

# NEWTOWN

## Neighbourhood Centre

### New(town) Beginnings #17

Dear Neighbour,

From November 25 to December 10, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is participating in the international UN campaign, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

This is a cause close to our hearts as Domestic and Family Violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness and something I unfortunately see the impacts of regularly here at the Centre.

These 16 days are a chance to ignite conversations and ensure that individuals and workplaces have the knowledge and skills to address this issue.

For many, Christmas may be a time of celebration. However, for women in volatile, abusive relationships, the Christmas and New Year holiday period can be an awful time of year. Stress is often at higher levels, and when compounded by addictions or financial insecurity this can lead to terrible consequences.

Our Newtown Early Intervention Support Hub (NEISH) held fortnightly on Tuesdays, is targeted at women who are either experiencing domestic and family violence, or who are trying to rebuild their lives after enduring the horror of it.

We bring together services who specialise in this area and welcome women into a safe space, solely for women. Apart from the weekly regulars such as Centrelink, Haymarket Foundation, Metro Assist, and WAGEC, we have a family lawyer from Marrickville Legal Centre, who is always busy dispensing free advice and there is an employment service which comes monthly to provide free advice and tips.

We also receive free clothes from Thread Together, such an important organisation, who use a similar sustainability model to Oz Harvest - they accept brand new donations from clothing companies and then redistribute the wares to community organisations and NGO's.

Helen, my colleague who manages programs associated with reducing domestic and family violence, supports women who present to the Centre with unimaginable stories of challenges and complex trauma often associated with a long history of domestic and family abuse.

What shocked me was that Helen reported the majority of women "are apologetic about seeking support and guidance when they initially approach us. They are often feeling guilty and ashamed about finding themselves in situations of abuse and violence. I am still saddened when I hear that these women think they should have known better."

I cannot imagine being in that situation, and the women we meet are some of the most resilient and brave people I have ever known. It is important for us all to understand the complexity of these situations, and to respect that it is every individual woman's decision as to when, and if, she decides to leave.

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During this campaign NNC are celebrating that our local community has united to say NO to violence against women and children.

As a committed supporter of NNC we ask that you stand alongside us and continue the conversation, whether this be looking out for someone at work or shifting what has traditionally been acceptable language used to describe women. Like it or not, discrimination and inequality inadvertently contribute to the horrendous and unacceptable level of violence against women.

Everyone must do their part and ensure that all individuals are cared for. It's time to say NO to violence against women and children.

Mel

P.S – looking for more resources? Our Watch is a powerful initiative that is encouraging people to take action and Follow My Lead is a resource to help individuals, community groups and workplaces respond more effectively to potential disclosures.

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