

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 24 April 2018

Supporting Mums Leaving Gaol Benefits Everyone

A program to assist mothers who have had contact with the criminal justice system has been found to have a positive outcome for the Western NSW region and for the state as a whole.

The Western Research Institute (WRI) evaluated the outcomes of Barnardos' Beyond Barbed Wire Program from 2013 to the present, to determine the contribution the program makes in economic and social terms.

Beyond Barbed Wire (BBW) offers a suite of support services for women and children, most of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), who are returning home following release from custody.

WRI assessed the program's outcomes by considering reoffending or recidivism rates, reductions in interactions across the criminal justice system and the impacts from the program's support services that build parenting, social and vocational skills.

Most notably, WRI found the Beyond Barbed Wire program helped to stop mothers from re-offending for the sake of their children, "Comparing the Beyond Barbed Wire program recidivism rate of 7% against the Australian trend of 42.9% for all women who re-offend and 66% of ATSI women who re-offend illustrates how strong the outcomes of the Program are." WRI's CEO Kathy Woolley said.

Three quarters of those interviewed said their parenting skills were better and 95% identified improvements in their relationships with their children. "When comments include how a participant now has "sense of hope" and another participant: "feels more confident and can do things and be successful, it is really uplifting" Barnardos Co-Ordinator Shiree Talbot said.

In addition to the social benefits, WRI estimated the economic net present value of expanding the Beyond Barbed Wire program to be \$1.38M over a 10-year period. The methodology used assesses benefits in economic, social and environmental areas.

A Benefit/Cost analysis was also undertaken which illustrated the benefit of expanding the Program. "The results of the Benefit/Cost analysis indicated that for every dollar spent in the Beyond Barbed Wire program, more than two dollars of benefit is returned to the communities where the program is delivered" Ms Woolley said.

Quantifiable benefits were identified to include reduction in health system and welfare system costs plus a reduction in crime rates and recidivism with consequential savings in policing, court and justice system costs. Non quantifiable benefits noted were improvements to child welfare outcomes and quality of life, social justice improvements and a reduced incidents of family violence.

"Breaking the cycle of repeat offending provides an estimated annual economic net benefit of \$22,150 per person per annum" Ms Woolley concluded.

The Barnardos Beyond Barbed Wire WRI Evaluation Report will be officially launched on Thursday 3 May, by Andrew Gee MP, the Federal Member for Calare. A screening of a Beyond Barbed Wire documentary, will also accompany the launch featuring interviews with participants in the program.

Event: Barnardos Beyond Barbed Wire Western Research Institute Evaluation Report Launch and Documentary Screening

Date: Thursday 3 May 2018

Time: 11:00am - 12:30pm

Venue: Hermitage Hill Resort and Function Centre
135 Maxwell St,
Wellington NSW 2820

RSVP: Wednesday 25 April 2018
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About Barnardos Australia

Barnardos Australia is a leading non-government, non-denominational child protection charity in Australia. Originally founded in the UK in 1870 by Dr Thomas Barnardo, we have been operating in Australia since 1921. 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. Our intensive family support programs combat family and domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, poverty and homelessness, to strengthen families and keep children safe at home. When this is not possible, we also provide safe homes for children through foster care and kinship care to give children a safe place to grow and develop. Since 1985, Barnardos has pioneered open adoption for non-Aboriginal children in NSW, giving children the permanency and security they need, for life. www.barnardos.org.au

About Western Research Institute

Western Research Institute, WRI, is a regional economics and development research organisation located in Bathurst, New South Wales. WRI has expertise in regional social and economic planning, labour market analysis, consumer sentiment surveying, and business development in regional Australia. It has worked with all tiers of Government, leading not-for-profits, industry, universities and research institutes and businesses on a wide range of social and economic development projects, and program evaluations, in regional areas. WRI has strong credentials in business and commercial market consulting and applied economic modelling.

Our credentialed team of professionals has extensive experience using a range of key research tools including surveys, input-output industry analysis and economic modelling, community surveys to ensure its analysis and recommendations are independent, accurate and reliable. www.wri.org.au