Future Generation Australia

DO WELL. DO GOOD.

Your Annual Social Investment: helping vulnerable young children defy the odds and thrive

Our refined focus in 2025

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"Early adversity shapes a child's entire future – with implications for individuals, the economy and broader society. That's why the deep, restorative work carried out by our impact partners is not only a moral imperative, but a sound long-term investment," **Dr Philip Lowe, Chair.**

Cover image: Photo courtesy of GUTS Dance, photo by Ivan Trigo Miras.

Helping vulnerable young children defy the odds and thrive

In the ten years since Future Generation was launched, we've seen profound shifts in the challenges facing young children and their families. As we approached this milestone anniversary, we began a review of our giving strategy to ensure that we are optimising our impact for vulnerable Australian children.

This took us to the landmark 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study which revealed, for the first time, the scale and devastating impact of childhood trauma. More than a quarter of young people aged 16-24 years had experienced between 3 and 5 types of abuse in their childhood. Earlier findings from the Australian Institute of Family Studies showed that more than 50% of Australian children are exposed to two or more adverse childhood experiences by the age of 11. Yet despite its scale, the national response to childhood adversity remains piecemeal and reactive.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is a term used to describe highly stressful circumstances in childhood, including maltreatment and household dysfunction. Twenty years of international research has shown a strong correlation between the number of adverse childhood experiences and the probability of physical health, mental health and social and behavioural problems – occurring through life and into the next generation.

Newer research has shown that children, regardless of the adversity they face, can recover and flourish through supportive relationships and experiences. These "positive childhood experiences" help the brain to heal, facilitating health across the life span.

To maximise the impact of our giving, Future Generation invests in areas with high potential for social good that are overlooked or underinvested. We aim to complement others' efforts and take on risk to accelerate change. Investing in the largely untapped capacities of positive childhood experiences to promote healthy development and healing offers opportunities for impact, innovation and evidence-building.

Earlier this year, we called for Expressions of Interest from non-profits that promote healthy relationships, resilience and a positive sense of self in children – the factors we know predispose vulnerable children to positive life outcomes.

Our focus is on those who work with priority groups of children at known risk of adversity aged 0-14, and their caregivers. We prioritised those 8-14 years as they have received less attention and investment than 0-3 years or youth/adolescent stages.

From 329 applicants, we selected six exceptional new social impact partners: Brave Foundation; GUTS Dance; Karinya House; KidsXpress; Yawarda Services and Yiliyapinya. These organisations are all small to medium-sized, with proven track records and the capacity to grow their impact.

They join five existing partners – The Australian Children's Music Foundation, Giant Steps, Lighthouse Foundation, Mirabel Foundation, and Raise Foundation – in a dynamic impact portfolio that balances continuity with renewal, while expanding our geographic footprint into Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

In line with philanthropic best practice, we will provide our partners with multi-year core funding and additional capital to develop their organisations.

Transparency and accountability remain central to our approach. Building on Future Generation Global's award-winning Impact Measurement Initiative, we will continue to rigorously capture both individual and portfolio-wide outcomes, strengthening the evidence base for investing in children facing adversity, as well as in the development and sustainability of high-potential non-profit organisations.

Our social impact partners

From 329 applicants, we selected six exceptional new social impact partners. These organisations are all small to medium-sized, with proven track records and the capacity to grow their impact. They join five continuing partners in a portfolio that balances continuity with renewal.

NEW PARTNER

YILIYAPINYA
Brain Health and Healing for Young People, Families, and the Workforce

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NEW PARTNER

Yawarda Services Ltd

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LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION *for youth*

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GUTS DANCE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

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Yiliyapinya OXLEY, QLD

Drew's Story

After more than a year out of school and struggling with emotional and behavioural challenges, 12-year-old Drew is back in the classroom – thanks to Yiliyapinya.

"I like coming to Yili because everyone gets me."
–Drew

Before Yili, I wasn't in school for more than a year. I'd been suspended a lot, and I was angry all the time. I didn't trust people. I didn't know how to talk to people without getting into fights. I didn't know how to act, especially with females, and I didn't care.

When I first came to Yiliyapinya, I didn't feel safe. I didn't want to join in anything. Team sports were too much – I didn't like being touched, and I didn't think I was any good anyway. I'd say mean things to other kids to try and connect. I just didn't know any other way.

But the people at Yili didn't give up on me.

They helped me work on my brain health and find better ways to deal with my feelings – not by yelling or shutting down, but by talking and learning new ways to cope.

We did all sorts of stuff: carpentry in the 'Made by Mob' program, music, painting, podcasting, even virtual reality experiences to help learn life skills. I've done didgeridoo lessons and cultural activities that helped me connect to my roots. The camps were deadly.

Little by little, I started to change. I tried new things without giving up. I got better at talking to people, even my teachers. I started asking questions about my culture, wanting to learn more.

I've also started seeing my mum again. I stay with her a few nights a week now. The team at Yili helped both of us with our relationship, and I can talk to her more easily.

Now I'm back at school full-time. That's something I never thought would happen. I'm learning again, and I know I can go back to Yiliyapinya whenever I need to. It's my safe place.

About Yiliyapinya

Yiliyapinya is an Indigenous-led, not-for-profit organisation focused on Brain Health and Healing for children, young people, their families, and the workforce. Yiliyapinya combines cultural wisdom with neuroscience to improve holistic wellbeing. Three core programs are provided; 1) The Yili Program for Indigenous 7-17yr olds to help young people return to school or start a job, 2) Deadly Brains Playgroup for culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous 0-5 yr olds and families, and 3) The Workplace Brain Health program for practitioners to understand their own brain so they can better understand the brains and behaviours of the children they work with. Yiliyapinya offers a safe, consistent space to heal, learn, and thrive. Representing more than programs; it's a community where trust is built, behaviours shift, and future pathways are imagined.

Yiliyapinya

YILIYAPINYA
Brain Health and Healing for Young People, Families, and the Workforce

NEW PARTNER

Yawarda Services BROOME, WA

Ethan's* Story

After the sudden death of his dad, my nine-year-old son was drowning in grief and anxiety. Then we found Yawardani Jan-ga and everything changed.

"This is the best progress he's had – and in such a short time. We'd tried everything, but Yawardani Jan-ga made the biggest difference." – Ethan's* mum

When my son Ethan lost his dad in a car accident, he stopped being the boy I knew. He was only nine, but the grief and anxiety overwhelmed him. He clung to me constantly. Leaving me would send him into panic. At home, he'd throw things and lash out. At school, he couldn't focus, couldn't cope. We tried counselling, but nothing seemed to help.

Then we were referred to the Yawarda Services Yawardani Jan-ga program. I didn't know much about equine therapy, but from the first session, I could see this was something different. Ethan was out on Country, working with horses and a calm support team who just "got" him. There was no pressure to talk; just connection, observation, and trust. The horses gave him something we couldn't: immediate, honest feedback. If he was anxious or angry, they stepped away. If he was calm and present, they came closer.

Slowly, Ethan started to see the impact of his emotions – and began to regulate them. He learned how to breathe through stress, express himself without exploding, and set boundaries in healthy ways.

He loved those sessions. And so did I – because I could see my son coming back to life. His confidence returned. His anger softened. He started talking to his teachers more, trying new things, and even laughing again. He wasn't just calmer, he was braver.

A few months later, life threw more challenges at us, and Ethan went back for another round of sessions. The second time, the changes were even deeper. He could "snap out of" tough moods faster. He had more patience. He began trusting adults again, including me.

I've seen my son go through years of therapy. But nothing worked like Yawardani Jan-ga. It met him where he was, in a way that made sense to him. He connected not just with the horses, but with himself.

I'll never stop being grateful for that.

About Yawarda Services and the Yawardani Jan-ga Program

Yawardani Jan-ga is a culturally safe, trauma-informed program supporting Aboriginal children and young people across the Kimberley region. Through Equine Assisted Learning (EAL), participants engage in healing activities on Country with a trained Aboriginal practitioner and therapy horses. Children learn emotional regulation, confidence, and communication by observing and interacting with horses – non-verbal, intuitive animals who respond in real time to human behaviour. Each session offers a safe space for young people to process emotions, strengthen self-belief, and feel culturally seen and supported.

Yawarda Services

Yawarda Services Ltd

NEW PARTNER

*From his mum's perspective. Name changed to protect identity.

Raise Foundation NATIONAL, NSW BASED

Lily's* Story

From feeling alone, angry and lost, Lily's* Raise mentor gave her the space to talk without judgment and the tools and confidence to find a new, positive way forward.

"I know how lucky I was to get a mentor. Not everyone gets that chance." – Lily*

This time last year, things were really hard. I felt so angry all the time, and I honestly didn't see the point in trying. It felt like everyone was against me, no matter what I did. I started arguing with teachers, and eventually it was easier to just not go to school at all. My friends and parents didn't get it, no one did. I just wanted to sit in my room, put my headphones on, and block out the world.

Then I met my Raise mentor.

At first, I thought the whole thing was stupid. How could someone I didn't know get it, when not even my own family did? But my mentor kept coming each week and, for some reason, so did I. Eventually, I found out they liked hip-hop. I didn't know old people even liked music like that!

The next week, I told my mentor how I was feeling. They didn't judge me, or tell me I was wrong or bad, they just listened. Someone finally understood.

They helped me see that I'm actually really creative, and good at stuff like problem-solving and thinking outside the box. They showed me that even when things are really hard, I can ask for help and people will listen.

I started going to class again and actually trying with my homework. Something felt different this time. Suddenly, I was doing really well, and the teachers told me they were really proud of me. I was kind of proud of me, too. I talked to my friends about it, the way my mentor practised with me, and we started hanging out again, going to the beach, and playing soccer on the weekends. It felt like a huge weight had been lifted, and I could finally breathe again.

I can't believe how different this year is. I'm in a much better place, I've got real friends, I'm doing better at school, and I've even asked mum to help me write a resume. I know how lucky I was to get a mentor. Not everyone gets that chance. There are so many more young people out there who feel alone, just like I did.

*We have changed the name and used a photograph of an actor to protect the identity of the mentee.

About Raise Foundation

Raise delivers early intervention youth mentoring programs. Expertly trained and youth safety screened, volunteer mentors meet with young people every week for up to 20 weeks, in schools or online, as they navigate the challenges of adolescence. Raise mentoring programs focus on the individual needs of that young person and help them to develop skills in resilience, self-confidence, school engagement, help seeking and goal setting. As a result, young people develop the hope and tools they need to survive and thrive through adolescence. With hundreds of thousands of young Australians living with anxiety, bullying, depression, eating disorders, discrimination, and loneliness, this early intervention is essential. Raise youth mentoring programs are the evidence-based, long term support that these young people need.

Raise Foundation

The Mirabel Foundation VIC AND NSW

Patrick's* Story

With his grandmother's unwavering love and Mirabel's support, Patrick transformed from a frightened child hiding under desks to a confident young person helping others find their voice.

Patrick's face lit up. "Nan", he said, "They're all just like me!" – Patrick

When Patrick came to live with me, he was just eight years old. The police had found him wandering the streets alone while his mum was off buying drugs. His dad was in prison, and there was no one else to take him in.

I was 67 and had been planning my retirement, and suddenly I was raising a traumatised little boy. Patrick had experienced more trauma than most adults – and it showed. He was withdrawn, struggling with nightmares, and had fallen years behind at school. He would hide under desks, disrupt other students, and lash out in anger.

I tried everything I could, but I was overwhelmed by his complex needs and began to feel isolated from friends who didn't understand my new reality.

That's when I found Mirabel. The team developed a plan to support both Patrick and me. Patrick joined Mirabel's therapeutic boys' group and began weekly tutoring, and I started attending kinship carer groups.

If I ever needed support, I knew Mirabel was just one phone call away. We even went to Family Camp together – our first proper holiday.

At camp, I saw something I hadn't in a long time – Patrick laughing, just being a kid. He played in the sand and went to the beach for the first time. It was pure joy for him, and for me.

One moment that stuck with me was when Patrick came home from a session at the therapeutic boys' group. The leaders had asked the boys to raise their hands if they didn't live with their mum and dad. When every boy raised their hand, Patrick's face lit up. "Nan", he said, "They're all just like me!" It was like a weight was lifted off his shoulders.

Now, two years on, Patrick is like a different kid. He's doing well at school and recently received an award for helping younger students. He's caught up on his reading and looks forward to seeing his Mirabel friends at Luna Park during the holidays.

He even tells me he wants to be a teacher when he grows up. Before Mirabel, he couldn't even imagine a future. Mirabel has been our lifeline – I don't know where we'd be without them.

About The Mirabel Foundation

Mirabel believes that every child deserves a childhood. Since 1998, we have been supporting children being raised by extended family due to parental drug use. We assist children and their kinship carers across Victoria and New South Wales. Mirabel's activities are all inspired by a mission to give children the childhood they deserve and break the cycle of addiction. Mirabel's vision is that every child has a childhood filled with love, hope and belonging. For Mirabel children, their complex and difficult past makes it hard for them to participate in life in positive ways. Mirabel supports children to thrive by providing comprehensive, trauma-informed services that address the unique needs of the Mirabel children and their kinship carers. All of Mirabel's service provision centres around creating opportunities for positive childhood experiences.

Mirabel

the mirabel foundation

*From his grandmother's perspective

Lighthouse Foundation MELBOURNE, VIC

Evan's* Story

How Lighthouse supported Evan and his mum to stay together and heal.

"Without Lighthouse, I don't know where we'd be. Now, I have hope for my son's future – and my own." – Evan's* mum

Before we found Lighthouse, life felt impossible. I was a young, single mum with a baby who needed more than I could give. I had no stable place to live, no support, and I was still trying to recover from the trauma of everything I'd been through, including trafficking and severe abuse. I was struggling with my own mental health, and parenting 24/7 felt unmanageable. There were moments when I seriously considered giving Evan up, because I thought he'd be better off without me.

Lighthouse changed everything.

For almost two years, we've been living together in a Lighthouse home through their Young Parents Program. It is the first time I've felt truly safe.

Evan is now three, and he's mostly a happy, energetic little boy who keeps me on my toes. He has some health issues, including kidney disease, so he needs regular hospital visits and medication.

The carers at Lighthouse have helped me manage every appointment and every treatment. They make sure that his health is stable and he is getting the care he needs.

But it's about more than just medical support. Evan's made friends with the other toddlers in the house – and they've grown so close they seem like siblings. Being around them has helped his speech and social skills and, even though he still has developmental delays, he's absolutely thriving. His favourite thing in the world is trucks; he can name every type!

A major milestone was when he moved into his "big boy bed" in his own room, right next door to mine. It was a big step for both of us and he was so proud. It reminded me how far we've come.

Now, we're preparing to move into our own place; just the two of us. We'll still stay close to Lighthouse and come back for family dinners and support. They've become our community, and we'll always be part of the Lighthouse family.

About Lighthouse Foundation

Lighthouse Foundation transforms the lives of vulnerable children and young people by helping them overcome adversity through its holistic, evidence-informed Lighthouse Model of Care. With the support of the community, Lighthouse works to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma - ensuring that children and young people who have experienced homelessness and/or trauma have access to safe homes and the therapeutic relationships they need to heal, grow, and thrive. Through a range of tailored care environments including Lighthouse Homes, Foster Care, Family Support, and In-Community programs – Lighthouse delivers consistent, trauma-informed support where and when it's needed most. Through long-term commitment, Lighthouse ensures that support reaches the children and youth who need it, where they need it, for as long as they need it.

Lighthouse Foundation

LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION *for youth*

*Name changed for privacy. From his mum's perspective.

KidsXpress NSW

Henry's* Story

KidsXpress gave Henry what every child needs to feel safe, seen, and understood.

"Thanks to KidsXpress, I have my little boy back." – Henry's* mum

A year ago, my son Henry* was in crisis.

We had just moved from Brisbane after fleeing a violent home. He was only eight, but already overwhelmed by anxiety and anger. At school, he couldn't focus, lashed out at others, and needed to be split across two different campuses – mornings at a behavioural support school, afternoons at our local public school.

I was doing my best to hold things together, but I was struggling too. Therapy felt impossible – not just financially, but logistically. I didn't know what help he needed or how to get it.

So when his teacher said, "We're a KidsXpress school, we can organise help for him", I felt incredibly relieved.

From the very beginning, Henry was met with kindness and care. Instead of being asked to talk about his feelings, he was invited to explore them through play, music and art, so it didn't feel like therapy to him.

Week by week, he learned to express his needs without exploding. His outbursts became less intense, and he started getting invitations to friend's houses and parties. For the first time since fleeing his dad, Henry began to feel safe and calm – not just at school, but at home too.

And it wasn't just Henry who felt supported. His teacher was given tools to better understand his behaviour. The school introduced activities that helped all students manage emotions and support one another. Even his classmates began to recognise that Henry's outbursts weren't defiance... they were pain. I felt the difference too. I no longer felt judged as a parent.

I often think about what would've happened if KidsXpress hadn't been there, if this support hadn't existed at his school. Would he have been labelled? Suspended? Excluded?

Instead, Henry was met with compassion, consistency and care. And now, he's not just coping, he's thriving.

In 2024, Henry became one of the first students to access Expressive Therapy through KidsXpress' new partnership with his local public school in South-West Sydney. His story shows how healing begins with creativity and connection, and raises the question: what happens to children like Henry when support isn't there?

*Name changed and school deidentified to protect identity. From his mum's perspective.

NEW PARTNER

About KidsXpress

KidsXpress is changing the trajectory of childhood trauma. Through evidence-based Expressive Therapy and Trauma-Informed Education, it provides early intervention for children aged 12 and under, using creative, neuroscience-backed approaches to build emotional regulation, strengthen wellbeing, and break cycles of trauma. KidsXpress also strengthens the ecosystem around children by equipping caregivers, teachers and health professionals with tools to recognise and respond to mental health challenges, creating safer, more supportive environments. This dual-impact approach delivers immediate benefits and long-term change. Programs are delivered at centres in Macquarie Park and Tumut (regional NSW), and in school, community and health settings. Independently evaluated and recognised for its strong social return on investment, KidsXpress knows healing children early isn't just the right thing to do – it's how stronger families, communities and futures are built.

KidsXpress

Karinya House BELCONNEN, ACT

Jodie's Story

Karinya House gave Jodie everything she needed to become the Mum she always wanted to be.

"Holding my hand as I gave birth to my first child, Karinya didn't just give me a home, they gave me safety, dignity, and the chance to become the Mum I always wanted to be." – Jodie

When Jodie was referred to Karinya House, she was 12 weeks pregnant and had just fled an abusive relationship. She was couch surfing with friends and had no space of her own.

Even with a full-time job, it was hard to secure safe housing in Canberra's competitive rental market. As Jodie's pregnancy progressed, getting to work became harder – especially without a stable place to live. Without stable employment, she felt the pressure piling up, and she didn't know where to turn.

That's when Jodie reached out to Karinya House for support. The staff at Karinya House referred her to Fair Work Australia so that she could understand her employment rights. They also gave her support to navigate legal and family violence order processes, attend antenatal appointments and advocate for her application to Housing ACT.

Karinya also provided Jodie with essentials like food parcels, baby goods, fuel vouchers, and even Christmas gifts! Most importantly, the case workers at Karinya House supported her emotionally, even staying by her side during the birth of her son. The support of the Karinya House team meant that Jodie didn't feel so alone.

Jodie lived at Karinya House for more than a year. During that time, she received parenting support and advice, childcare, and the help she needed to explore education and employment opportunities. Throughout this time, Karinya House staff continued to advocate on her behalf, and she was allocated her very own Housing ACT property. With help from Karinya House, Jodie was also able to save a small nest egg that helped with her transition into her own property.

Now, Jodie has a beautiful and healthy baby boy named Ned, a safe home, and is on her way to securing a stable job as an apprentice. Thanks to the care and support she received from Karinya House, Jodie has charted a path forward and she knows she can always reach out for Karinya's support again whenever she may need it.

About Karinya House

Karinya House supports women who are pregnant and or parenting a baby, who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or otherwise at risk. They offer safe accommodation, casework support and practical assistance that fosters self-confidence and personal development. Their intensive individualised casework support is tailored to meet the diverse needs of the women they walk alongside. Karinya House's vision is to provide a place of welcome, sanctuary and community to women, creating a community where women can grow, heal, build hope, and plan a future for themselves and their families.

Karinya House

NEW PARTNER

GUTS Dance ALICE SPRINGS, NT

Jasmine's Story

From a shy nine-year-old to a confident young woman embarking on a dance career, Jasmine's story is a powerful example of how community and creativity can change a life.

"Programs like Brave Bodies and Alice Can Dance gave me the strength and resilience I need – not just in dancing, but in life." – Jasmine McGinness

My name is Jasmine McGinness and I am a proud Gurindji and Kungarakany woman from Central Australia. I started dancing with GUTS when I was nine years old, through the Alice Can Dance program at Sadadeen Primary School. That was back in 2013. Now I'm 18, and I've been involved in 11 out of the 12 years the program has been running.

From the very beginning, dance gave me something I didn't have before: a place to be myself. I felt safe, supported and encouraged to express my identity. Being part of GUTS has helped me grow in so many ways. I've become stronger – physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Over the years, I've participated in weekly studio classes, the Brave Bodies program, and countless performances.

These programs connect me not just to my love of dance, but to other young women who understand what it's like to face racism and sexism. In Brave Bodies, we dance, but we also talk about our feelings, check in with each other, and learn about boundaries and respect. It's a space created for us, by people who listen and care.

Without GUTS, I honestly don't know where I'd be. These programs helped me realise that I want to pursue a career in dance. This year, I'll audition for NAISDA, Australia's only full-time dance school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. GUTS has given me the training to take this next step and the confidence to believe I belong there.

But even more than that, it's given me a sense of belonging here in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. I've seen how much GUTS means to our community, how it gives young people a reason to believe in themselves – and I feel proud to be a part of that.

Photo credit: Lisa Hatz Photography

About GUTS Dance

Based in Alice Springs, GUTS Dance empowers young people through inclusive dance and wellbeing experiences that build confidence, celebrate identity, and strengthen community connection. Their approach is grounded in intercultural respect, youth-led feedback, and creative expression. GUTS works closely with educators, elders, families and local organisations to ensure their programs are accessible, responsive, and impactful. Designed to reach young people who may feel alienated by traditional arts or education settings, GUTS programs are free or low-cost, built around consistent, long-term relationships, and centre care and accessibility. Whether through iconic community events like Alice Can Dance, or smaller group programs like Brave Bodies, GUTS ensures every young person has the chance to see themselves as creative, capable, and valued.

GUTS Dance

NEW PARTNER

Giant Steps SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

William's* Story

Before William started at Giant Steps, life was chaotic and heartbreaking. Giant Steps didn't just change William's life, it transformed his entire family's future.

"Walking through the gates of Giant Steps six years ago has been life changing for all of us." – William's parents

At 10, William's autism-driven behaviours had escalated dangerously: self-harm, aggression, and property destruction dominated his life at both school and home. He destroyed multiple iPads weekly, flooded rooms, and punched holes in walls. Although he attended autism support schools, they struggled to manage his escalating behaviours. Rarely a week went by when we weren't called to the school to take him home. His trust in adults had completely broken down, requiring multiple medications and frequent physical interventions.

Walking through the gates of Giant Steps six years ago has been life changing for all of us. There are no phone calls to come and get him. Rather, the team voluntarily came to our house to help us integrate programs into our home life. Giant Steps offered no quick fix, but provided what William desperately needed: consistency, structure, and a deep understanding of his mind. They recognised his need for visual cues, predictable routines and order. Slowly, this reduced his anxiety and extreme behaviours.

As the country shut down during Covid, Giant Steps stayed open and became an even more vital lifeline for our family. The school's integrated mental health clinic, which we accessed in 2021, proved transformative. By connecting school data, medical input and home observations, we finally made informed decisions about his care. His medication list shortened and became more targeted.

Progress remains fragile, and can be disrupted by illness or change – but the transformation is undeniable. William, now 16, has strong relationships with adults, engages socially and enjoys his class. His repetitive behaviours sometimes come with mischievous glints, inviting interaction. He's tall, playful and genuinely funny, exploring his world with a newfound calm and confidence we never imagined possible.

Giant Steps didn't just change William's life, they transformed our entire family's future. They walked beside us through our darkest times and helped us believe in a world where William isn't just safe, but truly understood and valued.

*From his parents' perspective.

About Giant Steps

Giant Steps is a leading provider of education and support services for children and young people with autism. It offers a unique transdisciplinary model that combines teaching, therapy, and clinical support – all under one roof. Every student receives a highly individualised program that supports communication, emotional regulation, social connection, and community access. The goal is to reduce barriers to learning and enable each young person to participate fully in their world. Giant Steps also supports families by offering counselling, training, and practical assistance in navigating complex care needs. Through its integrated services, Giant Steps empowers students and families to move from crisis to connection – and to build sustainable, more hopeful futures.

Giant Steps

Brave Foundation NATIONAL, VIC BASED

Image used is not Kiara.

NEW PARTNER

Kiara's Story

At 23, homeless, and expecting her second child, Kiara was overwhelmed. With the support of Brave Foundation, she found stability, strength, and a path toward her dream career – and a better life for her girls.

"Every aspect of my life from when I started with Brave, has changed for the better." – Kiara

When I entered the program with Brave, the situation I was in was unsafe, and unstable and had me feeling at a loss. I was 23 years old, I had an 8-year-old and another on the way, I was scared and felt like I had lost hope.

I believe my Brave mentors changed my life. I was experiencing homelessness and depression, I had no car and no belief that I was going to be able to achieve a nice life for my kids, let alone achieve any goals for myself.

My Brave mentors went above and beyond, they sourced information for housing programs and supported me in contacting them, right through until I had stable housing. They helped me source clothes for myself and my children and linked me with services that could help with furniture.

They helped me get back on my feet by linking me with support programs to help my mental health and parenting programs to help me be the best mum I can be.

They empowered me constantly, believed in me, and supported me.

They helped me get to a stable enough place to figure out what goals I had for my life. I have had an interest in Community Services since I was 13. I have attempted to do my Community Services Cert III, four times, each time being unsuccessful. They allowed me to see that I could be and do anything, even as a young parent. They got me into my dream course, Community Services Cert III, helped me with the means to study at home, and have supported, motivated, and checked in with me since the start.

I now have stable, permanent accommodation for my children, I have a car and everything we need to live. I am so proud to say I am a week away from completing the first semester of my course and organising work placement.

I have so much belief in myself, I know that I can do anything. I am going to raise strong independent girls. Every aspect of my life from when I started with Brave, has changed for the better.

About Brave Foundation

Brave Foundation works with young parents supporting them to identify and achieve their personal and parenting goals as they navigate pregnancy and parenthood. Brave's professional mentors provide one-on-one support over a 12 month period. Underpinned by a relationship of trust, mentors ensure young parents are able to connect to services and resources in their community. With lived experience core to the organisation's work, Brave is committed to ensuring young parents voices are heard and are directly informing policy, programs, and practice so that they and their children can thrive.

Brave Foundation

BRAVE

Australian Children's Music Foundation NATIONAL, NSW BASED

Lani's* Story

Before Lani started music lessons with ACMF, her school attendance was low, and she lacked confidence. Now, she's house captain and a top public speaker.

"Music is how I express myself; it makes me feel safe, and I can't imagine a life without it." – Lani

When Lani was little, we faced a challenge I never expected. Due to a misdiagnosis, she tragically lost 80% of her hearing. Between the ages of one and four, she couldn't speak – but we found another way to connect. Melodies and rhythms became the bridge between Lani, me and the world around her – it was her language. As her hearing slowly recovered, it was music that helped her to speak.

Starting school was another hurdle. Lani found it difficult to settle in, so I made the decision to move her to La Perouse Public School. At La Perouse, she entered an environment where, like two in three Australian public primary schools, classroom music lessons are not a given. That's where the Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) stepped in, providing free, long-term weekly music programs, ensuring that children like Lani don't miss out on the benefits of music education.

At first, things were hard. Her attendance was low, and she didn't have a lot of confidence. But when Lani met Rachel, the school's ACMF music teacher, everything started to change. Rachel encouraged her to join the school choir, the drumming group, and eventually school musicals. Music gave Lani a way to express herself – and slowly, she began to shine.

Her confidence grew, her attendance improved. Soon, Lani became a leader – one of the school's top public speakers, and a house captain. Lani always says; "Music is how I express myself; it makes me feel safe, and I can't imagine a life without it."

Today, Lani is preparing to sing at ACMF's 2025 Gala Event and has even secured a scholarship at a high school of her choice, thanks to her musical talent. She's still connected to Rachel and continues to find strength through music.

Watching her now, I know ACMF didn't just help her heal – it gave her back her future. As her mother, I'm beyond grateful.

About The Australian Children's Music Foundation

The Australian Children's Music Foundation (ACMF) is a leading arts organisation dedicated to ensuring every child has access to the transformative power of music education. With two in three public primary schools lacking classroom music lessons, ACMF addresses this critical equity gap by delivering free, long-term weekly music programs and instruments to children in schools with high levels of disadvantage, youth justice centres, and hospitals across Australia. ACMF's programs are more than just music lessons; they are a catalyst for positive childhood experiences. The programs boost confidence, self-esteem, and academic engagement, including improvements in literacy, numeracy, and school attendance. By providing consistent access to expert teaching musicians, ACMF empowers children to overcome adversity, express themselves, and build a foundation for a brighter future.

ACMF

Australian Children's Music Foundation

*From her mother's perspective.

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