

# Believe.

**Barnardos Australia Newsletter**  
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**Barnardos**  
**Australia**



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## **From couple to full house in a week**

Leisa and Ray Davies had one week to prepare for transitioning from life as a couple to a family of five. The couple always knew that they wanted children, but after trying for 10 years to become pregnant, they learned just how many children in Australia are already in need of a safe home to grow up in.

Reaching out to Barnardos with their dreams of parenthood, they applied to be carers with a view towards adoption and went through months of assessment and carer training. No amount of practice could prepare them for what came next.

One morning they got the call that would change their lives. Three siblings needed a family to grow up in and place to call home

— starting the next week. The Davies held an impromptu baby shower for their “instant family” and rushed to gather all the things Rowan, age one, Coopah, age two, and Shaelee, age three would need.

It was undoubtedly chaotic, but the couple knew that with love, patience, and a new routine for five, the children would come to understand that this was their forever home. The happiest day of his life, Ray says, is the day one of the children realised just that. The family was out eating pizza when three-year-old Shaelee leaned over and sheepishly whispered in his ear “Do you mind if I call you Daddy?” It was that defining moment — not a trip to the birthing centre — in which the Davies thought “Wow, we are really parents.”

Ray and Leisa made the decision to adopt in Australia, and to give three children the stability they deserved as a part of their family. But for others looking to take in the children who desperately need them, Australian adoption hasn't always been a viable or timely option.

When children are removed from their families due to ongoing safety issues, the best option for them is to find a permanent home. But without adoption, children may face the instability of moving around between carers, and government support for their care ends at the time they turn 18.

Our children have told us how important that final piece of paper is to them.

Story continued...

## Cover story continued...

Even if they have been with a family long-term, adoption is the final step in knowing that no one will ever be able to take them away. It is also a way of knowing they'll have a family for life, not just until they reach 18.

While adoption numbers were quite low last year compared to the thousands of children across Australia who need homes, adoptions by carers who know the children was at its highest point in a decade. Barnardos accounted for 20 percent of all orders in the country, our most successful year yet. We were able to finalise 21 applications, with 57 more in progress.

For the Davies, three of these applications have made all the difference in their lives, and given little Rowan, Coopah and Shaelee the stability and nurturing environment they deserve.

"When they give you hugs and kisses and write little notes like 'I love you mum' you just feel like it was meant to be," Leisa says. And there are so many families just like them in the process of, or waiting to bring children in need into their lives permanently. Progress in the adoption sector is changing the lives of children forever.



L to R; Ray, Coopah, Rowan, Leisa and Shaelee Davies with the family dog

## Christmas Bells Ring at Barnardos

December was a busy month at Barnardos as the staff and children at our centres were filled with holiday spirit. On December 14, children at our Yurungai Learning Centre put on a special Christmas performance they'd worked hard practicing for, Yurungai's Got Talent!

They presented artwork, read original poems, sang songs, played music and danced. Barnardos ambassador James Mathison presented their awards, and the children were treated to a disco afterwards.

Yurungai was also just one of many centres to receive a special Santa delivery. Thanks to donors like you, centres were given bags of new toys, with staff selecting those that best fit the interests and needs of each child in their programs. Children received their gifts at each centre's Christmas party, which were also funded by our donors and gave whole families the chance to have some holiday fun.

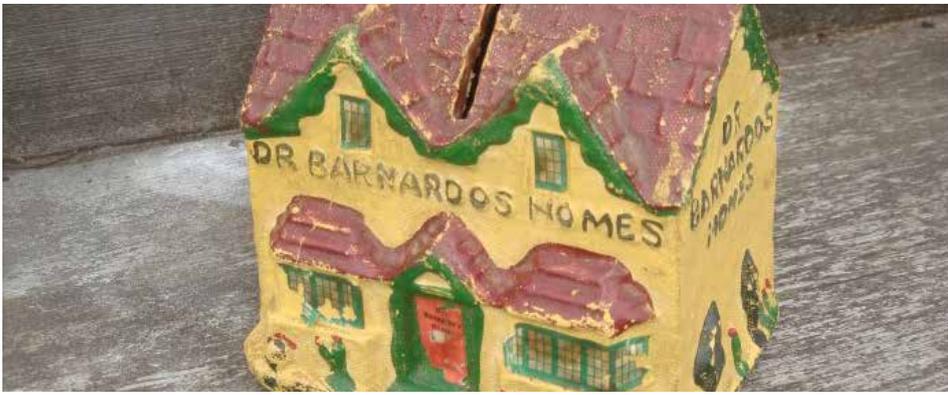
Some of the children, their carers and families also got a Christmas surprise at home when Barnardos

staff created hampers with treats, toiletries and festive decorations. We loaded up cars full of the gift boxes, delivering them right to the doors of our families who deserve a little something "extra" for the support they're providing our children this season.

Thank you for making our season merry and bright here at Barnardos. We look forward to growing these traditions with you in coming years.



Children at Yurungai Learning Centre displaying some of their talents



An old Barnardos House donation box, like Annie used when she was young

## Donor Spotlight: Annie's still supporting children after 60 years

Annie has been a lifelong supporter of Barnardos, and this year, she took the steps to leave a lasting legacy to a cause close to her heart. "Most people feel particularly compassionate towards children but at the same time, they think there is nothing they can do about it," she says. But Annie believes that it's possible for anyone to help children in need by donating to Barnardos.

Her donor journey began when she was still in primary school in 1950's England. Annie remembers, "We had a Barnardos House box at home, and my sister and I would put in one or two pennies a week. Once a year, all the boxes were opened up at school, and it was exciting as a young child to see how much we had raised at home. I think Mum may have topped it up a bit!" It was during that time she learned that children are often the silent victims of many family crises.

After World War II, Annie's family didn't have much money at home, but they still learned the importance of giving to others. "My mother always made us think about children who had lost both of their parents in the war. I know now how blessed I was to be brought up in such a caring atmosphere."

Annie later moved to Australia and learned even more about the scope of support Barnardos can provide. "They will support a family throughout their entire lives, if it's necessary."

Her building's caretaker was a Barnardos old boy, who had been brought to Australia many years ago. When he grew old, sadly, he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. "His one wish was to be reunited with his brother; they lost touch many decades ago. He asked Barnardos to help." Annie says that Barnardos was there for him after all of those years. "One day I visited him in the hospital, and his long lost brother was there by his bedside."

It is this personalised support for families, as well as Barnardos' work helping children find forever homes, that motivates Annie to continue to donate. She encourages others to do the same. "I have always tried to remind my family, colleagues and friends of our good fortune in life and that there are so many less fortunate all around us who need our help and our understanding."

Recently, Annie spoke with her solicitor about leaving a bequest to Barnardos in her will. "It had been in my mind for the last decade or so, but this year I decided actually to do it!" We are so thankful for Annie's kindness. She will make a lasting impact on the children who need us most.

If you have also been thinking of leaving a gift in your will and would like to discuss it further, please call Jessica Wood, Individual Giving Manager on **(02) 9218 2308** or email [jwood@barnardos.org.au](mailto:jwood@barnardos.org.au)

## Barnardos children given opportunity to star

Barnardos staff are excited to see some of our children star in a new film from Beyond Empathy Group called Protection. The film will be about childhood and centres on the need for children to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. The film will convey these important messages through several realistic scenarios that the children and their families act out.

Children who grow up in poverty and experience other hardships don't always have the opportunity to pursue the arts or other common activities we often take for granted. They might not be used to being told they have talent, or that others believe in their creativity. They may believe that they will never be given a chance to be successful.

The children in the film Protection, all under 12, mostly live in a public housing estate on the NSW south coast. This is not the first time children in our programs have participated in filmmaking. Teens from disadvantaged backgrounds previously helped to create Rights of Passage in 2013, which aired on ABC1. From the skills they learned in the process, some of the young people have gone on to further study in film editing and are looking to build careers in the industry.

The film Protection will help give these children a chance to shine, while giving other young people who watch it a lesson in respectful relationships and protective behaviours. Stay tuned for the progress and release of the film at [facebook.com/beprotectionfilm](https://facebook.com/beprotectionfilm)



Barnardos Youth Services team members

## Barnardos in focus - Adolescent Accommodation Program

Barnardos offers a wide range of services for young people aged 12-18, and our Adolescent Accommodation Program is just one of these. For over 15 years, Barnardos successfully ran a specialist homelessness service for adolescents until we lost funding in late 2014. As Barnardos is often the last source of help for these young people, we made it our priority to continue this vital work with the generous help of our donors.

Hayley Clisby, Barnardos Youth Services Manager, is so grateful for the support of our donors. "It is incredible to be able to save the service, and our donors give us the flexibility to tailor it to the changing needs of our young people. We were able to employ and maintain case worker support as well as the running costs for a private rental."

Thanks to our donors, Barnardos benefits from having flexible and integrated services. Having generally experienced very disruptive lives, every young person who comes to us has different needs. One such young person benefitting from your support is Matthew, who is now living in the private unit.

17 year-old Matthew was in our adolescent foster care program. When Mathew came to us at age 13, he had been through over 10

placement breakdowns. Due to the trauma in his childhood, his reactions and behaviours were often extreme and carers found it difficult to manage him.

Angry and frustrated, Matthew felt all alone. We knew he needed the right carer and guidance to help steer his life in a positive direction. Having been let down so many times before, Matthew didn't want a traditional carer, he wanted independence. We matched him with one of our longest serving carers, Rae, who had previously become a grandmother figure to so many of our young people. Rae was firm but fair, and really had a way of getting through to those she cared for.

For the first time in his life, Matthew had stability. He knew that no matter what he did, Rae wasn't going to give up on him and that Barnardos was there for the long haul. Sadly, Rae passed away last year. Hayley explained, "We had no available carers who could take Matthew. Without the additional funds from our donors to place him in the adolescent accommodation unit, we would have had very few options."

Matthew is really flourishing in this independent environment. Our youth workers are helping him to help build on life skills including budgeting, managing

## Case study: Oscar

We first met Oscar when he was 4 years old. At the time, he was displaying delayed development of speech and social skills. His parents both struggled with anxiety conditions and their home was messy and chaotic. They worried that Oscar wouldn't be able to start school at the same time as his peers or adapt to a new environment.

Our team started working with Oscar in his home, where he began speech pathology. We are also working with his preschool on a transition program so that he can understand how to behave in a classroom and begin learning his letters. Barnardos was able to help the family as a whole apply for public housing so that they could have a safer, cleaner place to raise Oscar and his little sister.

Now, Oscar's speech is developing quickly, and he is gaining the skills to relate to other children his age. He loves to tell you about how he's going to "big school" soon! Your support is helping Oscar and his family get ready for the next step in his young life, and to make sure he starts off school on the right foot.

money, cooking, personal hygiene and social skills. He is keeping the unit clean and tidy and continues the apprenticeship he secured in the care of Rae. Matthew is also making long term goals. When he finishes his apprenticeship, he even wants to take over the lease of the unit. Hayley says, "We will cross that bridge when we come to it, but for now we are very proud of him and his continued improvement."

The capacity to provide support like this is only ever possible thanks to our loyal supporters. Hayley proudly said, "We never give up on our children. Thank you for not giving up on them too."

## Barnardos leads the way in ACT

Barnardos has always had a strong focus on providing a permanent home for children in our care, whether it is safely back with their family or in permanent care.

In 2015, the ACT government decided to change their Out-Of-Home care service, to provide greater stability for carers and children by bringing together all elements designed to support children and young people in care.

One of the many aims of the subsequent “A Step Up for Our Kids” tender was that a child or young person in long-term care could have just one organisation, and ideally one case worker, responsible for the entire course of their time in care.

Annette Kelly-Egerton, Barnardos Canberra Senior Manager, says vulnerable children and young people will benefit from the changes. “We know that with support, children, young people and families can recover from the

impact of trauma through a supportive caregiving system, access to effective treatments and service systems that are trauma informed.”

After a rigorous application process, Barnardos, working in partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation, OzChild, Premier Youth Works and Relationships Australia, was announced as the successful applicant in November, 2015.

A major step for both Barnardos and the ACT community, the move will reduce duplication in the role of government and non-government services, giving Barnardos and our partners greater autonomy and responsibility in providing stable, long-term care for children and young people.

Upon making the announcement, the ACT Minister for Children and Young People Mick Gentleman said, “Barnardos has a long and proud record of providing services to children and young people which, in

Australia, can be traced back to 1921 when they commenced working with child migrants. Barnardos has a good understanding of what it takes to prevent children entering the care system as well as providing innovative and collaborative services to support children if they cannot live in the family home.”

Your support has allowed Barnardos to invest in research, to advocate for children and to be flexible in our approach so that each child’s individual needs are met. This experience and our willingness to work together made a significant difference in the selection process.

One of the cornerstones of the new approach is to see families kept together, fewer children entering care, better lives for those children that are in care and better support for carers. Thank you for playing such a crucial role in helping change lives today and into the future.

### Case study: Mike

Baby Mike first came into voluntary placement with Barnardos crisis care when he was only ten days old. As a new mum, his mother was having trouble meeting his needs, and had no stable housing for the two of them. She wanted some time to sort out these issues so she could provide the best care possible for Mike.

Mike’s mum had been living and working in Australia for six years, but without any family or close friends in the country, had little support for her new role of motherhood. Barnardos wanted to help Mum work on some stress management and parenting skills so that she would be able to take Mike back to her home country safely in a few months. Barnardos matched Mike’s mum with a case worker

who spoke her native language, which made communicating difficult issues easier.

During this period, his mum showed a commitment to working on parenting skills and was able to secure appropriate housing. Their case worker helped them to get in touch with extended family members overseas who could assist them with the return.

In a final step, Barnardos helped to create a two week transition plan for Mike, where he was given more and more contact with his mum before he was restored to her care, and they returned to their home country to be with other family members.

Mike’s story shows just one of many ways that Barnardos

provides short-term crisis care for families in trouble, while working with them on changes that see children remain with their parents where possible.

Barnardos has recently experienced a growth in the number of children who need these types of services. Knowing this, we have expanded short-term care to Blacktown, NSW. The local geographical area was identified as high needs without enough existing crisis care services.

The new program is emerging strongly, with eight children in the homes of five authorised carers. We are currently working to recruit even more carers, and want to make families in the area aware of the different services Barnardos provides.

