



Friends With Dignity's Back to School Drive returns amidst heightened DV rates due to COVID-19

Australian domestic and family violence support charity, Friends With Dignity aims to provide school supplies to hundreds of children living in refuge as part of its annual Back To School Drive.

While the rush of back-to-school shopping is often dreaded by many, this annual drive is a gift for the thousands of families who face hardship as a result of domestic violence.

Every day, domestic violence forces hundreds of people to flee their homes and leave everything behind – apart from the hope of a safer and brighter future.

Friends With Dignity believes all children deserve to live safely and be guaranteed a new beginning.

"Leaving behind your home, school, friends and family to escape the ravages of domestic violence, drastically affects the confidence of young people," said Friends With Dignity Community Engagements Co-ordinator, Catherine Woodbine.

"Starting the new school year is hard enough for all children, but starting at a new school, not knowing anyone and not having the essentials that every other child has, can be all too much to handle."

One in five children witness and/or experience violence at home, and the assistance provided by charities such as Friends with Dignity gives children the opportunity to ease into new schools following family upheaval.

"We are aiming to provide over 500 backpacks nationally to children who have faced the trauma of domestic violence, and had to leave their much-loved belongings behind," said Ms Woodbine.

Friends With Dignity National Community Engagements Manager, Rosemary Macchiavelli said the need for these school supplies extends throughout the year with children living in refuges required to enrol at their nearest school but often having nothing to take to class due to their unstable living circumstances and lack of resources.

"Going to school can be frightening for so many children. You don't want children to stand out for the wrong reasons and if they come to school without a backpack or any belongings, then they do stand out as the child with nothing," said Ms Macchiavelli.

"This initiative is needed now more than ever due to the increased incidences of domestic and family violence as a direct result of Covid, with demand for assistance at an all-time high.

"Something as simple as a pencil case or a lunch box can go so far to supporting the most vulnerable members of our community, and help promote learning and stability for these children.

"We are looking for people to donate new or excellent condition backpacks, we ask that drink bottles, lunch boxes, colouring pencils, lead pencils, erasers, glue sticks and exercise books are new."

Donations are being accepted at various approved drop-off locations in Newcastle, Perth, Brisbane and on the Gold Coast from the 28th of December, 2020 to the 14th of January, 2021.

A full list of donation drop-off locations can be found at: <https://www.friendswithdignity.org.au/back-to-school-drive>.

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For interview/photo requests or to request a detailed 14-page Fact Sheet about Friends With Dignity, please contact::

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