



**29 November 2013**

**Notes for media: Tuesday 3 December is International Day of People with Disability**

**St Vincent de Paul Society working to deliver inclusive communities**

The St Vincent de Paul Society has been delivering the *NSW Government's Ability Links* program in the Hunter region for close to six months with great success. *Ability Links* is the NSW Government's program which assists people with disability to enjoy inclusive lives in all spheres: community, public, private and social.

*Ability Links* aims to build a person's informal networks to support them to achieve their goals and have their needs and interests met. The St Vincent de Paul Society delivers the program to people and communities with funding from Ageing, Disability and Home Care, part of the NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services.

Ability Linkers work in Newcastle; Maitland; Lake Macquarie; Port Stephens; Cessnock; Dungog; Muswellbrook; Singleton; Upper Hunter Shire; Gosford and Wyong.

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW CEO, Michael Perusco says that the Society is pleased to be the provider of this new and ground-breaking initiative.

"Ability Links fits perfectly with our community-based responses. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to provide a program that will deliver real outcomes and social inclusion for people with disability," says Mr Perusco.

Ability Links Area Coordinator, Dawn Brown explains that program places people with disability at the centre of decision making about their lives.

"We are privileged to be able to meet with people with disability, their families, carers and community members across the Hunter. We will continue our work with people with disability for their full participation and inclusion in community," says Ms Brown.

Lizzy, who has a mild intellectual disability, was referred to an Ability Links worker after having secured accommodation through a local refuge. Since that time, Lizzy has been working with her local Linker to find opportunities in her local community and manage her budget.

"Lizzy was also connected with the local St Vincent de Paul Society Conference that assisted her with setting up her new home. She has now set her next goal, which is looking at starting some volunteer work and making more social connections," says Ms Brown.

Ability Links Hunter is delivering outcomes and breaking down barriers for people with disability every day.

***Interview and photo opportunities available.***

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