



Midland Family Relationship Centre Client Liaison Officer, Gaina Brown and Manager, Stephen Clark in the newly opened centre.

A new support service to help local families with their relationships has recently opened in the Midland area.

**The Midland Family Relationships Centre, operated by Centrecare, a LifeLink supported agency,** aims to help families improve their relationships and provide support in situations of separation and divorce.

The centre is one of 25 such facilities established by the Australian Government under recent changes to the Family Law system, and it is planned for a total of 65 centres to be operational across Australia by July 2008.

The centre also provides three hours free Family Dispute Resolution as an alternative to Family Court action, which under new legislation is required before issues relating to children can be taken to Court.

Tony Pietropiccolo, Director of Centrecare said:

*“This new centre will provide families with information, professional support and referral to a range of services that can prevent family breakdown or help to ease the difficulties associated with separation or divorce, particularly for any children involved.”*

*We hope our centre will become an important and valuable community resource for people seeking advice on any issue, whether it is for pre-marital education, preparing for the birth of a new child, all the way through the many important life changes that most families will face.*

*There will be a focus, as in everything Centrecare does, on providing a warm, inviting and friendly atmosphere where people in need will be directly assisted by professional, experienced and caring staff.*

*That is the essence of Centrecare, it is the essence of what all the LifeLink agencies strive to do.”*



Editor's Note:

*The left hand side photo and information used in this article were provided courtesy of The Echo Newspaper. Our sincere thanks to everyone at The Echo for permitting us to use this material.*



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## THE DARK SIDE OF THE BOOM

Comment by Tony Pietropiccolo, Director of Centrecare



*Centrecare is a social service organisation that delivers over 80 different social programs from nine offices based in the Perth metropolitan area, Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Bunbury and is supported by LifeLink.*

You can be forgiven for believing that we are now, more than ever, the lucky country. There is a boom going on in our State and it seems impossible not to be convinced that we are now all better off for it.

The worldwide demand for mineral resources has meant that we are exporting billions of dollars worth of our precious metals and, of course, natural gas.

The boom, we are told, is a once in a generation event and some are equating its impact on Western Australia to that of the Kalgoorlie gold rush.

The boom has attracted many thousands of people to our State. They have come here looking for work or have been sent here to do jobs for national and multinational companies. This has resulted in a significant increase in the State's population.

We are now a much more diverse group of people than we were four years ago. We are experiencing the lowest unemployment rate since the 1960s and our State coffers are overflowing with money.

Our houses are worth more than ever before and some homes have more than doubled in value in the last three years. We are told that consumer confidence and spending is at an all time high and that there is no sign that this will abate in the near future.

**But there is a dark side to this boom.**

Not everyone is enjoying the financial windfall that has accompanied the demand for our natural resources. The majority of West Australians still have the jobs they had before the boom and their pay doesn't reflect the large wages being paid in the mining and associated industries. For most West Australians their pay packets have not expanded to keep pace with the ever increasing prices for essentials such as housing.

The lack of availability of housing is perhaps the single most distressing aspect of our boom. Rent has sky rocketed in the last two years on the back of huge demand for accommodation and a largely static supply of housing. Vacancy rates in Perth dropped to as low as .8 per cent earlier this year. This means that rental vacancies in Perth have reached critical levels.





A priority for refugees arriving in Perth is to find adequate housing

Centrecare is well aware of how difficult it is to house people as it finds it almost impossible to find accommodation for humanitarian refugees arriving in Perth. Young adults, even those with well paid jobs, can only afford to rent if they share accommodation with friends and their dream of buying a house is fast receding.

For those on low incomes it often means doing without, just to pay the rent or the mortgage. Centrecare estimates that in Perth between 70 and 80 per cent of renters are paying more than 30 per cent of their earnings in rent.

For those on fixed incomes the picture is even bleaker as their ability to find a rental that will match their Centrelink benefit, even with the rental subsidy, is becoming more and more remote. Single people are especially at risk as their level of benefit is nowhere near enough to house, feed and clothe them.

We are now becoming increasingly aware of the huge financial burden that many families are under as they struggle to pay their large mortgages and to meet their other needs.

An increasing number of families are moving to outlying suburbs to find affordable housing. This adds to work-family life stresses and removes them from family and other support systems.

Many single and sometimes double income families are turning to welfare agencies for assistance in providing for their families. It used to be rare to see employed people searching for help to feed their loved ones. This is no longer the case and the substantial increase in the cost of housing has played a major role in this development.

And the boom is also creating a problem for those who have seen their wages balloon.

Some young people who are exposed to large sums of money develop spending habits, expectations and addictions that have the capacity to create long-term problems. Centrecare has been witness to this type of development, especially in regional centres.

Regular reports of the mountainous level of credit card debt that has been accumulated also suggests that many are negatively influenced by much of the rhetoric associated with our economic good times.

There is little doubt that some will find the emotional and financial adjustment, that they will necessarily have to make when the boom ends, very difficult.

The fallout from this adjustment is likely to be one of the long-term, dark legacies of the current economic boom.

Tony Pietropiccolo

Editors note : Centrecare is one of the leading agencies which assists people find emergency, short-term or low cost housing. This agency is able to reach out and help 25,000 Western Austrians each year... thanks to your continuing and generous support of LifeLink.



Centrecare reaching out to families in crisis

# MAXIMISING YOUR GENEROSITY

## “YOU DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

This is not cliché line we use, it is indeed a statement of fact. Your generous support of LifeLink truly does assist people in need here in western Australia.

Every year, Archbishop Hickey asks that you contribute to his various appeals in support of our LifeLink social service agencies. Thankfully, you generously and positively respond. Through this act of generosity, your gifts are joined with other generous gifts which means that together we are afforded the opportunity to reach out when people call on us for help.

We thought it was important for you to know how LifeLink makes sure we maximise your generosity to the best of our abilities.

Funds raised from the Archbishop’s Christmas, Winter and LifeLink Day School appeals are directed to the work of the 14 agencies supported by LifeLink.

The agencies names will not fit into this article however collectively, they provide emergency relief, accommodation, counselling, respite care, help people battle drugs and other addictions, help people who are intellectually and physically challenged or those desperately in need of someone to be there for them in a time of crisis.

**40,000** Western Australian families and individuals each year, from right across WA, are helped because of your generosity and the simple fact that you show you care by donating to LifeLink.

**7 cents** is how much we expend for every dollar raised from our Christmas Appeal and **6 cents** from our Winter Appeal.

These costs are provided for by the Archdiocese, not taken from your valuable and generous donations.

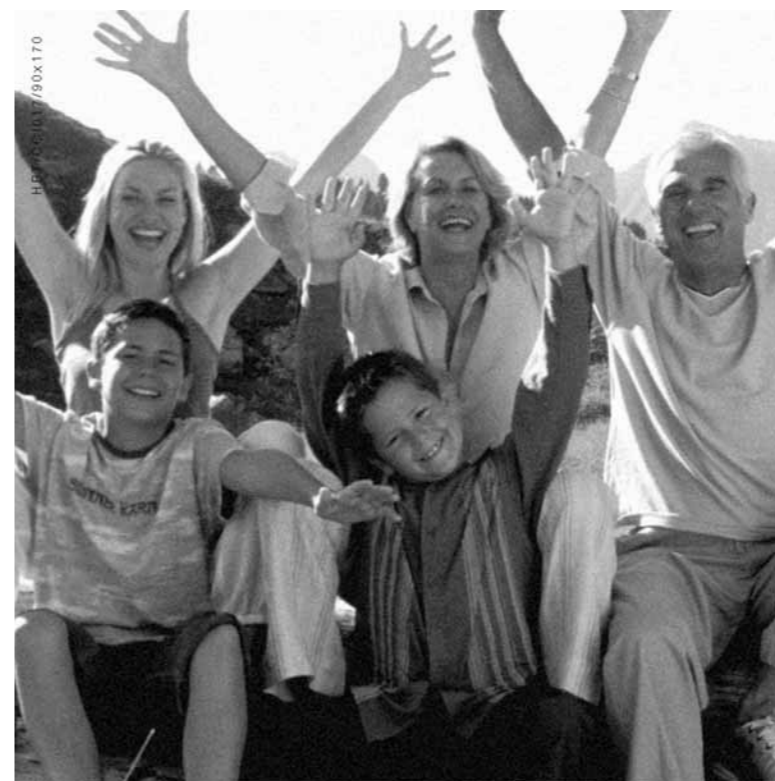
**30 cents** is the cost of producing each newsletter so we may keep you fully informed of what our LifeLink agencies are doing, and why they need your ongoing support.

Without **you**, the Archdiocese would have to redirect funds away from our parishes, Churches, schools, health and aged care services and other worthy projects,

**You make a difference...** and we are very grateful that you do!

Thank you and God bless,

Brett Mendez  
Manager, LifeLink



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