



Corporate charity begins at home

by GIOVANNI TORRE

THE re-opening of a house for homeless men in Highgate has been used as an example of how companies and charities can work together to improve society.

The Lincoln Street home was renovated and expanded as a joint project between the Uniting Church and property group Mirvac and can now house six men, up from four.

The company kicked in \$35,000, including \$15,000 directly by staff through salary sacrifice and fundraising, of the estimated \$70,000 cost. Other suppliers also donated time and supplies.

Mirvac and UnitingCare West, the church's charity arm, run 30 programs across metropolitan Perth.

"Partnerships are essential... for non-profit organisations to be more effective in achieving their goals, critical to building a civil society in which each of the members



• Chris Hall. Photo by Giovanni Torre

of our community are able to contribute and participate and live with respect and dignity," said UnitingCare West CEO Chris Hall.

"We are seeing a rising number of families and individuals presenting with increasingly complex needs.

"Last night across WA an estimated 13,390 men, women and children were homeless. We know this is a conservative

estimate."

Mr Hall said one man, homeless and missing all his teeth, had asked for help after battling drugs and alcohol. Within 18 months he had received counseling, dentures, found a full time trades job, saved the bond needed for private rental, paid off debts, got his licence back and was awarded custody of his three children.

Mirvac chief Evan Campbell said the company was "very proud" to be part of the project and thanked a long list of contributing contractors.

However, observers are predicting tough times ahead for such partnerships, with recent surveys showing 57

per cent of charities reporting a fall in fundraising but 66 per cent reporting increased demand.

"When the money is flowing freely it's pretty easy," said WA Business News editor Mark Beyer.

"The real challenge is to ensure the commitment of the business community is sustained if we experience a more challenging economic environment."