



## Is it possible to *feel* SMART when you've only been told you're STUPID? *We believe it is.*

With each new child or young person we meet, we see new trauma and distress. As CEO and director of welfare of Barnardos Australia I am writing to you to introduce Dylan and Ben – two young boys you may never meet, and whose lives you may find hard to imagine. I would also like to introduce you to Barnardos and to our work with Australian children and young people at risk of, or suffering the effects of abuse and neglect.

**Child abuse has severe emotional and social consequences. Consequences that can have life-long repercussions for young people and society as a whole.**

Australian research indicates that almost a quarter of teenagers have witnessed an incident of physical domestic violence against their mother or stepmother, but too many others are themselves the victims of significant physical, emotional or sexual abuse from a parent or care-giver<sup>1</sup>.

Barnardos believes the impact of serious abuse and neglect on a child's future is too important to ignore. As a concerned individual we are confident that like us you cannot sit back and see even a single child condemned to a future without hope. You have the opportunity to protect children like Dylan and Ben. A gift to Barnardos today will help them believe in the potential of tomorrow.

### Who we are

As a non-government, non-denominational child welfare agency we have been helping Australian children and young people in trauma, and living with deprivation for over 120 years. Barnardos believes that every child has potential.

**We believe teenagers deserve to be safe and supported through the uncertainties and challenges of adolescence.**

Young people like Dylan - he's done nothing wrong, but throughout his life he's been abused, insulted and left feeling worthless.

An intelligent, sensitive young man, 13-year-old Dylan, and his mum Angela are currently receiving support from Barnardos' South Coast centre. Our workers met Dylan late last year after Dylan's father, Justin, was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. His father had terrorised both his wife and his son for as long as Dylan can remember. For years his unemployed father had lived with paranoid schizophrenia, a severe mental illness, and had been in and out of psychiatric treatment all his adult life.

Having experienced both physical and sexual abuse himself during his own childhood, Dylan's father is a charming but unstable character. He frequently refused to take his medication and the resulting delusions and psychotic rages led him to treat his wife and child extremely harshly behind closed doors. Even in summer Dylan would wear long sleeve shirts to school to hide the bruises and at night he would stay at friend's houses after soccer practice until as late as possible and then barricade his bedroom door when he got home.

The physical abuse was coupled with emotional torment. "He used to shout and swear uncontrollably at me, telling me I was an imbecile and that there was no point in me going to school because I'd never amount to anything," Dylan told us. "After a while I started to believe him". Angela tried to protect and defend her son, but she too suffered physically and emotionally at the hands of her husband.

For a long time Dylan suffered in silence. His behaviour became increasingly erratic – he was frequently absent from school, and seemed to have drifted apart from the few friends he had on the school soccer team. It was only after a particularly violent episode at home when neighbours called the police, and his father was finally admitted for prolonged psychiatric treatment, that Dylan broke down and told the soccer coach who had inflicted the terrible bruises visible on his arms and legs.

Dylan and his mum were referred to our family support team at our South Coast centre for help. Lisa, our family support worker, quickly recognised that Dylan was both physically and emotionally traumatised. While the physical wounds would heal, the emotional wounds were likely to leave deep scars, so she quickly arranged for him to attend regular sessions with our counsellors. His mum is also receiving counselling and Lisa is showing her how she can develop a closer bond with her son, so she can give him the support necessary to help repair some of the damage his father's illness has caused.

Lisa has also spoken to Dylan's school to ensure he gets both the support he needs to catch up with school work he has missed, and the positive reinforcement essential to his further progress. It would be all too easy for Dylan's future to be shaped by the abuse he has suffered and lead him, like others, into a future of drug and alcohol abuse or even juvenile crime.

Considerable evidence shows the importance of adult friendship in the lives of troubled adolescents. Jim, one of our volunteers, is now Dylan's mentor. Jim has been assessed and trained to provide the support needed, and has become a positive role model in Dylan's life.

Most parents do not set out to be frightening bullies but pressures and difficult circumstances can conspire to create situations they would never have wanted. Pressures such as homelessness, financial stress, domestic violence, family breakdown, mental illness and substance abuse.

Barnardos needs ongoing financial support from the community. Every dollar you donate will enable us to make a real difference to thousands of young people's lives – young people just like Dylan and Ben. Your gift will touch young Australians who you will probably never meet, but who will believe it is possible to dream of a future as confident and productive members of our society as a result of your kindheartedness.

If we reach young people early they will have a better chance of transforming their lives. Your donation to Barnardos today will greatly enhance our ability to achieve this.

Yours sincerely,

Louise Voigt  
CEO and Director of Welfare

*PS. It may assist your decision to financially support us by knowing that Barnardos' policy is not to retain large assets. We do, however, keep a small reserve of money so that we will always be able to meet our commitment to the children placed in our long-term care for their whole childhood no matter what happens.*

<sup>1</sup>[National Crime Prevention (2001), Young People and Domestic Violence, NCP Canberra].

Barnardos is one of the largest children's charities in Australia, caring for children and young people at risk of, or suffering the effects of neglect and abuse. As a non-government, non-denominational child welfare agency that has been helping Australian children in need for over 120 years Barnardos assists children and young people of all backgrounds and cultural heritage through a range of welfare programs.

To donate please [click here](#) or call 1800 061 000

## Help him *believe* it too.

**Here's how your donation can help:**

**\$35** will assist Dylan to attend a local youth program providing him with the opportunity to rebuild his confidence and interact with young people his own age.

**\$70** will contribute to the purchase of sporting equipment for Dylan to safely rejoin the school soccer team enabling him to enjoy the physical activity essential to health and wellbeing.

**\$125** will enable Dylan to remain part of our mentoring program, ensuring he has the opportunity to connect with a significant, stable adult who can help him to develop trust, improve social and relationship abilities and work with him to set long-term goals.

**\$250** will cover the cost of parenting skills workshops for Angela to empower her with skills and confidence to raise Dylan on her own to ensure he doesn't become adrift into an uncertain future.

**\$500** will contribute to the cost of a course of counselling sessions for Dylan to start to develop the life skills he has missed out on, and to ensure he starts to gain independence and the ability to make the right social choices as he continues his path to adulthood.