

# Media Release

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## New appeal helps people with disability to Work It!

Did you know that there are 2.1 million Australians with a disability of working age?

Less than half of these people have a job.

This rate of unemployment for people with a disability has not shifted in 30 years...

For-purpose aged and disability organisation VMCH is committed to helping shift these terrible statistics with its latest fundraising appeal.

**'Work It!' aims to raise \$80,000 to support young people with disabilities to get into the workforce and begin their journey to independence.**

The money will fund a unique, new retail space in Melbourne's east, all geared towards readying people to work.

VMCH already has established job skills programs and employment pathways for people with disability, including social enterprise cafes, a coffee van and horticulture programs. This new retail hub will expand the organisation's current retail training offering, provided through its four op shops and op shop warehouse in Wantirna.

"This will be more than a traditional op shop," says CEO Sonya Smart. "It will be an exciting learning hub where up to 15 clients each year will build on skills such as money handling, customer service and product displays, guided by disability support workers and volunteer mentors.

"Once they've honed these skills and are ready to move on, we'll equip them with all the tools they need to find and secure paid work, like dressing for success, interview skills, and linking them with our employment partners in their chosen fields."

Sarah, aged 23, has been undertaking job skills at our warehouse for the past few months; sorting clothes, toys, puzzles and forming bonds with staff and volunteers. Chatting and socialising are Sarah's favourite activities. "I like to ask my op shop friends what they have for lunch and if they need help – that boosts my confidence."

In the future, Sarah hopes to work independently. She also hopes Work It! is successful, so she can build on her current experience on a bigger and more exciting scale. "Working in the op shop is a great opportunity and great fun!" she says.

Cody, aged 23, is one step closer to his dream of working in the I.T industry thanks to his first gig in paid employment. For the past eight months, he has worked at Puckapunyal Australian Defence Force base with VMCH employment partner and hospitality contractor Ventia, supporting kitchen staff with meal prep and service.

"I struggled to find a job before this," Cody says. "I was a bit nervous when I first started, but I'm definitely more comfortable now. I like making the soldiers happy and giving them the food that they like. Working with others is definitely a good experience and has helped me build skills. Eventually I'd like to work in computers. This is helping me find the confidence to do it."

VMCH has a goal to help 100 people find and sustain meaningful employment by 2025. With over 30 people realising this dream so far, the clock is ticking. Sonya hopes Work It! will help VMCH reach this target.

"This program goes over and above what is funded in clients' NDIS plans – so we are relying on the generosity of donors to see it come to life. If you remember that amazing sense of achievement from earning your first

pay cheque – please consider donating today. You can help make that life-changing experience a reality for someone who really wants to Work It!”

### Media enquiries

#### Cassie Zlonzak

Communications Manager

M: 0402 422 852

E: [cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au](mailto:cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au)

## About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

