

# Seminar to help poor

*Advertiser out of 24th*

By Jessica Mahar

POVERTY can take many forms and last week Campbelltown residents, including school students, had an insight into how it can affect anyone.

As part of Anti-Poverty Week, Macarthur Diversity Services and Campbelltown Council held a seminar which was addressed by Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes and others.

The week, from October 14 to 20, aims to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship in Australia and around the world and encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems.

Mr Innes said homelessness, as well as being a sign of living in poverty, was also a human rights issue.

"A person who is homeless is unlikely to be in a position to enjoy any or all of the following human rights," he said.

"The human right to an adequate standard of living, health, social security, an education, liberty, voting rights, privacy, and the right to enjoy culture and take part in cultural life.

"Also the human right to freedom of movement, freedom of association, expression, to be treated with humanity and dig-



**Human rights:** Macarthur Diversity Services chief executive Karin Vasquez and Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes. **Picture:** Jeff de Pasquale

nity, and, last but not least, the human right to non-discrimination."

"Of course, not all people who are homeless will be denied all of these 13 different human rights, however, there is a very high chance that a homeless person will not be in a position to enjoy at least one of those rights."

Mr Innes said discussing social problems like homelessness as a human rights issue would change the way people approach

them. "It changes the problem from one where individuals are seeking help and compassion from the state to one where people are asserting their rights against the state," he said.

People who daily deal with those in poverty, including Margaret Appleby from Lifeline Macarthur, Karin Vasquez from Macarthur Diversity Services and John Fenech from World Vision, told of local and international ways of fighting poverty.

## Out of Africa with new hope

AYEN Majier has been in Australia for four years, since escaping her native Sudan.

The 24-year-old woman, who lives at St Helens Park, told of overcoming hardship and poverty at last week's Anti-Poverty Week seminar in Campbelltown.

Ms Majier, who is studying at TAFE and going to university next year, said she had been a refugee since she was born.

"I'm now an Australian citizen after three years," she said.

"Poverty is the main thing in Africa. I've lived in refugee camps since I was a baby.

Since arriving in Australia, Ms Majier has found a job and gone to school.

"Poverty is not a permanent thing," she said. "For me I've cast poverty out of my generation."

Alfaki Gameil, has come to Australia alone, leaving his wife, three daughters and three sons in Sudan. Living in Ambarvale, Mr Gameil is also studying at TAFE and hopes to bring his family out to join him.

"Most of the people in Africa are poor," he said.