

Launch of NewPin Profram at Uniting Care Kippax: 31 March 2010

Georgina Byron's talk: Why decided to support Newpin

Newpin (New parent Infant program) – it really is an effective family program that breaks that systemic negative cycle of destructive family behaviours and enhances parent-child well-being.

Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, distinguished guests. I am delighted to be here at the launch of the Canberra newpin program. I must say, I didn't think it would happen quite so soon!

I came across Newpin in October 2008 while attending the Newpin book launch in Sydney. At the launch, I heard from experts in the Child Abuse and Protection Industry who painted the picture on how dire the situation is in Aust in how we care for our children. 34,000 children live away from their parents in State care each night. This number is rising by 10% every year. Significantly 2 in 3 of these cases are due to emotional or physical abuse and neglect yet we know few parents set out to harm their children. This captured my attention though it was the stories that really motivated and inspired me into action.

3 courageous mothers and a father shared their extraordinary stories having been through Newpin years ago at Uniting Care Burnside – the first ever Newpin program in Aust which has now been running for 11 years. They explained how Newpin had given them the courage to change and saved theirs and their families lives. Their stories were different but each had suffered extreme hardship with the common themes of domestic violence, substance dependence and/or mental health problems. Not surprisingly, none of them had a parent role model in their lives nor much if any love.

“One mother recounted her traumatic childhood filled with physical and sexual abuse and later as an adult experienced a relationship of more abuse. By the time she was 22, she had 2 young children and was treating them exactly same way – it was all she knew but it was something she promised herself she wouldn't do.. With the encouragement of her GP she enrolled in Newpin. Newpin stuck by her for 2 intensive years and 10 years on she proudly told the audience “my biggest achievement is that I love my children and

they love me and last yr my eldest daughter completed year 12 – no-one in all past generations of my family have come even close.” She summed up - if you have not been taught how to love and be loved, how can you show and teach it.”

It was clear to me this was an evidence based, life changing program for vulnerable families. It broke that negative systemic cycle that repeats itself in generations. I immediately rang the directors of our Foundation and unanimously we agreed it was a program Canberra would benefit from and we would do what we could to help bring it here. Soon after I met with Linda Mondy who was the author of the Newpin book and was instrumental in bringing newpin here to Australia. She had won a Winston Churchill Fellowship in 1997 to research the most effective parent program overseas. I confirmed our commitment to Linda and Linda took the responsibility to talk to community organisations in Canberra. Little did we know Uniting Care Kippax was doing some serious leg-work with the Government to get a parent program, ideally Newpin off the ground. The rest is history – 5 months later we all met at the launch of another Newpin program at St Marys in Sydney. There we rejoiced that Uniting Care Kippax was committed and had enough funds to take it on.

We are delighted to be partnering with the ACT Government and Uniting Care Kippax to make this program a reality here in Canberra. Thank you congratulations to the dedicated and talented Uniting Care Kippax team for driving this forward.

To support a program that is not just about providing relief and a band-aide but one that provides real generational change is certainly worthwhile.

I encourage all of you to support this program through whatever means so you can be a part of breaking the cycle of destructive behaviour that is endemic in vulnerable families.

Newpin is a big solution and our children’s well-being matters. I would now like to leave you with a quote from the Newpin book by Jane Woodruff who is the CEO of Uniting Care Burnside amongst many other positions.

“Now is the time to change the status quo. It is time for us to be the best we can be and in the context of the well-being of children, we

need to give vulnerable families the assistance they need to be the best families they can be. This is not 'soft' social policy – it is a hard-nosed economic reality. It is also the right thing to do: failing innocent children diminishes us all.”

Thank you.