

Monday, 7 August 2017

New focus on young families at yourtown's San Miguel homelessness centre

This National Homelessness Week (7-13 August), yourtown's family homelessness service the San Miguel Family Centre in North Richmond, Sydney has announced a new focus on young parents and their children.

According to **yourtown** Head of Client Services Brendan Bourke, early intervention is critical to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, housing instability and welfare dependence.

"For 34 years, **yourtown's** San Miguel Family Centre has been providing not just temporary accommodation for parents and children but also counselling and guidance to help families tackle the issues creating homelessness," Mr Bourke said.

"We know that when young parents secure sustainable housing and employment, the life prospects of their children improve dramatically.

"That's why we've reshaped our service to meet the needs of young families experiencing homelessness.

"Being young and homeless is tough enough, but it's so much harder when you have the needs of a child to consider. We offer young parents and their children a safe place to stay and wraparound support designed to equip families for a brighter future."

San Miguel Manager Alison Schneidereit, Manager of San Miguel Family Centre said the Centre's programs will be specialised to help young parents 25 years and under and their children.

"Families at San Miguel are offered specialist child and youth development support; expressive therapy to help children overcome possible trauma; life skills development and links to employment, health, legal, medical and other specialist services," Ms Schneidereit said.

"We also support them in their transition to safe, affordable accommodation and offer outreach support to help sustain their new home. We aim to change young lives."

Sarah, a young mum, who with her two small daughters is one of the families currently living at San Miguel.

It can be hard to escape homelessness in Sydney. Not only are there so many people going for rentals, for a young person with two children to support it can be nearly impossible.

Sarah and her young family resorted to couch surfing, sleeping on the couches of family and friends.

"I was just bouncing around from house to house, just trying to get by with two kids and didn't know what was going to happen tomorrow... I'd lie on the couch with one child at my feet and my other child in my arms.

"I found out about **yourtown** from a friend. As soon as I rang them they were giving me phone numbers and helping me out. I had a week until I moved in. My daughters are still adjusting to sleeping in their own beds. We have somewhere to come home to now."

Living at San Miguel gave Sarah the time and resources to take care of her children, study at TAFE and look for long-term accommodation.

“The girls are firmly established in preschool and Sarah was out and about constantly looking for a house, doing what she needs to do to participate with us to make sure those goals are met,” Ms Schneidereit said.

Just last week, Sarah’s hard work and persistence paid off after several months of constantly searching the rental market.

“We’re so pleased that Sarah has found private rental accommodation and a place to call her own. We’ll continue to work with her and her family in an outreach capacity over the next few months to ensure she has any support she needs. We want to help her in any way we can,” Ms Schneidereit said.

The San Miguel Family Centre can accommodate up to 16 young parents and 30 or more children. Each residence is fully furnished and has its own kitchen and laundry.

For more information about accommodation and support at San Miguel Family Centre contact us on 4579 6622 or sanmiguel@yourtown.com.au

yourtown is a registered charity and public company providing services young people can access to find jobs, learn skills, become great parents and live safe, happy lives. For over 55 years we’ve been tackling the issues impacting young people in Australia - like youth unemployment and mental health, and we take on issues like family and domestic violence. The community, including **yourtown**’s Art Unions, funds most of what we do.

-ENDS-

INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Brendan Bourke, **yourtown** Head of Client Services

Alison Schneidereit, Manager of the **yourtown** San Miguel Family Centre

Ann Chandra, **yourtown** Specialist Accommodation Services Manager

Sarah, San Miguel Family Centre former resident

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Regan Flor rflor@yourtown.com.au 0423 843 786

Tracey Gillinder tgillinder@yourtown.com.au 0434 077 478