



DEBBIE BRANDIS

My daughter and I moved from Biloela to Brisbane in 2009. We stayed with my sister until I got onto my feet but it wasn't long before she kicked us out. I was a single mum with no job, no license, nowhere to go; nothing. I called all of the youth services for help but they were either full or didn't allow kids. No one could help us out. We slept in the car for a while until we got into Saint Mary's Women's Hostel at Toowong.

In November my daughter's dad and I had worked things out and he moved down to Brisbane for us to start over. He couldn't stay with us at Saint Mary's so we found a boarding house in Ashgrove. While we were there life became harder and harder. We were constantly fighting, neither of us were working, we had no way of paying for food or rent. To make matters worse other people living at the house were always getting into fights, drinking and doing drugs. I couldn't believe how bad things had become and I was at the point of giving up. This wasn't a place for our little girl. Someone at the house gave me the names of some places to get help; the Brisbane Homeless Service Centre was one of them. That's where I got in touch with Micah Projects.

Without Micah's help I don't know where we would be. My support and advocacy worker helped us with public housing and private rental applications, but it wasn't just about getting a roof over our heads. She provided me with emotional support and came with me as I got help about my abuse. It was good knowing that I had someone who understood what I was going through during my hard times. It helped me to find the light again. Micah helped us when we lost everything in a house fire and gave us furniture and other things until we could afford to get our stuff out of storage. My PiP (Participate in Prosperity employment support at Micah Projects) worker also supported me to set goals and kept me motivated when I felt like giving up. Going back to TAFE and getting my license were two things I really wanted to do for myself and the PIP team provided me with the support I needed to achieve this. Micah went out of their way to help me and I will be forever grateful for this.

Now I have finished a Diploma of Youth Work, have begun a Diploma of Community Services at TAFE and have just been accepted into a counselling degree at QUT. We moved into a nice house at North Lakes and my daughter's dad has a full time job, which he loves. We don't fight about everything anymore and we're getting married in 2013. My daughter is happier and much more settled. The only thing missing for me now is a job. It's starting to get to me but over time, I'll get there. I've come too far to give up now.

Written by Debbie Brandis and Stacey Lloyd-Jones, February 2012.