

MEDIA RELEASE**Thursday, 8 June 2023****“What about the kids?” Barnardos CEO urges us
not to overlook the hidden victims of DFV**

Domestic and family violence (DFV) continues to plague our society, leaving behind a trail of shattered lives. The tragic loss of two children in alleged DFV attacks this week serves as a painful reminder of the urgency to address this pervasive issue. While attention is rightly focused on the adult victims of DFV, it is crucial we do not overlook the silent sufferers—children. Statistics reveal that 1 in 4 children in Australia is exposed to domestic violence. However, these children are not simply exposed; they directly experience the terror and trauma of DFV, often resulting in lifelong psychological distress.

[Research conducted by Barnardos Australia](#) has shed light on the lasting effects of DFV on children. An alarming 88% of child victims of DFV suffer from profound psychological distress, leaving a deep and enduring impact on their well-being. Even after the abuse ends, these children continue to grapple with low self-esteem, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm, and, tragically, sometimes even suicide. Their suffering does not dissipate with time; it lingers, affecting their growth and potential.

Barnardos CEO Deirdre Cheers explains “Almost every single family that is referred to us has experienced domestic and family violence (DFV). Under the current law, when a mother and her children arrive at a DFV service genuinely in fear for their lives, they are grouped together in an assessment, and it is assumed they have the same needs - the children are not treated as individuals.

How can we do better for children? How can we reduce the risk of children becoming victims of DFV? We need to listen to them. When the policies are being written and the laws are being made which impact on their journeys in life, we need to listen to the children and keep their voices and experiences in the forefront. Advocating for children is everybody’s business. Why aren’t more of us standing up and saying, ‘what about the kids?’

Barnardos Australia calls upon the Federal, State, and Territory Governments to take immediate action by implementing the following measures:

- Recognise children and young people as equal victims of DFV in policy, programs, and service delivery, prioritising their needs and safety in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children and its action plans.
- Provide immediate and effective trauma-informed counselling and therapy for children and young people who are victims or victim-survivors of DFV.
- Allocate increased funding to employ domestic and family violence child specialist workers to offer case management and support for children and young people.
- Increase funding for safe, secure, and affordable social housing options for children and families fleeing DFV situations, including crisis, transitional, and long-term housing, to prevent children from needing to enter out-of-home care.

For more information or to arrange media interviews, contact: Irene Saunders, Head of Media, PR and Communications, M: 0410503232 E: isaunders@barnardos.org.au
About Barnardos Australia

Barnardos Australia is here because every child needs a champion. We listen, we act, and we advocate for the safety of children at risk of abuse and neglect, providing family support programs and services that empower children to reach their full potential. When it comes to protecting vulnerable children from abuse, we never give up. We are dedicated to the prevention of trauma in children, and support families to be the best parents they can be. We help children to recover and thrive. www.barnardos.org.au