



media release

1 December 2014

Breaking the stigma of living with HIV/AIDS

To acknowledge World AIDS Day on 1 December 2014, CatholicCare Melbourne has launched a booklet of stories from its HIV/AIDS Ministry.

Angels in Disguise features the stories of people living with HIV/AIDS, and their family members, who have participated in CatholicCare's HIV/AIDS Ministry. Included in these stories are accounts by CatholicCare chaplains who have worked within the ministry.

'Many people who are living with HIV/AIDS continue to experience stigma and prejudice; they are living on the margins of our society – alienated by those who do not fully understand the disease,' said Marg Hayes, the Coordinator of the Ministry.

'Others are isolated as a result of self-imposed actions borne out of fear of rejection. Our Ministry aims to extend a welcoming hand – to show hospitality and to help regain and build a sense of community belonging.'

The HIV/AIDS Ministry has supported people living with HIV/AIDS for nearly 20 years, providing pastoral care and opportunities for peer support. Around 20 people regularly attend the weekly lunch for participants at the St Mary of the Cross Centre in Fitzroy. The Ministry also acknowledges the importance of families in caring for people with HIV/AIDS and extends pastoral services to them.

'World AIDS Day is a time for all members of the community to show support for people living with HIV/AIDS,' said Ms Hayes. 'We hope that the collection of personal stories in **Angels in Disguise** will help to raise awareness of what it is like to live with HIV/AIDS and to help overcome the stigma and discrimination that remains prevalent today.'

Fast facts:

- Angels in Disguise is available for purchase from www.ccam.org.au
- The HIV/AIDS Ministry operates under the auspice of the CatholicCare Archdiocese of Melbourne and is delivered by CatholicCare Melbourne.
- CatholicCare are experts in family-focused care and provide a range of counselling, education, community and pastoral services. We support people regardless of their religious belief or background. www.ccam.org.au

Interview and photo opportunities:

- Marg Hayes, Coordinator, CatholicCare HIV/AIDS Ministry | 0408 230 008
- Ministry participants

Contact:

- For further information about CatholicCare HIV/AIDS Ministry and/or **Angels in Disguise**, please contact Marg Hayes | 0408 230 008
- For media enquiries, please contact Bernadette Garcia | 0409 708 823 | Bernadette.Garcia@ccam.org.au