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MCN Columnists

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Nowhere on the Wikipedia page dedicated to Cairns, Australia, does it mention that the coastal city in far north Queensland is the “pedophile capital of Australia.” According to several people interviewed in Vijaykumar Mirchandani’s bittersweet documentary, **“Where the Streets Have No Name,”** however, that’s one of things that attracts tourism to the area, which also is close to the Great Barrier Reef and an easily accessible rainforest. The documentary describes the efforts of Dr. Harald Falge, who for the last 20 years has worked tirelessly to deliver food, shelter and clothing to the many homeless youths drawn to Cairns for its fair weather and scenery. That, of course, was before the arrival of the predators. Most of the young people served by Falge have experienced physical and mental abuse at home, addiction to drugs and alcohol, mental illness and poverty. Even if jobs were available in the isolated region, they would only last the tourist season. What makes Cairn different from other meccas for street kids is the unusually high rate of pedophilia, rapes and prostitution. By supplying the staples of life, at least, Falge believes he can give the kids a leg up to survival and independence. He’s helped by friends and family members, but considers the charity to be part of his Christian mission. To that end, there doesn’t appear to be much proselytizing and the recipients aren’t required to attend services to receive aid, as do the Bowery dwellers in Ragosin’s film. – *Gary Dretzka*