



PHOTO: DANIELLE LYONNE



## Ellen: Choices for Indigenous communities

What choices have you made this morning? Did you choose what you ate for breakfast? What you wore today? We are lucky to have choices. Some people live from day to day and have few choices.

Ellen, a Wiradjuri woman, her husband and four children live in East Dubbo. Ellen is a leader in her community. She volunteers as a grief counsellor, is involved in an after school literacy program with young people and helps run activities for children during the school holidays.

Ellen participates in the *Manage Your Income, Manage Your Life* program run by Centacare Wilcannia-Forbes in partnership with Caritas Australia. The program helps Aboriginal women like Ellen with planning, budgeting and making good choices. By managing their money women like Ellen have more control over their lives. When you are in charge of your life you feel proud of yourself.

Before the women's involvement in the program, self-esteem was low due to poverty and not being able to get a job. People felt ashamed when they were unable to pay bills. Now the women are encouraged to scan the shopping catalogues to work out the difference between what the family wants and what is actually needed. Meals are planned and the women buy only what is needed. They also plan for payday by looking at bills and seeing what needs to be paid and what can wait.

Because Ellen is part of the community, she knows what is needed. The *Manage Your Income, Manage Your Life* program is run by another Aboriginal woman, Lynda. Ellen believes it is very important that this program is run by an Aboriginal person. "An Aboriginal woman running the program takes out the fear factor," Ellen says.

The program helps people realise that they are able to manage their money even if they do not have much. Because money is not spent on unnecessary items there is a little to spare.

When the show came to town, the children wanted to go. Ellen told them to wait until she had done the shopping to see how much money was over. She looked into the cost of showbags and rides and worked out how much she would be able to afford to give the children. The children enjoyed the show but there was nothing extra left for the rest of the week.

Ellen hopes one day to complete her teacher training. Since she has learnt to save, she hopes to take her family on a holiday for the first time ever. Life has changed for Ellen and her family.

**Your contribution to Project Compassion has enabled Ellen and members of her community to make choices.**



### SOSE/HSIE / PDHPE

1. Collect shopping catalogues delivered to your letter box.
  - a) In a small group, study the catalogues and decide which of the items advertised are considered needs and which are considered wants.
  - b) Are all people entitled to needs? Hint: What's the link between needs and human rights?

#### **Fair Play Today**

2. a) What is the average life expectancy of Indigenous Australians? (See Worksheet 2 – page 10)
- b) What is the average life expectancy of non-Indigenous Australians? (See Worksheet 2 – page 10)
- c) What is the difference in years between the two?
- d) What does it say about Australia that there can be such a big difference in life expectancies between the two groups when we are all living in the same country?
- e) After reading this story, discuss how can we put *Fair Play* into action in Australia today?

*Generous God, You have given us so many choices. Others in our world have very few choices. Give us the courage to Play Fair Today, to make good choices so that more in our world will benefit. Amen.*