



THERE'S MORE GOOD PEOPLE IN THE WORLD THAN BAD

By Neil Starkie

When I joined The Spiers Centre earlier this year, I decided to start writing regularly. My hope was simple: to share reflections and stories that offered a glimpse into this extraordinary organisation and the community that surrounds it.

If you've been following these blogs throughout the year, I hope you've enjoyed them and that they've helped shine a light on the heart of The Spiers Centre. Writing them has certainly deepened my own appreciation of what happens here every day and the people; staff, volunteers, partners and community members who make it possible. If you'd like to revisit any of these reflections, you can find all our past blogs and newsletters in the *Newsletters and Blogs* section of our website www.thespierscentre.com.au.

As we reach the end of the year, I want to share a moment that has stayed with me, one that feels especially poignant as Christmas approaches.

If you read our last blog, *The Best Lasagne in the World*, you may remember I mentioned two men who were both

experiencing homelessness. One of those men, let's call him Matthew was in again this week.

Matthew has been living rough for around four months. As he talked, he opened up about his relationship with his mum. There is clearly a long and complicated history there, one that doesn't need retelling but Matthew spoke with honesty about the many mistakes he feels he has made.

What struck me most was the emotional weight behind his words. As he spoke about his mum, there was an unmistakable sense of grief and longing. It felt as though, if Matthew could have one wish this Christmas, it would not be for money or possessions, but for reconciliation.

What made this moment even more powerful was that Matthew wasn't speaking to me. He was talking to another man who is also sleeping rough. Someone he had never met before until that moment. Yet the two of them connected. As their conversation came to a close, the other gentleman simply said, "I will pray for you."

A short while later, Matthew popped his head around my office door and said, *“There’s more good people in the world than bad.”*

You are absolutely right, Matthew.

Over the past few weeks, we have been left open-mouthed by the generosity of our community. I’ve seen many posts from other incredible organisations working in the same space as The Spiers Centre, all sharing similar reflections on the outpouring of support they have received.

Here at TSC, donations have arrived from many different sources and in many forms; food, toiletries, hygiene products, pet food, toys, Christmas food and even a couple of Christmas trees. One lady came in with hundreds of handmade cuddly toys and beautifully crafted Minion blankets and keep bags, items she had spent the past 12 months making with love and care. She quietly shared that The Spiers Centre had supported her once, many years ago. She only needed help that one time, but we were there when she needed it, and she said she has always remembered it. I’ll admit, I looked at those Minions with a little envy. Anyone who knows me well knows I have a soft spot for Minions, but knowing they were created to bring comfort and joy to children who really need it, made them even more special.

I’m writing this on a Saturday evening whilst watching The Polar Express, one of my many Christmas traditions. In The Polar Express, one character ‘Billy’ is described as being “from the wrong side of the tracks.” He’s the one we instinctively worry about, the child we feel for because we sense he may wake up on Christmas morning without gifts or celebration.

We recognise the unfairness of that immediately, because when we see hardship through the eyes of a child, it cuts straight to the heart. In many ways, that’s exactly why this work matters.

Over the coming days, The Spiers Centre, along with many other community organisations will be distributing hampers and toys to individuals and families who are doing it tough. People often talk about job satisfaction, but what I see at this time of year is something much bigger than any one role or organisation. It is the combined effort of a community - community supporting community - that ensures children wake up on Christmas morning to presents under the tree, and that families have food on the table. Being part of that collective response, witnessing generosity flow from so many directions, is where true job satisfaction sits.

As the year draws to a close, I am deeply grateful for the stories, the generosity from the many organisations large and small, and the individuals who bring in a bag of groceries and want nothing in return, for the moments of connection, and for being continually reminded of the good that exists in our community. Thank you to everyone who has supported The Spiers Centre this year, in ways both seen and unseen. You are an invaluable, integral part of that goodness and you have made such a positive contribution to our community. From all of us at The Spiers Centre, thank you. May this Christmas be filled with kindness, connection, hope and maybe a Minion in your Christmas stocking.