



press clip

Service helps mum find home with child

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MELANIE Kirkman was living in her car with her two year old son when Reconnect took them in.

“When Reconnect had referred me to their accommodation, their youth housing, they pretty much put me into what I couldn’t get which was a roof over my head,” Miss Kirkman said.

Reconnect is a service offered by the Northern Rivers Social Development Council or NRSDC that helps youth at risk of becoming homeless.

“They got me where I am today, they were my motivation,” the 24-year-old said.

But Miss Kirkman hadn’t known Reconnect existed until Brighter Futures, a program run by the Department of Community Family Services, referred her to the service.

“We never had anyone to say ‘well hey, there is somewhere where you can go,’” Miss Kirkman said.

“I would never have known about Reconnect if it wasn’t for Brighter Futures.”

Miss Kirkman said that in her experience youth have no idea that these services exist so they remain homeless.

“They don’t even have ads or anything on TV, it was

really hard for me because I had no idea,” she said about not knowing where to turn.

If more youth know about services like Brighter Futures or Reconnect, Miss Kirkman said, then they will know how to find the help they need.

Living in her car was difficult for Miss Kirkman because she was constantly told to move on.

“It was difficult, with my child it was difficult. I guess me on my own it wouldn’t have been too bad,” she said.

No one offered her help when they saw her, or asked her to leave the area.

“They drove past and looked,” she said.

But it wasn’t till the Department of Community and Family Services referred her to Brighter Futures that Miss Kirkman found the help she needed.

“They were trying to care for my child, that’s what got me somewhere,” she said.

After finding help with Reconnect and Connecting Home, a service that helps youth at risk of becoming homeless or who are already homeless find housing, Miss Kirkman was able to secure housing for her and her child.

Miss Kirkman has now completed a Certificate 3 in Aged Care, which her case worker at Connecting Home helped her achieve.



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MOVING ON: Melanie Kirkman talks about her experience going from homelessness through to working.

PHOTO: ADAM HOURIGAN