



**Official launch of 13 Adolph Street, Richmond
6 December 2007**

Kane Bowden, CEO

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Wurundjeri people.

Thank you all very much for taking time out to be with us tonight. This evening is a celebration of what can be achieved when people get connected and work towards a shared goal.

This wonderful new home and everything it stands for in terms of our achievement as a community at Lighthouse would not have been possible without the incredible commitment and support of many many people.

We have been fortunate to have the help of our friends - too numerous to mention in tonight's proceedings. But they are no less important for that fact. I want everyone who is here tonight to know that you have all contributed to this watershed moment in the life of Lighthouse. Even though I can't mention you all by name I want to say to each and every one of you a heartfelt thank you.

Thank you for the hundreds of small things that have gone towards making up the one big thing that is this building and more importantly the people in it.

There are a few people we must mention by name because of their outstanding contributions.

On behalf of everyone at Lighthouse I would like to say a special thanks to John Mirabito and the Victor Smorgon Charitable Fund for donating this building. That was the start of it all. That was the focal point around which we were able to bring so many people together. Thank you.

The interior fit-out...from an empty shell to a fully functioning, fantastic space from which we can support young people...was supported by our major funders and in kind donors.

Thank you to Honda Australia MPE, the John T Reid Charitable Trust, the Newsboys Foundation, Vicki Vidor, and the Campbell Edwards Trust.

For Donation of materials, thank you to Mitre 10 Australia, Middy's Data & Electrical, MBA Design, CSR Gyprock & CSR Bradford, Pilkington Glass, Think Appliances, Laminex Group, and Reece.

Thanks so much to all of you.

And I would like to say a big thanks to our two very special Volunteers, Ralph Todisco and Shelley Stretton.

These people gave so much – they gave of their time, energy, expertise, networks, creativity and they gave of their hearts.

Please join with me in recognising the generosity of all of these people together with all of those who cannot be mentioned tonight.

This is a time when most of us have the pleasure of looking forward to time with our family and friends. For me, it is the best time of the year. A special time with my family in Victor Harbor, South Australia.

But at Lighthouse we meet kids who have not had a home.

Christmas can be the worst time of the year for these kids.

Too often they have not ever really had a family. They have been robbed of something really important, something that I think we are all entitled to – a safe happy childhood. Over the years these children grow up with nobody to make sure they get to school, eat properly or understand some of the basics of taking care of themselves let alone have special birthdays or family outings to the footy or the local park.

Often they have no-one to count on, no-one to turn to, no-one to trust.

Instead they get hurt a lot. They go without. They get lost.

Most never have a real home. They never get to see how a family really can be. In desperation they leave home and end up on the streets or staying with friends or being put up in temporary shelters because accommodation services are full. It's no place for a kid. They're vulnerable – easily spotted by predators. By the time they get to Lighthouse they've experienced a lot of things no-one should ever have to experience. They've had a gutful of sadness and disappointment and pain and shame.

But they get here - and that's when change begins.

They meet people who care. It takes a long time to learn to trust but these people at Lighthouse are patient. They get back to school, they begin to heal and rebuild. They see that their future can be very different from their past.

That's what happens at Lighthouse. One child at a time. One day at a time. Change happens.

And we could do that for every homeless kid in Australia. With the right resources, we could have a Lighthouse home in every community in this country.

Lighthouse can change the future for these young people. We know that what we do works. There's rigorous independent academic evaluation that says so. And we'll keep improving on it, expanding on it, moving towards our vision...ending homelessness.

One definition of homelessness is a lack of safe, secure, permanent accommodation. In that paradigm, the response is to provide accommodation.

At Lighthouse we go a step further and say that a home is somewhere you feel you belong. It's a place that supports your development. It's a *home*, not just accommodation: not just a bed, or a roof over your head. Somewhere warm, friendly, comfortable, familiar...A base - to which you can return at any time.

And then we take it a step further still. We say that in that home there should be a family. Not just 'staff' or other 'tenants'. There should be a group of people who know each other, who really know each other and who really care.

A home and a family. Our kids need that. Any kid needs that. They always have and they always will.

And every kid has a right to a home and a family.

Our dream is to make homelessness a thing of the past. Our vision is for every young person to have a home. We believe that this is an achievable goal. The support we have received from all of you here tonight (and those who could not be here) has shown us just what can be done when we work together – putting our collective 'shoulder to the wheel'.

One step at a time. One child at a time. In our own community. For each child: a home and a family.

For each young person that we restore to their right path in life...

For each young person that we connect with and love...

there will be benefits far reaching beyond our lifetimes, for generations to come. That kid will have a positive future – a wonderful legacy in itself but it doesn't end there...They will give back to their communities.

They'll pass what you have given to them onto their friends, the people they meet, their communities, their own children...

That's what this building symbolizes.

That's what everyone here has been a part of. You are all responsible for giving young people a home, a family, and a community.

Thank you.