

## Mental Health Royal Commission Submission

### Case Study

- Hannah is a 34 year old female
- Homelessness following family violence

*Hannah (not her real name)* is a mother of three who became homeless after fleeing a violent and abusive relationship which left her in financial hardship with debts incurred through the relationship, the loss of her home through rent arrears, and the gradual loss of her possessions through constant moving and no money for storage costs.

When she walked through the doors of our St Kilda site she was distressed, tired and feeling helpless. She had found short term emergency housing with her young family, was on a single parenting payment, didn't know where her next meal was coming from, in debt, and falling further into poverty and hopelessness.

She was also struggling to get her children into a new school as well as getting her youngest into childcare, due to language barriers, lost paperwork and immunisation records. Her children were anxious and distressed from the insecurity and uncertainty of being continually moved from one short term housing place to the next, and the loss of their school friends and community. The oldest child (in the presence of the younger children) often had the responsibility of translating for her mother. This resulted in all children often hearing distressing information (including family violence) and witnessing their mother's extreme stress and anxiety.

Like most people experiencing homelessness, Hannah found navigating the complex housing, welfare and health systems difficult. She was spending most of her time attending appointments or standing in queues to get onto waiting lists for various much needed assistance. Like many people without a home or adequate income, she had lost contact with family, friends and her networks. With a range of skilled staff and services available in one place, PPCG assisted Hannah with:

- **Food and food vouchers** and basic items such as toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Access to a **phone** to chase up her child's health records and get him into a Childcare Centre so that Hannah could find work
- **Direct referrals** to housing, health, schools, childcare, and employment
- **Financial Counselling** to set up a repayment plan for her debts and develop a budget
- **'Back to School'** funds to buy books and shoes for her children to attend school

The outcome is that with PPCG's advocacy and support and her own hard work, Hannah has secured a three bedroom rental home for herself and her children. Her children are at school or in childcare and she has some casual employment. She is beginning to build new friendships and social connections. But most importantly, for the first time in a long time, she has regained dignity and control over her life and is looking forward to her and her children's future.