



MEDIA RELEASE

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Anti-Poverty Week (13-19 October) - Poverty affects all ages

Vinnies volunteer Annette Baker sees poverty and people staring down the barrel of homelessness every day on the Sunshine Coast.

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

Annette recently helped a 78-year-old lady and her 54-year-old son on the Sunshine Coast who were reduced to eating just one meal a day in order to be able to pay rent, after her son was made redundant from his job.

Facing ageism and already crowded job market, as well as one of the steepest rental markets in the country, the mother and son not only had to content with a weekly rent of \$550 but a car that required hundreds of dollars' worth of repairs.

"They were both very upset when we saw them," Annette said.

"The mother was unwell which was only adding to the stress of her son, who felt like his struggle to find a new job was adding to his mother's worries.

"Their lease was expiring, and they knew they couldn't afford to stay there on a pension and Newstart. They also lived 15 minutes away from services like Centrelink which meant higher bus fares."

When Annette was able to help the mother and her son with food, getting their car fixed and a range of other support, they were overwhelmed with gratitude.

"The mother was embarrassed at having to ask for help and shed a few tears when we were able to help to the extent that we did," Annette said.

"They were super appreciative, we were just glad we were able to help relieve some of their stress and give them a hand up when they needed it – because that's why Vinnies is here, to help those in need."

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 Sunshine Coast woman and her son.

"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 8690 people on the Sunshine Coast in 2019, 3745 of those were children under the age of 16.

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*For more information on Vinnies work helping people on the Sunshine Coast, interviews with Annette Baker can be arranged.

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