

ACT FOR KIDS



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NEW CENTRES TO PROTECT CAPE KIDS »

LEN BYTHEWAY WITH WESTERN CAPE YORK STAFF



ACTFOR KIDS will establish a network of child protection centres across Western Cape York next year under an ambitious new plan to protect Indigenous kids from abuse and neglect.

With funding support from the Queensland Government, we will be responsible for running the new "SafeKIDS centres" in partnership with the Aboriginal Corporation of West Cape York Peninsula Traditional Owners. During a visit to ACTFOR KIDS in Cairns in October, Child Safety Minister Margaret Keach announced that the government has selected ACTFOR KIDS to run the initiative.

The new centres will be built in Aurukun, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw and Napranum. They will provide a safe place for kids to stay and get professional counselling while authorities investigate child safety concerns within their families. Family support workers will be based at the SafeKIDS Centres and work within each community. Until now, children from these remote communities often had to be relocated as far away as Cairns to receive out-of-home care.

ACTFOR KIDS CEO Len Bytheway said he is confident the centres will create a community-wide change for the better within the four townships.

"It was the traditional owners who called for these facilities to be built, and they stand side-by-side with us as equal partners in this project," he said.

"ACTFOR KIDS HAS THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND THE WESTCOAST CORPORATION HAS A DEEP UNDERSTANDING AND THE RESPECT OF LOCAL PEOPLE. SO TOGETHER WE REALLY BELIEVE THIS CAN WORK."

The SafeKIDS centres will operate strictly as a transitional service, giving kids temporary protection and support until they can be safely reunified with their family or secure long-term care can be arranged. Responsible "house parents" will be employed from the local communities and offered accredited training in protective care. Local Indigenous elders will be invited to participate as positive role models to provide the children with skills and cultural and spiritual direction.

West Cape Traditional Owners CEO Bruce Gibson said the concept of spiritual healing is integral to the success of the venture.

"Our children belong to the world's oldest continuing culture," he said. "If applied in a therapeutic context, this culture can work wonders for children's health and personal growth, and maybe even revitalise the spirit of entire communities."

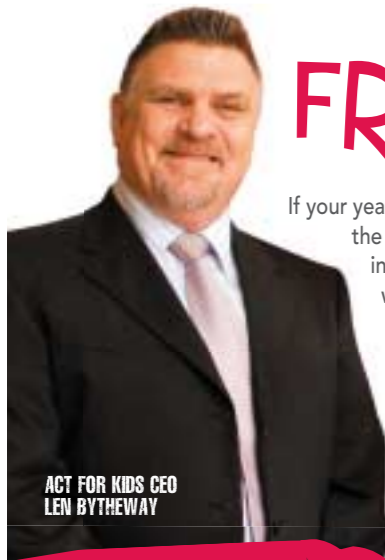
The SafeKIDS centres will be purpose-built within each of the communities in late-2009. We will begin providing the therapeutic support of the SafeKIDS project within the next few months. »

THANK YOU »



What better excuse is there to shop till you drop?! We'd like express our gratitude to Events & the City for nominating us as the beneficiary of the latest Brisbane Girls Night Out.

Visit www.EventsAndTheCity.net to sign up for the next shopping party. »



ACT FOR KIDS CEO
LEN BYTHEWAY

FROM THE CEO'S DESK»

If your year has been anything like mine, you'll be ready for the relief and relaxation of the holiday season. Our inexhaustible fundraising team, however, will be working over the break to make sure our 2009 Tatts & Tiaras campaign is a resounding success (p6).

When you're celebrating with your family this season, spare a thought for the 58,500 children confirmed as neglected or abused in Australia over the past year, 28,000 of whom will spend the Christmas period in unfamiliar

surroundings and without their parents because their own home isn't safe. We're determined to give the kids in our care a Christmas they'll never forget, so if you can, please support our Christmas Appeal (p7).

There's a lot left to do, but we've achieved some wonderful things in 2008 (p1, 3). A summary of our "year that was" can be found on our Annual Review website (p8). None of our good work would be possible without our sponsors, staff, volunteers and supporters like you. So from the bottom of my heart I'd like to say thank you. I hope you have a safe and merry Christmas with the people you love. »

WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?»



For the 14th year in a row the ACTFOR KIDS Corporate Luncheon delivered an afternoon of good food and good company for a great cause. Held in the first week of September, the event certainly lived up to this year's theme "Spring has Sprung". The Sofitel's Grand Ballroom was decorated to resemble a giant garden in bloom, and walking in was a strong reminder of how small our children must sometimes feel. The lunch was attended by 330 of our closest corporate friends and supporters and raised more than \$70,000!

Event hosts Kay McGrath and Dean Miller from Channel 7 kept their audience on their toes when they auctioned a dance lesson with *Dancing with the Stars* Judge Mark Wilson, our special guest for the day. The 2 minute dancing delight went for \$700 which is a testament to the goodwill in the room.

Keynote speaker and ACTFOR KIDS Ambassador Andrew Griffith had us all on a rollercoaster of emotions with his witty recollections of his bizarre childhood. Andrew's story of triumph over adversity was a heartwarming reminder that the work we do with kids can have life changing repercussions.

Sign up to our newsletter mailing list at www.actforkids.com.au to receive invitations to the Corporate Luncheon and all other ACTFOR KIDS events.»



SUSAN ROBERTS WITH HER THREE GRANDCHILDREN HARMONY (8), SETH (5) AND CHEVY (3) AT HOME IN WARMBRO, WHO SHE'S LOOKING AFTER BECAUSE THEIR MOTHER IS IN JAIL. SUSAN IS CONCERNED FOOD CARDS DISTRIBUTED UNDER WELFARE REFORM WOULD JUST BE SOLD ON A BLACK MARKET. ©NEWSPIX

PULLING PURSESTRINGS WON'T STOP ABUSE»

The Rudd Government recently revealed intentions to extend current welfare restrictions in Indigenous communities to all Australian families in the child protection system. Currently there are three kinds of welfare reform on trial throughout the country, and Families Minister Jenny Macklin has signalled that the outcomes of these trials will help determine the national model.

Whichever system is adopted, families on welfare are likely to have a percentage of their payments restricted to items of necessity such as food, clothes or shelter.

While there is some community backing for the policy, ACTFOR KIDS believes quarantining the welfare support of struggling parents is not an effective solution to child neglect, for individual families or for society as a whole.

Our organisation has 20 years' experience supporting Australian families, many of whom would be affected by the welfare reforms. We know from our work that these parents can change for the better, but equipping mums and dads with skills to cope under real world conditions is the only way to create safe and happy homes for kids.

ACTFOR KIDS Chairman Denis Looney says taking decision-making abilities away from people who already have relatively few

choices just leaves them with less incentive to make positive changes for themselves and their family.

"CHILDREN'S HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING IS BEST SERVED BY WORKING WITH THE ADULTS IN THEIR LIVES TO HELP THEM OVERCOME PERSONAL PROBLEMS. UNDERSTAND THEIR PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES. AND LEARN THE BASIC SKILLS NEEDED TO RAISE CHILDREN SUCCESSFULLY." DENIS SAID.

If any welfare reform model has merit, ACTFOR KIDS believes it should include elements of the Queensland model, incorporating a Family Relations Commission which deals with each family according to the specifics of their situation, and invests in the family's potential by requiring parents to participate in credible education and support programs like the ones we run.

"WHICHEVER SYSTEM IS ULTIMATELY IMPLEMENTED. QUARANTINING FAMILIES' WELFARE PAYMENTS ALONE WILL DO NOTHING TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF FAMILY DYSFUNCTION." DENIS SAID.»

» AMBASSADOR PROFILE – KAY MCGRATH



You spend almost half an hour with her every night but you may not know that Kay McGrath is one of Queensland's leading campaigners against child abuse and neglect.

Kay has reported and co-hosted a series of documentaries on child protection issues, including the acclaimed Channel 7 special *Behind Closed Doors: Child Abuse in Queensland*.

But it's her work in the community that makes Kay such a respected defender of children's right to be safe. As an ACTFOR KIDS Ambassador she is the face of our community service announcements, and she regularly donates her time to give us that extra professional edge. For example, Kay has hosted our Annual Corporate Luncheon for over 10 years.

Despite all the work she has already done to help, Kay is as committed as ever to the ACTFOR KIDS cause.

"As the mother of two healthy, happy and robust young men – Nick and Joey – I'm reminded on a daily basis just how priceless children are," Kay said.

"I CONSTANTLY COUNT MY BLESSINGS AND TRY TO PASS ON MY GRATITUDE IN WHATEVER WAYS I CAN."

Kay has developed a real understanding of the work we do during her long association with us.

"Not everyone has the support and necessary skills to parent well - it's definitely the biggest challenge I've encountered," she said.

"WORKING WITH ACT IS A PRIVILEGE. AND I CONGRATULATE EVERYONE THERE ON THE OUTSTANDING WORK THEY'RE DOING TO HELP FAMILIES LIVE BETTER LIVES."

Kay is most recognisable as Channel 7's nightly news anchor alongside Rod Young. She has built a long and awarded journalistic career, first earning her stripes as a regular on-the-road reporter. Her reputation as an investigative journalist was cemented through her reporting of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the Telecom corruption tapes, and the Brisbane airport hijacking for which she shared a Logie Award. ▶



TRAINING PROJECT WINS COLLABORATION AWARD»

A community-wide project to give Indigenous people the skills to protect their own communities has won the Minister's Award for Community Collaborations at a ceremony at the Queensland State Library on 18 November.



partnerships with tertiary institutions, so our humble training course has now become a sector wide employment strategy. Seven months later, the first intake of 21 students has just graduated with Certificate IV Community Services – Protective care. Seventeen of the participants continued their studies and achieved Diploma qualifications and can now progress to university should they choose.

Project Officer Keith Elaisa (pictured) says the extra support for Indigenous communities and the example graduates set for their families will be the most important outcomes of the strategy.



Project Officer Keith Elaisa

The Indigenous Workforce Strategy was designed and championed by ACTFOR KIDS in collaboration with Sunshine Coast TAFE and a number of other allied health organisations in Far North Queensland. The strategy was selected from a pool of 59 nominations as the project which best harnessed the power of the community.

When setting up shop in Cairns in 2006, ACTFOR KIDS realised that while many of the families who came to us for help are Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly under-represented in the community services workforce. We quickly realised that every time we employed an excellent Indigenous staff member we were denying our counterpart organisations a sorely-needed employee.

So ACTFOR KIDS did what we do best – ACT! At the beginning of 2007, we approached our counterparts, Indigenous organisations, government and educational institutions to come up with a solution which would work for everyone.

We decided to develop a basic child protection training course customised to the needs of Indigenous people, offering portable entry-level qualifications to promising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With the support of the Department of Child Safety and Department of Communities, ACTFOR KIDS invited Olympic champion Nova Peris to launch the initiative in April 2008.

As the year progressed we were able to offer new courses and developed more

"OUR GRADUATES' CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN WILL SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY STUDY AND BE ENCOURAGED TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION AS WELL." HE SAID. "AND OF COURSE, THERE ARE OBVIOUS BENEFITS IN HAVING TRAINED INDIGENOUS CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS WORKING WITH THEIR OWN PEOPLE."

I ♥ FEBRUARY

February doesn't have the Christmas bells like December or the patriotic barbeque flavour of January. But our glorious second month doesn't need such cheap gimmicks, because February is all about heart.

ACT FOR KIDS works all year round to help kids and families suffering from child abuse and neglect, but it's in February that we make a special appeal for help through our Tatts & Tiaras campaign.

A child is reported abused in Australia every 2 minutes, and all money raised through the campaign goes towards preventing and treating child abuse and neglect.

Shelby McNicholl, ACT FOR KIDS fundraising manager, says Tatts & Tiaras is an opportunity to raise money for a great cause and have some fun at the same time.

"As long as they're fitted out in our Tatts & Tiaras merchandise, people can choose to celebrate any way they like," Shelby says. "We've had people raise money for us in all kinds of ways - pirate and princess parties, biker runs, work events, and your run-of-the-mill birthdays and morning teas."

We're asking you to get your friends together in February for a Tatts & Tiaras celebration of your choice. You can register your party on our website www.ilovefebruary.com.au, and you can pick up some special Tatts & Tiaras merchandise while you're there.

This February we're putting our heart out there to stop child abuse.

What are you doing? »



NEW BUS PUTS KIDS ON ROAD TO RECOVERY»

The wheels on the bus will be going round and round now that Alpha Flight Services has generously donated to ACT for Kids on the Gold Coast.

We were overwhelmed with gratitude when Alpha offered to help with our transportation issues. Three weeks later, a brand new 12-seater Toyota minibus arrived on our doorstep!

The vehicle is an absolute necessity for parents who want to attend our parenting groups and counselling services but do not have adequate transport. Attending a therapy group or parenting workshop can be stressful enough for families who aren't coping well. But our new bus guarantees mothers and babies an easy journey to ACT FOR KIDS.

Kaye Pickering, our Gold Coast Regional Manager, says the lack of accessible public transport on the Gold Coast makes the bus even more vital. "A large number of the families we support don't have private transport, and catching a bus from one side of the coast to the other can take three hours if you factor in changing buses," Kaye said. »



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS...»

"I like Santa" says Sophie. "I like Barbie and I like presents" four-year-old Lucy blurts. Joseph doesn't want too much this Christmas just "a water pistol... oh and a car!"

His classmate Luke interrupts "I want a car too...with lights." And he's got a few tricks up his sleeve to get it.

"I'LL LEAVE LOLLIES OUT FOR SANTA AND HE'LL EAT THEM!"

The excited chatter of these little children is not very different to any other Aussie kids who are eagerly waiting for Christmas Day. However the innocence of their youth masks the realities of their far-from-normal home environments.

These kids are enrolled in our Early Education Program, a special place for children who can't cope in normal preschools because they've been subjected to sustained abuse and neglect. While some of the kids now live in foster care, many are still living with parents whose personal issues mean they're on the brink of losing custody of their children.

Our kids are likely to grapple with a toxic home life, as their parents struggle with a combination of financial pressures, mental health problems, dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse issues, and of course the constant stress of raising young children.

OUR JOB IS TO HELP MINIMISE THE RISKS OF THINGS GOING WRONG IN THE FAMILY OVER THE CHRISTMAS BREAK. A TIME WHEN FAMILY CAN REACH BREAKING POINT BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE THE REGULAR REPRIEVE SCHOOL PROVIDES.

In any case, Christmas for our kids is unlikely to be the gifts, laughter and love that "normal" families enjoy during the festive season. Christmas reminds us of the disparities among families throughout Australia. »



A SIMPLE CHRISTMAS WISH»

For as little as \$10, you can grant our children a Christmas Wish. Visit www.actforkidswishlist.com.au and choose from a wide range of toys, books, puzzles and computer equipment to make our kids' Christmas a little bit brighter. You can also buy gift experiences like family outings and counselling sessions which will go directly to ACT FOR KIDS' work to keep kids safe. »



MEAN GREEN ANNUAL REPORT MACHINE»

Well, our Annual Report for 2008 may not be so mean, but it certainly is green. This year we've ditched the tired old paper report and turned our Annual Report green (environmentally friendly that is!). All our achievements over the past twelve months can be found online at our Annual Review website – www.actforkids.com.au/annualreview

In addition to the obvious environmental benefits of publishing a paperless report, the money we've saved in printing costs can now be spent on our kids.»

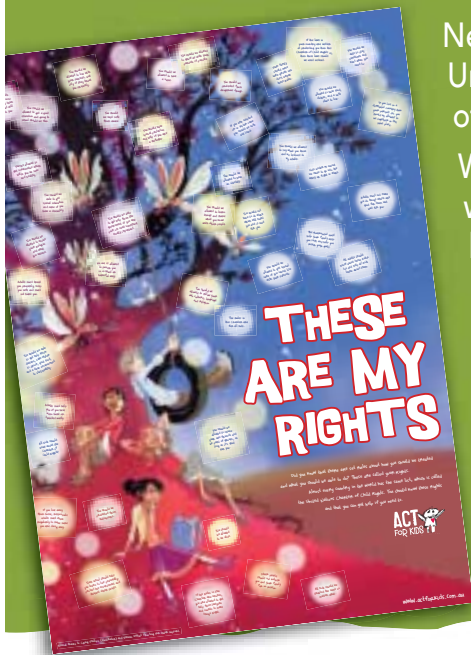


facebook

KEEP IN TOUCH»

Did you know that ACT FOR KIDS has a Facebook group? It's called (because we're sooo creative)... "ACT FOR KIDS". Join our group today so you can get ACT FOR KIDS news in real time, and show your support for child protection.

KIDS' RIGHTS – IN THEIR OWN WORDS!»



Nearly every country in the world has made promises to kids through the United Nations. But ironically there are very few versions of the UN Charter of Child Rights in words which kids can easily understand.

We've done something about it by creating an amazing "These are my rights" wall poster for kids, which lists all their rights under the charter in their language. By making our customised copy of the Charter available to Aussie kids, we hope to educate both them and their parents about child rights.

The poster was illustrated by Craig Phillips, a freelance artist whose clients include Rolling Stone magazine, Scholastic and Pepsi. His edgy style gives the poster a level of sophistication which means it will connect with today's kids, who are pretty media savvy and don't like being talked down to.

We have a limited number of posters to give away. Call us today on 1300 228 000 to get your copy.»

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Corporate office PO Box 3387 South Brisbane QLD 4101
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 Cairns Centre PO Box 1084 Earlville QLD 4870

WWW.ACTFORKIDS.COM.AU

Gold Coast Centre PO Box 669 Labrador QLD 4215
 Townsville Centre PO Box 4066 Vincent QLD 4814

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