

Believe.

Barnardos Australia Newsletter Volume 3 - 2014



**Barnardos
Australia**

30 years of open adoption at Barnardos

In July, under the banner of the Centre for Excellence in Open Adoption, Barnardos Australia formally launched a ground breaking research project into open adoption. Barnardos CEO Louise Voigt explained, "The launch coincides with 30 years of open adoption at Barnardos. I believe the research findings will challenge existing attitudes about adoption which will mean better outcomes for children currently living in a dysfunctional foster care system".

At the official launch titled Talking about Adoption, it was unveiled that the new research project will examine the long-term life outcomes of adopted children, permanently removed from their birth families by the courts because of abuse and neglect.

The 30 year retrospective study is particularly unique as it will examine the impact of 'open' adoption, where children continue a relationship with their birth family after they have been adopted.

Barnardos will partner with Professor Harriet Ward, internationally renowned research director and social policy advisor, for this project. The Australian team will be led by Barnardos staff through the new Centre for Excellence, who have long standing relationships with the adoptive families.

The launch also provided Barnardos adoptive families, staff and supporters to meet and share their experiences of open adoption. Damian, currently studying at university, spoke about his experiences. He was adopted as a young boy. "[Adoption meant] I could put down roots" he said, "for a long time I'd kept parts of myself in a travel case".

No matter how long a child has been living with their foster carers, many still have the fear they will wake up one morning and be taken away.

Louise Voigt said, "Many of these children tell me they want to belong. They need a family for life and I have seen the impact this has on them when they find one. This is why I am so committed to open adoption. Barnardos is fortunate to have a strong and committed staff who have stayed the course and persisted through many difficulties in order to implement our vision over these last 30 years. We also have some incredible donors, who have supported Barnardos, our carers and most of all, our children."

Julie and Carl, who have featured in previous Barnardos' communications, were also at the launch. They have both birth children and adopted children and are strong advocates for adoption. Julie doesn't allow

story continued...



**Inside this edition:
Mystory launches
Barnardos makeover**

Louise Voigt receives lifetime achievement award

The Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) honoured Barnardos Australia CEO Louise Voigt with their Lifetime Achievement Award at the ACWA Achievement Awards 2014.

The award recognises Louise's outstanding commitment and contribution to improving the outcomes of children, young people and their families in NSW – particularly those in vulnerable circumstances.

Louise is a passionate and outspoken advocate for change to adoption legislation. Under her leadership, Barnardos pioneered open adoption practice in Australia, improving the outcomes of many children and young people living in foster care.

Over the course of many years Louise has earned the deep respect of all members of the welfare sector, including leaders of other NGOs, senior government bureaucrats and politicians from both sides of politics.

As CEO and Director of Welfare for Barnardos Australia for the past 30 years, Louise has been a guiding light in child protection in Australia. Her passion and drive for always considering the best interests of the child has been central to her enduring leadership and her abiding value of "never giving up on children" has become ingrained in the Barnardos culture.

Cover story continued...

any talk of half-brothers or step-brothers, "I always say, the only steps we have are at the front and the back of the house," she said. Their son, Brendan, had eight placements before coming to Barnardos and finding a forever family. Brendan said, "When I stamped the [adoption] papers it gave me a feeling of relief knowing that from this day forward, I wouldn't be taken away from my family. I'll be with my family for the rest of my life no matter what, and I know my family love me."

Being loved and having a stable home is critical for children who are placed in care through no fault of their own. "We know from experience that the 'state' is not a good parent for children who must spend their childhood

in a dysfunctional foster care system and grow up to be over-represented in statistics for unemployment, homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction and in the juvenile justice system," says Louise Voigt, "we want many more children to have the opportunity for a safe family for life."

This major research project is a first for Australia and will add to Barnardos' growing reputation for evidence based practice. Barnardos' Centre for Excellence in Open Adoption is already contributing to the international debate on the permanency outcomes for abused children.

A Royal Visit

When the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visited Sydney earlier this year, they were joined by two youth workers from Barnardos Australia Sydney Youth Services Canterbury Office.

Meleseini Latu and Rhys Morris were chosen to attend the welcome reception after the Premier's office called for nominations for young leaders in the community.

They took with them a framed photograph of Princess Diana's visit to Barnardos Australia Children's Family Centres 25 years ago to present to the young royals. Diana was then the patron of Barnardos UK.

"Rhys and I were overwhelmed to be given this opportunity to meet the Duke and Duchess. They mean so much to Barnardos Australia and to me personally. It's a great honour. It's a dream come true," Meleseini said.

The senior manager of Sydney Youth Services, Lynn Casey, says Rhys and Meleseini have done amazing work implementing innovative new community programs, reaching out to

vulnerable young people in the Canterbury and Marrickville Local Government areas.

"They are both committed to providing intervention and support to local 'at risk' young people aged 12-18 years and their families. We are thrilled they have been chosen for this special honour," she said.

Every day Meleseini and Rhys work with 'at risk' young people in the community via a number of face-to-face support programs.



Rhys and Meleseini with the framed photo



Children enjoying the newly renovated house (Photo courtesy of Channel Seven)

Barnardos house gets a makeover

In 1978, Barnardos was left a house in the Will of Shellharbour couple, Harry and Hazel Bush, who were tragically killed in a plane crash over the Grand Canyon. The house has since been used by Barnardos foster families as emergency accommodation and as a holiday home.

Thanks to Harry and Hazel, thousands of children have stayed at the house – many of them have been through very tough times; many have never had a holiday; or even seen the ocean. Inevitably, with so many families passing through the house every year, general wear and tear has taken its toll on the building.

In June contestants on Channel seven's House Rules performed a makeover on the holiday home in

Shellharbour. With no budget for improvements this was more than we could ever imagine.

Thanks to the House Rules contestants for all their hard work and to Harry and Hazel who left such a wonderful, lasting legacy.

8th – 14th September is Include a Charity week - a week dedicated to raising awareness of the life changing impact a gift in your Will could make to someone in need. The message this year is 'live on' with Australians being encouraged to make a positive difference to charities after they're gone.

To find out more about how to leave a gift to Barnardos in your Will, please contact our Individual Giving Manager, Jessica Wood on (02) 9218 2308.

Hannah and Kate talk about fostering again

In our August appeal, Barnardos asked supporters to help us raise \$200,000 for our Find-a-Family program, so children like Hannah, don't go through life feeling like they don't matter. So far thanks to some incredible generosity we have received over \$80,000.

Hannah continues to heal every day. She is doing really well at school, persistence with her times tables has paid off as she has made huge improvements in her maths class. Hannah has also joined the drama club. Her adoptive mum Kate is thrilled seeing the girl who was labelled disruptive in class at her previous school, working together with other children.

Hannah and Kate have also been talking about maybe in the future, opening their home to another child, Hannah told her case worker Lauren, "I've got a great mum and I think I can share her."

While Hannah has found her forever family, we still need to raise \$120,000 for children in long term care, If you would like to make a donation, please complete and return the coupon on the back of this newsletter or call Megan on 1800 061 000.

Sarah becomes a virtual foster carer

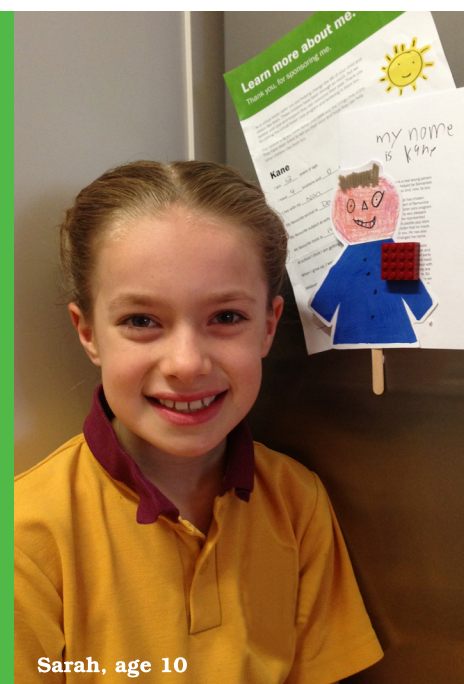
"We were all excited when Dad told us we were helping a child around my age who was not as fortunate as us. When we got the package about Kane I liked reading all about him and what he likes to do like fishing and watching Deadly 60 on TV.

We put his paddle pop picture up on our fridge, so we had a sense of what he looks like and it helped us never forget him but remember him whenever we walk into the kitchen.

I think everyone should help someone not as fortunate as you are. It is good to make other people happy."

Sarah, age 10
Virtual foster carer

Sponsoring a child through our virtual foster care program costs as little as \$1 a day. For more information on how you can join and make a real difference to Australian children, please call our supporter care team on 1800 061 000 or visit barnardos.org.au



Sarah, age 10

Barnardos in focus - Find-a-Family

Barnardos Find-a-Family program has been running for 30 years and specialises in finding permanent families for children in out-of-home care.

These children have been removed permanently from their families by the courts, they have often experienced extensive abuse. Where there are no suitable family members to look after them, carers have to be found. Moving to a new home with strangers is daunting and extra care needs to be taken to find carers who can provide the right support to meet each individual child's needs.

Where possible, adoption is the long term plan for children in this program although this is not suitable for all children, where this is the case a long term foster carer will be found who will care for the child until they are 18.

In line with open adoption the Find-a-Family team facilitate meetings with the child's birth family to ensure contact is maintained and that all children know their history and where they have come from. This is very important to a child's self identity.

Whether a child is adopted or placed in long term care, our work is designed to meet the long term needs of these children and was first established to give children certainty – so they wouldn't 'drift' in the care system.

Most children placed by Find-a-Family have had an average of six placements before they come to Barnardos. Because disruption like this can affect a child's ability to trust and form relationships, finding a secure family environment that can offer children permanency and stability is the main objective of the program.

Our case workers work hard to find the best possible match for children so they remain in that first placement. It is not a case of finding the first available family, but finding the right family. It is about finding every child a

permanent family for life – first time.

The reason Barnardos has such stability in our placements is because Barnardos focus on both the child's immediate and long term needs. We also provide 24 hour access to casework support, fostering payments to carers that recognise the demands of caring for traumatised children, regular respite, back up supports that include household help, educational support, health care and therapeutic treatment to make sure that everyone has the support they need to help our children reach their potential. Many of these additional services are provided for by the crucial donations we receive.

The most important aspect of the work is a strong, consistent and caring relationship between case managers, children and their carers. Case workers have daily to weekly contact with children at the beginning of the placement in order to provide support in the critical first phase. Support remains in place on an ongoing and 'as-needed' basis. Children and carers are able to access more support whenever they need it as children's needs change as they grow.

While we receive government funds for this program we are only able to provide the extra things that really make a difference to a traumatised child because of the donations we receive. This is a complex program and we are only able to be flexible and tend to the needs of each individual child because of support from donors. It's the little things that really make a difference, the new pair of shoes, the time with a therapist who helps them learn how to trust or getting their first pair of glasses to fix a squint.

Thank you for playing such a vital role in this program.

Snapshot of Adoption in Australia 2012-13

339 adoptions were confirmed last year

There has been a **77% decline** in adoptions in Australia in the last 25 years

2 in 5 adoptions were intercountry (from overseas)

52% of 'known' adoptions were by non-relative carers (such as foster carers)

1 in 2 adopted children were under 5 years of age

3 in 5 Australian birth mothers were aged under 25. All adoptive parents were aged over 30.

87% of Australian adoptions were 'open'

MyStory - a better future for all Australian children

In Australia there are almost 40,000 children who are unable to live at home with their parents and are living in out-of-home care.

Barnardos believes the launch of MyStory will give these children and young people the opportunity to have a voice and contribute to decisions that affect their lives.

MyStory is a pioneering cloud based case management system that has been specifically designed to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people in care.

MyStory records, monitors and generates specialised care plans that provide prompts to case workers about a child. MyStory guides good practice and ensures social workers make timely and sound decisions, with the best possible information available.

MyStory is now available for use by all out-of-home care agencies in Australia and will not only revolutionise, but make sure there is consistency across the sector in the way children in the care system's life stories are captured and stored. This will also minimise administration for case workers - ensuring the child or young person's voice is at the centre of all decision making.

At the launch Louise Voigt said. "Children who have been through

six, eight, 10 placements, they lose everything, they lose their history, they lose who they are in a sense. This is incredibly damaging.

MyStory ensures a child's key events, images and memories are captured during their time in care and held in one central location so children do not have to tell their story over and over again and re-live painful memories. A child's life story is captured in a single location and built up over time."

All those things that are important in shaping a child's own identity

later - photos, school reports, medical history, stories from their childhood - will all be there.

MyStory is the next chapter in Barnardos' ongoing investment in the future of all Australian children and has only been made possible thanks to the generous support of our donors. Thank you. If you would like to find out more information about MyStory, please visit my-story.org.au



The MyStory team at the official launch

Funding loss for Barnardos youth

In the shake up of the NSW Government's approach to homelessness in the 'Going Home, Staying Home' program, Barnardos received cuts to funding in some of our programs.

Our most affected area was Barnardos Youth Services which suffered a \$500,000 cut in funding. There are children and young people currently in the program who will be directly affected by this shake up, Barnardos program manager Hayley Clisby said, "We have two

current clients that will need to exit the units to the new service providers, but will be in the middle of their HSC exams when this transition is to occur. We are looking to raise the funds to continue housing them both in one unit and continue providing case management support so that there are no disruptions to their education and they can remain settled and stable during this very stressful time."

These two young people are our priority at the moment but Hayley knows there will be others like them who will need this kind of support in the future, "Ultimately, we would

like to continue to utilise the unit for other young people who are at risk of homelessness, or young people age 16+ who are in foster care and their placement suddenly breaks down. We would then have accommodation to support them and assist with their independent living skills".

Hayley and the Youth Services team are trying to raise funds to support these two young people and for a range of other affected programs in the area. If you would like to help at risk young people, please complete the coupon attached or call Megan in our supporter care team on 1800 061 000.

Case study: Laura

Laura was referred to our homework support program because she was falling behind at school. Laura attends one of our centres each day after school and Barnardos case workers are on hand to provide one to one support. She has access to computers, wifi and other resources to complete assignments - things she does not have access to at home.

Since attending the program Laura has made a fundamental change in her attitude to completing her school work. She recently received her first positive school report. Laura's change has also had a positive influence on other young people in the program. She now arrives early each day and knuckles down to complete her tasks. Completing her set tasks early in the school term has helped boost Laura's self esteem, as she is now asked by others how to do the work.

Case workers run for their cause



The Yurungai team before the big race

On Sunday 10th August, Barnardos case workers from the Yurungai Child and Family Service, along with other members of staff and their friends ran the Sydney City2Surf to raise funds for Barnardos. They initially only pledged to raise \$100 each but completely smashed that target with a fantastic team total of \$5,573.

Eilish from Yurungai said, “We thought that this would be a good opportunity to raise some funds for Barnardos. As case workers, we see firsthand the

help and support that Barnardos provide to children in our communities. I knew that by dedicating a little time and a little money, we could make a huge difference.”

If you would like to run for Barnardos or organise your own event, please call Kaitlin our Community Fundraising Coordinator on (02) 9218 2375 or email kcommmins@barnardos.org.au

I too believe that children deserve to be safe and protected.

☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Or I would like to make a regular monthly gift of \$ _____

☐ from my credit card below or

☐ My cheque enclosed (payable to Barnardos Australia) or

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Diners

A horizontal number line with 15 tick marks, labeled from 0 to 14. The line is used for plotting the data points from the frequency table.

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Expiry Date: ____ / ____ ☐ Individual or ☐ Corporate receipt

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Please send your donation to:

Barnardos Australia, GPO Box 9996 in your Capital City.

Call **1800 061 000** or visit **www.barnardos.org.au**

Donations of \$2 or more are tax-deductible.

complaint will be handled by Barnardos Australia. You may contact our privacy officer with any queries via email: info@barnardos.org.au or mail: GPO Box 9996, SYDNEY NSW 2001 or telephone: (02) 9218 2300.

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Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations to contact you with information that may be of interest to you, including some organisations located outside Australia. Those organisations allow us to do the same and this way we can reach more people with vital information.

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