



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Anti-Poverty Week (13-19 October) – Keeping the lights on**

Imagine the fear and anxiety a young mother faces staring at a \$1300 electricity bill she has no hope of paying in time, when she is already struggling day to day on a single parent payment.

Some people have known poverty all their life, but increasingly for many Queenslanders poverty has been thrust upon them by life events that were out of their control or they didn't see coming.

Vinnies volunteer and energy expert Anne Armansin sees people each week who come to her in despair, anxious about how they will keep the lights on at home.

Anne recently helped a young mum of two who came to her for help after her electricity had been disconnected after she couldn't pay the \$400 they demanded to reconnect her power.

"This mum had to go without power for three nights in total, she and her kids slept on the floor and she made a camping trip out of it," said Anne.

Anne said people who fall into trouble with energy accounts are an increasingly common occurrence, especially among those receiving Newstart and on pensions.

"They can be quite defeated, they don't know how to express themselves properly about their situation or where to start," she said.

"Their mental health suffers, people in stress go into survival mode, they look after the situation they have in front of them and things that are too hard go into the too hard basket."

No matter how much debt people find themselves in, Anne wants people to know Vinnies can always help.

"We worked with the young mum to help cover the costs of getting her electricity reconnected, as well as helping her with food and some other items," Anne said.

"It's a lovely feeling to be able to help people sort these issues out and in a way share the burden.

"We see a lot of people in very similar situations, there are too many people just like this right across Australia and we see them every single day."

Vinnies Queensland CEO Kevin Mercer said Anti-Poverty Week (13-19 October) presented the government with a perfect opportunity to raise the rate of Newstart.

He said doing so would make a positive difference, not only on a struggling economy, but in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Australians like the young Brisbane mother.

“We hear calls for help across the state and the majority of them are from desperate people on Newstart and other support payments, struggling to make ends meet,” he said.

“Thousands of these are single parents and people with a disability who want nothing more than to better their lives, but are skipping meals and struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

“Newstart hasn’t seen a rise in real terms for 25 years. It’s shameful that in 2019 Queenslanders, many of them children, are going hungry simply due to a welfare payment that can’t lift them off their knees when they fall on hard times.”

Vinnies has already assisted more than 27,128 people in Brisbane in 2019, 8611 of those were children under the age of 16.

\*For more information on the work of Anne Armansin in helping Queenslanders who face the threat of electricity disconnection and energy bill stress an interview with Anne can be arranged.

**ENDS.**

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