

June 20, 2022

## NEWCASTLE PERMANENT EMPLOYEES FEEL THE MAGIC AT NATIONAL CHARITY'S FIRST HUNTER-BASED CAMP

Last weekend, 17-19 June, [Feel the Magic](#) held its first-ever Camp Magic in the Hunter region, at CRU Lake Macquarie, dedicated to supporting children aged 7-17 who are dealing with the loss of a parent or sibling.

Newcastle Permanent is proud to have had eight employees volunteer to mentor the young campers, having also donated \$15,000 from the company's CommunityAssist Employee Donation Program, which facilitated 15 children being able to attend the free camp.

Joining these eight members of the Newcastle Permanent team was Josh Levin, for whom being a mentor is a case of coming full-circle; Josh attended Camp Magic in 2015 following the death of his father, Matt.

Now aged 19 and in the second year of a Law-Commerce degree at the University of Newcastle, Josh hopes he was the kind of mentor he himself found so useful when he was a 13-year-old struggling to process and articulate his grief.

"I had a really positive experience with my mentor. The camps are a really emotional experience and as much as it's good to be able to talk to the other people around your age, it's equally important to have an adult to share your feelings as they can help you articulate these feelings," said Mr Levin.

"My mentor took on the role of a father-figure – not there to be a parent and tell you what to do but be there for support.

"Based on the experience I've had and how I've learnt to articulate my grief – both at the time of Dad's passing and since, because it's a never-ending process – I want to help a child or young person in the same way.

"It's not about telling them how to deal with grief, because everyone deals with it differently. I felt really isolated at the time and was too young to know how to express how I was feeling to my Mum or my friends.

"Having a mentor was really important just to tell them how you're feeling. There's no judgement there," he said.

According to Feel the Magic CEO Adam Blatch, the camp is the first of many the company plans to hold in the Hunter.

"This is the start of a broader Hunter plan for Feel the Magic. We know what we offer in support for kids and families living with the death of parent, guardian or sibling is a vital part of helping these kids live healthily with their grief. We are looking forward to being a permanent charity in the region," said Mr Blatch.

“Thanks to a \$55,000 grant from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, we are also holding our first regional Grad Camp on Lake Macquarie in March of 2023. At this camp, we will prepare 17 and 18-year-olds from the Hunter who have experienced the loss of a parent or sibling build the strategies they need to live healthily with their grief through some of the milestones and challenges of transitioning to adult life – all without the need to travel to Sydney.

“By holding these events in the Hunter, we help keep families closer and build a community of support in the region,” said Mr Blatch.

Having grown up in Kahibah, Josh Levin is also excited about the possibilities presented by Feel the Magic holding their camps in his home town.

“The camp I went to was in Sydney. The biggest thing about it being in the Hunter is it’s more accessible for children and young people to access that grief counselling without having to travel too far,” Mr Levin said.

“I was just starting high school when Dad passed away and I didn’t know a single other young person in the same position as I was. But everyone at my camp was from Sydney and while we’re friends on Instagram, it’s not the same as catching up in person.

“Having people in the same area means you can stay in touch a lot easier down the track.”

Newcastle Permanent’s Manager of Partnerships and Community Engagement, Kirsten Lyndon, said Feel the Magic is doing much-needed work in local communities.

“In Australia, one in 20 children aged 7 to 17 will experience the death of a parent. This tragic reality demonstrates why we as a community need groups like Feel the Magic. Not only do they help the individual children involved, they also support parents and carers to simultaneously navigate their own grief as well as the grief of their child, and to move forward as a family,” she said.

“Our people choose to donate to organisations that matter to them and Feel the Magic is a very worthy recipient. On average, employees donate almost \$60,000 a year to charities they vote on, with almost \$1 million being provided since CommunityAssist began in 1997.”

## **Newcastle Permanent and Feel the Magic – by the numbers**

- \$15,000 donated through the Newcastle Permanent’s CommunityAssist Employee Donation Program, which will enable 15 children to attend the first Hunter-based Camp Magic at no cost to their families
- Eight employees volunteering a collective 16 days to mentor young people
- An additional \$55,000 granted by the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation will run the first Hunter-based Grad Camp for adolescents, in March 2023
- In Australia, [one in 20 children aged 7 to 17](#) will experience the death of a parent
- More than 300,000 children in Australia will lose a parent before they turn 18

**Media information:** Joe Frost on 0447 234 291. Interviews available with Mr Levin, Mr Blatch and Ms Lyndon