



MEDIA RELEASE

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Anti-Poverty Week (13-19 October) – Bringing families back together

Vinnies support worker Dale Mann smiles when she sees a single dad she helped reunite with his young daughter walk her to school each day, knowing she played a role in their reunion as a family.

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

Dale said the dad she helped was struggling to live on Newstart when he lost custody of his daughter due to not being able to afford rent in a place of his own.

Anxious and filled with despair he turned to the Vinnies Cornerstone Program in Warwick, which is funded by Department of Housing and Public Works, where he met and was supported by Dale.

“This guy was essentially couch surfing with friends and because the Department of Child Safety was already involved they deemed his living environment inappropriate and they took his daughter away.”

Dale said she witnesses the impact of poverty every day, in cases like this father and daughter, and believes raising the rate of Newstart can change lives.

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 Warwick father and his daughter.

“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.”

Not all stories of struggle end badly.

Vinnies worker Dale shares that after meeting with the desperate Warwick dad, she stepped him through the process of getting his daughter back, and importantly found the family a safe place to live.

“He was absolutely beside himself about losing his daughter to foster care. He desperately wanted to get her back but didn’t really know how or where to start,” Dale said.

“He wanted to give her the best life she could possibly have.

“Vinnies was able to help him to address a few issues that the Department of Child Safety wanted him to address and he was very engaged in that process, keen to do whatever he needed to do to get that little girl back.

“We helped him to break the cycle so he could give her the life he wanted to give her but didn’t have the skills to.

“Helping this dad was a very emotional journey, not just for him but for his child - and for us support workers too.

“I’ll always look back on that case with a smile. Every time I see him walk his daughter to school, I think, that was a good day at work.”

Vinnies has already assisted more than 2492 people in the Warwick region in 2019, 1067 of those were children under the age of 16.

*For more information on the work of Dale Mann and how she helped reunite the father and daughter an interview with Ms Mann can be arranged.

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