



Act for kids
Preventing and treating child abuse and neglect

NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2015

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Nikkita and Bailey's story

When mum Kerry* was a child she experienced severe sexual and physical abuse. As an adult dependant on drugs and a series of abusive relationships she had limited knowledge on how to safely parent to her two children Nikkita, 10 years old and Bailey, 7 years old. Kerry's family had been through Child Safety Services multiple times. Nikkita and Bailey were placed in foster care on more than one occasion and displayed signs of early trauma.

Act for Kids had serious concerns for their wellbeing. The children showed us how upset and confused they were through excessive crying, throwing tantrums and not understanding directions. Both kids showed severe speech and language delays, to the extent that Nikkita was operating at a grade two level.

Although Kerry loves her kids, she knew their day to day life was not safe and help was needed in order to turn her family's life around. Our multidisciplinary team at Act for Kids worked with Kerry, Nikkita and Bailey to strengthen their family unit, prevent statutory intervention and address their developmental and emotional needs.

Kerry, Nikkita and Bailey were introduced to our Referral for Active Intervention (RAI) program as well as external drug and alcohol services. Our RAI program helped Kerry to work through her challenges, develop a household routine, connect with Nikkita and Bailey's school and customise her children's education to ensure they were getting the help they needed. We also helped Kerry with parenting skills and emotional management techniques to help manage her own stress.

After several months of participating in our RAI program, Kerry completed the Methadone Program and is now drug and alcohol free. This is a huge

achievement. Nikkita and Bailey are both working with a Psychologist, Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Pathologist. As a result they are more settled in school and their behaviour has improved.

Kerry now uses positive personal and parenting strategies to ensure she has time to herself and has a strong support network from the school. Kerry, Nikkita and Bailey's positive learning experiences at Act for Kids have helped Kerry's family transition into a regular household routine, preventing them from re-entering Child Safety Services and establishing a safe home environment for Nikkita and Bailey.

*names changed to protect identities



From the CEO

It seems like every day now horrific stories of child abuse and neglect are being reported in the media. The statistics reflect the growing issue; the Child protection Australia 2013-14 report by the Australian Institute of

Health and Welfare, found 40,844 children were the subject of substantiated abuse and neglect, which is a slight increase on the year prior.

Thanks to your generous support, Act for Kids is able to make a real difference to the lives of abused and neglected kids and their families. In the financial year 2014-2015 we helped 15,868 Australians – over 1360 more than the year before. We want to continue to extend our help to where it is most needed. Thanks to an incredible private donation we will be opening our first Integrated Therapy Service in New South Wales, at Blacktown in November. I look forward to sharing with you our progress in Sydney once the centre is underway.

In other good news, we raised over \$130,000 at our annual Gala Ball in May, our biggest fundraising event of the year. Thank you to all our sponsors and volunteers who helped out on the night. Another major event in our calendar is Child Protection Week, and this year our sponsors and friends raised over \$22,500 through fundraising activities. October has already got off to a busy start; as I write this, 11 amazing people are trekking and cycling their way around Vietnam to raise funds for Act for Kids. So far the team has raised over \$70,000 and there is still time to show your support.

Visit www.trekforkids.com.au for more details.

The way we deliver our services is part of the Act for Kids difference, and ensuring our programs are culturally appropriate is key. Thanks to a generous donation from nib foundation we have been able to adapt our *Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends* protective behaviours program to be culturally appropriate and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents and communities. I am also thrilled to advise Act for Kids recently won the Community Category of the Queensland Reconciliation Awards for our SafeKIDS program.

Our Ipswich Integrated therapy centre recently received a grant from the Property Industry Foundation which has enabled us to employ a part-time speech pathologist. The need is great in this area, and we have more than 50 children on a waiting list.

It has now been just over a year since our Adelaide Integrated therapy centre opened its doors, and in that time we have assisted 157 kids and 12 adults. Through grants from Community Benefit SA and Port Adelaide Enfield Council, we have recently been able to appoint a part-time speech therapist which will help to meet the need in this area.

Thank you once again for your support. We could not make a difference to the lives of so many vulnerable children without your continuing kindness and trust.

Dr Neil Carrington
Chief Executive Officer

Substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect still too high

The Child protection Australia 2013-14 report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in May shows an increase in substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect across Australia.

In the 12 months of 2013-14, 40,844 Australian children were the subject of substantiated abuse and neglect, a slight increase from 40,571 in 2012-13.

The report shows the rates of child abuse and neglect have remained stable since 2012-13 at 7.8 per 1,000 children. This is despite an increase in the number of children who were the subject of substantiations, rising by 31% from 31,295 in 2009-10 to 40,844 in 2013-14.

Emotional abuse and neglect have remained the most common types of substantiated abuse nationally, and the most likely types of co-occurring abuse or neglect. In 2013-14, there were 18,012 substantiated cases of emotional abuse, 40% of all cases. Neglect still remains high, with 12,941 substantiated cases, 28% of all cases.

In 2013-14, 143,023 children (1 in 37 children) received child protection services (investigation; care and protection order; and/or were placed in out-of-home care). Almost 3 in 5 (59%) of these children were the subject of an investigation only (that is, they were not subsequently placed on an order or in out-of-care), while 8% were involved in all three components of the system.



Act for Kids Executive Director of Programs, Research and Education, Dr Katrina Lines, said each year the figures slightly change but the biggest issue still remains addressing the socioeconomic inequities.

"The causes of child abuse and neglect are often complex, but socioeconomic status can affect family stability, parenting practices and developmental outcomes for children, all of which can have detrimental effects," said Dr Lines.

"In our work we see the real benefits of early intervention and prevention programs to support and strengthen families, which reduces the likelihood of children and young people entering the child protection system. We also see the result of trauma from abuse and neglect; kids need intensive therapy and specialised treatment to address their issues before they become entrenched in adolescence."

New service to support Sydney kids and families

Thanks to philanthropic funding, Act for Kids will open its doors to the western suburbs of Sydney in November. The private donor from Sydney first visited our Woolloowin centre to grasp a better understanding of the work Act for Kids does.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on child protection there were 15,074 children confirmed as abused or neglected in New South Wales; the highest number of substantiations recorded in the country. Act for Kids' new therapy centre will go a long way towards catering for the number of children requiring specialist support and treatment.

The Sydney centre will provide an Integrated Therapy Service to help children and young people who have experienced trauma from abuse and neglect. Our specialist team of psychologists, speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists work together within a child development framework to conduct a full assessment, develop a personal treatment plan and provide ongoing therapeutic support.

Stay tuned for more information on our progress.



Future funding to benefit kids

The Future Generation Investment Company Limited (FGX) has donated nearly \$90,000 to Act for Kids as part of a wider \$1.64 million donation to support local Australian charities who are changing the lives of vulnerable children in Australia.

Dr Neil Carrington said FGX's corporate philanthropy has given Act for Kids an additional opportunity to boost its services.

"We are sincerely grateful for the opportunity FGX has given us. The funds will go towards growing our Integrated Therapy Services in Queensland, South Australia and establishing our new centre in New South Wales.

"Unfortunately, our field of work is one of Australia's most misunderstood social problems and it is our mission to ensure all children in Australia have a safe and happy childhood," said Dr Carrington.

"Each year we strive harder to help provide support to more children and FGX has given us the perfect opportunity to be able to help more kids."



Family reunification house to protect kids

Leading on from the success of our SafeKIDS program in the Cape York Peninsula and Gulf, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has partnered with Act for Kids to establish a family reunification house in Cairns in May this year.

The program is supported by eight trained professionals, who provide a safe, caring home for kids while authorities investigate concerns about their safety and wellbeing and work with their parents to address these concerns. This means kids can stay connected to their family, community and culture, instead of being placed in care far from their family and familiar environment, which can be very traumatic.

Act for Kids Practice Manager, Paul Harris is confident the new service will create a safe home environment and reduce the number of children ending up in long-term foster placements.

"Establishing a reunification service in Cairns means the Queensland Government recognises the importance of a 24 hour family-centred model aimed at ensuring temporary protection and support until a safe reunification or secure long-term care placement can be arranged," said Mr Harris.

"We have the professional skills and the support of local services, so we can work together to help parents address any issues impacting their children's safety and wellbeing, and gradually reunify children back with their parents and family."



South Australian families to benefit from grant

Act for Kids has been awarded a grant from Community Benefit SA (CBSA) to employ a part-time speech language pathologist for its Integrated Therapy Program in Adelaide.

Act for Kids' Integrated Therapy Program in Adelaide has been running since 2014. The program aims to help children and young people overcome their experiences and trauma through therapeutic support, and also offers counselling for families facing challenges.

Trauma from abuse and neglect results in wide ranging, and potentially permanently disabling, developmental impairments in children. Children not only exhibit emotional and psychological impairments, they may also experience speech and language, fine and gross motor, sensory and behavioural difficulties.

Kathy Moar, Clinical Psychologist at Act for Kids, said the speech language pathologist will fill a service gap for children in Adelaide, and improve communication, wellbeing and family functioning.

"Language and speech are generally the first areas where difficulties begin to show, as trauma can have detrimental impacts on a child's brain development and functioning," said Ms Moar.

"They might have delayed speech skills, if nobody talks to them or reads them books, they might have a speech impediment or not use many words or articulate their feelings well.

"If children miss out on these basics in childhood, it's difficult to remedy later in life. It's critical that children's physical, social and emotional needs are met when they're young and growing so their brain can develop normally."



About Community Benefit SA

Community Benefit SA (CBSA) provides one-off project funding to incorporated, non-government, non-profit, charitable and social welfare organisations to develop and strengthen communities across the metropolitan, rural and remote regions of South Australia.

Grants aim to improve the community participation, life management skills, well-being and quality of life of disadvantaged individuals, families and communities.

Act for Kids wins reconciliation award

Act for Kids recently won the community category in the 2015 Queensland Reconciliation Awards for its SafeKIDS program. The awards recognise businesses, community organisations, educational institutions and initiatives that are advancing reconciliation in Queensland.

The Act for Kids SafeKIDS program helps to increase the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care to remain connected to community and culture, and develops the community's capacity by supporting parents to address issues impacting children's safety.

Act for Kids' Far North Queensland Regional Director, Kieran Smith, said it was an honour to accept the award on behalf of the staff and management of the SafeKIDS program.

"Many of our SafeKIDS staff participated in a Family Wellbeing Program designed to help local staff address and understand their own trauma, so they are better equipped to provide a caring and nurturing environment for children dealing with trauma," said Mr Smith.

"We are dedicated to working with Indigenous communities in advancing towards reconciliation to shape a brighter future for local children and families."

The Queensland Reconciliation Awards is an initiative of the Queensland Government through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

For more information visit the Queensland Reconciliation Awards website.



Pictured (from left to right): Ms Temeka Johnson - Arrow Energy, Annastacia Palaszczuk - Premier of Queensland, Dr Neil Carrington - CEO Act for Kids, Ms Lesley-Ann Houghton - Chairman of the Board Act for Kids, Ms Madeline Lea - Workforce Development Manager Act for Kids and Mr Kieran Smith - Regional Director Far North Queensland Act for Kids.

New intensive program to support vulnerable Cairns children

Act for Kids can expand its therapeutic services in Cairns after recently being awarded funding by the Queensland Government to deliver the state's new program, designed to provide therapeutic support and early childhood education for young children.

The Intensive Early Childhood Development Support program focuses on learning, social and emotional development of children, aged from birth to five years, who have been affected by abuse and neglect.

The Queensland Government's Department of Education and Training and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has invested \$2.5 million worth of funding for six services providers to deliver the pilot program across Townsville, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Cairns, South Brisbane and Bundaberg.

Matthew Looker, our Cairns Program Manager, said the new Intensive Early Childhood Development Support program is another step forward in evidence-based programs that improve outcomes for local families.

"Act for Kids has provided free prevention and treatment programs in Cairns for many years," said Mr Looker. "The new program will go a long way to addressing Cairns' growing need for early childhood education and age-appropriate therapeutic interventions.

"Our multidisciplinary therapists are skilled at using



an integrated approach to support the emotional and developmental needs of young children to help them overcome the damaging effects of trauma from abuse and neglect."

Member for Cairns, Rob Pyne, said the funding was part of a new intensive early childhood development pilot program to help families most in need of support.

"This new funding will allow Act for Kids to develop a program that supports the learning, social and emotional development of children affected by complex issues such as domestic violence, abuse, or neglect," said Mr Pyne.

"These services could include therapeutic early childhood education and care focussing on social or language development, intensive supported playgroups, and programs for parents and children such as home visits that engage families in familiar environments."

Ipswich service given a boost

Act for Kids has been awarded generous funding from Property Industry Foundation to employ a part-time Speech Language Pathologist for its Integrated Therapy Program in Ipswich.

The Integrated Therapy Program helps children and young people overcome their experiences and trauma through therapeutic support, and provides counselling for families under stress or facing challenges. Since commencement in December 2014, Act for Kids has assisted 39 children and families in Ipswich, with around 31 more on a waiting list.

Dr Neil Carrington, said through the Property Industry Foundation's generosity Act for Kids has been able to fulfil its multidisciplinary team.

"Ipswich is an area of strong need," said Dr Carrington. "We know that 1,018 children were confirmed as abused or neglected in South West Queensland (2013-2014) and thousands more cases go unreported. By employing a Speech Language Pathologist, we can boost local service delivery to many children in desperate need of help.

"The aim of the speech/language component of the program is to improve speech and language developmental outcomes and general wellbeing of children and young people who have experienced trauma from abuse and neglect or are at risk of abuse and neglect. The Integrated Therapy Program will go a long way towards addressing Ipswich's growing need for support services."



Pictured: Occupational Therapist Emma O'Conner, and Psychologist Bianca Johnston at Ipswich.

About the Property Industry Foundation

The Property Industry Foundation (PIF) was established in NSW in 1996, when industry leaders joined forces to help grass-roots charities that provide specialist services for at risk youth. The Melbourne office was started in late 2008; and the Brisbane office opened in May 2013. Since inception, PIF has proven to be very successful as a forum and a philanthropic focal point for people in the property and construction industry to use their skills and resources to help solve the important community problem of youth homelessness.

For more information visit <http://www.pif.com.au>

Sports club gives grant to keep kids safe

In June, Sunnybank Community and Sports Club awarded Act for Kids with an \$8,600 grant to deliver the *Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends* program to 250 children at local schools in the Sunnybank catchment area.

Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends is a protective behaviours program that teaches grade one children the different ways to keep safe. The program is taught in a fun and age appropriate way through weekly one-hour workshops over five to six weeks and is delivered by trained professionals and volunteers with the assistance and partnership of associated schools and teachers.

This interactive and activity-based program teaches children how to recognise when they feel safe and unsafe, to identify trusted adults in their own lives and what they can do when they feel unsafe.

Parents understand what their children are learning because they have interactive activities and colourful handouts to do together, which also helps parents develop clear expectations of how to talk about their child's concerns and decide what to do next.

The program has been delivered to more than 6,000 grade one children in the Gold Coast and Townsville since 2009. Evaluation results show that there is long-term learning and retention of these important messages, and children who participate in the program are significantly better at identifying unsafe situations and getting help after they've gone through the program.

Michael Callaghan, General Manager at Sunnybank Community & Sports Club, said they are proud to be a member of a caring, inclusive community giving support to initiatives that bring measurable benefits to many people.

"Act for Kids' *Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends* program fits in very well with the guidelines we have in place for our Community Grants Program," said Mr Callaghan. "The



Pictured: Dr Katrina Lines and Mr Michael Callaghan.

Sunnybank Community & Sports Club looks forward to the results of our financial support that will assist Act for Kids to help educate 250 primary school kids within the Sunnybank community."

Act for Kids' vision is for every child in Australia to be empowered with the knowledge, skills and confidence to speak up about their right to feel safe, said Dr Katrina Lines, Executive Director of Programs, Research and Education.

"There is nothing more important to us than teaching children they have the right to feel safe and protected by adults," said Dr Lines. "When kids speak up if they experience harm, and an adult takes prompt action to protect them, then the long term consequences of abuse are reduced for kids.

"We are honoured to have the support of the Sunnybank Community & Sports Club and the program will go a long way to educating 250 local kids. We see this program as being an essential part of a child's education."

Gala Ball raises over \$130,000

Over 450 of Brisbane's business, community and social leaders attended the annual Act for Kids Gala Ball on 16 May at Sofitel Brisbane Central Hotel.

The evening was hosted by Channel Seven's Kay McGrath, while Pat Welsh played live auctioneer. Guests were treated to a culinary feast and a fun-filled night full of entertainment including an upbeat drumming act by Bang and talented musicians from Redtie band.

The grand lottery prize winner took home a \$10,000 Hardy Brothers Jewellers gift voucher. Guests quickly snapped up a range of extraordinary experiences and prizes with over 50 live and silent auctions items up for bidding.

The Gala Ball is Act for Kids' biggest fundraising event and this year more than \$130,000 was raised, said Dr Neil Carrington.

"The funds raised will allow us to continue to provide intensive therapy to children who have experienced abuse and neglect and help strengthen families at risk," said Dr Carrington.



We'd like to thank our marque sponsor Mercedes-Benz Brisbane, ruby sponsors Budget Direct and Treasury Casino, and emerald sponsor SRJ and Hardy Brothers Jewellery for their support of the lottery.

"We also thank our amazing volunteers, the Gala Ball Committee, suppliers and auction prize donors, as the night would not have been possible without their helping hand."

For more information or to donate visit actforkids.com.au/donate.html

Qantas team goes extra mile for kids

The Brisbane Qantas team has been throwing their energy into fundraising for Act for Kids. The team raised over \$12,900 this year through merchandise and cake sales, raffles and participation in this year's Bridge to Brisbane.

The funds will enable Act for Kids to expand its intensive therapy and early intervention programs to thousands of children, young people and families in Queensland and South Australia.

Dr Neil Carrington said Act for Kids was truly grateful to Qantas for their continuous support.

"Some of the Brisbane Qantas team members have been long term volunteers at Act for Kids, helping at many of our events," said Dr Carrington. "It's inspiring that their commitment has not faded over the years and now, the whole team have pulled together again to raise funds for us.



Pictured: Brisbane Qantas team, with Act for Kids Fundraising Manager, Ellen Park (third from right).

"We know there are kids and families in the immediate area who will benefit greatly from our therapy. Thanks to Qantas we can continue to give more people the chance to rebuild their lives and overcome their trauma."

Zarrafra's Coffee serves up ongoing support

National Child Protection Week serves to shine a light on child abuse and neglect and encourages individuals and communities to show their support for kids and families.

This year Zarrafra's Coffee once again gave generously donating \$15,000 to support Act for Kids' free professional treatment and prevention services to all children in Australia.

Zarrafra's has supported Act for Kids since 2009 and since then has donated over \$90,000 said Dr Neil Carrington.

"We are humbled by Zarrafra's generosity and so incredibly grateful for their loyalty and support over the years," said Dr Carrington.

"Every year thousands of children and families rely on us for support during times of stress or after serious trauma and abuse. We rely heavily on public support and generous businesses like Zarrafra's Coffee to ensure we can keep our doors open and reach out to more children in need."

Zarrafra's Coffee CEO, Kenton Campbell, said the support formed a critical part of the company's 'backyard policy', assisting important community initiatives that make a difference in people's lives.



Pictured: (from left to right) Judy Firmstone, Brisbane Zarrafra's team, Michelle McNicholl.

"These are significant issues affecting Queensland families and National Child Protection Week was the perfect time to help shine a light on Act for Kids and their vital work," said Mr Campbell.

Thanks to our supporters!

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Act for Kids is a not-for-profit organisation providing free professional therapy and support services to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. Established as the Abused Child Trust in 1988, we have helped thousands of Australian children and families who have experienced, or are at risk of child abuse and neglect.

To buy tickets in the Act for Kids Platinum Class Lottery call: 1800 968 946 or visit www.platinumclass.com.au