



## MEDIA RELEASE

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**Mathew Kratiuk has seen the gritty underworld, experienced the highs and lows of mental illness, the thrill of big business and boardrooms, and the desperation of homelessness.**

Now he's turning to Vinnies CEO Sleepout's Brisbane event on 20 June to share his journey of transformation.

Born in Sydney's Cronulla to hardworking and loving parents, the Kangaroo Point-based marketing executive is a real example that people who experience homelessness are not stereotypes but real people with real stories and real needs – the theme of this year's event to be held at the Brisbane Powerhouse.

When he takes to the stage to speak about homelessness at the event, Kratiuk will be speaking from firsthand experience that also includes drug addiction, involvement in an outlaw motorcycle club and crime – but also the lived experience of the power of love and transformation.

Having first found himself homeless as a young teen in Cronulla, and then again in his early 30s as he struggled to break free from the grips of an ice addiction, Kratiuk knows what it's like to be without a home and how it can impact the rest of your life.

Unfortunately for a then 16-year-old, deaths in the family and a relationship breakdown led both he and his father into alcoholism and eventually for Kratiuk - homelessness.

"I ended up on the streets like many kids in Cronulla back then, we just became the street kids, sometimes sleeping in parks, sometimes the train stations, sometimes lucky enough to get someone's garage or crash on a mate's couch," he said.

"When I looked back I realised how important that period of my life was in birthing the identity that would then follow me for many years.

"I ended up becoming a drug addict and a dealer and a criminal and all these crazy things, but even while that was going on I would never be in the one place at the one time for very long.

"It wasn't until after all that stuff when I was about 32 when I left the club, that I ended up moving to Sydney and I up ended homeless again but this time it was as about as bad as it gets.

"I had no one left, no friends, no family, nothing left, I was homeless in the streets of western Sydney in Glenfield and it was extremely hard."

It was that second stint of homelessness and thoughts of suicide which would propel Kratiuk to seek help and led to the remarkable transformation which has seen him become a highly successful marketing executive in just six years.

“My life today is just miraculous, people need to know I was that guy you walk past on the train and you think he is too far gone, he is past the point of no return, but the fact is that’s not the case. All these people need is to be loved back to life, and I’m happy to work very hard and rally for any organisation such as Vinnies that’s going to be a part of that journey for people,” he said.

“People seem to think that homelessness and drug addiction are these switches that society thinks you can switch off, it doesn’t work like that, how it does work is a lot of relentless love, a lot of courage and the will to survive but above all it takes people that are willing to love people back to life and that’s what Vinnies does, so I’m a big fan.

“People can change given the opportunity, and I need the world to know that.”

Kratiuk said when he speaks to people about homelessness one of the key points he makes is just how hard it is for people to turn their lives around without support.

“People just don’t realise just how hard it is, even to go from homelessness to not being homeless is a nightmare, it’s like a puzzle, honestly it’s like a maze you have to go through, you don’t have the right identification so you can’t get money or you don’t have money so you can’t get ID, it is just nuts and if it wasn’t for places like Vinnies it would literally be impossible.”

When he beds down under the stars on the concrete outside the Brisbane Powerhouse on 20 June, Kratiuk will likely have memories of his own periods of homelessness - making his participation and role as guest speaker at this year’s event even more powerful and important.

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