



THE HISTORY OF THE LINDARA FAMILY PROGRAM

The Early Days:-

1987, being the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, a seminar was organised by the Parish Public Questions Committee. Many people who attended the seminar were moved by the plight of homeless people worldwide and in our own Ku-ring-gai community. As a result a small group got together informally to discuss what could be done at a local level. The group formulated a presentation to the Parish Council, and in May 1988, the Parish Council approved the formation of the Parish Committee on Homelessness.

This Committee's direction was then influenced by a conference organised by the Board of Social Responsibility on the question of homelessness. The Committee, while examining what services were available in the area, as a prelude to planning some sort of service, took the decision to begin fund-raising. It was also decided to, pro tem, support the work of Edward Eager Lodge in the inner city, run for homeless people by Rev. Noreen Towers.

The Lindfield Community Market is Born:-



Recognising that considerable funds would need to be raised, the Homeless Committee decided to set up and establish a regular local market.

Rev Vernon Prowse, who was a member of the Homelessness Committee at the time, greatly facilitated an arrangement with Cromehurst Special School¹, Tryon Road, Lindfield, for the market to be held in their grounds and it was suggested the market be held on a monthly basis.

Once the Markets commenced in 1989, they quickly grew to become a focus for the Parish and received much support from all four churches. The market served as a meeting place between members of the different congregations, both workers and visitors. Workers at the Markets were aware that many people outside the church saw the Markets as an outward and visible sign of the Uniting Church's work within the community.

In 1990, meetings were held with representatives of the Dalmar Child and Family Services to discuss the possible options for the setting up of a service for the homeless. This seemed appropriate, not only because of the continuing link with Edward Eager Lodge, but because Wesley Dalmar ran an Emergency Housing Program at their purpose built site in Carlingford.



¹ Photos – Early Lindara Markets held at Cromehurst Special School.

A Steering Committee is Formed:-

With the success of the Markets, and under the auspices of the Parish Council, a Steering Committee was formed to advance the proposal. The Steering Committee had a representative from Wesley Dalmar and from the Parish Council. The Steering Committee formulated a detailed proposal, and in February 1991, a special meeting was called by the Parish Council for consideration. The result was that the Parish decided to accept the proposals thereby giving the green light to what has become known as the “Lindara Family Program”. The “Lindara” name drawn from the two suburbs of the Parish – “Lind” – Lindfield and “ara” – Killara.

The objective of the Lindara Family Program was, in partnership with Wesley Dalmar, to provide medium term supported accommodation for four homeless families at any one time in separate homes situated in areas with a reasonably low rental, but within easy reach of the members of the Parish. The proposal included appointment of a welfare worker to offer counselling, support and appropriate care for the families. Parish Council agreed that the Program would be run by a joint management committee with four representatives from the Parish Council and four representatives from Wesley Dalmar.

Wesley Dalmar was to have the oversight of the welfare worker, and arrange all finance and administrative support services through UnitingCare Ageing – Northern Region.

The ongoing funding for the program was to come from the invested proceeds of the sale of the West Lindfield property, fund-raising activities within the Parish (e.g. Lindfield Markets) together with a wider appeal to the community at large.

The Lindara Family Program:-

The Lindara Executive Management Committee was formed and Rev. Michael Groenewegen, of East Killara Uniting, appointed the inaugural Chairperson.

Shortly after, a fund-raising committee was formed by the Parish Council. This Committee agreed on a plan to door- knock every house in the Lindfield-Killara suburbs, raising circa \$19,000. This sum, together with regular income derived from the sale of the West Lindfield property – a Uniting church no longer in use which had been sold and interest on the sale proceeds allocated to the Lindara Program – as well as monies regularly raised from the Lindfield Markets, and generous individual donations, enabled the project to go ahead.

It Lindara Family Program effectively began operations in August, 1992 when the first Family Caseworker was appointed. A room at the back of Killara Uniting’s Hall was used as Family Caseworker’s office.

As it evolved, the Lindara Family Program covered a two-year period in the life of each eligible family. In the first year, the family was placed in suitable subsidised accommodation, and received intensive support from the Family Caseworker as they worked through some of their problems and moved towards independence. By the second year, the family had moved onto more permanent accommodation and was solely responsible for the rest, but if this accommodation was still within the geographical boundaries of the Program, the family continued to receive support from the Worker, and some small financial help from time to time, for a further 12 months. By then, the Worker had put the family in touch with any community services it continued to need, and Lindara’s part in the family’s rehabilitation came to an end.

By May 2000, 24 families had made use of the Program. Most were sole women parents with young children, and all had been through periods of extreme difficulty before being referred to the program. Through the Family Caseworker’s reports to the Executive Management Committee, it was understood that the outcomes for the families had been very beneficial. A high proportion of the families were fortunate enough to obtain permanent affordable accommodation through the Community



Tenancy Scheme which was run under the auspices of the Department of Housing to assist homeless people.

This had been facilitated by the fact that Lindara Family Program had become an established and respected part of a sparse network assisting homeless families in the Ku-ring-gai area. It remained the only Program offering medium term support.



In 2000, the Lindara Markets had to find a new venue. There was a period when it was thought they may have to close. However, after looking at each church in the Parish, it was decided to move to the “Undercroft” of St. David’s Uniting Church² (now known as Lindfield Uniting) on the Pacific Highway, Lindfield. The “Undercroft” facilities offered sufficient storage for the goods prior to the market, and the “Lindara Market” stalls could be set up the night before without any problems to St. David’s, and the weather was no longer an issue. In 2001, the Lindara Markets³ started at St. David’s Uniting, and the following year ran on a quarterly basis.

Shortly before this date, in his sermon at Killara Uniting on the theme of Christian unity, the Rev’d Ivor Bailey said *“the one program which has brought four congregations together is the Lindara Family Program, a project which seeks to help the plight of the homeless. Is it not significant that when different congregations focus on something benevolent, they achieve unity?”*

By March 2003, just short of its 10th anniversary, 31 families had been accepted into the Lindara Family Program. The capacity to help such families was now recognised and resulted in referrals from agencies such as Centacare Waitara, Wesley Dalmar Child and Family Care, Centacare Lower North Shore Family Support and elsewhere.

Wesley Dalmar Withdraw from Program:-

When Wesley Dalmar withdrew from the Lindara Family Program in 2004, it was decided there was a need to look at other ways to continue the Program, since, as a single unincorporated entity, we could not provide the means of overseeing the remuneration and employment conditions, and professional supervision of our Family Caseworker, a duty which had been undertaken by Wesley Dalmar. As a result, the Lindara “Transition Committee” was formed.



The “Transition” Committee, after much research and discussions with other providers, met with Centacare Catholic Family Services, then headquartered in Hornsby. Centacare, is the not-for-profit, professional social care and community services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, providing client services in response to those in need, and where appropriate in partnership and networks with like-minded organisations.

Centacare offered to form a co-operation agreement Lindara where they would provide the Family Caseworker. This proposal involved Lindara Family Program funding one of their Family Support Caseworkers for 2 days per week and working closely with their “Early Intervention Program”, a coalescence of government, non-government and community interest, and endeavour to link families with the network of services that permeate the resources of Centacare and the parishes of the Uniting Church in the Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby areas. The Centacare organisation owns several units and houses in the

² Photo – Banner advertising Lindara Market at St. David’s.

³ Photos – Early snaps of Lindara Market stalls at St. David’s, Lindfield.

Hornsby - Waitara locality and their throughput of clients was generally faster than that of the former Lindara Family Program. Their clients all gain Community Housing, eventually.

Centacare suggested a trial period, with review after 12 months or 24 months. Centacare were also pleased to provide feedback to the supporting Lindara congregations at church services on a regular basis.

The Centacare / CatholicCare - Lindara Family Program Agreement:-

The proposed co-operation agreement with Centacare Catholic Family Services was endorsed by all congregations and commenced early October 2005. The arrangement would be known as the "Centacare-Lindara Family Program" and the Lindara Family Program dedicated Family Support Worker located within the Specialist Homelessness Services team at CentaCare's Waitara Family Centre, Yardley Ave., Waitara.

The objective of the program is to facilitate positive lifestyle changes for families in need or crisis, with long-term benefits for family cohesion and sustainability. Further, the approach and focus taken, is to intervene at the earliest point where a family, parent, or child is distressed by external or internal crises, so as to avert the possibility of homelessness or the incapacity to care for and nurture the children of the family group.

Families / Individuals in need are referred to the Centacare Waitara Family Centre through NSW Government Family & Communities Services, and similar agencies, NSW Police and Hornsby Hospital. Assistance is offered to families impacted by domestic and family violence, mental health, drug and alcohol issues, living in unsafe conditions and more.

At the conclusion of the highly successful 24 month trial period, the Lindara Executive Management Committee in the second half of 2007 was faced with a decision whether to continue funding the Family Support Caseworker for 2 days per week or increase the number of employment days. Indicative donor support, combined with Lindara Markets fund raising activities, underpinned the "safe" options of increasing to 3 days, "at a stretch" maybe even 4 days, for another 2 years. While not unanimous, and with their faith, the Committee took the bolder step of leaping to commit to an agreement of funding the employment of a dedicated Lindara Family Support Caseworker for 5 days per week for the ensuing 2 years. For the Committee, the need within the community and the vision of setting up the former Lindara Family Program were decisive factors.

At the time of writing, the only change to the highly successful co-operation agreement has been a name change. CentaCare is now known as CatholicCare and the arrangement as the "CatholicCare – Lindara Family Program". Subsequent to the above mentioned Lindara Executive Management Committee's bold decision late 2007, the co-operative agreement has been "rolled-over" bi-annually. Sure, the remuneration and employment conditions of a Family Support Worker have increased. Working with homelessness is intensive, and expensive. The outcomes are what is important, and, this is where Lindara Family Program can feel pride that it is making a contribution. Since October 2005, through the co-operative agreement with CatholicCare, it has served around 1200 families involving almost 2,000 children in some way or other. In the last year it was 127 families with 11 of these families being accommodated in Catholic facilities.

The relationship between Lindara and CatholicCare is strong, one of respect, and highly valued by each. Lindara's Executive Management Committee Chairperson recently wrote:-

"As individuals we cannot personally resolve the homeless and domestic violence problems, but in providing funding to the people at CatholicCare, like our dedicated Family Support Worker, who do understand how to rebuild the lives of the homeless, we can make a difference".

The Lindara Markets:-

After 20 years of organising the Lindara Markets several of the co-ordinators indicated that the 2009 calendar year markets would be their last. For the second time, there again was a period when it was thought these community markets may have to close. Until, a husband and wife couple⁴ from St. David's Uniting Church, Lindfield, stepped forward and said "*the markets must not be allowed to close, they are too important*", and took on the co-ordination task in 2010.

The co-ordination task is enormous, organising volunteers to sort, clean and price donated goods on the four Fridays immediately before market day, putting up advertising banners around the suburbs, setting up stalls the Thursday evening



up / storing unsold goods etc., Around themselves the couple have of volunteers (including many beforehand), numbering upwards of forty volunteers for any given market, and drawn from not only the Uniting congregations but also from the wider Christian community. The camaraderie amongst the volunteers is incredibly strong, and all are passionate towards the underlying homelessness cause of the Lindara Family Program. A remarkable dedication and commitment by the Lindara Market volunteers.

before, then working the entire market day, including packing immediately afterwards. gathered a very large number volunteers involved

The frequency of the markets again altered in 2013, when reduced from held quarterly to three times a year. Coming into the 33rd year of being held, the Lindara Markets⁵, somewhat reminiscent of the old style school or church fete, continue to be a very important funding raising activity for the Lindara Family Program and, up until the COVID pandemic year, raising in excess of \$20,000 annually. Unfortunately, there was no avenue for recompense under the many government stimulus initiatives available during the pandemic. But, and while held with many COVID restrictive conditions in place, the first held post COVID Lindara Market had an atmosphere much likened to a homecoming for all concerned, the volunteers and the "bargain seeking" community.



⁴ Photo – Mr and Mrs Allerding being awarded Senior Citizens of Ku-ring-gai by the Mayor

⁵ Photos – more recent snaps of Lindara Market stalls at St. David's, Lindfield.

Funding of the Lindara Family Program:-

Lindara operates on a not-for-profit basis, and broadly has benefited from the fund raising activities of the Lindfield and Killara congregations. Historically, the Lindara Markets have provided a significant contribution to the Lindara activities and continues to raise significant sums. Additionally, Lindara has benefited from funding raising activities regularly undertaken by various groups, for example the Uniting Gordon Community Centre, Roseville Uniting, Knox Grammar Year Classes, etc..

The most significant source of funding is from individual donors of the Lindfield and Killara congregations, and since late 2012 individual donors of the Gordon – Pymble Uniting congregations. Through a two year planned giving process (next due to commence mid-2021 year), individual members of these congregations make either one off, or regular committed donations to Lindara. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible, and the Lindara Executive Management Committee hold considerable pride in reassuring individual donors that 100 cents in the dollar donated is expended on those whom within the community the Lindara Family Program serves.

Making a Donation:-

All donations are presently directed to accounts held within Uniting Financial Services. How to Donate guide on Killara Uniting Church's Lindara webpage: <https://killara.uca.org.au/engage/lindara-family-program/donate/>.

Newsletter:-

A Lindara communicative "Newsletter" is regularly issued to individual donors.