

MEDIA RELEASE

Under embargo until Monday 9 September 2019

The Journey from Violence to Safety in Central NSW

LINKER is a domestic violence service in Central Western NSW that is changing the lives of women and children.

The rate of domestic violence in Far West and Orana is more than five* times higher than the overall rate for NSW. In regional, rural and remote communities, domestic and family violence is one of the leading causes for women and children becoming homeless and seeking emergency accommodation.

Barnardos recognise that there is a high need for support, yet unlike urban areas, only a small number of providers operate in often isolated locations and most services are only able to provide active support during business hours.

LINKER is a unique and innovative service which addresses the after-hours support gap in Western NSW. It proactively offers telephone and text message support to women who have accessed emergency short-term accommodation as the result of leaving domestic violence.

LINKER offers flexible out of hours phone contact (**5pm-9am every day of the week**) from a specialist domestic violence worker to clients referred by emergency accommodation providers. The **LINKER** worker proactively contacts the client by phone and offer personalised and consistent support as required during their time of crisis and transition through homelessness to post-crisis stability, at times of the day and week when there are few if any other forms of support available.

Clients and SHS providers particularly value the **LINKER** Service capacity for phone-based support from another town, allowing for a more anonymous relationship, thus respecting confidentiality concerns, which can be challenging in small communities.

On Monday 9th September the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health will release their findings on how **LINKER** supports victims, provides insight into the successes of **LINKER** and how we can improve this program to assist more women and children in crisis. A documentary has also been created by Barnardos featuring **LINKER** support workers and the remarkable women they have helped to rebuild their lives.

Watch "**LINKER – A Journey to Safety**" [here](#): (embargoed until 9 September 2019)

According to the study:

- 90% of clients strongly agreed that the **LINKER** Service reduced their anxiety and increased their feelings of support.
- 80% of clients felt less isolated
- 97% agreed that **LINKER** assisted with respect to immediate outcomes.

*According to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, the rate of domestic violence incidents eliciting critical bodily harm, at a rate of 139.6 per 100,000, is highest in the Far West and Orana region of NSW. This is more than **five times higher** than the overall rate for NSW at 25.6 per 100,000 (Freeman, 2018).

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For more information or to arrange media interviews, contact: Irene Saunders, Head of Communications, Barnardos Australia isaunders@barnardos.org.au

About LINKER

LINKER was collaboratively developed in 2016 in response to an extensive consultation process into the needs of women and children in the Western NSW region. LINKER is funded as part of the NSW government Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE, announced October 2014). The consortium of Specialist Homelessness Services (Barnardos Australia, Mission Australia, Orana Support Services, Centacare Wilcannia Forbes, Orange Local Aboriginal Lands Council, and Housing Plus) have provided governance support and ensure district coverage, with Barnardos Australia acting as Lead Agency. The LINKER Service has been successfully implemented in a wide range of communities throughout Western NSW.

About Barnardos Australia

Barnardos Australia is a leading non-government, non-denominational, child safety and family care organisation providing services for vulnerable children, young people and their families. Barnardos Australia believes all children and young people deserve caring families in which they can grow safely and fulfil their potential. We work together with children, young people and families to break the cycle of disadvantage, creating safe, nurturing and stable homes, connected to family and community.

www.barnardos.org.au