







A message from our CEO

It's hard to imagine children as homeless and yet there are 62,000 children who require homelessness support services every year in Australia.

At Barnardos, we see families everyday who are sleeping in cars, camping in caravan parks or 'couch surfing' – bouncing between friends or relatives' already overcrowded places just to be safe until they can secure their own roof over their heads, a place to call home.

As the need for housing grows in Australia, and the increasing cost of living pushes more families into poverty, safe and affordable homes are almost impossible for families to access. There are no properties to rent in Sydney for families under \$650 per week. In regional areas, the options are even worse.

Many of the families we support are working, but they are on low incomes, and some are single parents struggling to make ends meet. A recent NCOSS study revealed 62% of households and 90% of single parents are going without essentials or unable to afford essentials in 2023 (1). High energy bills and increased rents are forcing them into debt.



They are accumulating significant debts with AfterPay and similar companies because they are using these facilities to purchase groceries and medicine.

We also know that domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. Often the perpetrator remains in the family home, while the mother and children are forced to flee in attempt to find safety. A lack of financial support and access to crisis accommodation means that they are left with an impossible choice: stay in the violent relationship where children are at risk or become homeless.

Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and secure home. Without safety and stability, children and young people cannot reach their milestones and thrive. We must take action to support families in crisis to ensure their children remain safe and can enjoy their childhood free from poverty and homelessness.

If we fail to act, we face a future where more children end up in foster care and the intergenerational trauma cycle continues. Barnardos is committed to changing the future for these children. We understand that homelessness is not just about lacking a roof over one's head; it's the often-invisible toll it takes on children - the overwhelming emotional, psychological, and social impacts. Children who experience homelessness are more likely to suffer from poor health, developmental delays, and trauma that can last a lifetime. It effects their education, mental health, and long-term opportunities.

We will never give up on children, young people and families facing homelessness and as you read through our latest snapshot on the issue, I hope you feel moved to join our cause because every child needs a champion.

Leide Chu

Having a safe and stable home is vital for children. Sadly child homelessness is an on-going reality in Australia.

What is homelessness?

People can experience 'homelessness' in many different ways^:

- Primary homelessness is experienced by people without conventional accommodation (e.g. sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings);
- Secondary homelessness is experienced by people who frequently move from one temporary shelter to another (e.g. emergency accommodation, youth refuges, "couch surfing");

During 2023 and 2024, our Barnardos Children's Family Centres observed significant increases in the number of families going without essentials and unable to afford safe accommodation. More often now, children are living with their families in cars or in overcrowded, unsafe housing.

In 2023-2024; 38,600 young people presented, alone, to homelessness services across Australia.¹ Three out of four of these young people were not enrolled in any kind of formal education. Young people who are forced to leave home due to family breakdown or domestic violence can become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Our recent YouGov survey² indicates that 91% of participants agree that experiencing homelessness as a child impacts a person for the rest of their life. In a wealthy country like Australia, we can and should be doing more for children and young people.

Causes of homelessness in Australia

1. POVERTY

Poverty is one of the main reasons why families become homeless. They don't have enough money for the basics and have very limited access to affordable and available housing. Poverty can be the result of many social, economic and health-related factors. Individual factors, such as low educational attainment, unemployment, experience of family and domestic violence, ill health (including mental health issues) and disability, trauma, and substance misuse.³

2. DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia.

In 2021-22, 108,000 Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients have experienced family and domestic violence, equating to 39% of all clients.⁴

40% or 43,200 people receiving SHS support are single parents with one or more children, and have accessed these services due to domestic and family violence.⁴

[^]Homelessness Australia

¹NSW 2023 Cost of Living Crisis Report: Barely Hanging On – UTS and NCOSS, Inequality in Australia: Insights from the Life Chances Study 1990-2024

²YouGov Survey 2024 Commissioned by Barnardos Australia

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare - Australia's Youth - Homelessness and Overcrowding 2021

⁴ <mark>Australian Institu</mark>te of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2021

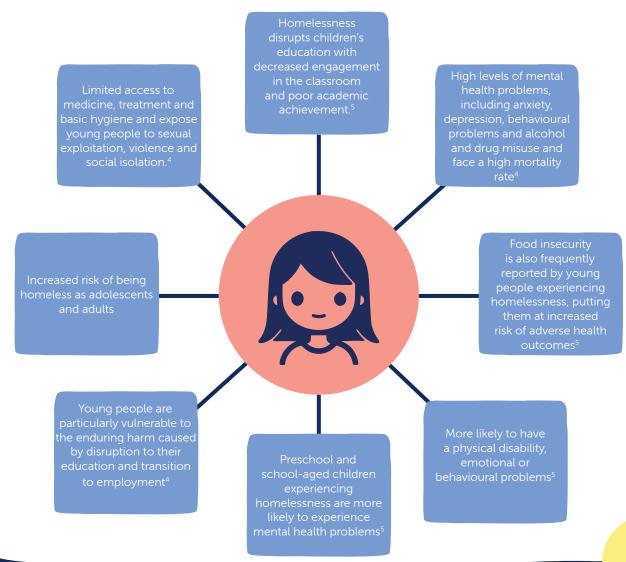
3. LACK OF QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing is a necessity, not a commodity. But in Australia it is treated as the latter. Tax offsets for those who invest in housing, has further concentrated home ownership to an increasingly smaller and wealthier proportion of the population. With more families in the rental market and a decline in new construction over recent decades, the price of rentals has increased significantly. In 2024, across Australia, less than 1% of rental properties advertised would be affordable for a person earning a full time minimum wage (2024 Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot). The figure is even lower for people on Youth Allowance or a Disability Support Pension.

For families experiencing separation or divorce, illness or disability, their ability to afford safe housing is vastly reduced. Even for families who have no changes to their financial fortunes are being forced to relocate due to rental prices rising significantly faster than wage increases. When families are unable to secure a safe home in the rental market, few options exist. The availability of public housing has declined for several decades because it is not longer considered a priority by governments.

The impact of homelessness on children is long-lasting

Homelessness isn't just sleeping rough or living in your car. Many young people and families are 'couch surfing' with family or staying in temporary accommodation, tents or boarding houses but they are still homeless. Our team has also seen a rise in overcrowding as families take in extended family or friends who have become homeless. All these situations have a detrimental impact on children and their development.



⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services Annual Report 2021

Australian Council of Social Service (ACCOSS) Poverty in Australia 202

Sadly, the risk of being homeless with six kids was Danielle's* reality.

Danielle's story is one of perseverance. Her journey with Barnardos began three years ago when this single mum of six children was on the brink of homelessness. Determined to keep her family safe and together, she defied all odds to give her children the home they deserved.

After separating from her partner, Danielle moved into a cheap rental property on the outskirts of her hometown. In a ruthless housing market with limited rental options for larger families, she had no choice but to accept a run-down home. Soon after moving in, Danielle discovered that the property was plagued with mice and the ceilings and walls were caving in. Desperate to avoid homelessness and child services from knocking on her door, she stayed.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) became involved when a neighbour raised concerns about the family. Danielle was trying her hardest to make the most of an impossible situation. DCJ recognised the poor state of the home and could see that Danielle was capable of caring for her children. That's when Barnardos stepped in.

Our Mudgee team quickly secured a four-bedroom transitional home for Danielle and her children through our Specialist Homelessness Service. But this was short-lived as the landlord had to sell the property. Caring for a child with a disability, Danielle had a support dog she also had to consider.

"I'm not going to lie. I was really depressed. Even looking for houses myself wasn't a great big help either. Landlords don't like to lease out to people with so many children," says Danielle.

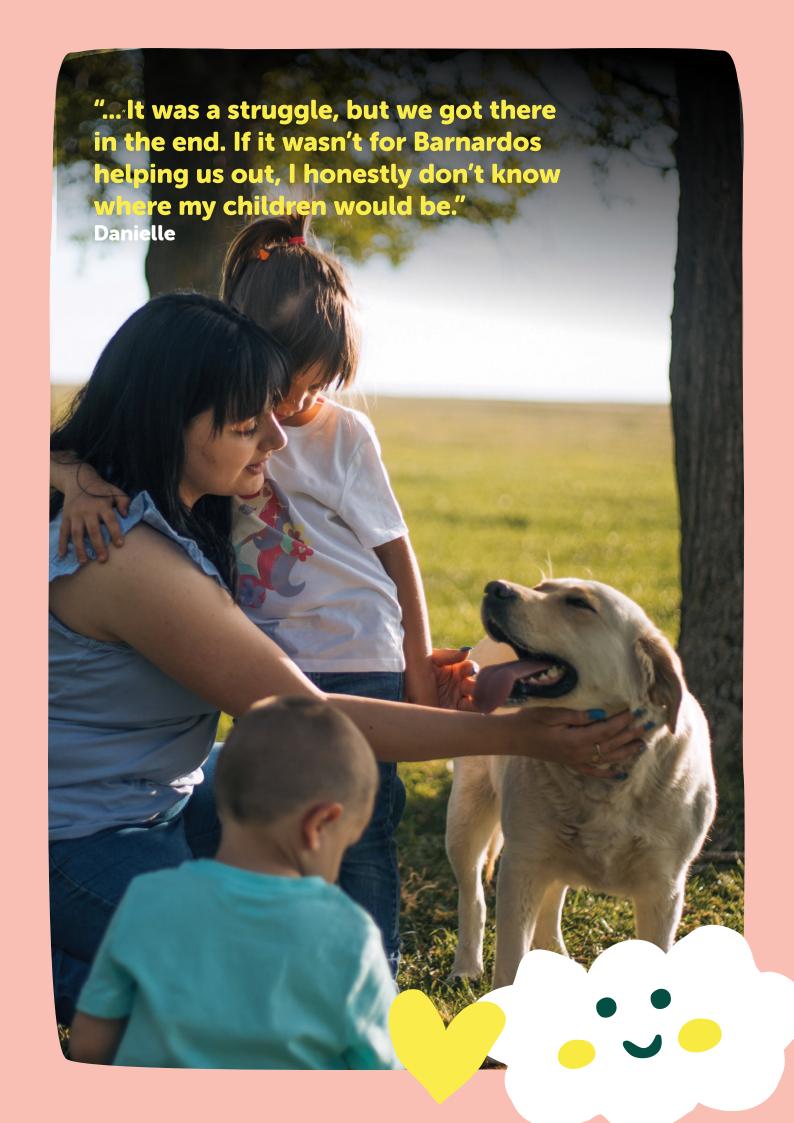
Living out of boxes, uncertain of their future, Danielle and her children were suffering. Their Barnardos case manager was with them every step of the way, providing emotional support during these trying times. Her children would always ask: "How long are we going to be here for? Are we going to get kicked out again? When will we find a permanent home?" They were constantly afraid of becoming homeless and the instability was taking a toll on their education. Barnardos provided Danielle with guidance through our Family Support Program and assisted her 12-year-old daughter, who has special needs, with her transition to high school through our Reconnect Program. Danielle also accessed parenting courses and in-home crisis support through our Intensive Preservation Program to prevent her children from entering care.

Through perseverance, Barnardos found another transitional home for Danielle and her children and eventually, an ongoing 4-bedroom private rental was secured for the family.

"It was a struggle, but we got there in the end. If it wasn't for Barnardos helping us out, I honestly don't know where my children would be. DCJ might have taken them because I was falling emotionally behind. Now we are settling down and the children know that this is our forever home," says Danielle.

Danielle has come leaps and bounds over the last three years. She has since remarried, found work and bought a new car. "There's a big difference from where I started to where I've come now. I was so close to being homeless if it wasn't for Barnardos being there for everything" she says.

We are beyond proud of Danielle and her determination to create a better life for her children. With the right support, she was able to avoid homelessness and give her children the best chance to thrive.



How Barnardos helps children, young people and families overcome homelessness

The Barnardos Children's Family Centres are family support hubs that are embedded in local communities and unique to other agency services in that they provide a single point of support for families experiencing issues such as poverty, homelessness and domestic violence. Families only need to tell their story once to receive a range of different programs and services that help them deal with immediate crises but also helps them build resilience and life-long skills.

Overcoming homelessness is so much more than providing shelter. It's about building resilience and skills to transition to independence. Every story is different and we walk with children, families and young people on their journey so that they don't have to overcome these complex challenges alone.

HELPING FAMILIES

Safe housing is essential to keep families together and out of the child protection system. Barnardos works with families until they have a secure place to call home. The pathway to safety looks different for everyone, but we support individual families in a range of ways including:

- Providing or connecting them with transitional accommodation
- Supporting families to negotiate with landlords so they can afford to stay in their homes
- Supporting families to apply for urgent public or community housing
- Working with families to develop a safety plan and an escape plan where domestic violence is present
- Support families with furniture and any other essential equipment

Every family facing homelessness is juggling a range of challenges. Beyond ensuring families have their essential needs met in crisis, we also create pathways to longer term security through complementary supports such as financial counselling, parenting support, youth support, advocating with schools and other services, playgroups, connecting families to paediatricians and other child specialists, and more.

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people need specialist services to address their unique needs. Barnardos works intensively with young people to ensure they can move forward with their lives and personal goals. There's no one approach to youth homelessness. Barnardos works closely with families to prevent youth homelessness through family mediation and supporting young people to re-engage in school.

Young people experiencing homelessness may not be aware that they can access support. That's why Barnardos Streetwork program operates after hours in community spaces where young people meet. We show up for young people 'on their terms, on their turf' so that we can build trust and provide the right support for young people to meet their goals.

Our caseworkers work with a range of housing providers so that we can provide the right fit for young people in need of housing. We work with them one on one to so that they can complete their education or find work in their chosen industry. It's about building their confidence and understanding their trauma in a way that makes them feel safe.

Barnardos also runs specialist housing services for homeless young people who are completing education or training. Our on-site team provides support so that young people can make a safe transition to independence.







Australian children and young people need your help...

At Barnardos, we know that child and youth homelessness can impact a person for the rest of their lives and we see first-hand the devastating effect it has on families. Our doors are always open for anyone who has received support from Barnardos in the past as we understand that overcoming traumatic experiences is difficult and takes time. Recovery isn't always straightforward but we're here so that children and young people can reach their full potential and have access to the same life opportunities as their peers.

If you believe that children and young people have the right to a safe home, join us in our campaign to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive. Through our prevention and specialist support services, that put children at the centre, we can build a safe and secure future for everyone. Your support can turn this vision into reality for thousands of Australian children, young people and families who are desperate for help and a place to call home.

By donating in support of the children, young people and families we work with, you're not just giving money; you're investing in transformative solutions that tackle homelessness at the root causes. Your contribution can fund a range of our support programs to help children, young people and families get back on their feet.

To ensure that all children reach their brightest future, vulnerable children and young people should be supported to recover and thrive despite the adversity they have experienced. Your support can help us provide the right assistance in our key areas of homelessness support:

Prioritising education

Prevention and Advocacy Early Intervention

Transition to independance through housing

Your generosity can help create sustainable change and uplift local Australian communities. Every dollar you give empowers Australian families to build better futures for their children.

Join us in this crucial fight to disrupt disadvantage for good!

Together, we can help children and young people overcome the impact of poverty, homelessness and domestic violence through our early intervention programs and specialised support to build an Australia where everyone has the chance to have a brighter future.



For more information on how you can help us fulfil our vision for Australian children contact our Revenue and Giving team:

philanthropy@barnardos.org.au or partnerships@barnardos.org.au



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