

Wednesday 28 September 2022

WE CARE CONNECT UNVEILS ITS BRAND NEW HUNTER WAREHOUSE WITH HELP FROM NEWCASTLE PERMANENT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The [20,000 children living in poverty across the Hunter](#) are set to receive a much-needed hand up, with We Care Connect officially opening its first warehouse in the region as a direct outcome of a \$70,000 grant from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

We Care Connect's volunteer-led model delivers a practical, in-demand service that benefits families in poverty by providing high-quality, essential childhood equipment and supplies through a network of agencies and case workers.

Originally established on the Central Coast, We Care Connect's new warehouse facility at Thornton sets up a sustainable operation to support those in need across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the lower Hunter.

Chair of Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, Jennifer Leslie, said the new facility would help We Care Connect to provide local families doing it tough in the Hunter with the support and services they need.

"This 450-square-metre warehouse has been equipped with excellent facilities and will be a bustling hive of activity," said Ms Leslie.

"We Care Connect currently supports 250 Central Coast families and re-homes close to 10,000 items each month. We know there are twice as many children living in disadvantage in the Hunter as there are on the Coast, so volunteers will be all hands on deck re-homing cots and prams to clothing and nappies as We Care Connect works towards their vision of reversing the day-to-day impact of poverty.

"The members of our community who make generous donations to We Care Connect can feel confident their contribution will be stored safely and securely until a new home is found for the item with the right family."

We Care Connect CEO and Founder, Derryck Klarkowski, said the Thornton warehouse would help the local charity build on their work on the Central Coast.

"The Hunter has parallel demographics to the Central Coast, with high levels of disadvantage, often low socio-economic income levels and pockets of extreme poverty," said Mr Klarkowski.

"We have an amazing support program across the Central Coast and we want to share that love and support here in the Hunter.

"We support disadvantaged children with clothing, nappies, bed linen, cots, prams, car seats – a whole range of essential items.

"We're often asked, 'How can I help?' And we offer a very practical way to help. If you no longer need that cot because the kids have grown up, give it to We Care Connect and we'll

pass it on to a family in need. Community donations make up more than 95% of what we distribute.”

As for where the support may go, Mr Klarkowski said previous families who have received help included a young mum-to-be, seven months pregnant and with no family to support her, for whom filling the nursery felt like a distant dream. Another was a mum and four kids who came from interstate, escaping domestic violence, leaving all their belongings behind – living in a small room in a hostel, they had to rebuild their lives from scratch.

“We Care Connect is powered by over 60 volunteers who provide passion, skill and sheer hard work to give children the critical support they need. We also have the support of an amazing community – so many people want to help kids in need,” Mr Klarkowski said.

“Critically, we’ve now partnered up with about 250 case workers. So, we’re there for neighbourhood and community centres, family support agencies, schools and student support officers. This means everything we give is part of a total package of care.

“It’s not just a shirt, it’s not just a car seat – it’s professional support that goes with it to break the cycle of poverty.”

We Care Connect are looking for both stock donations and volunteers for the Thornton Warehouse:

- Volunteers would ideally be willing to donate time in Thornton on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday from 9am until 2pm
- Stock: most-needed items are clothing for children ages 4-16, toiletries, as well as quality prams and cots

Head to the We Care Connect website for more info: www.wecareconnect.org.au

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has a proud association with We Care Connect having provided \$118,000 in grants to the charity since 2020.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation distributes around \$1.5 million in grants each year to facilitate charitable projects that make a difference to improving local communities throughout the Hunter, Central West, Central Coast, New England, Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of NSW.

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Facts and figures about We Care Connect

- We Care Connect has grown every year, from helping 440 children in its first year of 2016 to an anticipated 4,500 in 2022.
- Since 2016, its volunteer team has supported over 13,700 children distributing more than 310,000 items free of charge, in partnership with over 80 family support programs.
- We Care Connect support on average between 200–250 children each month, and distribute over 10,000 items to families
- May 2022 was its biggest month to date, with 338 children supported and over 17,000 items distributed
- We Care Connect is powered by over 60 volunteers on the Central Coast, and 30 volunteers have already been recruited for the Hunter
- In FY21, items re-homed had a second-hand value of \$912,500