

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Imagine living on \$80 a week ...

For over 37 years, Toora Women Inc. (Toora) has been delivering gender-specialist services to women who have experienced trauma due to homelessness, their own or other's addictions, domestic and family violence, and the corrections systems. Last financial year, Toora supported approximately 501 women and 156 children.

Approximately one-third of Toora staff volunteered to simulate being on Newstart for Anti-Poverty Week 2019. This staff initiative was an opportunity to gain an insight and raise awareness around the realities of the financial constraints for people on Newstart, people like their clients, to highlight some of the challenges they experience daily.

Participating staff lived on the equivalent amount of their clients' disposable income. The average single woman's disposable income is \$80 after receiving government subsidies and paying their rent and other utilities to Toora. This amount increases to only \$115 if they have children in their care.

"This is the amount that our clients would have to purchase their food and drink for the week as well as toiletries, clothing, transport, medication, other healthcare needs, and emergencies," says Toora's Executive Director Susan Clarke-Lindfield. *"I encouraged our staff to note their daily spending and budgeting process, take photos, and write down what had been their challenges and how it made them feel not to be able to purchase their usual coffees or have a social outing. We have produced a short staff video highlight and Instagram Stories to share our experience."*

According to the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) more than 13.2% of Australians are living below the poverty line.

"I am aware that living on \$80 for only a week is far from the harsh reality our clients live in," Ms. Clarke-Lindfield said. *"Our staff reported how difficult it was and we can only imagine the long-term and the chronic psychological and other health effects this has on our clients."*

During this week, Toora has heard from several of their clients on their personal struggles.

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