



Head Office
Phone: (07) 5479 0394
Fax: (07) 5451 0700

website: www.sunnykids.org.au
email: info@sunnykids.org.au
ABN: 62 774 810 987

SunnyKids delivers homelessness services; prevention and early intervention to at risk children in schools, family reunification services to thousands of children each year. Our literacy and resilience building programme 'Read 2 Remember' operates in over 2,000 schools and had 420,000 registrations in 2013.

SunnyKids has been providing support services to women and children escaping domestic and family violence since 1999. In 2003 via an internal review of services SunnyKids identified inter-generational transfer as a significant contributor to Domestic and Family Violence. Since that time SunnyKids has been developing services that aim to break intergenerational cycles of Domestic and Family Violence.

Findings that lead to SunnyKids conclusions included significant over representations of third generation refuge users in their refuge service; occasional fourth generation users of the refuge service; and contractual requirements from funding bodies that funds be utilised to support the Mother and were not available for use for the child/children. Whilst it appeared logical that by supporting Mum, the benefits would trickle down to the children – the stark reality of the numbers of third and fourth generation refuge users in their services made it evident that this was not the case. Whilst it has been considered inappropriate to directly quiz traumatised women in refuge about whether their parent was in refuge and or experienced Domestic and Family Violence when they were children, anecdotally this number would appear to be well in advance of 50%.

In terms of user groups in the refuge:

75% are children

25% will be indigenous

25% will be culturally diverse

25% will have either mental health, drug and alcohol issues or both

SunnyKids has developed a 'whole of community' response known as the 'SunnyKids Virtual Village' that applies the old adage that 'it takes a village to raise a child' to contemporary Australian life. Through this model in excess of 100 partners work together to ensure families require the support required for them to break the cycle.

SunnyKids provides the facilitation/coordination of all required supports and services through a case coordination model utilising four key strategic areas:

Economic Stability

Safe and Nurturing Parenting

Access to appropriate health and wellbeing services

Success in education

By supporting families to address these key areas SunnyKids empowers families to break intergenerational cycles and build new lives on solid foundations.

Funding Sources:

Federal, State & Local Government | Events
Philanthropic, corporate, small business, faith group, service club & individual donors





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a.the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Australia as it affects all Australians and, in particular, as it affects:

i.women living with a disability, and

ii.women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds;

75% of victims of Domestic and Family Violence will be children

25% of those seeking assistance will be: indigenous; culturally diverse, effected by a mental health, drug & alcohol issue or some and or all of these categories together.

b.the factors contributing to the present levels of domestic violence;

Australian culture has come a long way in its understanding of Domestic and Family Violence. Today we understand that violence and abuse stems from the misuse and abuse of power. Whilst we know women are significantly over represented as victims, it is the distribution of power in relationships that causes this (i.e. in a generalised sense women have access to less power in relationships than men, particularly physical and economic power) rather than gender itself. Whilst male victims are underrepresented, we now understand that there is a significant number of male victims of Domestic and Family Violence. We also understand that in order to reduce levels we must provide practical and therapeutic support to victims and education to perpetrators.

However we are yet to fully come to terms with the contribution exposing children to Domestic and Family Violence is having in the next generation's relationships.

75% of all victims will not be women and men, they will be children.

c.the adequacy of policy and community responses to domestic violence;

Responses currently over focus on the needs of adults IN or LEAVING Domestic and Family Violence situations. Prevention and early intervention responses tend to be under focussed on the group most at risk (children currently or previously exposed to Domestic and Family Violence).

No child, woman or man is able to contribute fully to society in a healthy way unless they have good self-esteem, feel that they are valued and belong to their community and feel assured that their housing, food and safety are secure (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs). Intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage (including exposure to Domestic and Family Violence) undermines basic human needs, engagement and attachment to community, self-esteem and the ability to self-actualise (be your best, and a positive contributor to society).

In the absence of readily available, targeted support for child victims, levels will remain unacceptably high and will continue to transfer from generation to generation. A support and intervention platform that ensures economic stability, safe and nurturing parenting, access to appropriate health and wellbeing care, and success in education for the whole family is essential if these levels are to be reduced and inter-generational cycles broken.

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SunnyKids data indicates that if children receive targeted support 90% will show measurable improvement, 40% will have their issues resolved and over 50% of school absentee cases will become regular attenders.

d.the effects of policy decisions regarding housing, legal services, and women’s economic independence on the ability of women to escape domestic violence;

By focussing on periods of crisis (as opposed to lifelong support and education) such as providing support and intervention post event we fail to ‘turn off the tap’. These services are essential and critical, however they must run in parallel with lifelong prevention and education strategies that focus on ‘breaking the intergenerational cycle’. Women leaving Domestic and Family Violence situations should be supported to gain economic stability, appropriate health and wellbeing care, safe and nurturing parenting skills and success in education - well beyond periods of homelessness and crisis. Their children should receive the additional social and emotional support they will require to remain engaged in education, healthy (and emotionally well), equipped to be safe and nurturing parents and to enter adulthood with economic stability. Policy must focus on breaking the cycle as well as responding to the crisis.

e.how the Federal Government can best support, contribute to and drive the social, cultural and behavioural shifts required to eliminate violence against women and their children; and

Communities should be resourced to ensure they can provide the whole of community responses required to all victims child and adult alike. The education and health and wellbeing systems need to be resourced and equipped (through models such as but not necessarily exclusively ‘SunnyKids Virtual Village’) to ensure they can play their part in whole of community responses. Every community should have access to targeted, strategically planned and coordinated support systems for all child and adult victims.

f.any other related matters.

Levels cannot be reduced without breaking the intergenerational cycles.

60% of all child safety cases will involve Domestic and Family Violence

Chris Turner

CEO SunnyKids

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