



# Act for kids

Preventing and treating child abuse and neglect



## HOW MUSIC HEALED EMMA'S MISTRUST...

Emma was only 7 years old when she came to Act for Kids, but she had lived in lots of different places. She was passed from home to home because her mother struggled with drug abuse, domestic violence and her own mental health issues. Her disruptive childhood convinced Emma that she was the problem and that no one loved her.

Emma was removed from her mother's care when she was 4 years old and went to live with extended family members. However, tension within her family escalated and Emma went to live with a foster family. Sadly, the family were unable to look after Emma long term and she was moved again to a new foster family, a lovely couple called Michelle\* and David\*. Even though her change of placement was not her fault, Emma believed that no one liked her and she didn't deserve a family.

Emma was very cautious of opening up to Michelle and David as she believed they would leave her eventually. Sometimes she would cuddle up to Michelle or play a game with David but the next moment she would yell or swear and break things because she was scared of feeling rejected again. This pattern was also occurring in Emma's relationships at school which lead to multiple suspensions...



When Emma first started therapy at Act for Kids it took her a long time to open up to her therapist; sometimes she would show real vulnerability and other times attempt to push them away with words and actions. It took 3 months for Emma to develop trust with the therapist. Once this relationship began to build, she was able to talk about her thoughts and feelings. At Act for Kids, we helped Emma understand why she had to change placements and that it wasn't her fault.

Emma's therapist helped her identify her strengths and abilities as she had begun to believe that she was a 'naughty girl' because she was getting into trouble at school so often. Emma learnt about making friendships and managing her big feelings. This helped her to feel calmer when she spent time with her friends and with Michelle and David. Finally, Emma started to get in trouble less at school and started to settle into her new relationship with Michelle and David.

However, after 6 months of therapy, Emma began to push Michelle and David away again. After forming a stable and trusting relationship, deep down she felt like she had more to lose. The family began a block of music therapy, writing songs together about their experiences. This helped Emma to express her feelings and develop strategies using music to help her feel calm when she gets worried.

After 2 months of music therapy, Michelle and David reported a big decrease in Emma's challenging behaviours at home and an improved connection with her. Emma is now achieving well at school and believes that she is a lovable little girl that deserves to be happy. Emma will go on to have a stable, safe and happy childhood thanks to your kind ongoing support and we can't thank you enough!

*\*Names changed to protect privacy.*



# RESEARCH REVEALS TWO THIRDS OF KIDS UNEQUIPPED TO REACT TO UNSAFE SITUATIONS



While the safety of our children is a continuous concern, new research finds that just one in three (30%) Australians understand the importance of teaching children the skills necessary to identify unsafe situations, what are public and private body parts and how to seek help from trusted adults when they feel unsafe.

The research of over 2,000 Australians carried out by Act for Kids reveals that two thirds (61%) of parents do not believe their child knows what to do when they feel

unsafe. A staggering 45% also admit that their child would struggle to identify a safe adult to confide in.

Executive Director of Services with Act for Kids, Dr Katrina Lines, said the findings are both incredibly surprising and scary. "Almost three quarters of the Australians surveyed haven't heard of protective behaviours and aren't really sure what they are, that means that they don't understand the importance of them for children," she said.

Nicole Stewart, a full-time mum to five-year-old Charlotte Stewart, said she was never taught explicitly how to recognise and manage unsafe situations. "I was only able to talk to Charlotte about protective behaviours in very broad terms, based on what I had been taught as a child," Nicole said.

Nicole's daughter Charlotte recently completed Act for Kids' Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends™ protective behaviours program at her school. Following the program, Nicole admitted that Charlotte didn't previously have the awareness to realise that she was in an unsafe situation, nor would she have known how to voice her fears or remove herself from an unsafe situation prior to completing the program.

During Child Protection Week, Act for Kids highlighted the need for parents and schools to work together to teach protective behaviours to provide our children with the ability to detect and react to unsafe situations. "For a minimal investment from schools or parents, Act for Kids can deliver the five-week program to students in grade one. We recommend that anyone interested in learning more about protective behaviours, or about our program to visit [www.actforkids.com.au](http://www.actforkids.com.au)," said Dr Lines.

## ANNUAL CAPITOL TRIVIA NIGHT RAISES \$21K FOR KIDS!

IT SURE WAS A SIGHT TO SEE AT THE BRONCOS LEAGUES CLUB LAST MONTH, AS OVER 150 TRIVIA FANATICS WEARING THEIR MOST OUTRAGEOUS SPORTS CARNIVAL THEMED ATTIRE GAVE IT THEIR ALL TO WIN THE FIFTH ANNUAL CAPITOL TRIVIA NIGHT!

This year, with the generosity of everyone who attended, the night raised an incredible \$21,339.40 which will go directly back to Act for Kids to help some of Australia's most vulnerable children get the life-changing therapy they need to overcome their trauma. Ashley Wood, Director of People and Communities at Capitol, said the annual event is valued at Capitol because they are able to raise funds knowing they are making a real difference "We can see where the money actually goes to support children in need, not only in cities but also in regional and remote communities," she said.

"Because we are raising funds knowing we are making a difference, it brings our team together for a great night and helps create a sense of community in our offices whilst raising funds for Act for Kids," Mrs Wood said.

For those interested in attending next year's Capitol event to raise money for abused and neglected kids, please don't hesitate to email [events@actforkids.com.au](mailto:events@actforkids.com.au) or visit [www.actforkids.com.au/events/](http://www.actforkids.com.au/events/)



# NATIONAL PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS CONFERENCE EMPOWERS AND EDUCATES



It is not often that we get to experience a phenomenon like the National Protective Behaviours Conference, where almost 300 people are brought together by one common goal; to keep our kids safe!

Hosted by Act for Kids and Protective Behaviours Australia, the sold out event absolutely exceeded expectations with a room full of dedicated professionals sharing current research, innovative practice and systematic approaches to protect our kids. Protective Behaviours Australia President Bronwyn Clee said she is incredibly grateful for everyone who attended, presented and participated in the 2018 National Protective Behaviours Conference.

**"IT WAS A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOUR TO EMCEE THE EVENT, AND TO NOT ONLY EXPERIENCE SUCH HIGH-CALIBER CONTENT, BUT TO ALSO MEET AND GREET SO MANY PASSIONATE PEOPLE FROM ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES COMMITTED TO HELPING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS FEEL SAFE," SHE SAID.**

The two-day event featured keynote speakers from all around Australia sharing their research, insights and knowledge of protective behaviours. Combined with informative and interactive workshops, attendees walked away empowered with the knowledge to collectively reduce the incidence and impact of abuse and violence in the community.

For more information about Act for Kids' protective behaviours program Learn to be safe with Emmy and friends, visit [www.actforkids.com.au/our-services/education-services/learn-to-be-safe-with-emmy-and-friends/](http://www.actforkids.com.au/our-services/education-services/learn-to-be-safe-with-emmy-and-friends/)



## TOWNSVILLE EEP KIDS BECOME PUBLISHED AUTHORS!



We are very excited to announce that our incredibly talented Early Education Program (EEP) kids in Townsville have been selected as runner-up prize winners of the RACQ Storybook Competition, winning themselves 24 books and becoming published authors!

After recently learning about the ocean and visiting Reef HQ Aquarium in Townsville on an excursion, our EEP kids were inspired to create an illustration and write a story titled 'Helen and the Helicopter to the Rescue'.

The story was submitted to a panel of judges who have since selected it to be published in the RACQ Story Book – a collection of short stories written and illustrated by Queensland students!

Karie Nixon, Act for Kids Specialist Early Education Assistant, said the EEP kids cheered with excitement when she told them they had won a prize for their story.

"The kids were so excited! When we reread the story, they each proudly pointed out the parts of the illustration they had created.

"We are extremely proud of these children, especially knowing that children who come to us can sometimes find it difficult to access higher order thinking skills, such as imagination," she said.

It will be another proud moment when the kids each have a copy of the book with their story inside to show everyone how clever they are. To read 'Helen and the Helicopter to the Rescue', please visit [www.actforkids.com.au/news/townsville-eeep-kids-published-authors/](http://www.actforkids.com.au/news/townsville-eeep-kids-published-authors/)



# ACT FOR KIDS OPEN DAY RAISES VITAL AWARENESS IN ADELAIDE

During National Child Protection Week, Adelaide Integrated Therapy Service (ITS) hosted its very first Open Day – and what a success! The Adelaide team spent the day meeting and building relationships with referrers, the Minister for Child Protection, the Shadow Minister and many other industry professionals to share the importance of the work we do at Act for Kids. Jenny Suter, Act for Kids Team Leader and Clinical Psychologist in Adelaide, said the Open Day was invaluable because it gave Act for Kids the opportunity to network with local referrers and provide them with an understanding of what children experience when they come to the service.

"We conducted tours of the centre, shared therapeutic resources and explained the integrated therapy model we use to help children who have suffered abuse or neglect.

"We hope this information will allow referrers to continue referring with confidence in our service, and give families a more personal and detailed explanation of where they are going for help," she said.

For more information about our Integrated Therapy Service (ITS), please visit [www.actforkids.com.au/our-services/therapy-services/integrated-therapy](http://www.actforkids.com.au/our-services/therapy-services/integrated-therapy)



## PROTECT AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN: PLEDGE TO STOP CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Every 11 minutes, every single day, a child living in Australia is abused or neglected, and this statistic is not getting better. In fact, every year it is getting worse. Every year, more vulnerable kids are suffering abuse and neglect.

### HELP US STOP CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY PLEDGING YOUR SUPPORT ON TUESDAY OCTOBER 2ND

Today, we only have to look at the headlines in the paper to know how bad child abuse and neglect has become in Australia. But enough is enough! Last year, over 49,000 Australian children were living a nightmare. They were hit, ignored, screamed at, locked in rooms for hours by themselves, starved, denied medical treatment, exposed to drugs or domestic violence and sexually abused. That's almost 50,000 children who, for 365 days, didn't feel safe or loved.

On Tuesday the 2nd of October, we're calling on all Australians to stand up for children who have suffered abuse and neglect. These children need to know they are not alone. They need to know we care! With your support, we can spread the horrific statistics and stories about child abuse and neglect, and educate Australians on what to do if they suspect a child is unsafe.

Right now, your single pledge can make a difference to a child feeling scared and alone. Imagine what thousands could do! These children need our help, and together we can give them the childhood they deserve. Together, we can heal little hearts right across Australia!

To make your pledge today, please visit [www.every11minutes.com.au](http://www.every11minutes.com.au)



For more information or to donate please call 1300 228 000 or visit [www.actforkids.com.au](http://www.actforkids.com.au)

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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 in 1988, we have helped thousands of children and families in Australia who have experienced, or are at risk of child abuse and neglect.