

Angels on our streets

WHILE most of us are tucked up in bed in the wee hours of the night, Carol Christopher is out and about in the city looking for people who are drunk, vulnerable and needing help.

The senior chaplain and program director of Cairns Street Chaplains has just celebrated 12 months of night patrols, during which 500 people were helped.

Distinguished by their purple and white polo shirts, the volunteer chaplains patrol the city's entertainment precinct on Fridays and Saturdays between 11pm and 5am.

On any night they might give first aid; care for people who are unconsciousness from alcohol or drugs; call an ambulance for the ill and injured; listen to the troubled; look out for the vulnerable; and help organise transport home.

"Many people are amazed that Cairns Street Chaplains would work on the night-time streets to help people without being paid for it," Carol says.

"But our 'payment' far exceeds financial reward. Our payment is the honour of meeting people on the streets who we've had the privilege of helping, and seeing them looking and feeling much better; or speaking with parents who are extremely thankful that their sons and daughters arrived home safely.

"Our payment is in the re-



HERE TO HELP: Cairns Street Chaplains program director Carol Christopher (centre) with fellow chaplains Mella Beaumont and Marsha Sparke.

Picture: VERONICA SAGREDO

lationships we build with those in the services who work on the streets, and with those we are there to help.

"Some of the ways in which we assist may seem small and insignificant to us, but to those

who need help that is far from the case."

She said the only patrols cancelled during the year were during Cyclone Ita in April.

"It's only a cyclone that would prevent us being out

there. We are very committed to this service and are always willing to go the extra mile."

To become a street chaplain or support their work, contact streetchaplains@cairnschurches.net.au.