

Healthy option for local families doing it tough



GOOD WORK: Pastor Fred Muys from the Ipswich Healthy Hampers co-op shop. The shop provides food to struggling families. Rob Williams



by Anna_Hartley

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IPSWICH Healthy Hampers Co-op on Brisbane St provides discounted food and essential grocery items to families in need.

Pastor Fred Muys runs the co-op and also leads an emergency relief program, which donates food to families who cannot survive week to week on their current wages or Centrelink payments.

"There are a significant number of people in Ipswich doing it very tough," he said.

"People who have nothing, those who may be behind in their rent or facing unexpected medical expenses, which have left them in a crisis situation are the people who participate in our emergency relief program where we give food away for free."

Mr Muys said the Healthy Hampers program was designed as an extension of the emergency relief program. For an annual membership fee of \$10 families can access discounted groceries and hampers from the co-op.

"People who can't make ends meet are referred to us by Centrelink or walk in off the street and the food co-op program is designed to help those people become more self-reliant," he said.

"The focus of the food co-op is to provide groceries, essentials and household items at a nominal cost.

"Typically a family might spend \$10-\$15 here on groceries, which would cost them \$40-\$50 otherwise."

Much of the money used to run the co-op is generated from the Tivoli Drive-In community family movie nights run every Saturday.

"We run the co-op because there is a strong need for it in the city," Pastor Muys said.

"In Ipswich there is a high rate of single mothers, pensioners and unemployed people who really struggle to meet weekly expenses.

"According to the ABS the average weekly income for Australian families is \$1100 but for our clients the average is more like \$487 a week."

Donations and discounted items are given to Healthy Hampers from SecondBite Community Connect, Primo meats, bakeries, other independent retail outlets as well as from Brisbane Foodbank.

Ipswich Healthy Hampers is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10.45am to 2.15pm.

For more information phone Harvest Rain Christian Care on 3812 0207.