



Pick the real one: a multitude of Santas parades in Bourke St yesterday for UnitingCare. Picture: PAUL TREZISE

Give Santa a hand

CHRISTMAS came early to Melbourne yesterday, with dozens of Santa's helpers taking to the city streets.

UnitingCare Victoria and Target launched their annual Christmas appeal to the peeling of Santa's bells in Bourke St.

More than 108,000 gifts were donated by Australians last year, with almost 40,000 given to Victorians in need.

"All Victorians can be someone's Santa this year by donating a gift beneath the Share Christmas Tree at Target," said the Rev Raoul Spackman-Williams, of UnitingCare.

Gifts can be donated at all Target stores until 5pm Christmas Eve.

Addict overdoses day after script Family sues GP over death

Elissa Hunt

chief court reporter

THE distraught family of a teenager who died from a drug overdose is suing the doctor who allegedly prescribed the pills that killed him.

Brennan Hetherington, 19, was trying to kick his drug habit when a GP allegedly prescribed him more than 100 pills to help him cope with the symptoms of heroin withdrawal.

The teenager saw the Cheltenham doctor on January 5, 2002.

By the next day he was dead, having overdosed at a friend's house.

Brennan's mother, stepfather and four sisters are suing the doctor, Dr Maurice Gilovitz, in the County Court.

Their statement of claim alleges he failed to take reasonable care in prescribing the drugs, given Brennan's drug-abuse history.

It claims the doctor prescribed the drug Doloxene contrary to the manufacturer's recommendations that it not be given to drug-dependent patients or in combination with sedatives or muscle relaxants.

The writ, lodged by law firm Arnold Thomas and Becker, also alleges the doctor prescribed excessive doses.

Brennan was prescribed 50 Doloxene tablets, a type of pain reliever, 50 Valium pills and 25 Temaze, another sedative.

The family are claiming compensation for loss of earnings and depression suffered after Brennan's death.

Brennan had visited the Cheltenham clinic on the day before he died and had been prescribed 20 diazepam pills by another doctor. But he re-



Battling back: family photos of Brennan Hetherington.



Grief: a letter his family wrote after Brennan died.

turned an hour later and saw Dr Gilovitz, who prescribed extra medication.

In court documents Dr Gilovitz denies any wrongdoing.

He admits knowing

Brennan had a history of heroin use, but says he advised him that taking too much medication was dangerous and could kill him.

The doctor claims he

told the pharmacist who dispensed the medication that only 30 of the valium tablets should be given.

He denies the amount of pills was excessive or that he prescribed Doloxene against the manufacturer's advice.

Brennan's mum Sandra Mollica said her son was a happy boy who lost his way after the stabbing death of his best friend in August 2001.

"After the funeral, Brennan began to cut himself off, effectively," she said. "He had never experienced death before and it was the saddest day of his life."

Ms Mollica said he worked in the family's on-site catering business at major events including the Big Day Out and was often backstage mingling with the stars.

He had dreams of building a bar and hiring bands to play there.

After a run-in with police and problems with heroin, Brennan was trying to set his life back on track, wanting to build a house and start a family, Ms Mollica said.

The case is due to start in the County Court today.



King Carl XVI Gustaf

Another royal tour

AUSTRALIA is hosting more European royalty with the arrival of the King and Queen of Sweden in Sydney last night.

The tourism industry is hoping the tour by King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia, which begins officially in Canberra today, will boost Australia's appeal to Swedes. The royal couple will also visit Adelaide, Perth and Uluru on the tour, which ends on Friday.

Federal Minister for Tourism, Fran Bailey, said the visit was a fantastic opportunity to showcase Australia and could prove a boon for Swedish tourism.

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