

Believe.

Barnardos Australia Newsletter
Volume 9 - 2017



Barnardos
Australia

Barnardos urgently needs more people to provide respite care to a child one weekend a month on an ongoing basis.

BECOME A RESPITE CARER

1800 663 441



Photo of the Yurungai Learning Centre and Totem Skateboarding.

Skateboarding their way to health

Your incredible support provides children with the opportunity to try new things that they might not otherwise get to – due to where they live or difficulties they face at home.

This winter, children from our Yurungai Learning Centre were able to try skateboarding – a healthy activity that they also thought was super cool! Centre Manager Viv Freeman tells us that, **“Many of these kids live in high-rises, so they don’t get the chance to do outside activities.”**

In fact, research shows that residents, including children, of high-poverty city neighbourhoods have higher rates of obesity and lower rates of physical activity than those in the suburbs.

Totem Skateboarding provided skateboards and helmets for the children to use throughout the activity. The lesson started by teaching the children the safest way to fall if they lost their balance. Next, they learnt how to properly step on the boards to keep their centre of gravity. As they got moving they learned to push along with their feet and roll down the pavement.

Finally, they learned the best ways to stop themselves safely and some even mastered a trick or two!

It was a great way for the children to be active and have tons of fun, when their living situation can see them spending lots of time indoors. Skateboarding builds cardiovascular health, and also helps form better posture and balance.

Thank you for helping give the children a fantastic day out and, possibly, inspiring the next great Aussie skateboarder!

Her first birthday party – at age 11

At almost 11 years of age, Amber had never in her life had a birthday party.

She asked her mother for one earlier this year, but Amber was told she was too old.

Amber has recently come into care with Barnardos because it wasn't safe for her to stay at home anymore. She is now in foster care until a permanent decision can be made about her future.

When our staff found out her birthday was coming up and she had no celebration planned, we organised a surprise party for her.

We were able to get passes to Taronga Zoo so that she could have the best first birthday ever. Amber tried for weeks to guess what we had planned, because she was so excited, but it remained a complete – and fantastic – surprise. She was a bit upset because her best friend was going to be overseas at the time, and was shocked but elated when she appeared for the party!

From the moment her party group of six friends got on the ferry, Amber was bouncing with joy, but the day just kept getting better. The girls were given a private tour of the nocturnal house and got to hold a tiny feather-tail glider. They then went on the sky safari and had a great time.

At the end of the day, they went to the seal show and got to sit right up the front. They were soaking wet from seal splashes by the time they caught the ferry home. The funniest part of the day, however, was when an echidna stuck its tongue in Amber's foster carer's shoe. At least that's what Amber thought!

Thanks to the kindness of our donors, children like Amber who have never enjoyed things we take for granted, like celebrating a birthday, can experience childhood more fully. We are so glad Amber adored her first ever birthday party.

The shocking reality of teen suicide

It's tragic to think about, but suicide is the leading cause of death in Australian young people aged 15 to 17 years.

Barnardos believes that no teen should ever feel that life isn't worth living, and we strive to provide hope and a future. Sadly, many of the 264 young people who took their own lives between 2000-2015 were experiencing issues that so many children in our care and programs have dealt with: the distress of long-term poverty, family members struggling with addiction, abuse at home and struggles at school. In 2015 alone, 87 or nearly half of the young people under age 17 who killed themselves had experienced childhood trauma.

For the children in our programs, mental health support is very important. The New South Wales government has recently launched an inquiry – Prevention of Youth Suicide in NSW – into the increased numbers of suicide in recent years and invited Barnardos to respond.

The inquiry will examine what service providers like Barnardos are able to do to prevent youth suicide, and how we make it a priority in assisting the young people with whom we work.

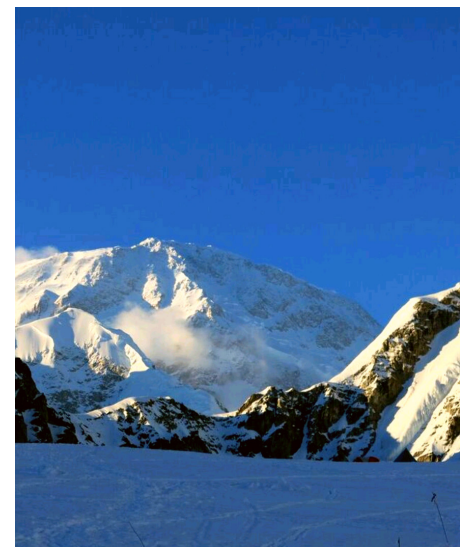
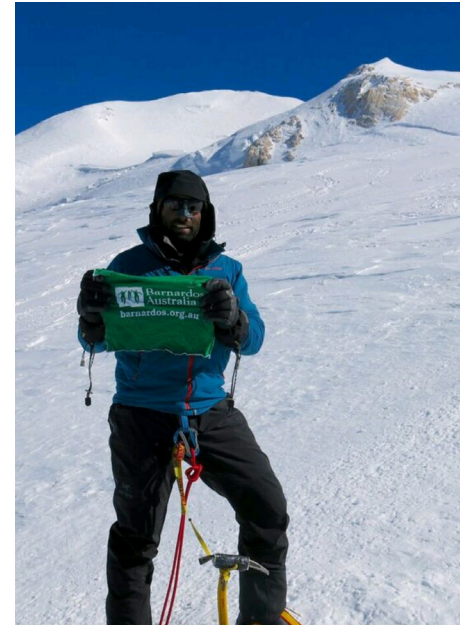
Thanks to incredible donors like you, every child and young person who comes through our doors can get the tailored individual support they need.

All young people in our

programs have access or referrals to counselling to help them move past the negative effects of childhood trauma. Barnardos aims to give teens a safe space where they can talk about issues and receive help without considering self-injury. This is important as a majority of teens who commit suicide struggle with a diagnosable mental illness, and almost all had other concerns with their psychological health. We know what research confirms: that most mental health illnesses are treatable especially if they are addressed early on.

Barnardos also provides preventative support for young people who may be at risk. Inter-social difficulties, or issues getting along with peers, were noted as a factor in all but two teen suicides reported in 2015. Barnardos offers opportunities for young people to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, which helps them to make new positive groups of friends if they are struggling socially in school. If the pressure of succeeding academically is a source of stress (especially for older students as they worry about their HSC scores), Barnardos can help match them with a mentor or tutor to help master their course material.

The full response to the inquiry will be published soon, but we continue to do all we can to help prevent the devastating suicides of young people. If you know any young person in immediate crisis, please contact Lifeline (13 11 14). Additional mental health services can also be accessed at Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636).



Photos of Delfino climbing Denali, highest mountain peak in North America.

Taking child abuse awareness to new heights - Delfino DiMascio's Story

On 14 May 2017, I returned to Denali, Alaska, to complete one of the seven hardest summits in the world and raise much needed awareness for child abuse prevention.

After months of physical and mental preparation, I abandoned the everyday luxuries of running water, a bed to sleep in at night, a power point, a telephone, and a hot shower, in pursuit of the mountains. Twenty-one days of challenging Arctic conditions lay ahead, with temperatures as low as -35°C and windstorms that bunkered us in tents for hours and days. I recall a tent buddy crying

in fear of the cold – multiple teams were suffering frostbite due to the rapidly changing weather patterns up high on the mountain.

Two rope teams made it to the top. Our team fell short of the summit with only 300 vertical metres to go, with an ill climber unable to continue from absolute exhaustion. I was feeling strong on summit day and thought of unroping to finish alone, but such an act can have deadly consequences. So close to the top, our feelings of frustration, disappointment and temptation to continue, melded into one.

I raised the Barnardos flag high with the summit dome within

arm's reach, and a daylight moon watching over us. I will contemplate yet another summit attempt on Denali, and the neighbouring Mt Foraker, in the years to come.

Child abuse is one of the most important issues that we face as a community. If we can all nurture a deeper understanding and a true sense of compassion, there is hope for change for future generations to come. I urge everyone to stop and reflect on this issue, and call on you to help stop this terrible cycle spiralling beyond control in our world today.

- Delfino DiMascio

A month of celebrating child safety and carers

September is a special time of year - the morning chill is lifting and flowers are beginning to bloom. We take the time to appreciate the father figures in our lives. It is also a fantastic time to get involved in standing up for children in need and their right to a safe, secure home.

We look forward to hearing what wonderful supporters like you did this month, or any time of year, to advocate for child protection and foster care.

3-9 September

National Child Protection Week

Now in its 27th year, the theme for 2017 is "Play Your Part" to encourage the safety and wellbeing of all children in Australia.

Playing your part can mean encouraging children and young people's participation in your community, to coordinating and promoting a family-friendly outing. You can also help by spreading local awareness of issues affecting young people, or if you work in the public sector, encouraging teens and young people to come and join you for a day.

No matter what time of year, the best way to protect children is to report any child you think could be in danger at home to your local Family and Community Services department.

10-16 September

National Foster Care Week

This week is a wonderful time to celebrate the amazing foster carers in Australia, and all that they do to keep children who've grown up in unsafe homes in a happy and stable environment.

Foster carers go above and beyond to protect these vulnerable young lives, and contribute to our communities as a whole.

If you'd like to learn more about the many different types of foster care at Barnardos or are interested in becoming a carer, please visit our website or call 1800 663 441.

Right now we are in need of short term carers who can look after a child for up to two years.



Illustration by Shannon Kassell, Year 8, Dubbo College Delroy Campus.
Sourced by napcani.org.au

Case Study - Mia

Our young people often feel like they don't deserve to have a brighter future. Mia's mum died when she was eight, leaving her and her younger brother in the care of their father. At 12 years old, Mia's father was having trouble keeping up with both her and her brother's needs during such a crucial stage of development. Mia was lashing out by refusing to go school, and we met the family when her attendance dropped so severely, she was at risk of failing.

As we began to work with the family, we learned of a boarding school scholarship available at Mia's school. Mia and her father both agreed that this would be a great option for her if she could get it - it would provide her with a more stable place during the week so that her father could better manage her brother, and it would ensure that she attended class regularly. We were determined to help her win the scholarship, so Mia's caseworker spent hours helping her put

together a winning application.

When Mia was awarded the scholarship, she was excited, but also extremely nervous. She did not believe she deserved to go to this school, much less have all the funds provided. As much as we tried to tell her she had received the scholarship because she earned it, Mia stopped going to classes during her three day trial. She was then advised that the offer would be rescinded.

Mia is just one of our children who, even when presented with the help they need, don't think they are worthy or special enough to receive it. We knew this opportunity would make a huge difference to her life, so over the school holidays, we worked intensely with Mia on preparing to make her case for keeping the scholarship and to understand and address her anxiety around this issue.

We encouraged Mia to come to Barnardos three times a week to

work through her feelings with art and other activities. When it was finally time for her to make her case to the boarding school, Mia told them that this was her "one shot" and she didn't want to miss it.

It was very emotional but thankfully, after the meeting, Mia was able to keep her scholarship! She started at the school and has maintained a 100 percent attendance record ever since. She goes home to see her dad every weekend, who reports that managing her little brother is easier now that he is being supported in his parenting.

Mia was in danger of disengaging with her education, but we believe learning is an important step to building a better future.

We are so proud of Mia - most of all because she now believes she belongs in this great environment!

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Remembering Louise Voigt – keep her legacy alive

Many members of the child protection community across Australia showed their support at former long-time Barnardos CEO Louise Voigt's memorial held on Monday 5th June at MacLaurin Hall, University of Sydney. Hundreds of people, including some of our fantastic donors like you, came to celebrate her life and all that she had done for children.

Louise passed away peacefully at her home on Friday 7th April, this year, having retired from Barnardos in 2015. Over the course of her life she helped hundreds of thousands of Australian children find a safer future and pioneered the way for open adoption.

Before Barnardos, London-born Louise helped shape changes in the Social Work program at University of Sydney. She also worked for Waverley Council in NSW and developed Temporary Family Care – a crisis care system that sees

children returned to their families as soon as it is safe again. She brought this model to Barnardos when she became CEO in 1983.

A key part of her vision when she took the helm was to create “one stop shops” where families under severe stress could access a range of services to deal with domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, or social exclusion through poverty. This vision came to life as Barnardos Children's Family Centres.

Louise advocated for permanency through adoption for children who couldn't live safely with their parents. She believed that multiple foster care placements was ultimately damaging to a child – especially one who has already suffered great trauma. Barnardos became an adoption agency in 1985 and Louise lobbied tirelessly for open adoption – where children can stay in touch with their birth

family and culture – as the first and best option. Today, Barnardos' position that long term foster care remains the last choice for children in need is reflected in NSW legislation.

In 2000, Louise was awarded the Australian Association of Social Workers' Social Justice Award and in 2014 she received the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies' Lifetime Achievement Award.

Her simple yet powerful philosophy that “every child deserves to be safe at home” became Barnardos' slogan and still lies at the heart of our agency's 176 programs and services.

We are, and know Louise would be, so grateful for the thousands of donors who are helping us to continue her legacy.



Photo of Louise Voigt and her memorial in June.

