



Barnardos Australia  
**Corporate Plan**  
2008-2011



## **Barnardos' Vision**

All children and young people will have caring families, in which they can grow safely and fulfil their potential. Families, children and young people will be valued and supported by quality services and engaged communities.

## **Barnardos' Mission**

Barnardos builds relationships between children and young people in need and their families and community. We promote knowledge about effective policies and programs for children and young people, and contribute to community knowledge about their needs.

## **Background**

Barnardos Australia is part of an international family of services begun by Dr Thomas Barnardo in England in 1867. All share the view that:

*“The Company’s inspiration and values derive from the Christian faith. These values, enriched and shared by many people of other faiths and philosophies, provide the basis of the Company’s work with children and young people, their families and communities.”*

# Barnardos' Operating Principles

## ► *Keep the child and the young person central*

We work for what we believe to be the child or young person's best interest and are informed by them.

## ► *Strengthen families*

We believe in the importance of stability in a child's family for their optimum development. We support the least intrusive intervention consistent with a child's safety and wellbeing.

## ► *Pursue social justice*

We work to empower the disadvantaged and those living in poverty, and oppose social injustice. We focus on children most in need, balancing prevention and direct service delivery to individuals in crisis. We are guided by the principles of cultural diversity, reconciliation and fairness in distribution of resources. We uphold equal, effective and comprehensive civil, legal and industrial rights. We uphold opportunities for children and clients to participate fully in personal development, community life and decision making.

## ► *Be persistent for change*

We work creatively to make a difference. We understand that for some children and young people it will take a long time to see change and we work with hope for the future and commitment to the present.

## ► *Take responsibility*

At every level of the agency we take our responsibilities very seriously and require commitment from all our staff.

## ► *Relate respectfully*

We encourage active partnership between, and participation of, families, children and young people, communities and other welfare agencies. We respect the unique contribution of carers, volunteers, Barnardos staff and external welfare agencies.

► *Invest in the future*

We use our advocacy, resources and knowledge to improve the future of disadvantaged children and young people in Australia. We are committed to strengthening the agency, our people and practices to undertake this task.

► *Value our knowledge*

We share knowledge and continue to develop expertise drawing on our own and others' experience. Barnardos has extensive specialist knowledge of child and adolescent welfare, and has well-researched and evaluated ways of working. We are committed to research and the constructive evaluation of what we do, and how we do it.

## Development of the Corporate Plan

This plan follows the successful implementation of previous corporate plans, the last being for 2005–2008. The 2008–2011 plan (1 July 2008–30 June 2011) has been developed through a consultative process that has involved the Board and employees of Barnardos Australia. Feedback from staff from each centre, program and team has been included. Feedback from service users, donors, supporters and members has also contributed to the process.

The framework for this plan is based on Results Accountability methodology, used by the New South Wales State Government and some Federal Government human services departments. Management deliberations were presented to the Board for consideration in April 2008.

## The result we seek

All children and young people in need will have caring families in which they can grow safely and fulfil their potential, supported in strong communities.

### *We seek this result for children in need*

Children in need are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health and development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services.

In Australia these children are predominantly clustered in particular geographic areas—socially excluded communities, rural and indigenous communities.

## **Australian children and young people need caring families with whom they can live safely BUT...**

### ***Children continue to die, suffer abuse or neglect, even when known to welfare authorities***

In New South Wales there have been approximately 120 deaths of children known to welfare authorities per year over the last three years. Of these children, more than one third died directly as a result of abuse and neglect. The rest were predominantly from families experiencing poverty and social deprivation.

Many children continue to live in violent situations even after they have been reported to welfare officials. Children remaining at home after substantiation of these reports experience re-abuse between 10.2% and 23.9%, depending on the State or Territory, over twelve months.

There is an increasing rate of substantiated abuse and neglect in Australia. In 2005–2006 there were 34,517 proven incidents and 167,433 children were reported with concerns over abuse and neglect. Government departments investigated 75,604 of these situations.

### ***Many households are affected by violence***

The number of Australian children exposed to domestic violence is estimated to be approximately 75,000 per year.

Research shows domestic violence is common. 39% of women have experienced physical assault after the age of fifteen years. 49% of adults who experience violence from their current partner had children in their care.

In 2003–2004, 33% of homeless people seeking crisis accommodation were fleeing domestic violence.

### ***Many children live in households affected by drugs and alcohol***

Children whose parents are affected by drugs and alcohol are twelve times more likely to have been the subject of substantiated notifications including sexual assault and neglect. Children of drug using mothers are twenty-nine times more likely to have substantiated physical abuse and are twelve times more likely to enter foster care.

## *Many young people are homeless*

It is estimated that there are 46,000 young people under the age of 25 who are homeless. Many are homeless because of abuse or neglect and live in unstable accommodation over many years.

## *Children and young people who are removed from their families often experience ongoing instability*

In Australia, 25,454 children live away from their families in out of home care. One quarter of children in out of home care, that is, in foster or residential care, are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. This is highly disproportionate to their numbers in the general population (4.5%).

The majority of children in out of home care do not experience a stable life in the care system. In general foster care, children average three or four placement changes, and 32% of children have more than four placements over a five year period. Barnardos has had children referred to our care who have had over twenty foster placements or periods in children's homes.

Only 30% of children in foster or residential care are successfully restored back to their parents' home. It is estimated that 17% have two or more reunification attempts. Children of drug using mothers were sixteen times less likely to be reunited with their families after foster care.

Few indigenous children who live apart from their families because of abuse or neglect are managed by indigenous agencies or placed in Aboriginal families. In Queensland in 2006 only 62% of indigenous children were managed by indigenous agencies or had Aboriginal placements and the number is decreasing.

## **Australian children and young people need to reach their potential BUT...**

### ***Many children live in poverty and in communities which are neglected***

We know that families asking for help from welfare agencies suffer from extreme poverty, for example:

- 33.5% lack decent, secure housing
- 31% are unable to buy prescription medicine
- 18.1% do not have a separate bed per child
- 18.9% do not have access to a safe outdoor play space for children
- 27% cannot afford to participate in school activities and outings
- 36% do not have access to up-to-date school books or new school clothes

Social and emotional health are strongly related to children and young people's socio economic situations. Students from the highest 10% socio-economic level rated significantly higher in their level of social and emotional health than students from the lowest 25% socio-economic level.

### ***Many children are not school ready which adds to their ongoing disadvantage***

Only 59% of children aged four years of age attend preschool, and 25%, long day care. Children who do not go to preschool are frequently from remote areas and have low socio-economic status. There are local variations in rates with the children least likely to attend coming from non-English speaking backgrounds and from homes in which parents are not employed or do not have post school qualifications.

### ***Many children and young people have poor health outcomes***

1,500 child deaths each year in Australia are attributed to socio-economic disadvantage, and thousands more children experience injuries which reduce life opportunities. Death and injury are not spread evenly across all social groups — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children average a death rate 2.5% greater than the norm. The most frequent and most severe injuries occur among children whose parents are unskilled. Children from low socio-economic groups are more likely to experience house fires and fatal assault. Incidents of traffic injury are higher in low socio economic areas. Low birth weight (2.5 kilograms) is affected by economic hardship including low incomes and unemployment. Aboriginal women

are twice as likely to have low birth weight babies. 9% of Australian babies are of low birth weight with the rate higher among single and indigenous parents (13%). Dental health remains a significant problem for socially disadvantaged families—approximately 55% of families with children who rely on welfare organisations for assistance do not have access to annual dental check-ups. Many families cannot afford access to specialised services such as speech therapy and services to overcome problems of disability for their children—7% of Australian children have mental or behavioural problems.

### *Many young people are in trouble for offending*

Approximately 15–17% of young Australians have at least one formal contact with the police. 20% of this group will have ongoing or serious ongoing criminal involvement. Factors correlated with youth offending include poverty, poor school attendance, poor parenting and physical abuse and neglect. During the periods 2002–2003 and 2005–2006 there has been an increase from 33% to 39% of indigenous young people being under juvenile justice supervision.

## **Australian children and young people need to be valued and engaged with supportive communities BUT...**

### *Some local areas and communities suffer multiple disadvantage*

Despite overall economic growth in Australia, social conditions are not uniformly improving. Some groups and particular communities continue to suffer disadvantage disproportionately. The majority of children in these areas live in family poverty and in communities where there is cumulative disadvantage such as an unskilled workforce, long term unemployment, welfare dependency, low mean taxable income and low rates of community activities and volunteering. These areas are typically affected by social disadvantage over a long period. Research has classified these areas by postcode.

## **Barnardos Australia key results for 2008–2011:**

- 1. Children and young people will have caring families in which they can live safely.**
- 2. Children and young people will reach their potential.**
- 3. Families, children and young people will be valued and supported with quality services in engaged communities.**
- 4. Barnardos Australia will continue to be a strong and viable agency.**

**Barnardos will undertake to provide direct service and to promote useful models of work to assist children across the Australian community.**

**We aim to measure our work and contribute to Australian welfare services. We will develop and utilise best practice case management systems and promote these systems.**

## 1. Barnardos will ensure that children and young people will have caring families in which they can live safely

	<b>Results sought</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Families are supported to care for their children whenever it is safe	<p>We will address the problems of poverty which limit families' ability to provide a home and care for their children</p> <p>We will develop our capacity to prevent family violence</p> <p>We will promote the child rearing capacity of families of 'Children in Need'</p> <p>We will increase our services to kin carers</p> <p>We will provide a case management system for kin care</p> <p>We will provide children and young people in rural areas with adequate support to meet their particular needs</p>	<p>Increase the number of families assisted with financial assistance and literacy programs</p> <p>2 new resource projects for families in rural and metropolitan areas</p> <p>Assess and provide enhanced individual and group work programs for the families of children and young people experiencing violence</p> <p>20% of program staff will be indigenous and an increase in family support programs</p> <p>Apply research findings on restoration of children</p> <p>4 new programs for kin carers</p> <p>Develop case management for kin placements</p> <p>Consolidate and expand our existing rural centres by 20%</p>
<b>1.2</b>	Permanent stable families for children in long term Out of Home Care	<p>We will ensure stability of care while undertaking assessment and decision-making for long term care plans</p> <p>We will ensure adequate numbers of foster carers through effective recruitment, retention and payment strategies</p> <p>We will ensure that children in Out of Home Care have clear appropriate care plans which involve them, their carers and their families</p> <p>We will maintain the current stability rate for children and their carers in permanent Out of Home Care programs</p> <p>We will find stable, helpful family relationships for children and adolescents permanently separated from their parents</p> <p>We will advocate for improvement in Out of Home Care service systems in Australia</p>	<p>Maintain 98% stability in first placement in Temporary Family Care</p> <p>Enhance training options for carers</p> <p>Annually assess carer reimbursements</p> <p>100% of children and young people in our care will have a care plan</p> <p>Develop techniques to increase communication with children and young people</p> <p>Maintain an adoption rate of one-third of children in permanent care in NSW</p> <p>Advocate for legislation for adoption of children in permanent care in the ACT</p> <p>Increase Find-a-Family permanent care programs by 50 new placements</p> <p>Increase the number of stable living situations which are maintained until young people are 18 years of age or older</p> <p>Promote quality standards at all levels of Government</p>

	<b>Results sought</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>1.3</b>	All children and young people in their own homes, Out of Home Care or kin care have the highest possible quality of assessment, planning and review	<p>We will work to assist indigenous agencies with Accreditation by the NSW Children's Guardian</p> <p>We will develop culturally sensitive case planning</p> <p>We will promote case management systems to other agencies</p> <p>We will assess and improve case management systems</p>	<p>Develop 4 working partnerships with indigenous Out of Home Care agencies</p> <p>Undertake research partnership with Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) on indigenous case management</p> <p>20% increase in agencies using Barnardos' case management systems</p> <p>Evaluate impacts of case management systems and develop an integrated system</p>

## 2. Barnardos will ensure that children and young people will reach their potential

	<b>Results sought</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>2.1</b>	Healthy children and young people	We will assist families to meet health and dental needs We will ensure that children in foster or residential care have health and dental checks and their needs met We will reduce drug use and self harm among our young service users	Increase the number of health/dental assessments and treatments 90% of assessment of health/dental needs initiated within one month for children in our foster or residential care Improve our work in harm minimisation in relation to alcohol, drugs and self harm
<b>2.2</b>	Children and young people receive education and training and can support themselves as adults	We will ensure children in our programs are prepared for school We will ensure that children in our care reach age appropriate education benchmarks We will provide educational and training support for young people leaving care and advocate to improve these services	Younger children will be offered early learning education as required. Promotion of the value of early learning expanded Identify areas in which children and young people may need more assistance and provide this Make training available to all young people leaving care from Barnardos
<b>2.3</b>	Children and young people understand their social and cultural background	We will ensure children in care maintain contact with their kin and cultural group	Develop contact plans for all children in care, including with extended family, and a cultural plan as relevant
<b>2.4</b>	Children and young people should have positive family and social relations	We will provide opportunities to enhance positive family relationships	Introduce Family Group Conferencing to improve the processes for decision-making within families
<b>2.5</b>	Children and young people will be socially competent, have improved emotional and behavioural development and age appropriate self-care skills	We will create more opportunity for social interaction We will assist babies and toddlers to enhance attachment to their carers	Provide increased social inclusion opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds Develop new program for young children to assist with their basic attachment needs

### 3. Barnardos will ensure families, children and young people will be valued and supported with quality services in engaged communities

	<i>Results sought</i>	<i>Future plans</i>	<i>Target</i>
<b>3.1</b>	Communities will provide adequate support and safety for children and families	We will work with other agencies and organisations to address structural and locational disadvantage	4 new partnerships with a range of health/welfare providers and corporate supporters
<b>3.2</b>	Families and young people actively participate in decisions and services in their local areas	We will engage service users in organisational issues at the local and agency levels	Pilot methods to involve young people in local decision-making
<b>3.3</b>	Families and young people in the community make active choices to improve their wellbeing	We will maintain and develop services to improve adolescent wellbeing and reduce homelessness	Develop a rural pilot program to better support adolescents
<b>3.4</b>	Welfare professionals are highly skilled and understand the needs of children and young people and provide for these needs	We will undertake research and promote the findings of research to child welfare agencies	Publish and present 10 papers on our work

#### 4. How Barnardos will ensure that we will continue to be a strong and viable agency

	<b>Results sought</b>	<b>Future plans</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>4.1</b>	Adequate income to sustain our mission including meeting of Government contracts and developing innovation	We will use Barnardos funds to complement Government funds to ensure the highest quality of service	Maintain sufficient reserves to meet ongoing commitment to children in our long term care and review these annually Ensure the community understands and supports disadvantaged children
<b>4.2</b>	A skilled labour force, carers and volunteers	We will increase the range of training programs We will maintain competitive salaries and conditions We will increase the number of carers We will support volunteers	Increase capacity, skill and training of staff Negotiate Certified Agreement to recruit/retain skilled staff Maintain carer allowances, support and retain carers Develop better ways to recruit and retain volunteers
<b>4.3</b>	The agency will have cost effective administration to support welfare services	We will monitor costs and pursue efficiencies We will develop unit costs and use them to benchmark our services	IT audits regularly undertaken Administration reviewed annually 2 research projects
<b>4.4</b>	Reduction in risks associated with our service	We will regularly review risk reduction processes and implement improvements	Maintain or improve current risk vulnerability
<b>4.5</b>	The agency will maintain high levels of corporate governance	We will maintain best practice governance and comply with external standards	Reassessment of ongoing governance policy Necessary registration and accountability requirements maintained