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people

Showing support for farmers in need



Farm hand-As hundreds of farmers make an annual visit to the city for the Ekka (or Royal Queensland Show), which is on in Brisbane until next Saturday (August 16), Year 8 students from Mt St Michael's College, Ashgrove are doing their bit to send a message that city slickers have not forgotten about those doing it tough on the land. Co-ordinator of the Downs and West Drought Appeal Sister of Charity Christine Henry (second from left) accepts gifts from (from left) Annika Guest, Josie Gordon and Bridget Hansen that will be used in "care packages" for farming families.

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WAITING IN HOPE

By PAUL DOBBYN

Rising poverty tests schools

SCHOOLS in Brisbane archdiocese are coming under increasing pressure as they deal with a student population drawn from 26 of Queensland's 40 most-disadvantaged areas, according to a recent Brisbane Catholic Education submission to the Federal Government.

The submission, prepared in response to the Government's Green Paper on homelessness *Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness*, also notes that 14

students per thousand are living "out of home" in Catholic primary and secondary schools.

Brisbane archdiocese has more than 60,000 students in 133 schools.

Brisbane priest and long-time youth advocate Fr Wally Dethlefs, who was invited by BCE to coordinate the submission, said he was hopeful that the Government, when it releases its White Paper on homelessness next month, would

present a range of measures to help at-risk students.

Fr Dethlefs worked alongside 34 BCE personnel - from guidance officers to teachers and pastoral workers - who volunteered to help prepare the submission to the Government.

BCE executive director David Hutton forwarded the Green Paper submission document to the Government's homelessness task force on June 23.

Fr Dethlefs said statistics indicating that a high percentage of schools in Brisbane archdiocese fell into the disadvantaged category were contained in the 2007 report *Dropping off the edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia*.

The report, commissioned by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, was prepared by Professor Tony Vinson from the University of Sydney and

tabled in Federal Parliament in February last year.

Queensland areas identified in the report in the category of greatest disadvantage included Hervey Bay, Caboolture, Inala, Woodridge, Kingston, Marsden, Loganlea and Waterford West - all within Brisbane archdiocese.

Fr Dethlefs, who works with BCE as a project officer for disadvantaged children, said many archdiocesan schools felt the impacts of location in economically disadvantaged areas in a number of ways.

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