



Barnardos  
Australia



# A brighter Barnardos

Strategic Directions 2025-26



# A note from our CEO

At Barnardos, we directly see and hear the impact of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and violence on children and families. Barnardos' response to these critical issues always begins with listening to the voices of children, within their communities and environments, and understanding what they most need. And at present, right across Australia, changes that impact children and families are happening at an ever-increasing rate.

To continue to support and improve the lives of vulnerable children and families, our new targeted two-year strategy aims to disrupt the intertwined barriers of poverty, violence, unemployment, and homelessness. To do this, we will be focusing on early intervention and education programs, forging strong

collaborative partnerships, and building capability - so that we can do even more for children.

Achieving our objectives and deliverables holistically means that Barnardos must think about the way we work together with others differently. By deeply integrating and embedding our Theory of Change into our new strategic directions for 2025-26 we will ensure greater alignment, consistency, sustainability, and effectiveness with our desired outcomes for everything we do and deliver, without compromising on innovation and excellence.

Critical to the reach and impact of Barnardos is the generosity and wisdom of our funders and supporters, including donors, partners, and sector

colleagues. With your ongoing support, commitment, and backing, Barnardos Australia can empower children and families to attain their brightest future.

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# VISION

To empower every child in Australia  
to reach their full potential.

## PURPOSE

We support vulnerable  
children to recover and thrive.  
Together, we ensure they  
reach their brightest future.

### WE NEVER GIVE UP

We recognise  
the challenges  
children face  
and put our shared  
commitment, wisdom,  
and experience to work.

### WE SPEAK UP

We listen, act, and advocate  
on behalf of children,  
always showing  
compassion, courage,  
and inclusion.

### WE AIM HIGHER

We learn,  
improve, and  
innovate in everything  
we do to enrich the  
wellbeing of children and the  
environment they grow up in.

### WE STAND WITH YOU

When we unite  
around a child in need,  
we prove that they do  
not have to overcome  
their challenges  
alone.

### WE DO WHAT'S RIGHT

We build trust  
with people,  
partners, and our  
community by being  
ethical, transparent,  
inclusive, and accountable.





# Strategic introduction



Barnardos always has and always will be there to support vulnerable children and families, and therefore we have developed a two-year strategic plan that aims to tackle two main factors.

Firstly, the pressures on Australian families have increased significantly. A cost-of-living crisis, housing shortages and soaring rental prices, as well as an increased prevalence of domestic and family violence are impacting our communities. Barnardos has experienced a rise in service demand, increasingly from families who have not previously sought assistance from a charity.

Secondly, the shifting Australian charity landscape has led to funding challenges, policy responses, and legislative compliance constraints that impact our workforce and operations. Our organisation has been busy implementing major projects to respond

to these changes and challenges, such as rolling out a new Practice Framework, new case management and back of house systems, Employee Wellbeing Framework, and preparing to transition how we deliver Out-of-Home Care services in the ACT.

Along with these challenges, there come exciting opportunities to keep demonstrating our commitment to Closing the Gap targets through our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and partnership work to support Aboriginal children to transition to the care of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). We fearlessly persist to advocate for the voice, rights, and needs of all Australian

children through our campaigns, programs, and collectively through an Allies for Children sector forum.

Our new targeted co-designed Strategic Directions aims to tackle the current internal and external landscape drivers head-on. We will use the next two years to position Barnardos for future growth and expansion. This will ensure that our positive impact and reach continues to address the direct needs of vulnerable children and families. We commit to focusing our efforts on the issues of poverty, violence, and homelessness, which are fundamentally embedded in our Theory of Change.



# Our ambition

Our vision and purpose is to support as many vulnerable Australian children and families as possible. To achieve our ambition, Barnardos needs to be responsive, evolve, and future-proof to capitalise on opportunities to magnify our impact and reach.

Our two-year Strategic Directions will shape the transformation of our operations, projects, and programs, so that we increase our capacity, capability, and sustainability, to continue to support our people, partners, and especially, the children and families we serve.



# Barnardos Australia Strategic Directions 2025-26

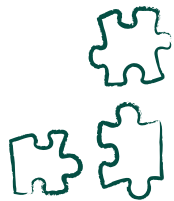
## Vision

To empower every child in Australia to reach their full potential.

## Purpose

We support vulnerable children to recover and thrive.  
Together, we ensure they reach their brightest future.

## Strategic Focus Areas



### Reduce the impact of poverty

1. Prioritise prenatal and newborn interventions for mothers who need support and assistance, so that children begin their lives with the best possible health outcomes.
2. Optimise, coordinate, and grow early intervention responses and programs to connect families to the right services, so that children's needs are assessed and met in a timely manner.
3. Facilitate learning opportunities for children, young people, and caregivers that empower and enhance self-confidence and wellbeing, so that they form lifelong skills and career pathways that lead to employment.

### Reduce the impact of violence

1. Lead domestic and family violence advocacy by making the child's experience visible, so that children grow up feeling safe, secure, and thrive.
2. Intensify our partnerships with peak domestic and family violence organisations to collectively work towards preventing domestic, family and sexual violence, so that we reduce the impacts of trauma on children and enhance their future potential.
3. Strengthen capability and reach of our domestic, family and sexual violence workers, so that we effectively respond by supporting and protecting children from harm.

### Reduce the impact of homelessness

1. Forge long-term partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to lead our commitment to self-determination principles, so that Aboriginal children and their caregivers can be connected with cultural, community, family and housing support.
2. Integrate and grow our programs specifically improving housing stability and referral pathways, so that children and families have a secure foundation to support their recovery and build resilience.
3. Drive family preservation and restoration outcomes that keep families together, so that children grow up in a safe and permanent home where they can excel.

### Increase our sustainability

1. Strengthen the capabilities of our workforce by providing diverse learning and training options, so that we embed our evidence-driven practice and use of casework technology tools across our programs and services.
2. Heighten our reach by investing in fundraising and brand awareness to amplify our fearlessly optimistic messaging so that we encourage increased donor and philanthropic support for our initiatives and programs.
3. Openly review the viability and effectiveness of our program offerings, so that we continue to provide services that deliver quality and outcomes to children and families aligned to our Theory of Change.

## Values & Culture



### We never give up

We recognise the challenges that children face and put our shared commitment, wisdom and experience to work.

### We speak up

We listen, act, and advocate on behalf of children, always showing compassion, courage, and inclusion.

### We aim higher

We learn, improve, and innovate in everything we do to enrich the wellbeing of children and the environment they grow up in.

### We stand with you

When we unite around a child in need, we prove that they do not have to overcome their challenges alone.

### We do what's right

We build trust with people, partners, and our community by being ethical, transparent, inclusive, and accountable.



Reducing  
poverty

Reducing  
violence

Reducing  
homelessness

Increasing  
sustainability

# Our strategic focus areas

# Reduce the impact of poverty on a child's potential through preparation and education



# Reduce the impact of poverty on a child's potential through preparation and education

## 1.

### What we'll focus on

Prioritise prenatal and newborn interventions for mothers who need support and assistance, so that children begin their lives with the best possible health outcomes.

### What action we plan to take

We will build new partnerships with health providers to establish new programs.

We will extend and expand our substance use in pregnancy program, as well as look at new program opportunities.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll collaboratively monitor and evaluate the strength of our partnerships in achieving our desired goals.

We'll measure the engagement and health outcomes of the women and newborns participating in our programs.

## Reduce the impact of poverty on a child's potential through preparation and education

# 2.

### What we'll focus on

Optimise, coordinate, and grow early intervention responses and programs to connect families to the right services, so that children's needs are assessed and met in a timely manner.

### What action we plan to take

We will establish 'satellite hubs' that reach and connect families who need access to face-to-face casework services.

We will simplify and streamline our internal and external referral pathways to ensure they are effective and efficient.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll monitor and respond to the findings of 'satellite hub' evaluations to ensure they are fit for purpose.

We'll refine our processes and monitor the needs alignment and the timeliness of our program referrals and responsiveness.

## Reduce the impact of poverty on a child's potential through preparation and education

# 3.

### What we'll focus on

Facilitate learning opportunities for children, young people, and caregivers that empower and enhance self-confidence and wellbeing, so that they form lifelong skills and career pathways that lead to employment.

### What action we plan to take

We will target our playgroups and early education programs to regional and rural areas.

We will provide learning and placement work experience opportunities for young people through partnerships with employment agencies.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll support children and caregivers to complete pulse and exit surveys to validate learning outcomes.

We'll examine the career pathways and employment conversion rates of young people and caregivers involved in our programs and partnerships.





**Reduce the impact  
of violence on a  
child's potential  
through advocacy  
and collaboration**

# Reduce the impact of violence on a child's potential through advocacy and collaboration

## 1.

### What we'll focus on

Lead domestic and family violence advocacy by making the child's experience visible, so that children grow up feeling safe, secure, and thrive.

### What action we plan to take

We will invest in research that connects and highlights our child-focused practice and outcomes that address domestic and family violence.

We will publish opinion pieces and submissions on domestic and family violence.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll monitor our impact in shaping government policy and legislative changes.

We'll quantify the community and media's level of engagement in our public advocacy campaigns.

## Reduce the impact of violence on a child's potential through advocacy and collaboration

# 2.

### What we'll focus on

Intensify our partnerships with peak domestic and family violence organisations to collectively work towards preventing domestic, family and sexual violence, so that we reduce the impacts on trauma to children and enhance their future potential.

### What action we plan to take

We will actively promote and invest in our partnerships with State and National organisations.

We will co-design domestic and family violence advocacy campaigns and programs that highlight the needs of children.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll monitor the levels of interaction and engagement with our partnerships and establish formal partnership agreements.

We'll measure the reach and outcomes of our campaigns and program interventions.



## Reduce the impact of violence on a child's potential through advocacy and collaboration

# 3.

### What we'll focus on

Strengthen capability and reach of our domestic, family and sexual violence workers, so that we effectively respond by supporting and protecting children from violence.

### What action we plan to take

We will obtain additional funding to employ more specialist domestic and family violence workers.

We will train our existing front-line caseworkers in responding to complex domestic and family violence situations using the Safe & Together™ model.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll quantify the participation and engagement of our employees in domestic and family violence training programs.

We'll ask our children and families whether they feel that our practice has supported them with their domestic and family violence issues.

# Reduce the impact of homelessness on a child's potential through partnerships and permanency

# Reduce the impact of homelessness on a child's potential through partnerships and permanency

## 1.

### What we'll focus on

Forge long-term partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to lead our commitment to self-determination principles, so that Aboriginal children and their caregivers can be connected with cultural, community, family and housing support.

### What action we plan to take

We will strengthen and learn from our existing ACCO partnerships to actively transfer Aboriginal children to ACCOs.

We will cultivate new partnerships with ACCOs to ensure we proactively demonstrate our commitment to their ongoing success.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll monitor the quality and intensity of our partnership interactions and engagement.

We'll seek feedback and survey our ACCO partners to identify opportunities to grow and maintain the longevity of our relationships beyond the transitions.

## Reduce the impact of homelessness on a child's potential through partnerships and permanency

# 2.

### What we'll focus on

Integrate and grow our programs specifically improving housing stability and referral pathways, so that children and families have a secure foundation to support their recovery and build resilience.

### What action we plan to take

We will develop new partnerships with housing providers, so that we can address housing needs of families through innovative program co-design that acknowledge socio-economic and climate change implications.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll identify the primary practice offerings we can bring to housing partnerships and monitor our effectiveness to establish new initiatives or partnerships.



Reduce the impact of homelessness on a child's potential through partnerships and permanency

3.

#### What we'll focus on

Drive family preservation and restoration outcomes that keep families together, so that children grow up in a safe and permanent home where they can excel.

#### What action we plan to take

We will focus on restoration outcomes for children, whilst recognising the importance of alternative permanency outcomes, like guardianship and open adoption.

We will replicate our restoration programs to support families to stay together.

#### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll measure the permanency outcomes we are achieving for children and identify the essential activities that lead to expediting permanency.

We'll evaluate the expansion of our restoration programs and survey the children and families participating in them.



**Increase our impact  
to children achieving  
their potential  
through sustainability  
and courage**

# Increase our impact to children achieving their potential through sustainability and courage

## 1.

### What we'll focus on

Strengthen the capabilities of our workforce by providing diverse learning and training options, so that we embed our evidence-driven practice and use of casework technology tools across our programs and services.

### What action we plan to take

We will work to further integrate our Practice Framework, Outcomes Framework and case management system to support client outcomes.

We will respond to feedback from our frontline employees on their learning needs and identify how we can enhance and improve our systems and tools.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll monitor and refine the outcomes we are capturing across our programs to ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned to our casework activities.

We'll regularly seek feedback on the learning opportunities, tools and systems we have designed and developed to support continuous improvement.

## Increase our impact to children achieving their potential through sustainability and courage

# 2.

### What we'll focus on

Heighten our reach by investing in fundraising and brand awareness to amplify our fearlessly optimistic messaging, so that we encourage increased donor and philanthropic support for our initiatives and programs.

### What action we plan to take

We will support our communication, advocacy, and engagement by increasing our focus and investment in fundraising and brand awareness.

### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll quantify the engagement of donors and donations connected to the impact of our campaigns.

We'll measure how our fundraising revenue is supporting the growth of our existing programs, as well as funding new initiatives and innovations.



Increase our impact to children achieving their potential through sustainability and courage

3.

#### What we'll focus on

Openly review the viability and effectiveness of our program offerings, so that we continue to provide services that deliver quality and outcomes to children and families aligned to our Theory of Change.

#### What action we plan to take

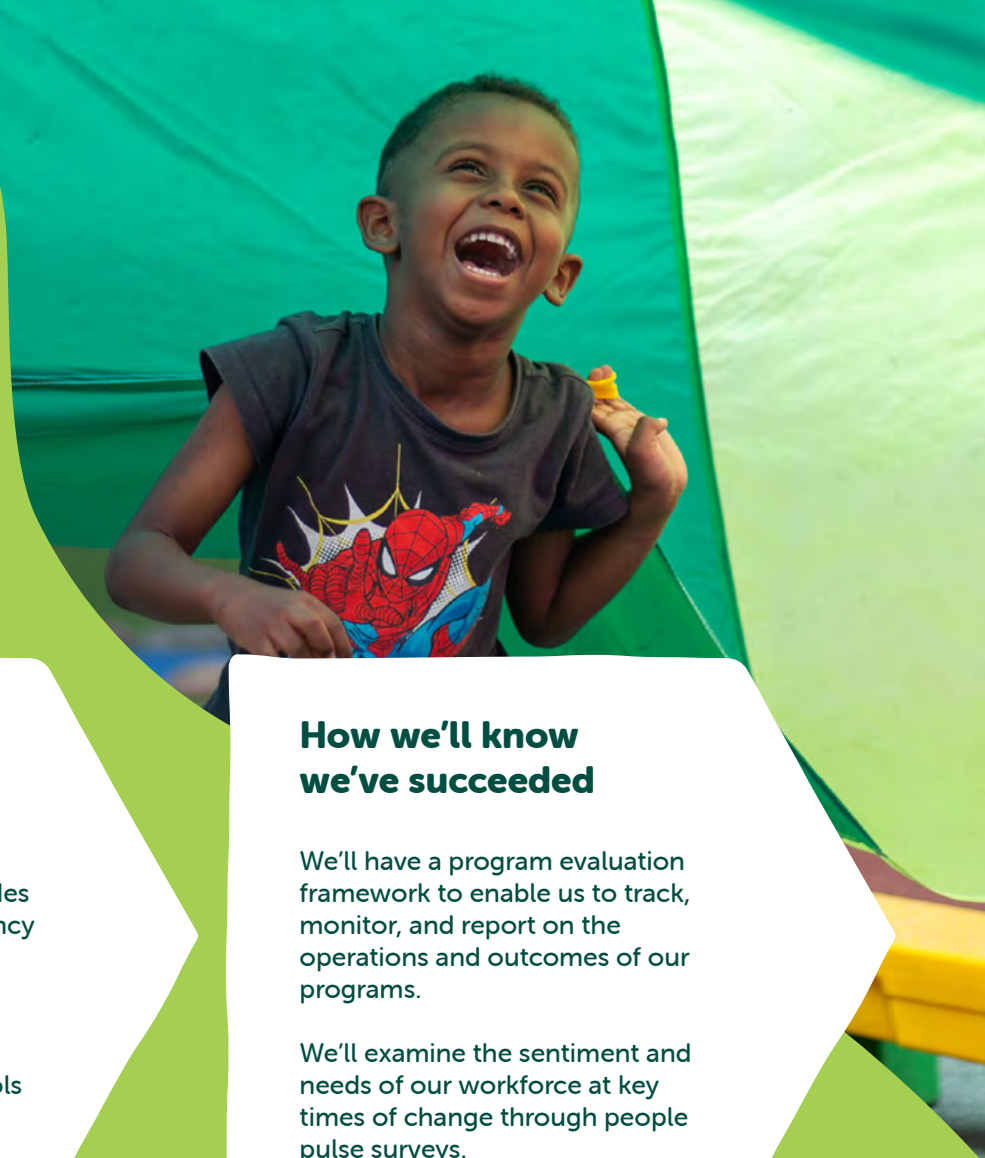
We will co-design a program evaluation framework that provides consistency, rigor, and transparency across the programs we deliver.

We will support our employees through change by developing a suite of change management tools that encourage regular reflection and adaption.

#### How we'll know we've succeeded

We'll have a program evaluation framework to enable us to track, monitor, and report on the operations and outcomes of our programs.

We'll examine the sentiment and needs of our workforce at key times of change through people pulse surveys.





# Our future aspirations

We not only dream of a future where children grow and thrive without the impact of neglect and abuse, we work tirelessly and fearlessly to make our dream a reality.

Our targeted two-year strategic deliverables will springboard Barnardos Australia into a new era of outcomes driven practice and specialised program offerings. By focusing on transformation initiatives that drive innovation and continuous improvement, we will continue to provide the most effective, responsive, and integrated front-line services.

We see a strong, adaptable, and sustainable Barnardos Australia shining a bright light on the needs of vulnerable children and families for many years to come.



Barnardos Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work.

We pay our respect to past, present and future elders.

**[barnardos.org.au](https://barnardos.org.au)**

