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On Friday 18 September 2020, **Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB** officially opened and blessed The Shopfront's new \$2 million 'home' in John Street, Bentley.



Damian Walsh, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB and Mayor Patrick Hall



Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Dr Terry Wilson and Emeritus Archbishop Barry Hickey

Due to social distancing restrictions, guest numbers had to be limited. However a warm welcome was extended to *Emeritus Archbishop Barry Hickey (Founder of The Shopfront), Mayor Patrick Hall and Councillor Graham Barry representing the City of Canning, Members of The Shopfront's Committee of Management and representatives from our supporting Catholic Schools. Damian Walsh, Director of The Shopfront, staff and volunteers from the agency were of course special guests to this event.*

A special service and blessing of the new Centre was celebrated by Archbishop Costelloe. In his Address, His Grace acknowledged and congratulated Emeritus Archbishop Hickey for his vision in establishing an agency "unburdened by either bureaucracy or a reliance on the conditional and fluctuating nature of government funding".

The Archbishop shared with us after the event, "The Shopfront commenced service in 2001. Who would have imagined the powerful and positive impact this agency would have on the lives of so many people in need within the community. From around 15 visitors a day, The Shopfront today reaches out to more than 25,000 visitors each and every year. It is a wonderful organisation, well supported by Damian Walsh, his dedicated staff and team of generous and loyal volunteers."



I am grateful to the local community which has so warmly welcomed the relocation of The Shopfront to the Bentley and surrounding areas, and I would like to acknowledge the enthusiastic and positive response received from the City of Canning, especially Mayor Patrick Hall and Councillor Graham Barry.

The opening today of this modern, purpose-built facility is an investment by the Church in continuing a mission of care to people most in need in the community who reach out to us for help. It is when we respond by extending our hand to them, our brothers and sisters in need that we express and experience our faith in a very real and tangible way," said Archbishop Costelloe.



In his Address, Mr Damian Wallis, Chair of The Shopfront Committee of Management, firstly acknowledged *"the traditional owners of this land, of the Wadjak Boodjar people, that we are standing on today and honour their Elders, past and present"*

He went on to say *"It is fitting in the 20th Year of The Shopfront that we have moved to a new purpose-built facility here at John Street in Bentley. Over the years of my involvement with The Shopfront I have been amazed by the sheer number of vulnerable people that we have been able to assist with the modest resources that we have had to work with.*

The secret to The Shopfront's ability to be able to so freely help those in need with an open and generous heart, has been the dedication of its people, both volunteers and staff. The Shopfront has survived and flourished as a ministry of the Archdiocese because of the generosity and commitment of the countless volunteers who have dedicated themselves to helping in whatever way they can."



A NEW HOME FOR THE HOMELESS...



...refugees, people in financial crisis, the lonely and isolated.

The **NEW** Shopfront

It was almost 20 years ago, when The Shopfront began in a small rented space in Whatley Crescent, Maylands - a welcoming place for about 15 homeless people who 'visited' each day. They came to share a cuppa, some food, some companionship and enjoy respite from their daily struggles.

Word spread quickly on the streets and demand increased. In 2004, The Shopfront moved to slightly larger premises just down the road. Additional services were provided as more and more people sought help of one kind or another.

In 2019, over 25,000 'visitors' reached out to The Shopfront – outgrowing its capacity to meet this level of demand within its existing home. A review was undertaken by the Archdiocese which confirmed that the current premises could not hope to provide the space and facilities required, and the cost of upgrading the premises and making good all the disrepair would prove far too cost prohibitive.

As reported last year, the hunt began for a new location. The Archdiocese set about looking for somewhere located close to a railway line and within 5 stops from the CBD, as this is the main method of travel for people struggling financially.

A significant factor was the 'demographics of need' as we like to call it... where are the people who reach out to The Shopfront for help coming from? Directed by the "Poverty, Homelessness and Migrants in Western Australia" report commissioned by the Archdiocese (as part of the Archdiocese's Strategic Plan implementation) and compiled by the University of Notre Dame Australia, it clearly showed that a significant gap in homelessness services existed on the Armadale line.

The Archdiocese's own research showed that The Shopfront would be the only organisation providing services for homeless people within that geographical area, people who in many cases were being 'missed'.

In mid-2019 the Church purchased land in John Street, Bentley, to develop a purpose built new home for The Shopfront. With thanks in part to the generous contributions of donors to the Archbishop's fundraising appeals, approximately \$2 million was committed to providing for both the land and building.

As Dr Terry Wilson, Vicar for Social Outreach, said at the time of securing the land:

"The Church sees this as an important investment in reaching out to help people in need within the community, people who in many cases may have fallen through the gaps and not received help previously... or have been unable to access help. Whilst a significant undertaking, it reinforces the commitment the Church has in this Archdiocese to fulfilling our collective mission of being 'a people walking together in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd'.

It is through service, reaching out with love and compassion to our brothers and sisters in need, that we live and express our Faith," said Dr Wilson.

Construction of THE NEW SHOPFRONT was completed in July 2020 and the building was officially opened by Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB on Friday 18 September 2020.



We visit the new premises and were shown around by Damian Walsh, Director of The Shopfront.

"Our new home is simply fantastic," said Damian. "Now we have the space to really provide for the needs of the people who come to us seeking help, and it's a real blessing to be able to offer help from our purpose built facility.

There is full accessibility for people with disabilities, a secure waiting area, 3 private counselling and interview rooms. For the first time, we have a dedicated Medical Room for the visiting Homeless Healthcare GP.

We have a beautiful, welcoming dining room and service canteen with proper food storage facilities. As you can see, there has been a significant increase in storage area for donated clothes, blankets, toiletries and food hamper provisions. The outdoor garden and courtyard areas are wonderful for visitors to relax and share time with each other.

At the rear of the property, we have secure parking for Orange Sky Laundry to set up when it commences visits to the new centre, and for visiting Centrelink personnel.

I have an office to meet with people in privacy, and I know our staff and volunteers are enjoying having a small lunch room where they can gather and place their personal belongings," said Damian.

We ask Damian how the move has been and how people are responding to the new Centre.

It's only been a matter of weeks since we relocated, but so far the response has been extremely positive. Word is slowly spreading that our Centre is open, and we are seeing some of our regulars from Maylands travel across whilst welcoming new visitors from the surrounding areas.

Everyone, including our volunteers, have been so impressed by the facilities and the overall aesthetics of the property.

Are you seeing the same number of visitors as you did at the previous location?

No, but then we wouldn't expect to at this early stage. I'm told by Julie Fuge (Manager, Governance and Corporate Services for the Archdiocese) that when she first started The Shopfront in Maylands, it took about 12 months for the number of visitors to reach its peak. I'd expect that here in Bentley, we might expect capacity service within 6 months or so following the official opening. We are already seeing evidence of this with numbers increasing each week.

Although it's early days, how has The Shopfront been welcomed by the community?

I've been working hard to introduce myself and our agency to the local authorities, community groups and other service organisations. I have been so grateful for the genuine and warm welcome we have received, and people seem excited to have The Shopfront providing services for the region.

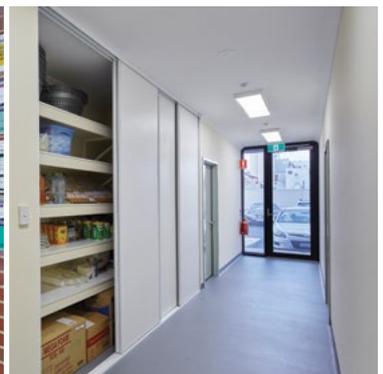
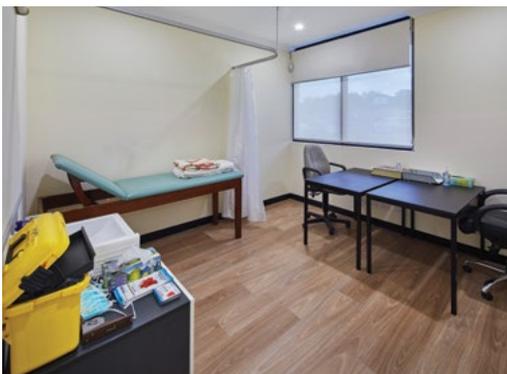
The City of Canning has been very supportive. Whilst not wanting to single people out, I would like to acknowledge Mayor Patrick Hall, and Councillors Mark Bain and Graham Barry, for their enthusiastic response.

I'd also like to express my thanks to Senior Sergeant Ray Anderson from the Cannington Police Station who has been fantastic.

Have you retained support from parishes, businesses and organisations since the relocation?

Absolutely. All our existing support networks have continued I'm delighted to say.

Our Archdiocesan schools have continued to be so generous in providing foodstuffs, hampers and all manner of donations. The Shopfront is so grateful to them all. I don't want to miss anyone, but I do want to thank Chisholm College, Mazenod College, John XXIII College, Sacred Heart College Sorrento, Santa Maria College, Trinity College, Irene McCormack Catholic College, St Norbert College and St Francis' School Maddington.





Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese are the very life of The Shopfront. Without the contributions or donations and people from our parishes, we could not do what we do. I would like to take a moment to thank all the Parish Priests for their ongoing commitment to our work.

Then we have all the amazingly generous businesses which continue to help us, and never seek any fanfare.

Vince Garreffa from Mondo Meats - the nicest man with the biggest heart. Vince has donated thousands of dollars of meat and other supplies to The Shopfront, and has done so for years.

Chez Jean-Claude Patisserie in Subiaco donates fresh rolls and bread that we supply every day to our visitors.

I must mention the generosity of Chef John Swiatek from Chopin Patisserie & Café in Sorrento, who donate gourmet fresh rolls to The Shopfront that are delicious and our visitors simply love them.

The rolls are so big we actually cut them in half.

I'd estimate that these donations save The Shopfront about \$700-\$800 a week!

We used to receive fruit and vegetables from Second Bite, however, supply has stopped since the COVID19 crisis began.

Now we've moved to Bentley, one of our close neighbours is The Spud Shed. I'm hoping to chat with the Galati Family (owners and operators of The Spud Shed stores) who are well known for their generosity and support for organisations like The Shopfront. So I'll be speaking with them in the near future. Fresh fruit and vegetables are an important health requirement for the people our agency seeks to help.

As we prepare to launch the Archbishop's Christmas Appeal for LifeLink, what would you like to say to our parishioners and donors?

Please be generous with your gifts. Every single dollar you give to this appeal is directed by LifeLink to help fund Church social service agencies like The Shopfront.

- **A luncheon roll** costs about **\$7.95** to feed a person in need each day.
- **A food hamper** for a family struggling to put food on the table will cost **\$25-\$30**
- **One night's accommodation** for someone living on the streets cost approximately **\$50**.

You are not only donating money - you are truly helping someone in real need!

Thank you... and God bless you for your generosity and compassion.



GORDY'S STORY

A place of my own

Gordy (60) lives in his 1993 Ford Fairlane because he has no home to call his own.

He said it's a good car as it carries most of his possessions and the seats can be adjusted to provide adequate sleeping room. He bathes when he can access shower facilities, and cooks 2 minute noodles on a small burner. Sometimes, he will enjoy an evening meal of sausages cooked on a public BBQ.

The greatest challenge he said is finding toilet facilities when he needs it, particularly after hours. *"It's crazy, but most public toilets are locked after 6.00pm. There is one which stays open until midnight in South Perth, but after that the only one I know is the 'portaloos' at South Mole. I've been camping in the West Swan area lately, so that makes it difficult"* said Gordy.

Gordy kindly sits and shares his story with me whilst he enjoys a toasted sandwich and a cup of coffee at the new Shopfront in Bentley. He said he appreciates the support he receives from places like The Shopfront, and despite being an introvert, is happy to give us an insight into his daily struggles as a way of making people know what life is truly like for those who are homeless.

Born in South Australia, his parents both worked in the printing industry. He had two sisters and one brother. Sadly, one sister passed away and his brother is battling severe dementia in an aged care facility. Gordy said he'd had a troubled childhood.

An extreme introvert (by his own admission), he found it difficult to 'fit in'. He spent a large part of his younger years chasing tadpoles and insects on his own. As he grew older, he had a passion for electronics and technical things which continues to this day. Though intelligent and passing his exams at school, Gordy said he would stay away for large periods of time, and that would get him into trouble.

"I was a bit of a kleptomaniac mate. I was shoplifting and that got me into trouble with the police and at home" he said.

Gordy's father passed away when he was around 14 years of age, and that's when things took a turn for the worse. His mother declared him an 'uncontrollable child' and he was placed into the care of Children's Services. Gordy spent time in Remand Centres for shoplifting offences, and lived in hostels and other temporary accommodation.

It was in the late 1970s that Gordy first travelled to Perth, with a group of 20+ year old friends in an old HR Panel Van. *"Over the years, I've had a lot of jobs mate. I've worked in a lot of petrol stations, as a factory worker, as a Security Officer. I guess I'm what you call a 'Jack of all trades, Master of none"* said Gordy.

For almost 40 years, Gordy has battled to secure a permanent home.

It has been a succession of shared living arrangements, longer term rentals, staying with friends, public housing and emergency accommodation. A disagreement with the Department of Housing over an alleged unpaid debt (which Gordy strongly disputes) unfortunately means he can no longer access public housing... **and so now he lives in his car.**

I ask Gordy how he heard about The Shopfront and what he thinks about the new premises.

"I heard about this place from other people I know. It's good mate. It's easy to get to and the people here are nice. The food is good and I can get help here when I need it. I kind of keep to myself but that's what I usually do" he said.

I ask Gordy what he thinks the future will hold for him.

He quietly answered *"I don't think about that mate. I just live and survive day by day, the only way I can. Every time I have made a plan or worked towards something, it hasn't turned out the way I'd hoped. After so many years of that, you just focus on getting by today"* he said.

Finally, I asked Gordy that if he could have just one wish, what that might be.

He quickly responded: *"My own home mate, a place I own, that's only mine; a place no one can take away from me. No mortgage, no landlord, no government agency. Maybe I'll win that 'Set for Life' lottery one day".*

Editor's Note: It is through your collective support of the Archbishop's Christmas Appeal for LifeLink that you directly help to support agencies like The Shopfront, who in turn reach out to Gordy and thousands of other Western Australians in need in our community.