

**Christmas giving:** Sr Christine Henry (second from left) with her dog Lady Kenya receives gifts for families in remote and rural Queensland from St Vincent's Care Services and St Vincent's Health Australia staff Debbie Hambleton, Lauren Kippin, Kirby Campbell, Desire Swanepoel, Anita Tramacchi and Robert Roma.



# Care goes west

By Emilie Ng

A FARMING family who was devastated by the death of a parent and had its home damaged by fire while battling one of the worst droughts in Queensland history will find its stockings full on Christmas day.

Staff at the Bowen Hills offices of St Vincent's Care Services and St Vincent's Health Australia delivered a range of household appliances, grocery vouchers and Christmas gifts for the affected family and others living in Queensland receiving support from Sisters of Charity Sister Christine Henry.

Sr Henry co-ordinates Downs and West Community Support, a ministry of the Sisters of Charity, and provides on-the-ground practical support for people in rural and remote areas of Queensland.

St Vincent's Care Services already provides a station wagon for Sr Henry but the organisation offered to support the charity further at Christmas.

During a visit to Brisbane, the "nun in the bush" told staff at the SVCS' Bowen Hills office about a family who suffered tragedies in recent years.

Like other farming communities in western Queensland, the family had been battling the

drought and floods for several years, losing livestock, soil and farming equipment as a result.

The family was forced to re-finance and took two of its children out of school early and into home-schooling to help rebuild and maintain the farm. They suffered further tragedies this year when one of the parents died, in addition to a fire that caused significant damage to part of the family home.

SVCS chief executive officer John Leahy said staff were struck by the story of the family and were compelled to offer a helping hand to the charity.

"When Sr Christine told us about this family who have suffered unimaginable tragedy and hardship in the past few years, we really wanted to help not only get them back on their feet, but also help make their Christmas a little brighter," Mr Leahy said.

As well as the generous pile of gifts, both St Vincent's organisations donated more than \$2000 worth of Bunnings Warehouse vouchers to help the family repair its kitchen which was damaged in the house fire.

St Vincent's Care Services also donated two large hampers of food, toiletries and household items to refugee families supported by Brisbane's Romero Centre.

Mr Leahy said staff from SVCS "recognised we lead fortunate lives" and always sought to help those "who are less fortunate", especially at Christmas.