

A Journey Toward Hope and Healing: A Story of Change through Community Support

I'm taking a moment to share my story—a story of how life can begin to turn around when you're met with kindness, belief, and real support.

For years, I was homeless and struggling with mental health challenges I didn't understand. I felt completely lost, hopeless, and without purpose. My turning point came when I started going to **St John's Crisis Centre** for lunch each day. The meals weren't just about food—they were offered in a safe, welcoming environment that gave me space to breathe, think, and slowly start imagining that change might be possible.

The **Community Engagement Officer** at St John's made me feel seen and valued. They had a way of speaking that reminded me of the potential I still had inside. Encouraged by that support, I joined the creative art men's group and, for the first time, took part in a guided meditation session. That experience helped me begin to process deep emotions I'd buried for years.

A **social worker** assisted me with navigating services that helped me survive through a really tough time. Then, everything changed when my six-year-old child was unexpectedly placed in my care. I was unprepared—without housing, food, or a plan. I was scared, overwhelmed, and mentally exhausted.

I reached out to the **Community Engagement Officer**, who connected me with **UnitingCare**. Through this collaboration between **St John's Crisis Centre** and **UnitingCare**, I was provided with emergency accommodation. My child and I finally had a safe place to stay. The case workers not only supported me in securing a unit, but they also walked with me through some of the hardest emotional moments of my life.

Unfortunately, after a short period, my daughter's other parent decided to remove her from my care. That moment shattered me. I felt like all the progress I had made had been ripped away. Once again, I returned to St John's—heartbroken and struggling. The **Community Engagement Officer** sat with me and helped me work through my pain, offering techniques for managing overwhelming emotions and reminding me of my worth.

Instead of giving up, I chose to keep going. I enrolled in recovery programs to address substance use and committed to turning my life around. Today, with the continued support of **St John's Crisis Centre** and **UnitingCare**, I'm in rehab, focused, and doing really well. I've even been accepted into a university degree in engineering—a dream I never thought possible.

I now feel something I haven't in a long time: hope. I'm beginning to feel confident, stable, and ready to care for my future. I am deeply grateful to **St John's Crisis Centre** and **UnitingCare** for their belief in me, for walking with me, and for helping me rediscover the person I was always meant to be.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. These services truly change lives—just like they changed mine.