

## The tough get going

**Barnardos supporters in Melbourne recently got filthy and acquired the odd sore muscle to raise vital funds in the Tough Bloke Challenge. Join us at the Sydney event on 2nd and 3rd July for your chance to get down and dirty for a good cause.**

The Tough Bloke Challenge is a great day out. Just ask our Melbourne supporters who on Saturday, 5 March 2011 competed in this off-road running event. The tough competitors – men and women of all ages and abilities, as well as children over 12 – tackled manmade and natural obstacles, cross country running, water crossings and some unexpected surprises to be in the running for the coveted Tough Bloke Challenge Trophy.

Following on from the success of last year's event Barnardos is again the exclusive charity partner of the Tough Bloke Challenge in 2011. Not only does it provide fantastic fun and competitive events for our supporters but it allows a valuable opportunity to raise crucial funds.

To find out how to register for the Sydney event visit the Events page in the 'How to help us' section of our website. Please remember once you have registered, make your experience count and create your own Everyday Hero fundraising page that can be emailed to friends, family and colleagues. The funds you raise will make a difference in the lives of Australia's most vulnerable children.

Each event has a fantastic festival atmosphere. Families can cheer on their favourites, kids can play on the jumping castles or you can just kick back and enjoy the live music.



## DEXUS inspire a rescue renovation

**When staff from DEXUS Property Group learned that the emergency accommodation units at our Auburn centre were in dire need of renovation, they were moved to rally a true community project.**

DEXUS has supported Barnardos over the past few years through a range of staff engagement activities. In May 2010 a group of staff who visited our Auburn Children's Family Centre were troubled to learn that the emergency accommodation units had not been refurbished since they were constructed in 1974.

The four units provide accommodation for children and their parents at risk of homelessness in an emergency situation, such as escaping domestic violence. The units give the children a safe and secure environment while the family receives the support of the centre's integrated range of programs.

Initially they planned to spend \$20,000 renovating the kitchens in each of the units, however the DEXUS staff soon realised a complete refurbishment was needed and their project managers sought the support of FDC Building. FDC pledged their commitment and called in help from many of their own business partners for what turned out to be a complete renovation project. In the end the value of the project which was completed in March 2011 exceeded \$120,000.

"Thank you to all those who were part of this significant and invaluable project," said Julie Duffield, program manager of the emergency accommodation units. "Families have now moved in to their brand new units, and while they need a lot of support to get their lives back on track, at least they are living in fresh, comfortable and secure accommodation."

# News

### A trip to the zoo

Sometimes it's the small things that many of us take for granted that make a memorable difference to a child's life. Recently Energy Australia donated 350 tickets to Taronga and Western Plains Zoos for Barnardos to give to our children, young people and their families.

The tickets were distributed across our programs and services to children and families who are not in a financial position to consider a trip to the zoo. Thank you Energy Australia for providing a wonderful experience and life long memories for these kids.

### Expanding into new areas

So far in 2011 we are delighted to have secured new funding that will enable us to expand our services into new areas, and offer new services in areas we already work.

We are soon to expand our Orana Far West services into Orange after recently receiving state government funding to launch a new intensive family preservation service in the area. This new service further extends our work in this rural region assisting families, children and young people at risk and in crisis. Intensive family preservation works with children and young people up to the age of 15 who have been identified as being at imminent risk of placement in out-of-home care.

In the Illawarra region of NSW we will be establishing a new family referral service to help local families and improve the safety, health and welfare of their children. We will provide services based out of Wollongong for families in a number of local government areas in the Illawarra region.

### It's tax time!

Don't forget that tax time – when we all review and prepare our finances for lodgement with the ATO – is also a great time to consider making that invaluable tax-deductible donation.

The start of a new financial year is also a good time to consider becoming part of our regular donor family. Regular donations are easy to set up – visit the 'How to help us' section of our website to find out how or call 1800 061 000.

### The gift of vision

Global Luxottica Group charity, the OneSight Foundation, has partnered with us to provide free eyecare and eyewear to families in our programs.

Through their OneSight Vision voucher program the foundation is committed to providing children who might otherwise not be able to access or afford basic eyecare and eyewear that they need to function in their daily lives with the opportunity to obtain free optical services through designated Luxottica Group brands.

Quality eyecare is integral to the health and wellbeing of the children we work with and this invaluable assistance will for some be key to improving their quality of life.

Donate today. Call 1800 061 000 or go to [www.barnardos.org.au](http://www.barnardos.org.au)

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# Barnardos News

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Is it POSSIBLE to *feel* SAFE when you can't *escape* VIOLENCE at home? We *believe* it is.

## Toby is learning to be a kid again

**Traumatised by the violence and insecurity of the first four years of his life, Toby, now nine, is making great progress in the care of, Caroline and Peter, who recently adopted him.**

It's been a long journey for Toby and his little sister, Lilly. Last year we told our donors how they came into our care after their mother and her violent partner were imprisoned for murder. It's been five years since they were placed permanently with Caroline and Peter by our Find a Family team and while there have been hurdles along the way both children have realised that they can put the past behind them.

While living with their mother and her violent boyfriend Toby was physically abused and both he and Lilly suffered extreme neglect. It took huge amounts of patience, love and understanding for Caroline and Peter to calm the fearful and aggressive little boy that first came into their home. However a bond was established and when they adopted the children Toby finally accepted that he now had a secure, forever family. However, his behaviour has still been challenging at times.

Barnardos works hard to ensure children maintain some kind of relationship with their birth parents so that they understand where they came from, and while Toby's mother didn't consent to the adoption, she did wish for ongoing contact. Toby and Lilly have supervised visits with her a couple of times a year.

Over the years Toby has also had trouble at school. Difficulty dealing with his emotions, learning difficulties and his lack of trust in adults made it

hard for him to cope with formal schooling in the beginning. He also found it hard to make friends because he felt 'different' and ashamed of a past that he felt he had to hide. So, prior to the adoption, he was enrolled in our Two Trees Project, a group therapy course designed specifically to address the abandonment, identity and self-esteem issues that children like Toby, who have been permanently removed from their birth parents, typically experience.

Two Trees gave Toby the opportunity to explore friendships with other children who have had similar experiences. He used to make up stories about his life – pretending that his real mum was a celebrity, or that Caroline and Peter were his real parents – but over the course of the project this story-telling became less frequent and he began to share his real experiences and use the social skills he learnt to make friendships. Most importantly Toby was able to show his appreciation to his foster, now adoptive, parents – calling Caroline his 'permanent mummy who loves me no matter what,' and telling the group facilitator that, 'she is teaching me to be a kid again.'

Caroline and Peter have noticed that lately Toby is enjoying far more carefree moments. "I'll catch him when he's playing football or in the garden playing a silly game with Lilly and see something I thought I might never see – a kid without a care in the world," says Caroline. "He and Lilly will always carry their past with them but we hope that, with Barnardos' help, we have been able to heal the rawness of those wounds, and give them both a chance to be the fun-loving kids that they should be."

## Lachlan's lost so much already...

**It is always tragic when a child loses a parent so young, but without Barnardos one-year-old Lachlan was in danger of losing the rest of his family too.**

Just a few months before we met Lachlan, his mother had died of breast cancer. His grief-stricken dad, Craig, had nursed his wife through her illness, while continuing to hold down his job as a mechanic at the local petrol station. However after her death he sank into a deep depression, and was unable to work or cope with caring for Lachlan and his five-year-old brother, Thomas.

Craig and his wife, Miranda, both came from difficult backgrounds and depended on each other for everything. They looked forward to being able to give their children the loving upbringing they never had. However without Miranda, Craig crumbled. Estranged from his own and Miranda's family he was left living in a remote rural community, feeling very isolated and alone and not used to having to ask for help.

With the help of a neighbour who offered to drive him, Craig was able to get Thomas to school every day, but blinded by grief the demands of a baby were too much for him to deal with day-in day-out. He would shut himself in the bedroom and cover his ears so he couldn't hear Lachlan crying and the little boy would be left alone, hungry or sitting in soiled nappies, for hours as his father's mental state unravelled. At such a crucial developmental age, when bonding and nurturing are so vital to healthy emotional development, the once happy little boy who had been used to the loving attention of both his parents became fractious and screamed constantly.

Is it possible to *feel loved* when NO ONE wants you *around*? We *believe* it is.

Even when Craig did try to settle Lachlan, missing his mum's cuddles and in pain from nappy rash, the little boy was inconsolable. This increased Craig's lack of confidence. One day, after listening to Lachlan cry for hours, Craig was nearly overcome by an urge to shake the little boy to shut him up. Realising that he couldn't go on as he was he took Lachlan to see his GP. Desperately worried about Craig's emotional state, and about the welfare of both Lachlan and Thomas the family were referred to us.

Our family support team saw at once that without help Craig was at risk of losing his kids. Having

visited the family to assess the situation, our worker, Kelly, could see that prior to losing his wife Craig had been a loving and attentive father. Thankfully his GP had already prescribed a short course of antidepressants and arranged for Craig to see a grief counsellor. Realising that Craig had lost his confidence as a parent, Kelly has been spending time helping him establish a routine for Lachlan that will make it easier to meet his needs and give them all a more peaceful home. She has also arranged for Craig and Lachlan to attend a local playgroup together to help re-establish the bond between them. The neighbour is willing to continue taking Thomas to school until Craig is back on his feet, and Kelly has also negotiated extra time off from work with Craig's employer. She has also put Lachlan on the waiting list for a daycare placement so that Craig can get some respite, and in time return to his job.

It is still early days, and this family will continue having a difficult time coping with the loss of their wife and mother. However, we are confident that with our support Craig, Thomas and little Lachlan will not lose each other as well.

**Ninety per cent of childhood deaths due to neglect are children under the age of four.\***

\*Children & Youth Services Review 2002.



## Rising above a violent beginning

**Twenty-five per cent of Australian boys and girls live with violence in their homes<sup>1</sup>.**

Children are not just passive onlookers. Witnessing violence, particularly between people they love, affects children's view of the world and of themselves. It permeates their ideas about the meaning and purpose of life, their expectations for future happiness, and damages their moral development<sup>2</sup>.

Children who grow up in abusive environments often learn to resolve problems using violence. They develop a coping personality, learn destructive ways and often behave similarly in their own relationships.

At our Children's Family Centres – our 'one-stop welfare shops' – children and young people affected by domestic violence can access a range of integrated support and practical assistance.

At our Auburn centre in western Sydney children between the ages of nine and 12 take part in our Stretching Your Wings program – a fun and interactive eight week program that helps children deal with the

## Meeting the challenge of mental illness

**For many of the families we work with mental health problems present a particular challenge.**

It is estimated that just over one million Australian children under the age of 18 have a parent with a mental health problem<sup>1</sup>. While that doesn't mean their children are necessarily at risk there is significant evidence that parents with mental health problems are over-represented among families that have been found to mistreat their children. Where the parent also has a substance abuse problem there is a significantly heightened risk.

The impact on children depends upon the severity and duration of the parent's illness, but can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems themselves, attachment issues as infants and social and behavioural problems. They are also more likely to bear the burden of caring for their ill parent, particularly in single parent families. In these cases the impact on their life can be dramatic, resulting in social isolation, low self-esteem, depression and problems at school. Many children will hide their distress out of shame or loyalty to their parents.



difficult emotions associated with the violence in their past. Held in a therapeutic group setting, and using targeted activities, children are provided with a safe and supportive environment in which to talk about their experiences and develop resources for coping with the effects of domestic violence.

"Working directly with children in this way gives us one of the greatest opportunities for preventing generational family violence," says Rosemary Hamill, senior manager of the Auburn centre. "Helping children to learn alternative skills for solving problems gives them the tools to deal with conflict in a more constructive way."

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Criminology (2001), Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (2008/2009)  
<sup>2</sup> The Effects of Family and Community Violence on Children, Annual Review of Psychology (2000)

Our services can be tailored to address the needs of families where mental health is either a short or long-term issue. If a parent is hospitalised we can make temporary care arrangements to ensure the children are safe and looked after. To relieve the stress on parents who are struggling to cope we can organise respite care, one weekend a month, to give them a break.

Our family support team work with parents in the home to help them organise a routine for the children, learn parenting skills and build confidence. Living with a mental health problem can be socially isolating so where possible getting the family involved into the community by attending one of our playgroups can also be a major morale boost to both parent and child.

Mental illness itself is often just one of the problems the families we work with are facing, but it can be one of the most intransigent. Our support can ensure that the children are given the best chance possible of overcoming their situation and growing up to become healthy, well-adjusted adults.

<sup>1</sup> VicHealth Research Report on Children at risk in families affected by parental mental illness (2005)  
<sup>2</sup> Operating the Child Protection System, HMSO (1995). The Last Resort: Child Protection and The 1989 Children Act, The Stationery Office.