierarchy who seemed not to approve of his association with troubled young men.

Once settled in Warrnambool, Father Brophy was quick to set about establishing a youth centre and boys' home similar to those in Ballarat, but he wasn't about to forget the young lads he had been helping in the goldfields city.

In fact, the first residents of the Warrnambool Home for Boys came from Ballarat. If Father Brophy had to be moved, his boys were going with him.

Young Warrnambool men were soon being added to the mix.

As a probation officer, Father Brophy came into direct contact with boys in trouble with the law. As fellow probation officer and former Warrnambool Mayor Jack Daffy says "he could never see any wrong in any of them".

With a ready-made batch of boys needing a place to stay, Father Brophy fortuitously came into contact with Warrnambool lawyer Dan Madden.

D. Madden and Co had been operating out of a sprawling building at 67 Kepler Street but the law firm was relocating to Sandilands, a former guest house at the top end of Liebig Street.

With the Kepler Street premises vacated, Father Brophy struck a deal with Mr Madden.

Supporter and later Brophy director Bob Myers recalls: "Dan Madden had just moved out of his building in Kepler Street and he gave the premises to Broph

as a donation. It was supposed to be for 12 months but it was a bit longer than that.”

The committee had no funds or income, apart from donations, and could not afford to pay rent. The first boys moved in during April, 1972.

It was named the Warrnambool Home for Boys but was also referred to simply as the Warrnambool Boys’ Home. Media coverage from the era uses both terms. Initially there was no government support and the program relied solely on donations. In early 1973 government funding was obtained for one permanent supervisor; however this funding didn’t cover all the costs and the community continued to contribute.



Original Home for Boys site today, Warrnambool

The local Lions Club, Fletcher Jones and various church groups were supporters. At one stage a fund-raising football match was held where the boys in the home and their supporters played against the boys of St Augustine’s Orphanage.

The property had about eight rooms. The bedrooms varied from one bed to a room holding three double bunks.

However, the home didn’t have showers and the boys had to march up the road to the Freedom Zone just over a block away to have a shower.

Young teacher Ivan Boyer became the first live-in supervisor of the home. He remembers being there when the first lads arrived. “Broph spoke to me one day and asked if I was interested in giving a hand with some of the kids he was

looking after. A couple of days later he said he had a building we could put the kids in and asked if I could be there that night.

"I said OK and quite late in the evening all these kids started climbing in through the windows. They were everywhere. He had brought two car loads – and I guess those cars were absolutely packed – from Ballarat. That's where it all started."

The home was next to the office of Member for Wannan (and later Prime Minister) Malcolm Fraser. "We had an election that year I was there (1972), recalls Bob Stensholt, another CBC teacher who joined Ivan as a live-in supervisor. "I remember we weren't allowed to have Labor Party stickers on our cars," Bob, who later spent 11 years as the ALP Member for Burwood, said.

Bob Myers was also an early recruit to the Brophy team in Warrnambool, firstly as an assistant at Freedom Zone and later in an increasingly important role in the home and the expanding organisation.

"Broph brought nine boys down with him from Ballarat," Bob Myers said. "He had a house in Ballarat and when he was shifted down to Warrnambool he had nine boys, all on probation, and they came down with him.

"There were generally about 17 kids. It got up to 25 one time...they were everywhere."

Ivan Boyer was teaching economics and accounting at St Joseph's CBC when he started as live-in supervisor.

"It was a fairly big job. It was like going in the deep end," Ivan said. That was pretty much how Broph did things. He was just an amazing man. When something had to be done, he did it.

"I was on an incredibly steep learning curve. I regard it as one of the great experiences of my life. I think at the end of the day it made me a better teacher and much more aware of the needs of young people."

Ivan described his year at the boys' home as "quite chaotic".

"Some of the boys had been in trouble with the police; others were just unhappy kids who were having problems at home. I often think about them. I suppose they're all in their 50s now."

He said there was no such thing as an average night at the house.

"It would depend what would happen. Sometimes it would be a very late night.

These boys weren't angels. They were inclined to do the odd burglary etc.

"One night one of the boys had bowled over a milk bar and came back with cartons of cigarettes. Broph and me and a couple of other people re-packed all those cigarettes and got them back into that milk bar somehow.

"That's the length Broph went to for these kids. For a lot of them his level of concern and love was the first time they had anything like that in their lives."



Top to Bottom L-R: Some of the 'Brophy boys'. Mattie and Clarrie Savage in the kitchen of the hostel receiving a donation of goods. Some of the 'Brophy Boys' in 1972 visiting the Boyer Family Farm. Father Tom Brophy at the Warrnambool home. Some of the 'Brophy boys' and local children with Father Tom Brophy at the Warrnambool Home.



“The kids knew that he was there for them 100 per cent. There was never anything in Tom Brophy that he was doing it for his own ego. He was just dedicated to helping these kids.”

Ivan Boyer describes the place as a “rabbit warren” but there was always room for a boy in need.

OBJECTIVES

In late 1972 the committee called on the Warrnambool community for financial support and help in finding new premises, and outlined in letters the objectives and operation of the home.

At this stage government funding was being considered but was not formalised.

Secretary Alan Carman wrote that the committee aimed to assist “boys with a problem” who could not receive such help and supervision in their own homes.

“We are assisting needy boys to adjust to community life and to overcome the ill-effects of pressures and tensions which have caused their problems,” he wrote.

The committee aimed to help boys to:

- Work and participate in community activities as equals and individuals
- Gain an educational level in line with their abilities and desires
- Develop responsibility with a minimum of coercive pressures
- Participate in a ‘home-life’ which is as free as possible from any artificiality
- Receive the necessary guidance, counsel, friendship, discipline and acceptance necessary to overcome their problems.

“We believe that there exists a need for the establishment of such a home, not only to provide accommodation but also to offer some positive rehabilitative guidance to adolescents whose problems include homelessness,” Alan wrote.

He said there was a shift towards accommodation providing more than just board and lodging.

At the time of the letter, December 5, 1972, there were 18 boys at 67 Kepler Street. Without this home, many of the boys would have been sent out of their home area to a youth training centre.

It was costing about \$200 per week to run the home.

Around this time a constitution was drawn up, outlining the objectives of the committee of management which included not only the previously stated aims of helping “boys with a problem” but also to acquire a suitable property for a hostel to be leased or purchased, and to promote the welfare of the boys,

especially those on probation under a court order.

The boys staying at the house also had the right to nominate one of their group to be a part of the committee of management.

There was a sub-committee for providing counselling facilities for the boys

KEEPING CONTROL

While his dedication to caring for young people was never in doubt, sometimes 'tough love' was also needed.

"They were kept under control by Broph," Bob Myers recalls. "He was the authority figure. He used to come roaring in at times and straighten things out. He had very unconventional methods that wouldn't go down very well now."

He hesitates to talk much about these methods because of the difference in values 40 years later, but he says the strict approach worked and garnered the respect of the boys. "One time they left a mess in the hallway and Broph came along late at night – he did a lot of things late at night because of his nocturnal habits – and he came into the place and found it a mess. He got the rubbish bins and tipped them up all down the passage. All the kids had to get out of bed and clean the whole place up."

Ballarat and Warrnambool resident Hugh Crawford remembers Father Brophy's discipline technique. "He was a strict disciplinarian," he said. "He'd twist your arm and when your arm is twisted there's some muscle that comes up at the back of your bicep. He'd swing his fist, not hard, across that muscle. It would hurt like hell. He'd give you a couple of little flicks and then he would sit down and talk to you."

While he was strict, the place was still fun and the boys, especially in retrospect, respect the methods he used.

"He was strict but fair and even-handed," Hugh said. "We were allowed to smoke, have a drink and have girlfriends."

Bob Myers recalls another discipline method that was transferred from Ballarat.

"He'd take them out in the country as a discipline thing and just tell them to walk home. One time the police picked a couple up and asked what they were doing. They told them what was happening so the police just said well you better get going and left them to walk home."

Many of the lads had already been in touch with the police.

"The kids came from the courts and that's how he became involved with them," Bob said. "They would get into strife. Society creates them and then society punishes them. The problems were way back in family and school. People didn't understand them and it made life harder for them and of course they rebelled."

Although there was a perception that the boys were wild, the home had rules in place and tried to teach responsibility.

“Society deemed many of the residents to be ‘uncontrollable’ but we put them in charge of making the rules at a weekly meeting, guided by a few basic guidelines about making rules,” Bob Myers said. “The other major, and challenging, aspect was that we adopted the approach that once someone was accepted as a resident, he or she could not be kicked out for any reason. I don’t know of any other facility that took that approach.”

Each of the residents went through a life-skills course designed by Bob Myers. “Many of them couldn’t even tell the time or use a phone book in spite of having been in the school system for eight or nine years. They weren’t stupid; it was just that society had failed to provide for them or to take the time to explore their needs.”

The residents were mostly aged 13 to 16 or 17.

There were also “associate residents”, boys who didn’t live at the home but were under the guidance of Father Brophy.

They would sometimes visit the home for counselling sessions. Sometimes they would go to the church, and sometimes Father Brophy would visit their homes.

Early live-in supervisor Bob Stensholt said Father Brophy’s methods of keeping control “were probably not the ones they’d use today”.

“He was not averse to giving them a smack on the ear, but it wasn’t done for his benefit; it was done for their benefit. You have to remember the Brothers at school also used the strap at that time.”

His version of tough love didn’t get negative kickbacks from the boys. In fact, it was quite the opposite.

“He had enormous rapport with the kids,” Bob Stensholt remembers. “They were Brophy’s boys, no doubt about it. They weren’t mine or Ivan’s they were Brophy’s.”

Resident Bail Fogarty says Father Brophy had a keen interest in every boy. “He knew someone was going to get into trouble before they did. If they needed attention he would take them on trips, to stay with a couple of other boys. I think he also did this simply to gain a greater insight into each boy.”

“There were constant times when he took the boys down to the Catholic Church presbytery. Many late nights were spent with him with an Irish coffee and talking generally about life.”

Initially there was some tension between the “Ballarat group” and those being introduced from Warrnambool. “Looking back, I think the Ballarat boys thought they had a superior claim to ‘Broph’, as they were his original boys,” Basil Fogarty recalls.

One regular visitor to the home, Robin Roissetter, said there was a strict 10pm curfew.

“In those days if you snuck out and you got caught coming home, Father Brophy would give you one cut behind the back of the head...or a kick in the butt sometimes,” Robin said.

“He was really strict but it helped people get back on track. Everyone was too bloody scared to come home late. Ten o’clock was the latest you could be out. You wouldn’t want to be any later or you’d be in strife.

“Sometimes we’d try to sneak one of the windows open before we went out, but Father Brophy or someone would check them all the time and pull them down.”

Robin Roissetter recalls one man trying to bring drugs into the house. “They got rid of him; he went out the back door real quick,” he said.

Father Brophy was also strict on the no-girls policy. “He’d never have girls in. He was very strict on that. You had your private rooms but he’d make sure no-one snuck in through the windows,” he said.

Overall there wasn’t a lot of trouble at the house. The boys had respect for Father Brophy and benefited from their roles in setting the rules.

There was a sense of camaraderie in the home. Many of the boys stayed in touch for decades.

“There was an incredible bond between all the people at that stage,” Bob Myers said.

“It was the interest he showed, the caring. He was a very strict disciplinarian but at the same time there was an incredible fondness and understanding of the kids.”

“I don’t know what inspired him but it was definitely a commitment that he would never shake.”

LIVING IN THE HOUSE

‘Broph’ was strict in imposing a daily routine. A resident at the house for more than a year, Basil Fogarty, recalls there were up to 28 boys there at times, some were still at school but most worked.

Father Brophy ensured that every person had a job of some description.

Some people started work at 4.30am and then progressively throughout the morning. “Either he took us to school or his assistant did,” Basil said.

There were a number of assistants, including Father Eric Bryant, who was a trainee priest at the time, Ivan Boyer and later Mick Brookes.

Evening meals were prepared off site by a team of women on a rotation basis.

The meals were brought over around 6pm. "At the time we thought the meals were quite lavish, ranging from various casseroles, curries, beef and the like," Mr Fogarty said.

"The table had to be set and one of his most insistent points was that the dinner plates had to be warm. Most times he would have dinner with us if possible."

Father Brophy expected the house to be kept clean as well as the bedroom.

If it wasn't, there was trouble.

"If the dishes weren't done, and he called in at 2am, everyone was called out of bed and ordered to clean the house. You have to realise he had to complete his priest duties before he was able to spend time on the house. Many times if he woke up at 1am or 2am, he would walk through, no doubt counting every one.

Father Brophy liked to keep track of the boys...often for their own good. He introduced a book where if a person left the house, they had to write in the time they left, where they were going and their expected time of return.

Basil Fogarty recalls why the book was introduced. "The main reason he said was because every time some crime was committed in Warrnambool, the police immediately blamed one of his boys. By having the diary, he believed that prevented the police from nailing people. I know he used to go back to the house from time to time during the day, checking out where people said they were going, and then going to that place to see if they were there."

"One boy remarked once that he was like a phantom – the ghost who walks. He would catnap. He would often say "I'm just going into the room (at the house) to have 15 minutes sleep". He would do so, and then refresh himself."

Barney Deverall, who now runs a transport business based in Darwin, was one of the Ballarat lads who came with Father Brophy to Warrnambool.

"I was working so the routine for me was a bit different," he said. "I'd get up early, get lunch ready then off to work, usually get home after dark and have dinner then do whatever chores were mine," he said.

Barney said the atmosphere of the place depended on the circumstances. "It was sometimes very unhappy when something happened to us that was unfair, but we wore that. Most times very happy and we all got on well together. I came from big family and our bedrooms at home were more crowded than at the boys' home."

Mr Deverall was at the home for three years; the first half was prescribed by the courts, the second half was voluntary. "Over the three years many came and went but mainly the original Ballarat boys stayed and a couple locals

There were no girls at the time, despite protests of the male residents. "We wanted girls but the authorities said no, no, no," Barney recalled.

Father Brophy kept a close eye on things.

"Broph would do his round every night just check to make sure that we were safe. This could be anytime from 8 or as late as 4 in the morning and then do early mass," Barney recalled. "He was at the home every day and most days more than once, unless going to get more boys or away on business.

"I can never remember him having a holiday. He was over worked but he devoted his life to what he wanted to do and do well."

COMMUNITY SUPPORT... CHURCH RELUCTANCE

While the community threw its weight behind Father Brophy, his employer, the Catholic Church, seemed reticent.

In fact, most agree that the church was actively opposed to Father Brophy's additional duties.

This was the common perception among the 'boys' and Father Brophy's supporters.

Basil Fogarty recalls: "My understanding is that Father Brophy had established "Brophy's" at Ballarat. Bishop Mulkearns was unhappy with the time that he was devoting to the home, and apparently directed that he relocate to Warrnambool. Of course he did, but also relocated his boys."

"He did not have support of the church but he had much community support. He was able to persuade people to see his point of view and took many people along with him. "

A committee provided direction for the home. The first chairman was the late Alan Carman and he held the role until 1975.

In 1973 The Standard newspaper reported on Alan Carman's re-election as president. At the time the vice-president was Guy Hobson, secretary James Nicol, treasurer Joe Purcell, publicity Jim Clapham and roster officer Kath Purcell.

The report said that Michael Brookes had been appointed as the first full-time supervisor of the home.

When considering funding for the home, the Department of Social Welfare had asked the committee to show evidence of its permanence and organising ability.

"I think that we have now demonstrated these qualities," Alan Carman said.

As a reflection of the community support, the home was set up with donated furniture and clothes were also donated for the boys.

Ivan Boyer said there was wonderful support from individual helpers, service clubs and the community in general.

“Bob Myers dedicated himself to it. Tommy Hudson was a great helper along with his wife. There was a lady from Ballarat who was a good friend of Tom’s who was tremendous, and the women who did the cooking,” he said.

Bob Myers also recalls the commitment of local women to supporting the cause, regardless of their religious background.

“It had a big kitchen. There was a great band of women who used to take it in turns on a roster basis to cook. Marj Guyett was big with it. There was a Mrs Thompson, a Mrs Purcell, others I don’t remember,” he said.

Mostly the meals were fine, but sometimes they weren’t so good.

Bob Stensholt remembers some of the supplied meals weren’t a hit with the boys. “Some of the meals were interesting,” he said. “They were basically done by the ladies of the parish and it was a bit of pot luck. Sometimes we got lots of mashed potatoes. Pots would turn up and they were a bit...well, sometimes Ivan and I had to cook dinner or get take-away, but they never went hungry.”

Despite community backing from all denominations, the Catholic Church was noticeable in its lack of support for the project.

“I’m not sure but I got the impression a lot of what Tom was doing was swimming against the tide of the church hierarchy,” Ivan Boyer recalls. “It seemed what he was doing was frowned upon and they would not cut him any slack to do this magnificent work he was doing.”

“The ordinary citizens of Warrnambool embraced it; it was just a problem with the Catholic Church.

“To the church’s shame, the community embraced the whole thing far more than the church did.”

Ivan said he had the impression that the opposition came from the immediate hierarchy in Warrnambool. “Warrnambool is a very conservative place and it was particularly conservative then. The lay people involved in running the Catholic Church in Warrnambool seemed to me to be very conservative people and perhaps couldn’t accommodate having these wild young people around,” he said.

“That’s why Tom Brophy stands out in my view as one who took his religion and his faith literally and did it as he should. I’m not religious at all but Tom was the real deal.”

Bob Myers had the same impression about the church’s cold shoulder.

“The church was not in favour of it at all. At the time it just seemed like they didn’t want to get involved with the kids that he was involved with,” Bob said.

“Broph got up in the church one day at mass and read out a statement because he said he didn’t want to be misquoted. He said that the old mother church always arrives on the scene too late and out of breath. He was told to make a

statement that the church was in no way connected to the Warrnambool Home for Boys and never would be.

“It was strongly put that they didn’t want to have anything to do with it.”

In 1972 there was recognition of Father Brophy’s work with an article in the Catholic Church’s Light newsletter.

The article said two moves made recently had much promise for youth in Warrnambool.

The first was the establishment of a ‘Freedom Zone’ at St. Paul’s Youth Centre in Kepler Street. “It is a place where young people can relax and enjoy themselves, and it is open to all youth. It includes a coffee bar, a pool table, table tennis facilities and other amenities. It opens a door to freedom and togetherness, but it does not imply freedom without responsibility. For example, members are expected to ‘staff the coffee shop themselves, and organise folk nights and an occasional discotheque,” the article states.

It said the idea originated with Father Brophy, who had much experience of youth work in Ballarat, and was recently transferred to Warrnambool.

“He has already enlisted the co-operation of other churches, and hopes to broaden their involvement.”

The article said Father Brophy was busy in the process setting up a “home for boys with a problem”.

“A Warrnambool businessman has made premises available, and CBC teacher, Mr Ivan Boyer, is taking charge. Already three boys are installed and he hopes eventually to cater for 12. The boys’ “problems” could be various; some have been in “trouble” or are likely to be; others are sons whose parents cannot support them, and others are orphans. Candidates will be referred to the home by the Social Welfare Department. They will be aged 14 to 18. Most would be from Warrnambool, because the boys needed a chance to prove themselves to a community, preferably their own.”

The home was described as “undenominational” and the article said it would depend on public support for its maintenance.

The church did not support it financially.

Today Bob Myers and Ivan Boyer still wonder about the church’s lack of support and fear it could have been connected to the cover-up of sexual abuse.

“Thinking about it afterwards, part of it could have been there were so many priests since exposed as paedophiles and they were around this area at that time,” Bob said.

He added that there were never any claims against Father Brophy. “The only remarks I ever heard from the kids was that it was the only place that they were not molested or abused.”

“I think that’s part of the bonding and atmosphere of the whole place.”

In fact, he believes Father Brophy’s position in the church had become more difficult because he was speaking out against paedophiles and trying to expose the abuse.

Ivan Boyer says Tom Brophy was “squeaky clean” and it wouldn’t surprise him that he would fight against sexual abuse in the church.

“I have subsequently heard there were a couple of blokes I was teaching with at Christian Brothers who weren’t clean,” Ivan said. “That’s one of the really sad things. I have no sympathy for the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Some of those brothers were genuinely wonderful human beings. There were a couple who used to belt kids but they were in a minority. It makes me so angry that those wonderfully good men have been tarred with the same brush as the bastards. That is an enduring tragedy.”

According to Broken Rites Australia, Father Brophy did the right thing and reported allegations of abuse to higher authorities, both locally and at the Ballarat diocese.

The Broken Rites website reports that one Warrnambool victim (‘Ken’), according to a sworn statement tendered in court, told Father Brophy about Father Gerald Ridsdale’s abuse — and Father Brophy duly reported it to the Ballarat diocesan authorities. Father Brophy then told a superior, Monsignor Leo Fiscalini.

It was another 20 years before the case went to court. Gerald Ridsdale today remains in jail as a convicted child molester.

FUN TIMES

Put together a bunch of boys from different backgrounds and all burdened with some sort of family or legal problem in the background and there’s bound to be fun and games.

Ivan Boyer remembers the high spirits that led to good times and tough times.

“They were always pranking on each other. There was often a fight as well. They didn’t all get on,” he said.

“It was chaotic as hell.”

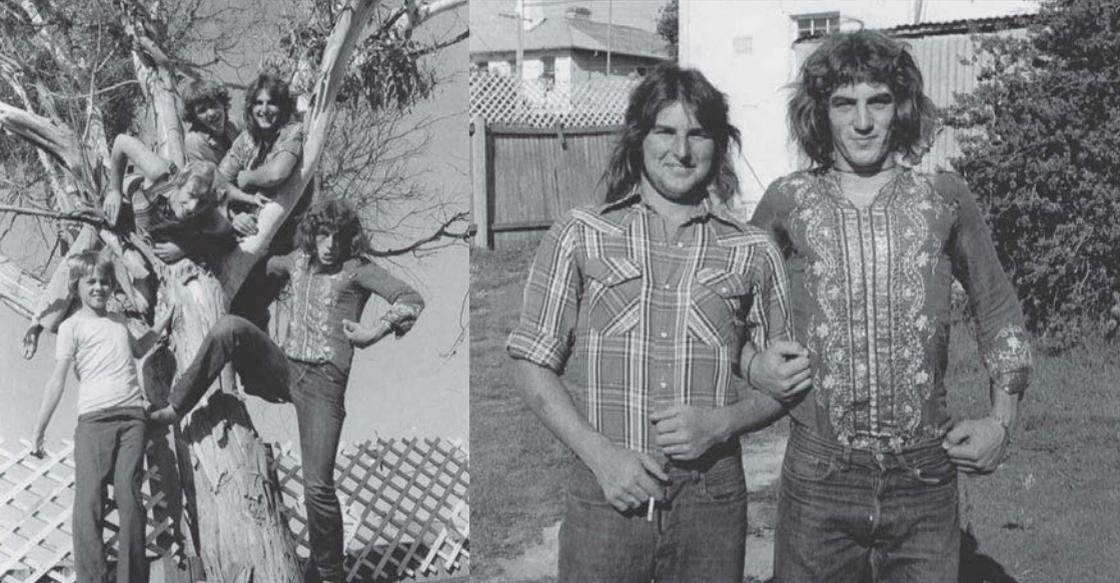
Ivan came from a farm at Narrawong and the boys loved going on weekend trips.

“They loved the farm and they loved my mum,” he recalls. “I was the youngest of 11 kids and so she was used to dealing with rowdy boys.”

“It was a homely atmosphere and we could show them a bit of a happy home life.”



Top to Bottom L-R: Promoting a fund-raising concert. Some of the original residents of the Warrnambool hostel. Some of the 'Brophy boys' visiting the Boyer family farm and at the Warrnambool home. Some of the 'Brophy boys' at the Warrnambool Home.



The farm also gave Ivan a chance to help the lads learn how to drive. "It was illegal of course but it helped them," he laughed.

It was common for Father Brophy to visit his mother who lived in Heidelberg. Generally he took a couple of boys with him, trying to introduce them into aspects of normal life.

His mother lived in a bungalow at the rear of his sister and brother-in-law's house.

There were also trips to the football in Melbourne.

COMMUNITY HELPERS

A band of volunteer women helped to get the home started and then helped to feed the boys every day.

The late Marj Guyett was one of those helpers. Her daughter, Helen Bayne, remembers the priest as "a very tall man with glasses".

A teenager at the time, Helen recalls the charisma and drive of Father Brophy. "He was just a wonderful, community-minded person who in two years made a significant difference," she said.

"He touched a lot of people from all religions, all walks of life. He was incredibly charismatic and to achieve what he did in that time he would have had to be really driven."

Marj Guyett, who went on to receive a Brophy life membership, helped with fund-raising and was part of a cooking and cleaning roster at the boys' home.

"I don't know how he got to know mum, I guess it was through dad (Jack) and the funerals," Helen said.

"My recollection is that he approached mum and some of her friends who were big into supporting community efforts. He said he had a group of young boys who needed a hand and if mum and her friends could do the fund-raising and the cleaning and the cooking, he would look after them."

The initial home in Kepler Street was not far from the Guyett family property in Timor Street.

Helen Bayne recalls her mother's friends Margot Johnson and Alan Carman were made life members of Brophy at the same time as her mother.

They were part of a cleaning and cooking roster for the house and baked for fundraising. "Every Friday they had a stall in Liebig Street outside what is now Cheap As Chips," Helen said. "It was all voluntary. They would have done it all on their own time and paid for the produce."

The Guyett family also helped out. "I remember having to help mum do the

baking," Helen said. "I don't remember any of the boys. It wasn't till years later that one of them spoke to me and said how much he respected and admired my mum."

"I think some of the boys were still at school. He tried to get them back into school, provide a safe house, have them fed and warm and give them a bed at night."

Like Father Brophy, Marj Guyett was community-minded and keen to play a part. "She was asked to help, so she did," Helen said. "That's what you did in those days. You couldn't see your neighbour or your sisters do without, so you got behind and helped."

"The remarkable thing was that these people were from all faiths. It wasn't just a Catholic thing. It wasn't about religion, it was about a need."

Another of the helpers was Anne Clapham. Sometimes her help went beyond cooking and supervision.

"I can remember his birthday. Rhonda (Myers) and I went down to Melbourne and picked up his mother and brought her back. We went to church for confession that night and his mother goes up and says 'bless me father...I mean bless me son'. Well he nearly died," Anne recalled.

"He always seemed to know secrets. That was one time we got him. I can still see him there. "It was probably his last birthday and I think we ended up going out for dinner."

IVAN LEAVES

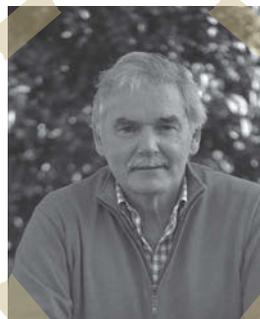
At the end of 1972 Ivan Boyer left the home and went to Canberra to finish his teaching degree.

"I was teaching a full load with two year 12 subjects, plus looking after the kids with Broph and trying to do the teaching course. At the end of 1972 I decided this was ridiculous and I was going to go crazy. So reluctantly I left the home and went to Canberra to finish my degree," he said.

"It was important to have a person staying at the home. I did my best but I couldn't keep pace with Broph. I couldn't calculate how many hours he slept but it wasn't many."

His time with Father Brophy remains a highlight of his life.

"In my life I have worked with some pretty dedicated people but I haven't come across anyone who would go anywhere near matching Tom Brophy. It would be nothing for Tom Brophy to be at the boys' home in



Ivan Boyer

Kepler Street till about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning looking after kids, talking to them and counselling them and then he would be expected to be up at 6 o'clock saying Mass for the nuns.

"That was something I felt was particularly bad. I'm not sure but I got the impression a lot of what Tom was doing was swimming against the tide of the church hierarchy. It seemed what he was doing was frowned upon and they would not cut him any slack to do this magnificent work he was doing.

"When I heard of his premature death I thought bugger you, you actually killed him. That was how I felt.

"He wore himself out. I could see it happening. Like others I had a feeling of guilt that I left but I could see that I needed to move on and get my qualifications.

"They worked him to death."

Ivan Boyer is now 65 and retired from full-time teaching but still tutoring students in the Portland region.

"I felt privileged to be a teacher. I loved the job," he said.

He thanks Father Brophy for shaping his career.

"For a hardened old atheist like me, Tom Brophy is as close to a saint as you'll ever get. If there's such a thing, he's one. They should be making him a saint but I doubt that will ever happen."

ARDLIE STREET

Father Brophy was adept at getting the most out of people but after more than a year in free accommodation, Madden Lawyers again needed to use the Kepler Street building and the home was forced to move.

Because the Kepler Street property had been so sprawling, two houses side-by-side were needed to accommodate the boys in Ardlie Street, but the main property was at number 100.

By now virtually all of the residents were from Warrnambool and district.

There was a brief gap before Ardlie Street properties were secured to continue the service, and the boys were privately billeted during this time.

The home at 100 Ardlie Street was officially opened on May 12, 1973 by Member for Warrnambool and Minister for Social Welfare Ian Smith.

"Before they got the place in Ardlie Street, four of the boys came to live here with us and others were billeted out in other places," Bob Myers recalls. "The

four boys lived in the room upstairs and the caravan out the front. We had three kids as well. It was a busy place," he said.

Other boys were billeted to other district homes.

The Ardlie Street home was rented from a local builder and there was a flat attached. The home was registered with the Victorian Social Welfare Department. There were 18 boys, ranging from 14 to 19 years, needing care at the time of the opening and the home remained non-denominational.

During the opening ceremony Ian Smith praised the work of those behind the hostel, saying it and others of a similar mode were giving assistance to young people during difficult periods in their lives and helped them to work towards responsible independence.

Government funding was flowing at this time, but the committee still had concerns about costs.

The Standard reported a committee member as saying that in the previous four weeks the home had cost \$2051 but income was just \$1482.

It was less than a year after the official opening that Father Brophy was given his marching orders from Warrnambool. He was due to take on his new role on May 4, 1974 but he never made it.

At the time of Father Brophy's death, 75 boys had been through the Boys' Home in two years. Only three of them had ended up in prison. Without his intervention, many more would have been likely to have found themselves behind bars.

It was reported that there were 17 boys living in the home when Father Brophy died.

"I THINK SOME OF THE BOYS WERE STILL AT SCHOOL. HE TRIED TO GET THEM BACK INTO SCHOOL, PROVIDE A SAFE HOUSE, HAVE THEM FED AND WARM AND GIVE THEM A BED AT NIGHT."

LEAVING WARRNAMBOOL

IT WAS WIDELY ACCEPTED THAT FATHER BROPHY DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE WARRNAMBOOL AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FELT THE SAME WAY.

The community wasn't going to let it happen without a fight and rallied behind the highly respected priest to mount a protest against his transfer.

Many of his supporters believed that the choice of Merbein, about 10 miles out of Mildura, was designed to break his connection to the boys' home and his around-the-clock working habits. Some say the move was just part of the church's policies of the era, others think it may have been because Father Brophy was trying to expose paedophiles.

Whatever the reason, Father Brophy and the community didn't want it to happen.

However, a strong letter writing campaign and personal visits to Bishop Mulkearns in Ballarat failed to sway the decision.

Bob Myers thinks the church's lack of support for the boy's home was part of reason for moving the popular priest.

He said Father Brophy was "devastated" about being relocated.

"For some reason or other, there was always a mystery about it. I think the monsignor here in Warrnambool was partly to blame for it," Bob said.

"Suddenly he got moved to Merbein which was as far as you could be moved. It seemed to be a very deliberate thing to try to break him away from the set up here."

Bob Myers and others suspect more sinister motives might have been at play.

"It may have been the opposite of moving paedophile priests," Bob said. "From things that I have discovered since, I think he was about to blow the whistle (on paedophiles).

"Thinking about it afterwards, there were so many priests since exposed as paedophiles and they were around this area at that time.

"He used to come here late at night. He'd tap on the window and come in and we'd talk till 2 or 3 in the morning. He said to me one night that he was thinking about taking leave of absence. He would have to have a strong motive to do that. He was dedicated to the church."

The organisation representing victims of church abuse, Broken Rights, confirmed that Father Brophy had reported molestation allegations to higher authorities in the church.

Boys Home resident Hugh Crawford recalls the opposition in Ballarat to Father Brophy's support for the boys. "What he did was against the conservatism of the Catholic Church and I know he had a few opponents in the church against what he was doing. That was probably one of the reasons he was shunted out of Ballarat," he said.

Father Brophy let his feeling be known to his family.

His niece Lyn Merritt recalls that he was "extremely upset and disappointed" by the forced move. She adds that as far as she knows, her uncle had no plans to leave the priesthood.

Boys' Home resident Basil Fogarty said it was a common belief that Bishop Mulkearns transferred 'Broph' to try and break up his house. "Notwithstanding Mildura is six hours away, he planned to complete his priest duties and then drive back to Warrnambool to ensure everything was going okay," Basil said.

Another resident, Barney Deverall, said he wasn't sure of the reasons behind the move. "If they wanted to shift him it would only be so he would slow down, but that would never happen," he said.

The move was reported in The Standard newspaper in an article headlined 'Director of Boys' Home transferred'. The article noted he would remain director of the home and would continue to make regular visits to Warrnambool.

The Warrnambool community threw its weight behind Father Brophy, but to no avail.

Despite support from big names in the Warrnambool community and beyond, a letter writing campaign from civic leaders to the Ballarat diocese fell on deaf ears.

The letters were typed just weeks before Father Brophy's untimely death.

Police Superintendent M.A. Oakley told the Bishop that Father Brophy had "rendered extremely valuable service to the community in general and in particular the inmates of the Warrnambool Boys' Home and Hostel".

A letter from the Melbourne-based Social Welfare Department highlighted Father Brophy's "vital role" in the operation of the home.

"Most of these boys are rather difficult to control, often because of previous unsatisfactory home environment," the department's director general wrote.

"I have little doubt that if it were not for Father Brophy's counselling and general guidance, some of these boys would quickly become candidates for placement in youth training centres and possibly even prisons."

MAC:EAB

VICTORIA



POLICE

April 23, 1974

Superintendent's Office,
Police Headquarters,
WARRNAMBOOL. 3280.

The Rt. Rev. R. MULKEARNS,
Catholic Bishop of Ballarat,
632 Sturt Street,
BALLARAT. 3350.

Dear Bishop:

I learn with regret of the impending transfer of Father BROPHY of Warrnambool, to Merbein to take effect in the near future.

Father BROPHY, Director of the Warrnambool Boys' Home, has rendered extremely valuable service to the Community in general, and in particular, the inmates of the Warrnambool Boys' Home and Hostel which cares for seventeen boys aged between 14 - 17 years.

Because of previous unsatisfactory home environments there is little doubt that many of these boys would finish up in further trouble and eventually become inmates of Youth Training Centre or Prison.

Even though Father BROPHY has the backing of a very strong local committee and the support of a full-time Manager, who, with his wife, have the day to day running of the Home, I feel sure these people would readily admit their tasks would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the skilled advice, dedication and energy of Father BROPHY.

Having regard to all these circumstances, and in the interests of this community, I respectfully request that his transfer from Warrnambool be deferred indefinitely or, alternatively, that a transfer be arranged to a Parish in the vicinity of Warrnambool, from which he could continue to assist in the supervision of the Home.

I have no doubt that should this course be possible, the Community in general, the boys in particular of the Warrnambool Boys' Home would be greatly benefited, and eternally grateful.

Yours faithfully,

M.A. Oakley
M.A. OAKLEY,
A/R SUPERINTENDENT.

L-R Top to Bottom: Letters to The Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Ballarat expressing concern of Father Brophy being transferred to Merbein in 1974 from: The Victoria Police - Superintendent M.A. Oakley; Ministry of Agriculture - Ian Smith; Mayor of Warrnambool - J.P. Daffy; Department of Mental Hygiene - H. Hannah, Psychiatrist Superintendent; Social Welfare Department - Director-General



MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

POSTAL ADDRESS:
BOX 4041, G.P.O.
MELBOURNE, VIC. 3001

24th April, 1974.

The Most Rev. R. A. Mulkearns,
Bishop of Ballarat,
632 Sturt Street,
BALLARAT. Vic. 3350.

My Lord Bishop,

I understand that the Supervisor of the Warrnambool Home for Boys, Father Tom Brophy, is being transferred to Merbein.

Considering the excellent work that Father Brophy has done in supervising the Home for Boys, many of whom have very real problems, I wish to ask you to give consideration to Father Brophy being allowed to stay in Warrnambool.

If this is not possible, it would be appreciated if Father Brophy could be retained in the Warrnambool area so that he can give the necessary supervision to the Home. I consider that if Father Brophy is transferred to Merbein which is a considerable distance from Warrnambool, it would be extremely difficult for him to give proper supervision to the Home.

As Member for Warrnambool, I have always taken a personal interest in the Home and admired very much the good work done by Father Brophy.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Smith,
Minister of Agriculture.

BJP

26th April, 1974

Bishop R. Mulkearns,
Bishop of Ballarat,
BALLAARAT. 3350

My Lord Bishop,

In my capacity as Mayor of the City of Warrnambool, and President of the Warrnambool Probationary Officers Association, many people have suggested that I write to you expressing gratitude of the work undertaken by Father T. Brophy during his time at St. Joseph's.

I have not at any time heard remarks other than praise of Fr. Brophy for his work as a priest, a probation officer and a counsellor to many people of all denominations.

His work in establishing the Warrnambool Boy's Home and that of his Committee is something of which we are all very proud. The Home has fulfilled a need in this area and boys of various age and religions have been given the opportunity to adjust in surroundings comparable with the best the State can provide.

Whilst we all knew that in time Father Brophy would be expected to continue his work in other parts of the Diocese, we are all very sorry to hear of his transfer to distant Merbein, particularly as this is a vital stage in the development of the home and an important time in the training of the supervisor.

Fr. Brophy will leave Warrnambool with the best wishes of all and I believe that it is the prayer of many that in the not too distant future, we may see him returned to the close proximity of Warrnambool where he will again be in a position to assist in the continued success of the great work undertaken by him and his supporters.

Yours faithfully,

(J.P. Daffy)
Mayor,
City of Warrnambool.

MENTAL HYGIENE BRANCH
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, VICTORIA)

MENTAL HOSPITAL
TRAINING CENT
WARRNAMBO

24th April, 1974

The Rt. Rev. Ronald Mulkearns,
Bishop of Ballarat.

Dear Bishop,

I have been fairly closely associated with Father Tom Brophy and his Boys' Home for the last year or two; and I was very concerned when I heard of his impending transfer. I cannot visualize the Boys' Home surviving without Father Brophy being replaced by someone with his rare talent for dealing with youth. Its dissolution would be a tragedy for very youths of this district.

I am sure you will understand that I am taking this liberty and expressing my opinion - only to supplement the many considerations which you have to take into account when making one of your many onerous decisions.

Yours humbly and sincerely,

R. J. Hannah
Psychiatrist Superintendent



VICTORIA

SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

1 Macarthur Street, Melbourne, 3002

TELEPHONE 654 4322
110 Collins Street, G.P. Box 63
TELEGRAMS "SOCIALWEL"

22nd April, 1974.

REFERENCE: AGB/ED.

The Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Ballarat,
632 Sturt Street,
BALLARAT. Vic. 3350.

Right Reverend Sir,

I trust you will not mind my writing to you regarding a matter greatly concerning this Department.

I understand that Father Brophy of Warrnambool has received notice of his intended transfer to Merbein, which is, of course, a considerable distance from Warrnambool. My Department's concern is that Father Brophy is currently undertaking a vital role in the operation of the Warrnambool Boys' Home and Hostel which cares for some 17 boys aged approximately 14-17 years. Most of these boys are rather difficult to control - often because of previous unsatisfactory home environment. I have little doubt that if it were not for Father Brophy's counselling and general guidance, some of these boys would quickly become candidates for placement in youth training centres and possibly even in prisons.

My Department subsidises the costs of running the Home, and is very concerned that it should continue to operate as successfully as it has done for the two years of its operation - the last year at its present location.

Whilst I appreciate that Father Brophy has the backing of a very strong local committee and the support of a full-time manager who, with his wife, have the day-to-day running of the Home, I am sure these people would readily admit that their task would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the skilled advice, dedication and energy of Father Brophy. It is in these circumstances that I respectfully request that his transfer from Warrnambool be deferred indefinitely or, alternatively, that he be transferred to a parish in the vicinity of Warrnambool, from which he could continue to supervise the Home on a part-time basis.

Action along these lines would be greatly appreciated by my Department, but what is much more important would be of tremendous value to boys now living at the cross-roads.

Yours sincerely,

DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

The Director General, whose name has faded from the letter, said his department subsidised the cost of the home.

Then Warrnambool Mayor and president of the Warrnambool Probationary Officers Association, Jack Daffy, said in his letter that he heard nothing but praise for Father Brophy's work as a priest, probation officer or counsellor to many people of all denominations.

He said the community was proud of Father Brophy's contribution to the boys' home.

"The home has fulfilled a need in this area," he said.

Minister for Agriculture and Member for Warrnambool Ian Smith also joined the campaign.

"Considering the excellent work that Father Brophy has done in supervising the Home for Boys, many of whom have very real problems, I wish to ask you to give consideration to Father Brophy being allowed to stay in Warrnambool," he said.

"I HAVE VERY MUCH ADMIRERD THE GOOD WORK DONE BY FATHER BROPHY."

Psychiatrist superintendent with the Mental Hygiene Branch of the Victorian Department of Health, H. W. Hannah, said he was very concerned to hear of Father Brophy's impending transfer.

"I cannot visualise the Boys' Home surviving without Father Brophy. Its dissolution would be a tragedy for many youths in this district."

All the letter writers suggested that if Father Brophy must be relocated, it should be to a parish closer to Warrnambool.

Supporters Tony O'Hurley and Bob Myers went to see the Bishop the week before Father Brophy died. "We had all those letters but the Bishop didn't want to know about it," Bob said.

As Mayor and a probation officer, Jack Daffy had seen first-hand the positive outcomes of Father Brophy's work.

"Not long before he died he got a transfer. I wrote a letter to the Bishop appealing it. I've still got the reply around here," Jack said recently.

"The Bishop was very lucky that Father Brophy died so he didn't have to respond in any other words."

The response received from the church came after Father Brophy's death, effectively allowing the Bishop to avoid the complaints.

"He just said that I would appreciate the fact Father Brophy had died and what a wonderful job he had done...a typical secretary's response," Jack Daffy said.

Moving priests after a few years was not uncommon in the 1970s within the Catholic Church.

“In those days they were moved every couple of years,” Jack Daffy said. “There was no specific reason.”

“They would stay in town for about two years; six months getting used to the place; six months packing up and a year in the middle to get to know people.”

Even if it was common practice at the time, the Warrnambool community wasn't happy about losing Father Brophy.

Jack said there was a feeling around Warrnambool that it was the wrong time to move Father Brophy.

“He had just got the boys' home established and it was running well and probation officers and other people thought it was worth keeping it going.

“We thought it needed someone like him to drive it.”

History proved otherwise as the legacy left by Father Brophy inspired others to follow his example.

BROPHY DEATH

THE DEATH OF FATHER BROPHY AT AGE 42 STUNNED THE WARRNAMBOOL COMMUNITY.

The Standard newspaper published the news as the page 3 lead story in its Friday, May 3 edition under the headline 'Sudden Death of W'Bool Boys' Home Founder'.

Father Brophy, who had been due to take up a new post at Merbein, was visiting his mother at her home in West Heidelberg, and died suddenly on Thursday morning, May 2 1974.

His death happened just weeks after his appointment as parish priest of Merbein. The appointment was announced on April 16. It is widely understood that Father Brophy was devastated about being moved from Warrnambool.

A heart attack was publicly reported as the cause of death.

Although young to have a heart attack, there had been concerns about his health leading up to his death and others in his family died from heart problems.

Former Warrnambool Mayor Jack Daffy recalled that Father Brophy's mother had been worried about his health. He had been under the care of a doctor.



Warrnambool Monsignor Leo Fiscalini told The Standard that Father Brophy's death was a great loss to the St Joseph's Parish.

Monsignor Fiscalini also told the paper that Father Brophy had been recently under the supervision of a doctor.

Former Boys' Home resident Basil Fogarty was one of the last people to see Father Brophy.

"He was a tireless worker. I believe his work led to his death," he said.

On the weekend before his death, Father Brophy visited Basil, who was living with the Myers family in Warrnambool.

"He would visit often, and many nights were spent having a drink and talking about life. On that particular weekend, he was going to Melbourne on Sunday to visit his mother and he invited me to go with him. Of course he could never give a time," Basil said.

Basil was living in a caravan in the front yard of the Myers house and had gone to bed around 10pm. "It was around midnight or later when the caravan started rocking. Broph was lifting the end of the caravan rocking it to stir me. He asked whether I wanted to go to Melbourne and I said no. It may well have been later. I do know that he arrived at his mother's house the following morning; that may have been around 7am. In any event, he sat on a chair in the bungalow and she was making him a cup of tea. He then apparently called out her name and slumped in the chair. He died instantly of a heart attack."

Mr Fogarty later saw the death certificate which confirmed a heart attack as the cause of death.



Father Brophy and his Mother

Bob Myers had become a close friend of Father Brophy. Even today the premature death cuts deep.

"I spoke to him the night before and he wasn't well," Bob said. "He had travelled to Melbourne overnight. I offered to go down to Melbourne and pick him up but he said he'd be right. They rang me the next morning to say he had died.

"It was a shock for all of us. I knew he had this trouble but it was still a shock. You don't expect these things to happen.

"The whole town seemed to come to standstill."

Resident Hugh Crawford had left the home by that stage but was still devastated. "The night we found out he died, I don't know where we went but we all went out bush and we all got smashed and sat around talking about Broph, about what he meant to us all. Some of them would have been lost without him; some have been lost without him since then."

Hugh said Father Brophy had indigestion and was always taking tablets for the condition. "We all thought his heart just gave out and that he over-worked himself to death. He just worked so hard," he said.

"It's still inexplicable why he died; why was he taken from us, taken from the boys."

While his death was reported to be from a heart attack, Bob Myers said it was from an aneurism and that Father Brophy's father had died from the same thing. "It wasn't a heart attack; it was an aneurism. It just burst and he was dead before he hit the floor. He knew that if he didn't slow down that it would happen but he didn't slow down."

Father Brophy's niece Lyn Merritt also believes it was an aneurism and said that the family was shocked and devastated by the death.

"While we knew Father Tom died of a heart attack I remember my Nan saying he died of a broken heart, because of the transfer from Warrnambool," she said.

Lyn said there were concerns in the family that he was pushing himself too hard. She can remember her mother and Nan wanting him to have a break. "I'm fairly sure they said his doctor had told him that he needed to slow down but he said he had to be there for the boys if they needed him day or night. It was reported in the paper that Monsignor Fiscalini said he had been under the supervision of a doctor not long before his death," she said.

"I was 13. He died at my parents' home early in the morning of a heart attack. I remember the funeral was enormous."

Father Brophy's sister Joan died about 20 years ago, age 61. She also died from heart problems.

The Catholic Church paid its tribute in the Light newsletter.

While recognising that his methods didn't win unanimous support, the article said that "in the end opposition was disarmed".

"There was no doubting his charisma, and at death some of the most touching tributes came from his erstwhile critics."

The article said that while Father Brophy fulfilled his duties as an assistant priest in Warrnambool, he continued his "life work" which centred on supporting young people.

The first boys' home live-in supervisor, Ivan Boyer, had moved to Canberra and was studying to become a teacher when Father Brophy died.

He remains bitter about the church's lack of support for Father Brophy and the boy's home.

"When I heard of his premature death I though bugger you, you (the church) actually killed him," Ivan said. "That was how I felt. He wore himself out. I could see it happening. They worked him to death."

"I always felt bad that I didn't hear about his death until later and didn't get to go to his funeral."

"For a hardened old atheist like me, Tom Brophy is as close to a saint as you'll ever get. If there's such a thing, he's one. They should be making him a saint but I doubt that will ever happen."

More than 1500 people attended the funeral of Father Brophy and his death met with an outpouring of grief in death notices published in The Standard.

**"IT'S STILL
INEXPLICABLE
WHY HE DIED;
WHY WAS HE
TAKEN FROM US,
TAKEN FROM
THE BOYS."**

Priest and social worker mourned

Fr Thomas Brophy was never simply a social worker, but was always and uncompromisingly a priest, Bishop Mulkearns said at the Requiem Mass for Fr Brophy at St Joseph's, Warrnambool.

Fr Brophy, about 42, died suddenly at his mother's home in West Heidelberg recently, two days before leaving for Merbein where he had been appointed parish priest.

Fr Brophy had served for nearly 10 years in the Diocese of Ballarat.

He was born in Melbourne and educated at St Bernard's, Moonee Ponds, and after his family moved there, at Warracknabeal, and St. Patrick's, Ballarat.

In 1955 he entered

Corpus Christi, Werribee. In 1952 he went on to study in Rome, and in 1960, to All Hallows, Dublin, Ireland.

He was ordained there in 1962, and continued studying in Rome and the United States for more than two years before returning to Ballarat Diocese.

Fr Brophy spent some time in the parishes of Ballarat East, Ballarat North, St Patrick's Cathedral, Robinvale and Warrnambool.

He founded the Warrnambool Home for Boys, two years ago, and helped in the setting up of the "Freedom Zone", St Paul's Youth Centre.

"Fr Brophy was always ready to encounter Christ in every person he met, regardless of that person's background or attitude," Bishop Mulkearns said.

"Probably the outstanding characteristic of Fr Brophy was his complete availability and selfless service.

"As a probation officer and counsellor, he was a puzzle to the experts, who probably thought that he worked with the wrong approach and would have been surprised by his success in dealing with people.

**Article that appeared in
The Standard, Warrnambool**

BROPHY FUNERAL

THE FUNERAL OF FATHER BROPHY WAS ONE OF THE LARGEST SEEN IN WARRNAMBOOL. MORE THAN 1500 PEOPLE PAID TRIBUTE TO THE BOYS' HOME FOUNDER AT A REQUIEM MASS AT ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH ON MONDAY, MAY 6, 1974.

Chairs and loud speakers were set up in the church grounds to accommodate the huge congregation.

A photograph of the service was featured on the front page of The Standard newspaper the following day.

More than 150 priests from the Ballarat and Melbourne dioceses took part in the service. Principal celebrants of the mass were the Most Reverend R.A. Mulkearns, Bishop of Ballarat Diocese, and the Most Reverend J.P. O'Collins, retired Bishop of Ballarat Diocese.

Mourners came from Merbein, Robinvale, Warracknabeal and other Victorian centres.

Former residents of the Warrnambool Boys' Home carried the coffin and formed a guard of honour at the graveside service which was conducted by Bishop Mulkearns.

More than 30 wreaths were laid on the grave.

Speaking at the funeral, Bishop Ronald Mulkearns said Father Brophy was never simply a social worker but was always and uncompromisingly a priest.

"Father Brophy was always ready to encounter Christ in every person he met, regardless of that person's background or attitude," Bishop Mulkearns told the gathering.

"Probably the outstanding characteristic of Father Brophy was his complete availability and selfless service.

"As a probation officer and counsellor, he was a puzzle to the experts who probably thought that he worked with the wrong approach and would have been surprised by his success in dealing with people."

Bishop Mulkearns said Father Brophy had a very direct approach. "He made it very clear what he expected of people and how they should behave; yet such was his character that he could achieve tremendous success with all who called on him."



Thank You

To the people of Warrnambool I give my son, Fr. Tom Brophy.

His great love for you and his boys made it impossible for him to be buried anywhere else.

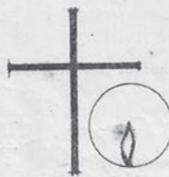
I thank you for the happiness you gave him and your wonderful support for the love of his life, the Warrnambool Boys' Home.

My dearest wish is that Tom's burial in Warrnambool will inspire you to keep his dream a reality. May God bless you all.

THEA SCHAECHÉ.

135 Oriel Rd., West Heidelberg.

Mass of
THANKS -



TO THOSE WHO ARE
FAITHFUL TO THEM,
O LORD,
LIFE IS CHANGED,
NOT TAKEN AWAY.

GIVING
for the
Life and
Love of

Father Thomas
Brophy

1500 PAY TRIBUTE TO
FATHER T. M. BROPHY

More than 1500 people yesterday paid tribute at a celebrated Requiem Mass for Warrnambool Boys' Home founder, Father Thomas Martin Brophy, who died suddenly last week.

Newspaper clippings and photos of Father Brophy's funeral from Bob Myers' collection.

Father Brophy to a certain extent 'did his own thing', Bishop Mulkearns said. "But he did it within the framework and with the support and encouragement of the 'institutional church' which takes a considerable battering these days but to which he was unfailingly loyal and in the context of which he was proud to serve."

The Bishop said Father Brophy had been "constantly told that nobody could keep up the pace he set for himself".

"Yet he would not change. It was as though he wanted to accomplish as much as he possibly could in the time available – as though he suspected that there may not have been a great deal of time."

"Father Tom was a sign to us in life – a witness to the love and concern of Christ. Now he is a sign to us in death," he said.

The Catholic Church Light newsletter described the funeral as a "revelation". "His requiem mass attracted the largest crowd ever seen in St Joseph's Church and grounds."

Tributes to Father Brophy's youth work were received from the Social Welfare Department, Victoria Police, the Mental Hygiene Department and parliamentary and civic leaders.

The daughter of funeral director Jack Guyett, Helen Bayne, recalled her father's amazement at the response from the Warrnambool community.

"I distinctly remember Dad saying it was the second biggest funeral Warrnambool had ever seen. The biggest was for Sir Ronald Mack, the Member of Parliament," she said.

"What was so amazing was that Father Brophy was only in Warrnambool for two years. He attracted people from all religions and all walks of life."

At the time of Father Brophy's death, Jack Daffy worked at Guyett's Funerals and was involved in the service for Father Brophy.

"It was one of the biggest funerals ever seen in Warrnambool, probably second only to Ronald Mack the politician," Mr Daffy said. "All the church hierarchy was there. The church (St Joseph's) was full and there were even more people outside."

A lot of young people helped by Father Brophy attended the funeral and served as pallbearers. "I'd say every young bloke in the district turned up to pay their respects," Mr Daffy said. "I distinctly remember (police detective) Jack Manley being respectful to them, saying to me 'I'm not looking at them today'."

"A lot of the young people who had known him were visibly upset outside. Most of them wouldn't have had much religion in them but they paid their respects.

"There was a lot of respect for him from young people in the community, from everybody really."

In the 1970s church services usually followed a rigid formula but an exception was made for Father Brophy. Instead of a hymn being played as his casket was taken from the church, Frank Sinatra's 'My Way' was played through the speakers.

Even though Father Brophy lived in Warrnambool for only two years, there was never any doubt that the city would become his final resting place.

His friend Bob Myers said Father Brophy's mother Thea Schaeche requested Warrnambool as his burial site. "She said Warrnambool was where he wanted to be. There was no question about it," he said.

Father Brophy's niece Lyn Merritt said Warrnambool was chosen because the Boys' Home was so important to him.

"He had a great love for his boys and the people of Warrnambool and they hoped that his burial in Warrnambool would inspire the people to keep his dream (the Warrnambool Boys' Home) a reality."

Mrs Schaeche placed a thank you notice in The Standard.

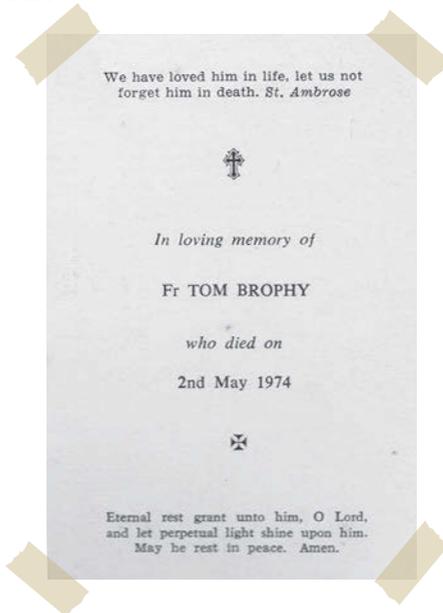
"To the people of Warrnambool I give you my son, Fr Tom Brophy.

His great love for you and his boys made it impossible for him to be buried anywhere else.

I thank you for the happiness you gave him and your wonderful support for the love of his life, the Warrnambool Boys' Home.

My dearest wish is that Tom's burial in Warrnambool will inspire you to keep his dream a reality. May God bless you all."

"I DISTINCTLY
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THE BIGGEST
WAS FOR SIR
RONALD MACK,
THE MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT."



'Broph' — father to them all

FAIR GAME

with
Neil Roberts



"BROPH" beat them to the punch. On May 6 this year Warrnambool priest Fr T. M. Brophy died at his mother's home in West Heidelberg.

HE was 45, but in his short lifetime he became a living legend. His death has drawn further attention to his greatness.

He founded and successfully ran the Warrnambool Home for Boys and put into practice that which so many social reformers merely talk about.

The incredible thing is that he did it all in two years, initially against great odds and solid scepticism. All sorts of people had their doubts that the home would work.

Police, religious leaders, priests and citizens doubted alike — but they were all converted.

Even Sailor Jack Manly, Warrnambool's leading policeman, who was perhaps the greatest sceptic at the outset, finally went



Fr. JOHN BROSAN

overboard on the scheme and ended up paying glowing tribute to Fr Brophy.

Seventy-five wayward boys went through the home in two short years



POLLY FARMER

and only three of these ended up in prison — an indication of his calibre, charisma and dedication.

There were only 17 boys living at the home at the time of his death.

Father Brophy was a strict disciplinarian and the boys certainly knew they had a boss, yet his warmth came through to them.

In fact at his funeral there were at least 1500 mourners. Six of his past pupils carried the casket containing his body in a unique gesture of respect.

The funeral was attended by 120 priests and people came from all over Victoria to pay homage to this great man.

The impact of Brophy's sudden death has been explosive.

Naturally everyone wants the work of the home to continue.

A committee was quickly formed, composed of all sorts of people.

Although the home was run by a Catholic priest it was a non-Denomination establishment and so is the committee. In fact it reads like a com-

the Queen's Birthday honors list.

These men have to raise a certain sum within six months for the home to continue and they are starting with a huge night at Mac's Hotel in Warrnambool on July 14.

It only takes the breath of a thing like this to hit the air and you get a response from sportsmen. Sportsmen attract people — particularly those with a sense of service.

Jack O'Rourke, the ex-Tiger full-forward, has started the ball rolling.

He and his mates in the racing game, along with the father of all charity and welfare, Fr

Brosnan, have put together a panel of ex sportsmen to conduct a giant bucks' night.

Fellows like Smoky Clegg, Ian Meckiff, Mopsy Fraser, Polly Farmer, Pat Hyland, Des Rowe, Leon Weigard and trotting driver Bernie Clarke are rallying to the cause.

It should be a great night.

It would be wonderful to see the home perpetuated in the memory of a man who had obviously already given a very strong message of service to others — something rather rare in our modern community.



IAN MECKIFF



JACK O'ROURKE

KEEPING GOING

DESPITE THE DEATH OF FATHER TOM BROPHY THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION ABOUT CONTINUING THE BOYS' HOME.

In fact, Father Brophy's premature death may have made his supporters even more determined to honour his vision and passion.

Bob Myers recalls that resilience. "There was a committee of management and we decided to keep the thing going," Bob said. "There was never any doubt about that. We knew his work had to go on."

By this time the home had already moved from Kepler Street to Ardlie Street. Mick and Shirley Brookes were the main supervisors and Bob Myers and Jim Clapham were part-time supervisors.

The first chairman of the Warrnambool Home for Boys was the late Alan Carman and he held the role until 1975. Bob Myers then took over to build Brophy House, which opened in 1976. Tony O'Hurley became chairman in 1979 and served until 1991. James Nicol became chairman in 1991 when the name was changed to Brophy Family and Youth Services. Heather Goddard later took on the role as chair in the 1990s.

The secretary from 1972 through to the late 1980s was James Nicol, a Warrnambool solicitor and later a city councillor.

The impact of Father Brophy's death was immediate, not only in its shock across the community but in fortifying his supporters.

The committee needed to raise money and challenged the community to help.

The community was quick to come on board.

A testimonial screening of the film 'Brother Sun, Sister Moon' at the Capitol Theatre on May 26, less than a month after Father Brophy's death, raised \$1100 for the Boys' Home as the start of a public appeal.

In a letter to the editor published in The Standard, Bob Myers appealed the community to support the "impossible dream".

He recounted a story of 'John'.

"At 18 he is already in jail. He is frustrated and bitter because he never knew what it was to receive love and have a normal family life.

"His drunken father's favourite pastime was beating mum and the kids.

“One day he will get married and if the normal course is followed he will treat his family the same way his father treated him. His son will be filled with frustration and bitterness.

“This is not true in every case but normally the broken home produces children who are almost certain to run afoul of the law and then in their turn create another broken home, therefore keeping the vicious circle going for generation after generation.

“This was the impossible dream of Father Tom Brophy – to break this chain and make a new beginning. He did this with love, understanding and strong discipline.

“He proved that the impossible can be done, not for every boy but for most that his ideas were used on.”

Bob Myers said in his letter that the people of Warrnambool could share this dream and make certain his work could go on.

He said the home was mainly for Warrnambool and district boys “so Warrnambool people are building a better future for Warrnambool boys”.

The film screening was a good start but more money was needed.

By July the Standard referred to the appeal as raising funds for ‘Brophy House’.

Along with ongoing donations, a sportsman’s gala was organised in July, attracting big names and big dollars.

Brownlow medallist and TV commentator Neil Roberts hosted the event that featured Pentridge chaplain Father John Brosnan, Geelong coach Graham ‘Polly’ Farmer, Test cricketer Keith Stackpole, jockey Pat Hyland, reinsman Bernie Clarke, former Richmond footballer ‘Mopsy’ Fraser and current players Brian ‘Whale’ Roberts and Neil Balme, South Melbourne Brownlow Medallist Ron Clegg, and Warrnambool horse trainers Kevin Lafferty and Eddie O’Sullivan.

A crowd of 350 people at Mac’s Hotel raised \$4000 in ticket sales but that amount was further inflated by donations.

The organising committee included Jack O’Rourke, himself a former Richmond player, John McCormack, Brian McMahon, Damien Gleeson, John McMahon, Peter Homann and Barry Dalton.

At the time Neil Roberts wrote a feature article in the Sunday Press, describing ‘Broph’ as a “legend”.

“In his short lifetime he became a living legend. His death has drawn further attention to his greatness,” he wrote.

“He founded and successfully ran the Warrnambool Home for Boys and put into practice that which so many social reformers merely talk about.

“The incredible thing is that he did all this in two years; initially against great odds and solid scepticism.

“All sorts of people had their doubts that the home would work. Police, religious leaders and citizens doubted alike – but they were all converted.”

Neil Roberts’ article said that even local policeman Jack Manley ended up paying glowing tribute to Father Brophy after earlier being the greatest sceptic.

Not long after Father Brophy’s death, Bob and Rhonda Myers closed their shop in Timor Street and Bob became the chairman of the committee. Others on the committee at the time included Tony O’Hurley, Joe Purcell and Gerald Gray.

“Jim Clapham and I would be involved in different ways and on different nights and different days. We’d sleep there on the Friday and Saturday nights to give Mick and Shirley time off,” Bob recalled.

“One Christmas we took all the kids to Geelong. They decided that only those boys that couldn’t go home for Christmas would go. Of course none of them could go home. We finished up with 20-25 kids down there in tents.”

The fund-raising pleas struck a chord with the local community. By August more than \$12,000 had been donated to an appeal to construct a purpose-built home for boys.

The appeal target was \$65,000 but the State Government had also indicated it would offer a grant.

The home was closed for a few months in early 1975 after some problems and the search for a new permanent site started.

Concept plans were drawn up and several potential sites investigated. One possible location was the Raglan Parade home of the Timbertop Motel. Decades later this land became the site of Brophy’s Foyer Warrnambool project.

In August 1974 it was announced that a five acre site at the corner of Ardlie Street and Daltons Road had been purchased for \$12,000.

Architects O’Connor, Brophy and Treloar from Melbourne were contracted to prepare the designs.

The dream was edging closer to reality.

“There was never a thought of not continuing the house; there was no way I would let that happen,” Bob Myers recalls.

“There was a good band of people still keen to keep it going.”

On August 25, 1975 The Standard newspaper carried an article announcing the imminent start of work on the new Boys’ Home.

Tenders for the construction had closed, though at the time the committee had yet to select the winning tender.

At this time the rented premises at 100 Ardlie Street had been vacated for four months. The newspaper article said the committee had been looking for

suitable rented premises without success, and would continue the search during the construction of the new premises.

The committee also said it planned to build more than one home and to accommodate both boys and girls.

It was announced that Alan Carman had stood down as chairman and had been replaced by Bob Myers. Alan continued as vice-chairman, James Nicol as secretary and Joe Purcell as treasurer.

Sportsmen rally to aid of boys' home

About 350 Warrnambool and district people last night attended a sportsmen's gala at Mac's Hotel to raise funds for the Brophy House appeal by the Warrnambool Boys' Home Committee.

Guests were entertained and informed about sport by some of the leading personalities in the State.

All proceeds from the night are being donated by the six-man organising committee to the appeal.

One of the organisers, Mr. Jack O'Rourke, said last night that the amount raised was not known.

So many donations have been given there has not been time to total them," he said.

"But the response to the night is just fantastic."

Tickets were sold at \$12 each and more than \$400 was raised from sales.

TOP PERSONALITIES
Former St. Kilda champion footballer, Trevor Medallist and now television commentator, Neil Roberts, presided over the night.

Guests were Pentridge chaplain, Fr. John Brennan; Grolong coach, Graham "Polly" Farmer; former Test

cricketer, Keith Stackpole; jockey Pat Ryland, retirement Bernie Clarke; former Richmond player, "Mopsy" Fraser; former South Melbourne Brownlow Medallist, Ron Clegg; Richmond ruckman, Brian "Wialac" Roberts;

Richmond player, Neil Balmn, and Warrnambool horse trainer, Kevin Ladefry and Eddie O'Sullivan.

Two TAB administrators, Mr. Les Hooley and Mr. Colin Pavia, showed a film on the TAB operations.

Guests gave talks and were questioned about their respective fields.

The organising committee comprised Messrs. John McCormack, Jack O'Rourke, Brian McMahon, Damien Gleeson, John McMahon, Peter Houston and Barry Dalton.

The hotel met all running costs and staff donated their services.

Carlson and United Breweries donated beer and some of the food was donated.

Father Brophy testimonial film raised sum of \$1100

In a moving tribute to the late Fr. Thomas Brophy a large crowd last night donated more than \$1100 to see the film, "Brother Sun, Sister Moon," arranged as a testimonial to his work.

The testimonial launched a public appeal to raise funds for the Warrnambool Boys' Home which was founded by Fr. Brophy.

All expenses were paid for by Capitol Theatre and all proceeds will go to the appeal.

The Warrnambool City Band donated its services and played as patrons entered the theatre.

Past and present residents of the Warrnambool Boys' Home and past residents of the Ballarat Boys' Home, which was also founded by Fr. Brophy but since disbanded, were present.

Fr. Brophy's mother, sister and brother-in-law and their family were in the official party.

Chairman of Capitol Theatres, Cr. P. O'Sullivan,

and president of the Warrnambool Boys' Home committee of management publicly welcomed the audience.

"Brother Sun, Sister Moon" is the first film made by the producer, Franco Zeffirelli, since his acclaimed "Romeo and Juliet."

It describes the conversion and early life of St. Francis of Assisi.

SUNDAY, 8 p.m. — A TRIBUTE TO FATHER BROPHY

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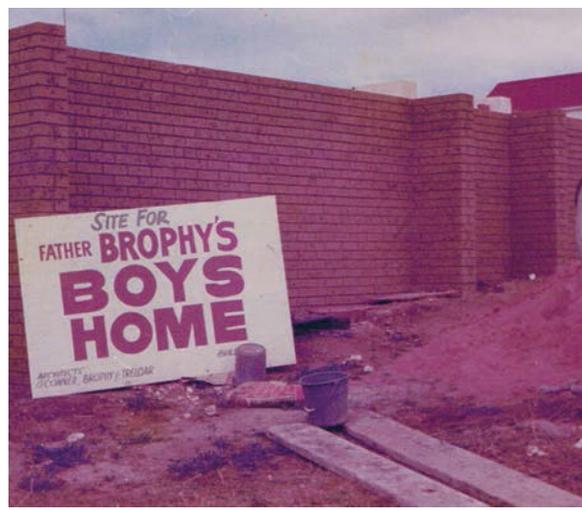
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L-R Top to Bottom: Clippings from the Warrnambool Standard newspaper. The foundations of the Brophy's Boys Home, Warrnambool.

BROPHY MEMORIAL HOSTEL OFFICIAL OPENING

On Sunday May 2, 1976 Father Brophy's vision was realised when the Brophy Memorial Hostel was officially opened at 61 Daltons Road.

It was a big affair with about 300 people attending, including Minister for Agriculture and local MP Ian Smith, Father Brophy's mother Thea Schaeche and other members of his extended family.

Other guests included Senator Cryil Primmer, Pentridge Prison chaplain Father John Brosnan and Warrnambool Mayor Cr Jack Daffy.

Ian Smith presented a \$20,000 State Government contribution to the hostel and described the facility as a preventative measure to try to stop young people from getting into trouble, and to prevent the resentment that could build up if they were put in institutions.

He admitted he had been initially sceptical about the idea but it had since "gripped the imagination".

Father Brosnan said the late Father Brophy and the committee had done great work for the welfare of young people and dealing with social problems in the community.

He said their methods of prevention were better than cure.

Construction had started that January and the purpose-built brick veneer hostel had capacity for eight residents plus live-in supervisors. It had five bedrooms, a family room, lounge room, kitchen, dining room, five toilets and four showers. Later a self-contained flat was built to increase the capacity. Although the official capacity was eight, this number was sometimes exceeded.

General supervisor Bob Myers said the house maintained a home-like atmosphere and like any family there was the occasional upset, but generally it was a good place to be.

The residents were mostly aged 13 to 16 or 17.

"Society deemed many of the residents to be 'uncontrollable' but we put them in charge of making the rules at a weekly meeting, guided by a few basic guidelines about making rules," Bob Myers said. "The other major, and challenging, aspect was that we adopted the approach that once someone was accepted as a resident, he or she could not be kicked out for any reason. I don't know of any other facility that took that approach."

Each of the residents went through a life-skills course designed by Bob Myers. "Many of them couldn't even tell the time or use a phone book in spite of having been in the school system for eight or nine years. They weren't stupid; it was just that society had failed to provide for them or to take the time to explore their needs."

The 2.6 hectare block allowed residents to go into livestock business. At one stage there were 14 cattle, two sheep and two goats in the adjoining block. Calves were sold at market and the proceeds used for the house.

Bingo – technically illegal at the start but the authorities didn't seem to notice - and donations raised about \$10,000 needed each year to run the house in addition to government grants.

"Some of our supporters were a little upset that we were indulging in illegal activities to make money but there was no comment from authorities," Bob Myers said.

The prizes were packages of groceries or ornaments, not money.

When bingo became legal, the Brophy committee teamed with Warrnambool Football Club. "They had the numbers and we had the licence. That was our main fund-raising method for some years until the WFC bought our licence and went alone," Bob said.

The events were sometimes referred to as "games nights".

In mid-1978 it was decided to allow girls to stay in the hostel. A year later, there were four male and four female residents in the house. It continued to remain non-denominational and accepted residents from government authority referrals and parents, or young people who went there directly for help.

"The Department of Human Services had three girls getting into a bit of strife and they asked us to take them in," Bob Myers said. "From then we weren't without girls. The boys didn't complain."

In 1979 Tony O'Hurley was chairman, James Nicol secretary, Joe Purcell treasurer, Margo Johnson publicity officer, Bob Myers general supervisor, Mattie and Clarrie Savage live-in supervisors and Mat Finnigan relieving supervisor.

A 1979 article in The Standard was prophetic as it reviewed the progress of the Brophy Memorial Hostel, or simply Brophy House as it was becoming known. "Tom Brophy was one of those rare men whose years were as short as his memory will be long." Thirty five years later this is proving to be true.

"FATHER BROSINAN SAID THE LATE FATHER BROPHY AND THE COMMITTEE HAD DONE GREAT WORK FOR THE WELFARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND DEALING WITH SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE COMMUNITY."

EVOLVING BROPHY

THE 1980S AND 1990S SAW A CHANGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT HAD MAJOR RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE BROPHY SERVICE.

The main focus in the 1980s remained the Brophy Memorial Hostel in Daltons Road, but change was in the wind.

While foster care and families opening their doors to young people in need had always been part of the set-up, the focal point during the 1980s remained the home in Daltons Road. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that other options and community-based care would play a more prominent role. The cost of running the home was not being ignored by the major funder, the Victorian government.

Annual reports from the 1980s have not been retained, leaving gaps in the history about how the service evolved during this period.

During this decade both boys and girls shared the facility but there wasn't much chance for sexual antics.

One female resident in the 1980s who wanted to remain anonymous said she was not aware of any cross-gender mingling.

"The boys and girls kept to themselves. I don't know of anyone sneaking into rooms...at least it didn't happen with me," she said.

"We were more like family, whether we liked it or not. It would be like sleeping with your brother."

Funding continued to be a challenge through the 1980s.

Director Bob Myers recalled: "We would get a certain amount per child which was always a bit of a problem. They wanted to work on a 'bums on bed' basis. You got paid for how many kids you had there, but of course apart from food you still had the same expenses whether you had five kids or 10 kids."

There was always a need for the service but there were times when numbers were low. "We were down to one at one stage," Bob said. "A couple of times the kids were pretty rough. They smashed the place up badly one night and it had to be repaired."

The community continued to support Brophy House. In the late 1980s the Rotary Club of Warrnambool introduced an annual dinner auction to raise funds

for the house, and other fund-raising activities helped to cover the shortfall in government funding.

Tony O'Hurley ended 13 years as chairman in 1991-92. Sister Rose Glennen took on the position and was later replaced by James Nicol. Heather Goddard became chairman in the 1990s.

Reflecting the changing welfare environment where new community-based programs were starting to play a more important role, Brophy introduced more varied programs to meet the needs of clients.

In conjunction with this expansion, the name of the organisation was changed to Brophy Family and Youth Services Inc in 1991.

In March 1992 there were six residents at the home and a new 'block funding' system was being introduced.

As early as 1973 Father Brophy tried to recruit caregivers to open their homes for young people. He had some success but most of the boys remained at the official boys' home. In 1981 Bob Myers tried to do this in a formal manner, applying to the government for funding to pay households to make beds available for young people. He failed at the time but the concept didn't go away and in 1991 the Community Adolescent Placement Service (CAPS) became a reality. Francis Broekman, later to become director, was the first manager of the CAPS program.

Brophy was the auspice agency for the program but by 1994 it came at a cost.

In the annual report from that year, then director Bob Myers said that the department had forced the closure of the residential service that had run for 22 years. Some of the money went to the CAPS program, which grew from one to two workers, and to setting up the Community Adolescent Support Team which aimed to keep families together.

However, Bob bemoaned the fact that \$80,000 of the money from the closure of the Brophy Memorial Hostel went out of the region.

The building continued to be used by management staff and was home to the Family Support Centre, but it no longer operated as a residential service.

Bob added that some young people did not fit into home-based care and still needed supervised care. A CAPS share house and two caravans went some way to meeting that need, but Bob said there was little hope of getting a residential unit. There were 23 placements under the CAPS program in 1994.

Francis Broekman remembers that the Kennett Government wanted to cut 10 per cent of its welfare budget and wouldn't be swayed about the hostel.

"Unfortunately the hostel was only caring for six kids at a cost of about \$400,000 at that time, and it was seen as a high level of care that wasn't required," Francis said.

“They established the adolescent foster care programs, in our case CAPS caring for kids aged 12 to 18 in foster care. They thought once the foster care program was developed the kids in the residential service would transfer into these foster care arrangements and therefore you wouldn’t need the hostel.

“However, we didn’t have the community responses. It was a really difficult time. I was trying to strengthen the adolescent foster care program knowing full well that it would lead to the demise of the hostel.”

There were attempts to combine the two services with the hostel to be used as an assessment and intake centre and venue to develop the skills of young people and assist them to move in with a family.

“We were thwarted by the government that was dead keen to get rid of the hostel,” Francis added.

Government funding bolstered the foster care program and added an early intervention program to work with families to try to keep young people at home. “They were good initiatives but there are some kids so highly traumatised and have such dysfunctional behaviour that they need professional supported care to survive,” Francis said.

In 1994, Brophy was expanding into new areas and received funding from the Office of Youth Affairs for a sexual assault outreach service. There was also a Parents Support Group, Family Support Centre and Euthenics Centre under the Brophy banner.

More major changes were on the horizon through discussions with the Warrnambool Youth Accommodation Committee about possible amalgamation. However, the Brophy organisation was reluctant to change its name “because of the proud record of Brophy in working for the youth of the district”. Chairman James Nicol said that while both services operated separately, they had strong links.

In 1995 Bob Myers resigned as director and was replaced in August by Francis Broekman who had been running the CAPS program since its inception. Remarkably in its long history, Brophy has had only two directors.

Acting chairperson at the time, Heather Goddard, said 1995 had been a year of consolidation after the change in direction from a residential service to an organisation that supported young people in a variety of ways.

New director Francis Broekman said in the 1995 annual report that the restructuring of the agency had been largely successful.

The CAPS service was upgraded to accommodate twice the number of young people. CAPS was now covering Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland and Camperdown areas and servicing up to 15 young people at any one time. There were 38 people in the region opening their doors to young people.

The Community Adolescent Support Team had also been formed to help young people either stay at home or to move into alternative living arrangements.

In 1995 the Brophy organisation had assets of \$308,637.

The agency continued to grow and in 1996 was employing 14 people and offering more diverse programs, including Links to help young people who left school early to return to the school system. There were also extended specialised placement and young homeless outreach programs.

It was also the end of an era with the Daltons Road premises vacated and the Brophy administration moved to the Warrnambool central business district where it established new headquarters in Liebig Street.

Francis Broekman said this allowed the agency to be viewed as generic and become more visible in its service delivery, rather than being perceived as just an accommodation service for troubled adolescents.

The organisation was also looking at developing a strong presence in Hamilton and Portland.

In 1997 the Warrnambool Youth Accommodation Centre merged with Brophy Family and Youth Services. Chairperson Heather Goddard said this integration resulted in a centralising of accommodation services and was a positive outcome for young people.

“We were working with the same sort of kids and it made sense for us to get together,” Francis Broekman says today. “They didn’t want to merge but they became insolvent and the department came to us and said they would transfer these programs to Brophy,” he added.

Brophy also won several competitive tenders as it continued the move away from residential services as its core activity. These included broader programs for families and parents, although supporting young people remained at the heart of all work. The agency also increased its collaboration with other local agencies, including joint ventures with the Western Region Alcohol and Drug Centre and co-locating youth housing and crime victim services.

“Once those cuts had happened in the early 1990s, there was a small flow of funding and we were lucky enough to get some of that,” Francis Broekman recalled. “Later in the 1990s there was some significant growth of services.”

In 1998 one of Father Brophy’s original concepts for Warrnambool – a community youth complex – was back on the drawing board. The Brophy committee started collaborating with other local service providers to investigate the proposal, which took a decade to become a reality.

Demand for services continued to grow, especially in the CAPS program where the number of referrals had doubled within five years.

At the turn of the century, Brophy Family and Youth Services employed 32 staff and provided programs between 200 and 250 homeless young people per year.

Services now covered accommodation, counselling, education, community youth and family services, including new programs in community reconnection,

early intervention and youth enterprise. Francis Broekman said that around this time the focus changed from one of welfare provision to growing the individual and family within the context of their community. In many ways, this traced its roots back to the work of Father Brophy.

New initiatives included School Focussed Youth Services, a Job Placement Employment Training program, and an outdoor adventure program.

The expansion of the agency was evidenced in the 1999-2000 financial report which showed income and expenditure had topped \$1 million for the first time and had increased to nearly \$1.5 million.

Brophy was now providing services to Portland, Hamilton and Camperdown districts, and had offices in Hamilton and Portland.

A new strategic plan called for Brophy to be a learning organisation, to strengthen its capacity to react, and to continue to provide services to young people and families.

In 2002 new chairperson Anna MacGarvey reported on the purchase of a block of land in Timor Street for relocating the Brophy head office and establishing a Warrnambool Community and Youth Complex. A community advisory group was formed to guide the development of the complex, led by convenor Bill Quinlan.

The planned complex was seen as a one-stop community and youth information and referral service that would allow for the delivery of community and youth programs, activities and enterprises, coordination of services and a youth access place.

The comprehensive range of programs now included reconciliation, mediation, short-term crisis accommodation, support for independent young people, a youth enterprise and leadership centre and an equity and access project.

In 2003 the proposed youth and community complex took a step forward with Warrnambool City Council committing \$90,000 to the project.

“It has the capacity to change the landscape in the way we engage young people and families in our community,” Francis Broekman said at the time.

Kulcha Shift was established and provided an outlet for young people to display their locally made wares.

Volunteer support from all parts of the community continued to be an important part of Brophy's success.

While the vast majority of funding comes from government, the organisation started with the backing of volunteer supporters and continues to call on helpers today, ranging from foster carers to Kulcha Shift event organisers.

While Father Brophy was a Catholic, the Brophy organisation never got any assets from the church and, apart from continuing his mission, has no ties to the Catholic Church.



Top to Bottom L-R: The Warrnambool Community and Youth Complex today. A Kulcha Shift Event at the CYC. Painting the Constabulary mural. The opening of the Community and Youth Complex.



The organisation continues to see itself as non-denominational.

Demand for services continued to grow. In 2005 Brophy accommodated 65 homeless young people with caregivers and a further 274 in transition accommodation. Of these, 106 were helped to resume schooling or find employment.

The agency also helped 127 adults to overcome crime-related trauma, 128 people living in vulnerable situations and 1600 students were assisted for issues such as family conflict, relationship difficulties, violence and drug and alcohol use.

A more preventative and early intervention approach was being adopted to address the region's ongoing homelessness.

In 2005 plans were drawn up for the proposed Community and Youth Complex at 210 Timor Street, Warrnambool. A community fund-raising appeal augmented funding from government, local councils, businesses and philanthropic trusts. At the time of writing the 2005 annual report, \$2.4 million had been raised which was close to 80 per cent of the budget for construction and fit out.

The new complex was opened for business on September 8, 2008.

Chairperson Anna MacGarvey said it was not just about a building but a new model of service delivery to young people, their families and the community in general, with a more integrated, holistic system across the spectrum of youth services.

Francis Broekman described the building as the most challenging and yet greatest achievement during his time with the organisation, particularly in the way it was able to harness the support of the community to build the complex.

"I think it was close to \$2.7 million out of the \$3.4 million from the community," he said.

"We bought the block in February 2002 and didn't move in to September 2008. That was six years and there were times I thought my life would never be the same."

The building gave youth a focal point for activities and Brophy a place to call home.

"We had no assets," Francis said. "We were renting a place and just had \$3-\$400,000 in the bank. We were strong in terms of income that we were getting for our programs but we were asset poor. We didn't come from a base like many similar youth organisations," he said.

The complex quickly established itself as not only a serviceable home base for the organisation but importantly as a place for young people to go and learn.

Francis Broekman explains: "It's getting great use. We'd love to have more funding to do more activity but what we do have has a great karma to it. We

found we can close the second and third stories and have Battle of the Bands downstairs with the Kulcha Shift volunteer events crew of young people doing the control, the tickets, the band, the rooms and they set it up on a Friday and clean it up on a Sunday. We come back on a Monday as if nothing happened.

“One of the reasons for the youth complex was not just a place for young people to come to, but it needed to be purposeful. It’s okay to support young people, but we need to look at their goals and instil opportunity and skills for them to have a vision. We find that as soon as you give young people hope and you’re able to support them, they will come up trumps every time.”

In 2007-08 the organisation employed 59 staff and had an annual operating turnover of \$3.4 million.

It continued to grow with funding to become one of 30 Headspace sites in Australia and new funding for the Same Sex Attracted Friendly Environment Project.

In 2011-12 Brophy’s growth continued when the agency was asked by the Department of Human Services to manage the south-west foster care program. Later Brophy was successful in its tender to become one of the foster care providers in south-west Victoria.

A total of 80 foster children and 60 foster carers were transitioned to Brophy over the space of a week.

A similar situation had occurred years earlier when the Warrnambool Youth Accommodation Centre was merged into Brophy.

The new programs contributed to record levels of services to the community during 2011-12. These include more than 3000 youth attending Kulcha Shift events and activities, 473 new clients accessing headspace services, 95 children being assisted in the Foster Care program, 7400 nights of housing provided to young homeless people, 22 women and children supported by the Family Violence program and 26 young people previously in state care were transitioned to independent living.

Francis said the influx of new services and staff led to the decision to seek new premises and during 2011 Brophy established a child and family services hub in the former Palais building in Koroit Street Warrnambool.

Brophy also purchased new premises in Hamilton and supported the resumption of a foster care opportunity shop in Warrnambool involving more than 40 dedicated volunteers.

The organisation had an operating budget of \$6.36 million for the 2011-12 year.

In 2013 Foyer Warrnambool was opened for business, providing accommodation for up to 16 young adults aged 16-25 who can live in either one or two bedroom self-contained units for up to two years.

The \$4.95 million centre is far removed from the facilities of Father Brophy's first home but its heart is in the same place. It is an early intervention program that aims to break the cycle of poverty and unemployment by providing affordable and secure housing for young adults while they complete their education or start employment.

It was officially opened in March 2013 by Member for South West Coast Dr Denis Napthine in his first official opening since his elevation to Victorian Premier.

The Youth Foyer was developed from an overseas evidence-based model. "A number of young people helped us to develop the design principles for the Youth Foyer," Francis Broekman adds.

"It has a real safety element with 24-7 surveillance and CCTV used for safety rather than as a punishment."

Already there are good stories emerging from the centre.

"We have three young women with children. In the old days the children would have been moved and adopted; in the 90s they would have been removed and put into foster care. Now we're bringing in support services and it makes a real difference," Francis said.

"For many of these young women, their planning of having a child is around wanting to change their lives. This is an opportunity for them to love somebody and begin afresh. The 24-7 support means they have every opportunity to succeed. In the 1990s they'd go to transition houses and be quite exposed."

Brophy continues to provide a wide gamut of programs, including Foster Care, Child First, Family Services, Social Housing Advocacy Support Program, and Foyer Warrnambool; School Focused Youth Service and Headspace service delivery.

And it continues to follow the mission started by its namesake.



Top to Bottom L-R: The Youth Foyer in Raglan Parade. The opening of the Youth Foyer. The Youth Foyer Signage. The Youth Foyer building.



BROPHY TODAY

THE BROPHY FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES OF 2014 IS A FAR CRY FROM THE 'RABBIT WARREN' HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION THAT WAS HOME TO TROUBLED BOYS IN THE EARLY 1970S.

Brophy in 2014 employs about 100 people, has an annual budget of about \$7 million and provides services to thousands of young people and families.

A snapshot of the organisation in 2014 shows just how far it has come. During the year Brophy Family and Youth Services provided 7900 nights of accommodation for homeless people, more than 2200 young people attended events, and community awareness campaigns reached more than 8,000 people.

The diversity of programs is far removed from the days of a single boys' home. These programs now come under the headings of family and support services, education and enterprise, health and support, and housing and support services.

Despite the changes and growth, so much of Father Tom Brophy's inspirational work continues in the core of the organisation.

Not only does the Brophy name live on in the organisation's title, so too does his commitment and dedication to young people and families.

The Freedom Zone enterprise of the 1970s has its successor in the Timor Street community youth complex. The Warrnambool Home for Boys has its successor in the Foyer in Raglan Parade

As has always been the case, Brophy continues to deal with a plethora of changes in the welfare sector at the broader government level and locally.

The name Brophy still conjures up an image of a local community helping its people – particularly young people – when they're in need.

The organisation hasn't strayed far from its roots, despite its massive expansion.

It is worth noting that the organisation's headquarters is just around the corner from the original boy's home.

Director Francis Broekman says there "is a bit of *déjà vu*" about recent developments such as the Timor Street complex and Youth Foyer.

While Brophy Family and Youth Services didn't intentionally set out to replicate those original activities, the irony of the similarities is not lost on the current administration.

“It’s like going back to the future,” Francis said. “Father Tom set up Freedom Zone and a hostel and we now have similar activities, just modern versions of them.”

Francis says social relationships and being engaged in the community are still important, even though complexities have changed.

“Things are more complex now. Some of the young people we are seeing now are even more traumatised than we have seen before. The more traumatised they are, the more difficult it is for them to learn. They are in survival mode,” he said.

“We’re dealing with complex trauma. There has been long-term abuse for many of these kids. Their relationships with their primary care givers have been traumatised. While they still need support of care givers, they also fear them. They want to attach but are fearful.”

Drugs and alcohol have become more prominent. “It’s a way of masking the trauma but it also means people don’t deal with the trauma, they just sedate it,” Francis said. “It then starts to affect their health and gets them into difficult situations.”

Brophy Family and Youth Services is moving to a therapeutic care approach to work with families, children and young people.

“It’s about understanding, educating and training the workforce to know the impact of trauma and then work with those clients in a way that helps them to address those problems and recover,” Francis said.

The system embraces a series of principles around trying to provide people with hope and skilling them while dealing with those traumas.

“That is a really big change,” Francis said. “It’s only happened over the past few years based on the research into the impact of trauma on the brain. We’re changing the way we work and I think we can be more effective and evidence-based.

It’s a continually evolving way in which we work with our clients. That’s the challenge we face.”

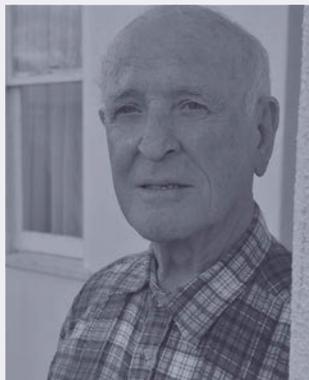
But some things don’t change.

“We’ve done very well to stay within our mission, which is around being  to provide community service with a focus on social justice and disadvantage,” Francis Broekman says. “That’s what Father Brophy was about – trying to keep the kids in the community and standing up for many families to assist them in their difficult times.”

PART TWO

THE SUPPORTERS





BOB MYERS

A TALK AT A PARENT-TEACHER NIGHT AT WARRNAMBOOL'S CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COLLEGE CBC WAS ENOUGH TO GET BOB MYERS ON BOARD WITH FATHER TOM BROPHY.

"Broph was talking about the Freedom Zone and how he wanted people to give him a hand," Bob said.

"I was very busy with a television sales and service shop - as busy as a dog with fleas - but for some reason I went along.

"I was a little bit taken aback by it. I had three kids of my own, who were not yet teenagers, but I kept going back, just doing the supervising."

It was a life-changing decision. Not only did Bob forge a close friendship with the priest he simply called 'Broph', the encounter helped to solidify his love for helping young people in need.

After Father Brophy died, Bob Myers and his wife Rhonda kept the St Paul's Youth Centre going. Although the Freedom Zone activities had faded by that time, the youth centre continued for a number of years.

There was an occasional disco but mostly the centre focussed on sport.

"We ran a mixed netball competition with the footballers and the netball girls for four or five years," Bob recalled. "The burly footballers used to try to calm themselves down to play with the girls. It worked out pretty well and they had a lot of fun."

Bob was also on the committee of management for the Warrnambool Boy's Home and was instrumental in the push to keep it going after Father Brophy's death. Rhonda was an active member of the fundraising committee.

He was involved at that stage as a part-time supervisor and later became chairman of the committee.

Not long after Father Brophy died Bob and Rhonda closed their TV shop in Timor Street. "I became the chairman of the committee and we set about planning to build and open the new place in Daltons Road. It opened in 1976."

In 1979 the operation was restructured and Bob moved from the committee to become the Brophy director, working from the Daltons Road property.

“That was August 16, 1979. I was still fixing televisions and studying for a degree in social science. There was not much money in running a boy’s home. So I kept the repair business going for a few years after,” he said.

“We had contact with different ones right through...still do. I can’t say anything about who was there but only the names and faces changed, the fun and heartaches were the same. However, it was a great kick to see many of them be quite successful here and in other parts of the country,” Bob said.

Bob Myers continued as Brophy director until he left 1996. “Director was a grand name but we only had the two little programs,” he joked.

“I could see the writing on the wall. It had changed entirely to what I was used to.”

“I WOULD HAVE DONE THE ORIGINAL JOB I WAS DOING TILL THEY BURIED ME IN THE PLACE. IT WASN’T A JOB; IT WAS A WAY OF LIFE AND JUST WHAT I WANTED TO DO.”

By this time Bob had written and published books on parenting and relationships and after leaving Brophy moved into private counselling and mediation. He also helped to form Pace e Bene Australia which promotes the enjoyment of living through the practice of non-violence. He is still a facilitator of those programs.

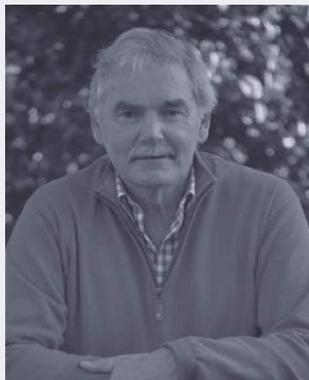
He has been impressed by the expansion of the Brophy organisation and sees the opening of the Foyer as a good initiative.

“It has come full circle. We had looked at that same block at one stage.”

He supports the concept of the Foyer. “It was a big mistake on the Kennett Government’s behalf to close down the hostel in the first place. It was costing a lot of money but it was something that couldn’t be replaced. There were always kids that needed it. They did the same with mental health. They just closed Brierly and shoved people out without making any provision for what they were going to do with them.”

While his friend ‘Broph’ was an inspiration, Bob has his own motives for wanting to help people.

“Things that happened through the years made me realise that I wasn’t just doing it because of Broph. I don’t know what it was but it was there in me anyway.”



IVAN BOYER

IVAN BOYER WAS A STUDENT TEACHER AT CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COLLEGE WHEN HE WAS RECRUITED BY FATHER BROPHY AS THE FIRST LIVE-IN SUPERVISOR OF THE WARRNAMBOOL HOME FOR BOYS.

Now retired and living in Narrawong, Ivan made a successful career in teaching and was based for many years at Portland Secondary College.

He describes his time helping at the boy's home as "exciting days".

"He (Father Brophy) just spoke to me one day and asked if I was interested in giving a hand with some of the kids he was looking after.

"A couple of days later he said he had a building we could put the kids in – could you be there tonight?

"I said OK and quite late in the evening all these kids started climbing in through the windows. He had brought two car loads – and I guess those cars were absolutely packed – from Ballarat. That's where it all started."

The live-in supervisor had a full-time teaching load, studying to complete his qualifications and helping in the boys' home. "I think my teaching was OK but I was on an incredibly steep learning curve. I regard it as one of the great experiences of my life. I think at the end of the day it made me a better teacher and much more aware of the needs of young people."

At the end of 1972 he decided this was "ridiculous and I was going to go crazy". Reluctantly Ivan left the home and went to Canberra to finish his degree.

"IN MY LIFE I'VE WORKED WITH SOME PRETTY DEDICATED PEOPLE BUT I HAVEN'T COME ACROSS ONE WHO WOULD GO ANYWHERE NEAR MATCHING TOM BROPHY."

BOB STENSHOLT

IN 1999 BOB STENSHOLT FOLLOWED IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUSTED VICTORIAN PREMIER JEFF KENNETT WHEN HE WAS ELECTED AS THE ALP MEMBER FOR BURWOOD.

In the early 1970s Bob followed in the footsteps of Father Tom Brophy and became one of the first live-in carers at the Warrnambool Home for Boys.

At the time Bob was a teacher at St Ann's College and CBC in Warrnambool. He had studied to be a Catholic priest but didn't complete his training and instead took up a career as a teacher and later became director of Australia's overseas aid program AusAID for 20 years before moving into politics.

Father Brophy needed two teachers to live in the home to supervise the boys and asked Bob and fellow teacher Ivan Boyer to help out. Although he didn't think he was as well suited to the role as Ivan, Bob took on the challenge for nearly a year.

"They were interesting kids and had a range of backgrounds," he recalls. "Some of them were a bit amoral but they weren't bad, they just did what they liked. Some were hard cases; some were mixed up; some were real good kids."

"The idea was to keep them fed and keep them out of trouble."

Bob and Ivan did their best to keep the boys out of trouble. One time they even made some boys break into a shop again to return stolen cigarettes.

"We were one step ahead of the cops a few times, but a few of them got in trouble," Bob said.

Bob and Ivan lived there for most of the first year before moving out to finish their studies.

"There were a few parties and they'd pull a few tricks on us and disappear from time to time," he said. "We'd have a few girls hang around but in general it was a pretty good atmosphere."

Bob looks back on the "great fun" and says it was something he was able to draw on later in life in AusAid and then as a Member of Parliament "which in many ways is pretty altruistic, despite what people think".

Bob held the seat of Burwood for 11 years. "I was very much a local member, involved in local issues," he said. Despite his input at the home, Bob knows his limitations.

"They were Brophy's Boys, no doubt about it. They weren't mine or Ivan's; they were Brophy's."



ANNE CLAPHAM

ANNE AND JIM CLAPHAM PROVIDED MEALS, JOBS, BEDS AND SUPERVISION FOR 'BROPHY'S BOYS' AND ENJOYED EVERY MINUTE OF IT

Anne doesn't recall how they became involved with Father Brophy but assumes it was through her children who were teenagers at the time and attending the Freedom Zone.

It didn't take long before they were recruited to help out.

"We were mainly supervisors at Freedom Zone," Anne recalled. "They were a good crowd really. They just entertained themselves. They had music and games and good friendships were formed there."

Her late husband Jim was more closely involved than Anne but she became a regular on the meals roster at the Warrnambool Home for Boys.

"I'd do meals for them at the house and later at Ardlie Street. It was mainly at the weekend. I'd usually do them a roast which was easiest. I'd either cook it at home and take it down, or do it there, particularly when they went to Ardlie Street.

"They were always happy to have a decent meal."

Anne recalls that a loose roster of sorts was followed.

"We never clashed. Some of the others did the meals during the week, we were on the weekends. We'd cook and serve them out, the boys would wash up."

Their connections with the Brophy boys continued in many ways.

Hughie Crawford (a resident of the home) was a deb partner for Anne and Jim's daughter Mary. "The night they made their debut down at the town hall, I have no idea where Broph had been for the evening but at 12 o'clock he marched in and marched Rhonda and Bob (Myers) and Jim and I out so we could go home and have supper. He took us out because he wanted his supper."

They also opened their home and business to the boys.

"We had four or five of the boys live with us over the years," Anne said. "They wanted a break away. When you got a house full of half a dozen or more boys, probably one got on the nerves of the others. We had six of our own so could only take one at a time."

The Claphams had a wholesale confectionary business at the time and employed a few of the boys. "They were fine," Anne said. "Geoff Godfrey, Bob Markwell and some others worked with us over a period of time."

The connection ran deep and Anne and Jim were devastated by Father Brophy's unexpected death.

Even today Anne has a framed photograph of the priest in her Warrnambool home.

"HE WAS JUST WONDERFUL. HE WAS A GOOD LISTENER. HE DIDN'T REALLY DICTATE BUT YOU GOT THE MESSAGE. THE BOYS RESPECTED HIM," SHE SAID.

She also noticed his persistence. "He was definitely driven but he wasn't boisterous. He was just a terrific chap."

The Clapham children also appreciated his influence and are grateful for his guidance.

"The kids knew him mainly through the Freedom Zone and they still talk about him. They think it's a pity he's not around today," Anne said.



FRANCIS BROEKMAN

THE FRAMED PHOTO OF FATHER TOM BROPHY THAT SITS IN FRANCIS BROEKMAN'S OFFICE REPRESENTS MORE THAN JUST AN IMAGE.

The whole ethos of Father's Brophy's life and his dedication to helping young people in need continues to run through the organisation and to motivate Francis.

The Director of Brophy Family and Youth Services for the past 20 years never knew Father Brophy but, like so many others, continues to be inspired by him.

"He has always been someone seen by this community as inspiring others," Francis said. "Wherever I go, most people of the older generation don't know what Brophy Family and Youth Services does, but when I mention Brophy House they recall Father Brophy and say he was a good bloke and did a lot of good work for troubled youth.

"THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN A SENSE OF PRIDE THAT HE WAS SOMEONE THE COMMUNITY LOOKS UP TO. IT'S OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OUR ORGANISATION TO HOLD THOSE LINKS."

Francis said Father Brophy showed there was always hope and that support can influence young people.

"I was recently in touch with a 14-year-old in 1992 who was cared for by one of our foster families. Now he has a family. He says that foster family and Brophy's involvement was the thing that changed him."

Like the organisation's namesake, Francis has dedicated most of his adult life to helping young people, families and people facing disadvantage.

The eldest of six children born to first generation Dutch immigrants who met and married in Geelong, Francis attended Catholic schools and did first year civil engineering at university before changing direction.

"Engineering was good and I did well but I was asked to work with a youth group as part of the Catholic Church and did two years of that and thought why would I want to do civil engineering? Social work is my thing. I just loved it."

He then completed a four year social education degree and worked in child protection and foster care in Melbourne.

During an overseas trip with wife Jacinta he applied for the CAPS coordinator job from London.

He started with the Brophy service on November 11, 1991 and in August 1995 became director, the role he still holds today.

"I never sought the director's job but after the position was opened I put a proposal to the board to do half-time director and half-time CAPS coordinator. My belief was we couldn't sustain a full-time director.

"We only had a couple of programs. My half-time director's job was to build the organisation to the point that we could have a full-time director.

Build it he did and today Francis oversees a \$7 million annual budget and 100 staff.

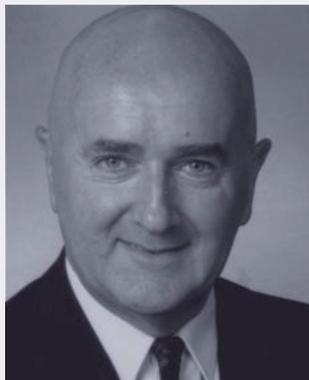
"I still enjoy it because the job is continually changing and has so many different aspects to it. I'm continually reinventing myself and I find that very exciting and enjoyable," he said.

"I really like being part of the organisation and enjoy the staff and the way people are so committed to their clients. I can only be very proud of what the staff do. My job is to support them and create the systems to make their jobs the easiest and most effective."

Francis still holds dear the mission started by Father Brophy, but he worries that broader society and government are less concerned in these tight economic times.

"There is a real sense that society once was assessed on how well it treated its most disadvantaged. We're in a time in Australia where governments are saying we no longer have the money to put into social services as we once did.

Unfortunately, classism is becoming more of an issue and welfare is the poor cousin."



JAMES NICOL

JAMES NICOL WAS FRESH OUT OF UNIVERSITY AND STARTING HIS LEGAL CAREER WITH D. MADDEN AND CO IN WARRNAMBOOL WHEN HE FOLLOWED THE “IRRESISTIBLE URGINGS” OF DAN MADDEN TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE WARRNAMBOOL HOME FOR BOYS.

James became the first committee secretary for the home in 1972, and held the role for the next 24 years before taking on a term as president alongside other civic duties including an extended period as a Warrnambool City Councillor.

He was mainly involved in governance and fund-raising matters relating to the organisation and didn't spend a lot of time with the boys or with Father Brophy.

But it was clear that the young priest had the power to inspire people and the power to motivate others to actively assist him.

“I found him to be rather reserved...not a gregarious back-slapping sort of person. But he inspired confidence, trust and had an uncanny knack of bringing people along with him,” James said.

“I GUESS THE BOYS IN HIS CARE GOT THAT SORT OF VIBE FROM HIM...THE FACT THAT BROPH WAS TAKING A GENUINE INTEREST IN THE LADS GAVE THEM SELF-ESTEEM AND GREATER CONFIDENCE TO GET ON WITH THEIR LIVES.”

After Father Brophy's death, the committee needed to develop a sustainable structure and generate sufficient funds to keep going.

“From memory it was necessary to get registered with the Hospitals and Charities Commission before we could get any form of public funding or soliciting for public financial support. That was actually quite hard legal work,” James said.

The then Member for Warrnambool and Minister for Social Welfare, Ian Smith, helped the committee to get recurring funding but this covered only about 90 per cent of the wages. The committee had to raise the rest and held cabaret balls, bingo nights and cycle events among others as fund-raisers.

In 1979 Warrnambool Football Club combined with Brophy Memorial Hostel to conduct weekly bingo sessions and share the profits.

James was recruited as “treasurer” counting the takings and determining the prizes for each game of bingo. “Obviously there needed to be a correlation between the takings and the prizes or else we wouldn’t have made a profit, but if the punters thought the prizes were too light, the person officiating, more often than not me, would get booed,” he said.

James said the home benefitted from strong community support. One of the ‘star’ fund-raisers was Kathleen ‘Kal’ McKenna who “deserved a medal for her work,” he said. “Alan Carman and Tony O’Hurley gave great service at the governance level, both serving as president for many years.

“Further loyal supporters included Margot Johnson, Jack and Marj Guyett, Guy Hobson, Jack Daffy, John Grace, Pat O’Shea and Bob and Rhonda Myers.”



TOM AND MARGARET HUDSON

WHEN FATHER BROPHY FELL AND BROKE HIS LEG, TOM AND MARGARET HUDSON BECAME HIS CARERS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS.

Margaret was a nurse and went to Father Brophy's aid when he fell off cushions at the Freedom Zone and broke his leg.

For the next three months he was laid up at the Hudson's Warrnambool home, though that didn't mean he wasn't working.

"He needed a place to stay and this suited him," Tom said. "He had the front room and the lounge room till seven o'clock at night and then we took over for our family."

Father Brophy continued to counsel boys during this time. "If he needed to raise his voice with someone he'd get Hugh Crawford to play the piano a bit louder so they could talk privately," he added.

He was a good patient, never demanding too much attention and worrying more about his boys than himself. "We made sure he went to the doctor for his check-ups, but he kept working through it. He was very dedicated," Margaret said.

The three-month convalescence wasn't the only time Father Brophy was at their home. Like many other Warrnambool families, he would turn up from time to time at the oddest hours for a chat and a glass of 'Irish' coffee.

"It would often be midnight or one o'clock when he'd arrive," Margaret said. "We'd leave the front door open for him. You never knew when he'd turn up."

The Hudsons also opened their door to boys who would stay for two-week blocks.

"It gave them a chance to experience some home life," Margaret said. The Hudsons also helped with meals for the boys' home.

They became involved with Father Brophy within days of his arrival in Warrnambool. Already he had plans to start the Freedom Zone and he needed adults to supervise the activities.

"It was probably about three or four days after he arrived," Tom said. "He just said what are you doing Saturday night, can you come and give us a hand?"

Tom took a central role in running the youth centre, and generally managed to keep things in hand. "There were some who'd come from out of town looking for a stoush," he said. "We jumped on them straight away."

He also got to see the best of Father Brophy, not only in controlling the boys but in his generosity and loyalty.

"There was a guy needing some money so he went up one side and down the other collecting for him," Tom said.

"One time one of the boys did something to me, I don't recall what it was, and Broph pulled him aside."

On another occasion when a visitor at the Hudson house threatened Tom, the other boys took his back. "There was a bit of a confrontation and half a dozen of the boys stood up for me," he said.

Like others, Tom and Margaret were amazed at the determination and resilience of Father Brophy.

"HE LOVED HIS KIDS AND HE'D DO ANYTHING FOR THEM; IF THEY NEEDED DISCIPLINE HE'D GIVE IT TO THEM; IF THEY NEEDED LOVE HE'S GIVE IT TO THEM."

"They didn't get away with much when he was around."

The Hudsons kept touch with Father Brophy's family and some of the boys after his premature death on the day of the May racing carnival in 1974.

“I REALISED
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FATHER TOM BROPHY

PART THREE

BROPHY'S BOYS





BASIL FOGARTY

AS A 14-YEAR-OLD, FUTURE WARRNAMBOOL LAWYER BASIL FOGARTY WAS "OCCASIONALLY" GOING TO SCHOOL IN YEAR 9 AT CBC WHEN HE FIRST BECAME AWARE OF FATHER BROPHY.

"I was absent mid-year in 1972 for about a week. When I returned to school, "Brophy boys", as they were known, had enrolled at CBC," Basil recalls. Their names included Chris O'Lynn, Alan Lynch, Garry Hamilton, Peter McCormack, Hughie Crawford, Peter Lucas, 'Mouse' Mosely and his brother 'Moses'.

"Through the class, we were then introduced to Father Brophy."

The introduction was fortuitous.

By late 1972 Basil's family was experiencing domestic problems that were coming to a head. "My parents separated, and 'Broph' asked me would I be willing to go to his house. I agreed. That was in December 1972. I remained there until January 1974."

Throughout 1973 Basil continued attending school at CBC. He was a reasonably intelligent lad but his progress didn't reflect that. "We were into having a good time," he admitted.

However, at a one-on-one meeting, the type he had with many of the boys, Father Brophy encouraged Basil to knuckle down.

"He said it was possible for me to go on and complete year 12 and then go to university," Basil recalled.

"Most times I followed his advice. He dealt with me as well as others in a direct way. There was no beating around the bush. If there was a problem, he told you. If there was an answer, he provided it."

Basil said 'Broph' made sure everyone was welcomed.

"When I first entered the house, I wasn't nervous. 'Broph' made sure that every person welcomed each other and that everyone was equal. He had a keen interest in every boy."

Father Brophy often took boys with him when he visited his mother in Heidelberg. "At Easter 1973 he took me and two other boys. I recall going to the football at

the MCG, and otherwise spending a long weekend with his family doing normal activities.”

One of Father Brophy's aims was to expose the boys to a normal family situation.

At most times the Boys' Home was friendly. “He was totally against anyone who was a bully,” Basil recalled. “If someone was a bully, he would invite them to take him on. He had an aura whereby basically what he said was gospel.”

Basil was one of the longest residents taken under the wing of Father Brophy.

“I guess I could sit down and name at least 30 people who were there during my period. I suspect the number was probably about 50 overall. The place was for boys only when I was there, although in the early days there were plenty of girls around.”

By March 1974, Basil was boarding at the home of Bob and Rhonda Myers in an arrangement set up by ‘Broph’.

Basil did ‘knuckle down’, did complete year 12 and did go on to university, just as Father Brophy had urged. He earned his Law Degree and continues to practice in Warrnambool.

“HIS IMPACT UPON ME WAS PROFOUND.”

“His personality was complex. He was dynamic. At many times he was methodical, and at other times passionate,” Basil recalls.

“He was full of encouragement for everyone, not only me. He tried to reason with his boys and encouraged them to better themselves.”

HUGH CRAWFORD

FATHER TOM BROPHY CAME TO THE RESCUE OF MANY TROUBLED LADS, AND THEY WOULD DO THE SAME FOR HIM IN AN INSTANT.

One of the lads he supported in Ballarat and Warrnambool was Hugh Crawford.

"Broph had respect from all of us. Every tough street hood respected him." Hugh said.

There's no doubt their respect for 'Broph' cut that deep.

Hugh was an altar boy at Nazareth House, age about 13, when he first met Father Brophy, who later saved him from living on the streets in wintery Ballarat.

Hugh was raised in a strong Catholic middle class family but he didn't like living at home and didn't like the Christian Brothers at St Pats.

He left home in the middle of winter when he was about 15. "I'd sleep on park benches with newspapers over me. Someone said go to Broph so I just stayed there."

"He took in kids who didn't deserve to go to jail but had troubled lives, troubles families or they'd done minor crimes or they were street kids," Hugh said.

"He gave them a place to stay, a second chance to make something out of their lives."

Hugh admits he was easily led astray and got into some trouble with police "but each time Broph came to the rescue".

In Ballarat Father Brophy had a youth centre similar to what he later established as the Freedom Zone in Warrnambool. "He had a place near the railway station as a drop-in centre for youth," Hugh said. "He'd take a boy down there and he'd have to wrestle him. He was testing you to see if you'd give up. You'd think what's going on here but he was just testing your determination and your resolve. He was a strong man in spirit, in mind and in body."

At one stage Father Brophy was sent to Robinvale for a few months and another priest took over the house in Ballarat. "He was too weak and the boys went on a bit of a rampage. He didn't command the respect that Broph did," Hugh said.

When Father Brophy was moved he again came to the rescue of his Ballarat boys, taking several to Warrnambool.

"Broph got us out of Ballarat and out of trouble. That was good for me – I didn't want to be at home. Every new place is a new adventure. Not all the boys went. Probably half a dozen of us did," he said. "That's the kind of bloke he was."

Hugh resumed his education and completed year 11 and 12 in Warrnambool. "He thought it would be better for my studies and put me in with Bob and Rhonda Myers. I have a lot of affection for both of them."

Hugh's return to education paid off. He worked at several locations with Fletcher Jones and trained as a systems analyst.

Hugh worked in Vanuatu for 12 months, volunteering helping poor people in need. "I thought Broph would be proud of me doing this; I'm doing for others what he did for me."

The father of two also had a successful musical career, spending about six years full-time touring the country and recording in the duo Luhrs and Crawford. "I liked to write music. We did quite well; got signed to BMG and got to play some big festivals."

"I've had a colourful life. I can't change it, the good and bad.

One thing he wouldn't change is his time with 'Broph'.

"He had a great ability to draw people to him and get people to do things for him on the strength of his personality and his commitment to the boys.

"He gave me opportunities. I get my social conscience from Broph. I feel the pain in the world because of Broph; I feel the joy in the world because of Broph, because of the very decency and fair-mindedness of the man.

"HE WAS JUST THE MOST PERFECT HUMAN BEING."

Hugh is turning 59 this year and has a disability and can't work but he still keeps in touch with music through a radio show.

"I'm like Broph. I look for troubled youth and try to help them. I know one young fella who has an anger problem. I said I want you on radio. That came from Broph. I automatically reach out to youth, I don't judge youth in trouble, I try and help them."

Hugh said Father Brophy should be held up as a shining light to all Catholic priests. "This is how you handle young boys; you don't molest them, you don't look down on them; you get in there and say you have something and you're a decent person, you can make a life and do good. He was an amazing man."

A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

IN 1979 GIRLS WERE FOR THE FIRST TIME ALLOWED TO STAY AT BROPHY HOUSE.

For many of those girls it was a helpful experience that got their lives back on track, but it came at a cost.

Eve (not her real name) was one of the girls who stayed at the Daltons Road house during the 1980s. She says it was a positive, life-changing experience but living at Brophy House came with a stigma attached.

Even today she wants to remain anonymous and not publicly discuss her time at the house.

"You had to put up with a lot at school if you were staying at Brophy," she said. "The parents of my best friend stopped her being friends with me because I was at Brophy. That was not a nice feeling."

"There was a perception that everyone there was a criminal or that it was just a party house and everyone was running wild. That was far from the truth. I was there for family reasons, everyone had their own story."

Eve was 13 and having family problems when she was taken by her mother to the home.

"I didn't really know what was going on," she said. "I didn't understand that it was a home and I would be there for the next two years."

Eve continued to go to school over those two years but left both the school and the house when she was 15. At 16 she became pregnant and returned to live with her mother.

By then the lessons learned at Brophy were starting to change her life for the better and they later influenced her own parenting.

"It taught me accountability and to take ownership of my life," she said.

"WE HAD TO DO VARIOUS CHORES AND ONE NIGHT A WEEK WE WOULD COOK FOR EVERYONE. IF YOU DID A HALF-ASSED JOB YOU'D HAVE FOOD THROWN BACK AT YOU."

"It taught me to get up and do things and take care of myself and others. I tried to teach my son very similar ideals. Brophy taught me values that I still use today."

Residents at the house were placed on various levels of privileges that encouraged them to keep good hygiene, not swear, do their assigned jobs and generally show common courtesy.

They would lose privileges if they scored poorly on the rating system.

"I used to nick off at nights and get caught and lose privileges," Eve said. "After a while I realised I could keep being the cool and defiant one but it wasn't much fun being sent to bed at 7.30. I realised I had to toe the line."

Eve admits there were tough times at the house and she was once assaulted and injured, but there was also a sense of camaraderie and family. "We would look out for one another but you didn't hesitate to beat the crap out of each other either."

She said the supervisors were patient and kind. "When you look back you think of the shit they had to put up with. If we saw a weakness we'd exploit it," Eve said.

"But they were really good and I have a lot of time for them."

ROBIN ROISSETTER

SOME RESIDENTS OF THE WARRNAMBOOL HOME FOR BOYS USED TO GET IN TROUBLE FOR TRYING TO SNEAK OUT OF THE HOME.

Robin Roissetter took a different route and used to sneak into the home to stay with his mates.

"I slept there on and off for about three years," Robin said. "I'd left home early and lived in Allansford with my sister and got involved with the boys in the home. I used to sneak in and sleep the night and got to know all of them.

"I LOVED IT, LOVED THE BOYS AND HAD A MAGIC TIME WITH THEM."

Father Brophy didn't mind young Robin going to the home. "He was happy for me to go there. I'd help to keep the boys out of trouble. We were all loose cannons and up to mischief as kids do, but I was a bit more responsible and a bit older than most of them.

"I used to get a lot of them out of trouble. We'd run like hell to get back by 10 o'clock and I'd be saying 'c'mon, hurry up'."

Robin was working as an abalone diver in Port Fairy at the time and later worked as a shearer.

Although not an official resident, he had plenty of time to appreciate Father Brophy.

"He was a terrific guy, a straight-forward, no-nonsense sort of a bloke. He didn't take any rubbish from anybody. He knew if you were lying," he said.

"He selected his words very well. He was never abrupt or violent. He'd give you a clip behind the ear but it wasn't going to cause any damage.

"He was a beautiful man. You learnt your lesson and you'd try not to do it again. He taught you well."

Robin was shocked by Father Brophy's sudden death. "It blew me away. I'd been away shearing and came home and I didn't even know. I didn't go back shearing; I stayed back for the funeral. It was huge; there must have been 2000 people there.

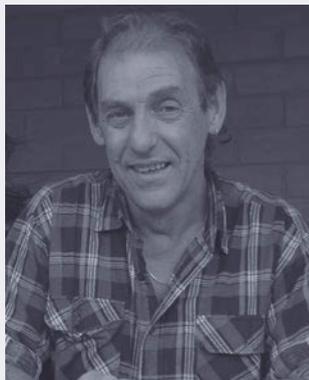
"I can't remember all the names of the boys who carried the coffin. My late brother-in-law Geoff Godfrey was one of them."

"Geoff and I used to talk about it all the time and say how we missed old Father Brophy."

The pair used to be involved in reunions. "We used get together as many as we could find. We're all up in our 50s and 60s now and seven or eight of the guys I knew have died," Robin said.

"I miss a lot of them guys. I just loved the time we had together. It was a great time. It was one of the highlights of my life."

The former shearer and construction worker in Warrnambool moved to Hervey Bay two years ago and runs a boat hire business with his wife Dianne.



TREVOR WARNECKE

FORTY YEARS DOWN THE TRACK, TREVOR WARNECKE STILL THANKS HIS MOTHER FOR MAKING A TOUGH DECISION THAT CHANGED HIS LIFE FOR THE BETTER.

In the early 1970s Trevor had left school at age 14 and was running wild.

His mother Barbara "Joyce" Warnecke sent him to live at the Warrnambool Home for Boys founded by Father Tom Brophy to get him back on track.

It worked.

"We weren't getting into too much trouble; we were just partying all the time and drinking too much," said Trevor, now 57 and still living in Warrnambool.

"Mum did me a favour. I'm still thankful for it."

Trevor spent about two years at the home in Ardlie Street. Supervisor Mick Brookes helped him to get a job at Fletcher Jones and brought some much-needed discipline into his life.

"Without Brophy I would have been dead like a lot of my mates, an alcoholic or have done something stupid," he admits.

"It helped me to get off the grog and meet new people and get into a different lifestyle."

Today Trevor is a father of three, works as a truck driver and organises an annual toy run around Warrnambool to give toys to needy children.

His wife Bonnie echoes his sentiments about the positive influence the Brophy home had on his life.

"It turned him into a responsible adult," she said. "If he wants to get into America he can because he doesn't have a felony record. Who would know where he might have been without it."

Trevor said the home was strict but fair.

"There were rules and if we got out of line you'd get a bit of a caning. I didn't like it much at the time but after a while you realise it taught you a lesson."

"Mick kept everyone in line...he didn't take shit from anyone. The atmosphere wasn't too bad; everyone was pretty well behaved."

The residents were given nightly tasks (Trevor was responsible for the bins) and kept busy.

With a curfew on attending parties, Friday and Saturday nights at Freedom Zone became the big drawcard for the week.

"I'd go down there and help. We had roller skating in one room, a dance in another room," Trevor said. "They wouldn't let us go anywhere else so it was better than nothing. It was good fun."

Securing a job at Fletcher Jones helped to turn around Trevor's attitude to life. "Things changed when I got a job," he said.

"I made \$30 a week and had to give that to Mick and he would give me what I needed for smokes or going out."

"I can still use a sewing machine."

He simply describes Father Brophy as "a good bloke".

"If you were having any trouble he'd grab you and take you to his office. He'd wrestle you to get your anger out of you...he was pretty good too."

"He knew what we were going through."

**"WITHOUT BROPHY I WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD
LIKE A LOT OF MY MATES, AN ALCOHOLIC OR
HAVE DONE SOMETHING STUPID."**

GARRY HAMILTON

GARRY HAMILTON WAS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL 'BROPHY'S BOYS' WHO CAME FROM BALLARAT TO WARRNAMBOOL.

Originally from Elmhurst, Garry says he was "just a young bloke in a lot of trouble" when he was introduced to Father Brophy.

Garry was a ward of the state and he stayed with about 10 lads at the Ballarat home. "It was an old timber house. There were maybe 10 or more there. People were coming and going. I was there for a while and I was in the move when he went to Warrnambool," he said.

He doesn't know much about the reasons behind Father Brophy's transfer but moving to Warrnambool was an adventure.

"I'd never been to that area. For a 14 or 15 year old kid at the time it was probably a bit of a thrill going somewhere different.

"As far as I remember he got transferred and we went with him. He had pretty good support in Ballarat. Ladies used to come in with meals every night but at the time there were a certain amount of people around the place who didn't like it."

Warrnambool turned out to be good for Garry.

"I met some really good life-long friends," he said. "There was quite an age variation in the early days. From Ballarat I think there are only three or four of us still alive out of that original lot. Some I lost contact with."

Like others at the homes, Garry has nothing but positive memories of Father Brophy.

"HE WAS A GOOD BLOKE, PRETTY DOWN TO EARTH, BUT YOU DIDN'T GET ON THE WRONG SIDE OF HIM OR YOU'D COP IT. I COPPED A COUPLE OF BELTS UNDER THE EAR FROM HIM. YOU WERE ALLOWED TO GO A CERTAIN WAY BUT IF YOU CROSSED THE LINE YOU HEARD ABOUT IT."

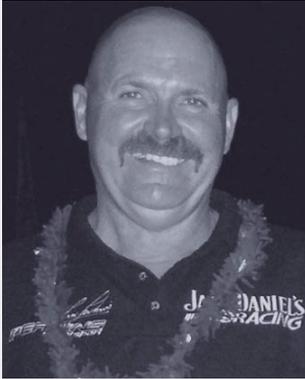
While Garry admits he ended up getting in more trouble that extended his time with Father Brophy, he credits the priest as a positive influence in turning around his fortunes in the long term.

“He wanted me to stay with him rather than go into juvie. I think that helped. I did all right out of Warrnambool. I’ve still got very close friends in Warrnambool.”

Garry secured a job at Fletcher Jones and was able to move on with his life. He later returned to Elmhurst but things had changed and so he instead went back to Warrnambool.

“There are things I haven’t thought about for years, but I look back fondly on my time with Brophy.”

Now 57 and married, Garry runs his own earth moving business in Queensland.



BARNEY DEVERALL

THE JUDGE MAY HAVE THOUGHT HE WAS SENTENCING BARNEY DEVERALL TO A FORM OF PUNISHMENT WHEN HE SENT HIM TO STAY WITH FATHER TOM BROPHY.

In reality, it was the best thing that ever happened to him.

"I had to steal two cars to get there and the reward was the best days of my young life," Barney says today.

"They really were wonderful days with really good people."

Barney had been through "irreconcilable differences" with his parents and after stealing two cars was placed at the home by the courts.

"I was in the house for three years and was never put with other families like some were," he said.

"I had to stay there for 18 months because I was sent by the judge; the other 18 months I stayed to return the good they gave me," he said.

"It set me up for life and to deal with every twist and turn conceivable."

Barney first went to Father Brophy's home in Ballarat before moving to Warrnambool.

"Broph got me out of jail in Melbourne and took me to his mother's for the night before going to Ballarat. We arrived late at night and I was told what bed was mine so get in and go to sleep. The next morning all the boys were standing around my bed saying things like this is new boy and other things...it was very intimidating."

"There were many memorable incidents that are still fresh in my mind, but none can be printed," he added.

Father Brophy helped Barney to get a job when he was 15 and made an impression that has never gone away.

"I can't describe how he made us better. It was mainly learning what's proper and what's not, appreciating everything and knowing that the only help you will get is the same as you give."

"Broph could make you laugh and smile and then destroy your ego in one 10-minute session.

"He was brilliant and treated everyone equally."

Barney had left the home before Father Brophy died but was still in contact with him. "I was getting married and we were arranging for him to marry us," he said.

Barney kept in touch with some of the boys and the Brophy family.

"Up until his mother died my children called her their grandmother. His sister and Ralph were also wonderful and so were their kids...a wonderful family. Words cannot describe how incredible they were."

Barney now lives in Darwin and has his own business running road trains from Darwin to Townsville and return. He is divorced from his wife of 21 years and has two children who live in Melbourne.

"MY LIFE HAS HAD ITS UPS AND DOWNS BUT THAT'S NORMAL, AND BROPH MADE IT VERY NORMAL. MY REAL PARENTS BROUGHT ME INTO WORLD; BROPH SHAPED THE REST."

Barney had the "honour" of carrying Father Brophy's coffin during the funeral service.

"Everyone including his mother wanted him buried in Warrnambool. It's the only grave in Australia that I visit and I visit every time I'm in Warrnambool."

PART FOUR



FATHER BROPHY IN HIS OWN WORDS

THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPILATION OF EXCERPTS FROM VARIOUS INTERVIEWS DONE BY FATHER BROPHY WITH LOCAL RADIO STATION 3YB AND THE BALLARAT TV SHOW 'SIX TONIGHT' ABOUT THE WARRNAMBOOL BOYS' HOME. THE INTERVIEWS WERE KEPT ON TAPE BY BOB MYERS.

WHY DO WE NEED THE WARRNAMBOOL BOYS' HOME?

It's necessary here because of the local need. I firmly believe that any society that has problems or needs of this nature helps to spawn the problem by indifference. The local society should accept responsibility for doing something about it. It's not good enough to export our problems and our difficulties.

The hostel is set up for 18 boys. The real aim is to give lads who are emotionally disturbed a chance to settle down first of all, realise what their problems are, and then help them to face up to them.

We're really trying to give the boys a new start, to help them feel they are accepted for a start and realise that they can lift themselves up.

THERE HAS BEEN SOME COMMUNITY DEBATE AROUND 'OUT-OF-TOWN' BOYS BEING BROUGHT TO THE HOME IN WARRNAMBOOL. IS THIS TRUE?

Within the past 12 months, 50 out of about 65 were local boys from this immediate area.

It will continue to happen from time to time that boys from outside the area will be there. In some cases boys can be more effectively supported outside their home town. Because of family pressures, sometimes they can be helped more effectively in other communities. In some cases I could refer a Warrnambool boy to another town for that reason.

A lot of people think it's an adjunct of larger places in Melbourne, but it's not. It's an advantage of course to be independent.

HOW IS IT FUNDED?

Funds are mostly from the boys' wages, donations and a partial subsidy from the government according to the status of the boys in the house.

We're still not worry-free financially, but we're managing. We've never got any money to throw around.

It's not run by the local church, though a lot of people think that. A lot think that because I'm a priest it must be run by the Catholic Church or supported by it, but that is not the case.

We have a full time supervisor and his wife which is absolutely essential for the running of the house. They are the only paid people, we have others helping in a voluntary capacity.

We've certainly improved by the move to Ardlie Street and can function much more effectively for that reason.

For the same reason (growth in demand) it will become necessary to move again, preferably into a building built to our own specifications. That's still in the distance.

DO YOU DO THE WORK ABOVE YOUR NORMAL DUTIES?

That's true. I do it away from my normal church duties. Apart from the other duties that must be performed, you could say this is my baby.

Officially the Catholic Church is not involved at all. Due to the fact I'm a priest people think it is, but the Catholic Church has no responsibility as far as this place is concerned.

It can be fairly hectic but it's nowhere near as busy as Ballarat.

WHAT IS YOUR TITLE AT THE HOME?

I'm referred to as director, among other things.

HOW ARE THE BOYS SELECTED?

The only criteria we have is the need, some real need, and a realisation on behalf of the boy that he has a need and is willing to do something about it.

We try to encourage a family atmosphere, a brotherly atmosphere so that every boy feels accepted. I think that's the main thing.

Religion is not even mentioned in the criteria for acceptance.

I hate the word institution. I've deliberately avoided it. It's a house where the boys are living and receiving a special sort of assistance that they haven't received in their own home.

Mostly the boys are aged 13 to 18. There's no fixed time or age, it all depends on the need. All boys are referred in one way or another, either by a government agency or private agency, parents, or teachers.

The only criteria I have is that there is a genuine need. The place is not just a boarding house.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL WEEK AT THE HOME?

A week is pretty much the same for any lad in the community. If he's a school boy he goes to school the same as everyone else, a worker goes to work. He's answerable a bit more than the average teenager if he wants to go out, but as he progresses he gets more and more freedom.

DO CATHOLICS RECEIVE A MORE FAVOURABLE HEARING?

No. The main reason for that is that all I'm interested in is a need. When I first meet a boy I don't know his religion and I never ask. That's not the important thing.

I couldn't even give you the percentage of Catholics and non-Catholics that help out or are on the committee.

HAS THERE BEEN DIFFICULTY IN HAVING THE HOME ACCEPTED?

Some were initially apprehensive or perhaps even hostile but later came to us to help.

It's a matter of understanding the problem first. It could happen to almost anyone. Adults tend to be very judgmental.

We have a very able committee who push me to keep things running; we have ladies cooking meals on a roster and looking after the laundry, cleaning the house once a week. The boys keep it reasonably clean but like most boys they miss on the corners. We could also do with more help. The more people involved the better for everyone concerned.

DO THE BOYS GET BLAMED FOR THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN THE COMMUNITY?

People tend to blame the boys in the home. When people know a place like this exists and they know something is going wrong, they do tend automatically to put the two together, but often it's a case of putting two and two together and making five. This happened in Ballarat. There was wood going missing in the locality and had been for a number of years before we got there, but as soon as the boys moved in, some people started implying it was probably the boys in the house. What they didn't realise was our wood was disappearing too, despite the fact we had 16 brave young men in the place who couldn't stop it.

WHAT SORT OF PROBLEMS ARE THE BOYS FACING?

There's always a deeper underlying cause. The boy only knows he's unhappy and probably holds a grudge against one or both of his parents.

I never come across a boy who was just hostile within himself. There's always a deeper underlying cause.

A fair number of them are disturbed, usually because of something lacking in the home. Quite a few are orphans and in that case they need a little bit of extra help to readjust from the sheltered environment of an orphanage before they go completely on their own.

Parents need as much help as the boy. We try to do that as well, otherwise it would be a one sided effort on our part. You can't be self-righteous and blame the boy for everything that's going on.

I don't condemn the parents, though in some cases they deserve a slap over the wrist. We also have to recognise that harm can come from ignorance. In many cases they are people who really care but through mismanagement they are doing harm.

HOW DO THE BOYS GET ALONG?

They get along extraordinarily well, which might surprise a lot of people. The fact that they've all been hurt makes them more tolerant.

We put emphasis on the boys helping themselves and helping one another.

It's amazing their intuition, they can be very perceptive.

Boys can be quicker than adults and often are. If they see something they will jump on it immediately.

HOW LONG DO THEY STAY?

The stay depends on the need. It could be a month or a couple of years.

The first time they ask if they could go home I say no, to make them a bit more keen and to realise what they're missing at home.

WOULD IT BE EASIER FOR YOU TO LOOK AFTER A BOY SCOUT GROUP?

Yes, but I wouldn't get as much out of it.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY REACTION?

I think this (positive) feeling is growing. Some people were apprehensive when we started but we've become more aware of the interest and even pride that something like this is going on.

Acceptance by different groups helps encourage others who may be a little bit unsure or perhaps even a little bit afraid.

People do fear the unknown, things they don't understand. It's a very short step sometimes to go from being uneasy to being hostile.

Some are afraid of the boys; many are apprehensive where teenagers are concerned. Adults demonstrate their uncertainty by over-reacting; this can apply to teachers too. It worried me a bit in the earlier stages but I realised pretty quickly there's nothing for an adult to be afraid of. The main thing is to accept the boy and then start helping him.

WHAT ARE THE END RESULTS?

The end result is to help a boy to adjust. We can't undo the things that have happened to him, and we can't undo the hurt sometimes going on for years. We don't plan to be a substitute for a home because there's no real substitute for a home, but what we try to do is show a family-like atmosphere and show that the boy is wanted and accepted for himself.

“WE'RE REALLY TRYING TO GIVE THE BOYS A NEW START, TO HELP THEM FEEL THEY ARE ACCEPTED FOR A START AND REALISE THAT THEY CAN LIFT THEMSELVES UP.”



LIFE MEMBERS OF BROPHY FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES

- Tony and Mary O'Hurley
- Marj Guyett
- Margot Johnson
- Alan and Mary Carman
- James Nicol
- Bill Quinlan
- Bob and Rhonda Myers
- Marie Ganley

“THE END RESULT IS TO HELP A BOY TO ADJUST. WE CAN’T UNDO THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM, AND WE CAN’T UNDO THE HURT SOMETIMES GOING ON FOR YEARS. WE DON’T PLAN TO BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR A HOME BECAUSE THERE’S NO REAL SUBSTITUTE FOR A HOME, BUT WHAT WE TRY TO DO IS SHOW A FAMILY-LIKE ATMOSPHERE AND THAT HE IS WANTED AND ACCEPTED.”

FATHER TOM BROPHY