



MEDIA RELEASE

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Anti-Poverty Week (October 13-19) – Support through the toughest of times

Young Townsville single mother *Jane has a child with a rare brain disease, meaning she must travel to Brisbane regularly for medical treatment.

She's also among the thousands of Queenslanders struggling to make ends meet on a carer's payment.

Jane and her four children moved to Townsville to escape an abusive relationship, and be closer to family support, but the family's life changed when one of her teenage twin sons was assaulted at school three years ago and ended up with a rare brain disease from the head injury.

"At 16 he has the brain capacity of a 4-6-year-old. So much damage has been done to his brain," said Jane.

"He is only the 18th person in the world diagnosed with his condition, and Townsville can't really do much. We see doctors here, but all the specialists are based down south.

"It's a struggle financially having to travel back and forth, and because a lot of his treatments are chemotherapy-based and he has heavy doses. The other kids can't always come with us so I'm having to find places for them to stay."

After leaving her job to care for him, Jane turned to Vinnies when times got really tough.

She said Vinnies had been a "godsend" to her family, helping her with food and other costs of living pressures, adding that the moral support helped as much as the financial support.

"They (Vinnies) have been such a humungous help, they've just been amazing," said Jane.

"You're not left with much at all when you're travelling away so much. I mean just from the airport to the hospital its nearly \$100.

"When they come around they take the time to talk to you. They don't just come out and give you something and leave, they talk to you, it's just the support they give you as well, it's important to me.

"Last time I saw the volunteers we had just had a really hard time, my son had a really bad seizure and had spent time in intensive care and things were really tough.

"Libby who works with Vinnies here in Townsville is just amazing, she has been so helpful."

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 Jane and her children.

“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 15,565 people in the Townsville region in 2019, 7095 of those were children under the age of 16.

For more information on Vinnies assistance to people in need in the Townsville region interviews with volunteers can be arranged.

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Media contact: Vinnies Queensland Communications Officer Joshua Paterson.
Phone: 0408 675 567 | Email: joshua.paterson@svdpqld.org.au

*names have been changed to protect the identity of those we assist.