



Connections

child, youth and family services

MEDIA RELEASE

Attention: COS, news, social affairs, youth, health & community

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NEW IDEAS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WORK TO REDUCE POVERTY RECOGNISED

THE ANNUAL WJ CRAIG LECTURE & PRESENTATION OF ANTI-POVERTY AWARDS

In a ceremony held in Anti-Poverty Week, Connections UnitingCare hosted The Annual WJ Craig Lecture and Presentation of Connections UnitingCare Anti-Poverty Awards.

Delivering the 23rd Annual WJ Craig Lecture was Moira Rayner, a senior and experienced lawyer and children's rights advocate. In her speech entitled 'Protecting Children's Rights', Ms Rayner stated that 'our progress in protecting the fundamental rights of all children is disgracefully slow. Children are the most talked about, but silent and powerless, members of society.'

Ms Rayner's Lecture outlined five 'modest' proposals, including outlining immediate steps that should be taken on child protection 'while we develop a different approach with a sense of urgency'. Her Lecture asked for acceptance for the cost of 'a generous, universal and whole-of-government program of supportive and early intervention services for all, rather than obviously 'at risk', children' and a call to recognise the importance of family strengthening, community organisations.

The event also saw the announcement and presentation of the 2009 Connections UnitingCare Anti-Poverty Awards. Two Gippsland residents Sarah Elston and Caitlin Grigsby, were announced as the main recipients of the Award in recognition of their efforts in overcoming poverty and supporting local women through their organisation, the Blue Stockings Association Inc.

Established in 2007 after a successful event celebrating women's pursuit in education, Blue Stockings Association Inc. has awarded over \$40,000 worth of scholarships to women within the Gippsland Community to help them further their educational endeavours, many of whom would otherwise have had to discontinue their studies.

'Education as a means of eradicating poverty is one that is openly talked about in the community and is often thought of as a key component to overcoming many problems facing communities - it is refreshing to see that this concept is actually being put into place in the local community,' said Connections Chairperson and founder of the Awards, Adrian Pyle.

'These awards are an avenue for us to un-earth the extraordinary young talent that we have in this country and these two young women are no exception. Their desire to make a difference in the lives of women and empower them further, humbled me and the Award committee,' Adrian said.

Encouragement Awards for their work on poverty alleviation were also presented to Elliot Costello co-founded Y-Gap (Y Generation Against Poverty) a volunteer based organisation that offers its members the opportunity to join in practical and global initiatives by volunteering their services. And, Daniel Perkins, co-founder of Mayibuye South Africa, working with disadvantaged young people in South Africa. Through dance and theatre, students are taught about the issues that affect them such as drugs, violence and racism and bring their new found knowledge back to their community.

Established in 2004, the Connections UnitingCare Anti-Poverty Awards recognise young Victorians and Tasmanians between the ages of 16 and 30 who are making a contribution to the eradication of poverty, locally, nationally or internationally.

As Anti-Poverty Week states 'Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians.' Connections UnitingCare and so many other community welfare agencies support vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community. Every day we provide services like intense family support for families (often with children) who are in crisis due to difficulties including drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, experience of family violence and poverty.

We aim to support community members to overcome social isolation and gain self-confidence and a sense of worth, we work in partnership with people to achieve positive outcomes and more broadly we work within the community to raise awareness about the issues associated with disadvantage and poverty.

Media: Connections Chairperson and founder of the Anti-Poverty Awards, Adrian Pyle and Chief Executive Officer, Angela Forbes are available for interview. Contact Connections Communications and Fundraising Manager, Matt Clear on 03 9271 0800 / 0403 229 094 or matt.clear@connections.org.au

Connections is a community welfare agency of the Uniting Church's UnitingCare network in Australia providing a range of innovative and early intervention programs that support vulnerable children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.

More information at www.connections.org.au