

ACT FOR KIDS

An initiative of the Abused Child Trust



NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2010

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Take a minute – listen to a young person who was in care

My name's Skye and I'm 20 years old.



This is my true story and I want to share it because I believe it's important and people should hear it.

I went into foster care at the age of two because I was neglected; I left when I was 18. Still to this day I don't really know much about what happened or why it did. I have other people's versions and what the department told me, but I was pretty young so didn't really understand it all.

I didn't have to tell anyone bad stuff was happening; it was like they all just "knew". When I was older and stuff happened I was approached by the police, they asked me questions and I just had to answer them. I don't know how people found out what was happening but if I really think about it all, yeah probably my behaviour was showing something wasn't right.

When I was around 14 I started seeing a counsellor, I wasn't really given any options about who I wanted to see, it was just whoever was available. At the time I struggled to think that the counsellor really knew what I felt. I kind of questioned if it had an expiry date on it, how do you know if the stuff that's happened and haunts you is ever really dealt with and you're ok? When I look back I think I would be a lot worse off without counselling and the help they provided.

My mental health wasn't the best and sometimes I thought about escaping from it all. I think if I didn't have the counsellor – who was often the most stable person in my life – I wouldn't be alive.

I think it's important for all children and young people who have been abused to have free counselling. As a kid in care, you don't really get help unless you ask, or scream for it. But a young person isn't always going to know that counselling may help, or say that they need it. They need to be able to access counselling without feeling ashamed. I've learned that therapy is an ongoing thing. It needs to be thought of as long-term, not something that can fix things in a few weeks or months and it shouldn't stop just because you turn 18 and the community thinks you have become an adult. If you stop counselling it's very hard to pick up again because you have to find a therapist, somehow find the money for it and start again. You have to share your story all over again.

Even at 20 years old I still need help and counselling, it's harder to access now though without free options, but I'm proud of how far I've come. I'm about to move into my own place and hopefully stay there for a long time. I also want to do youth work and maybe even apply to go to Uni. I don't really want a lot in life. I just want a home, a job and enough money to be able to look after myself. I'm looking forward to doing my best to set myself up for the best future I can have.

We want to thank Skye for sharing her story. Skye is a CREATE Young Consultant – Young Consultants are aged 14–25 and have spent time in out-of-home care, they advocate for other young people in care.

From the CEO

It was with much anticipation that I stepped into the role of ACT for Kids CEO at the end of August, with all the excitement surrounding the events of our busiest Child Protection Week program to date. While the Channel Seven/ACT for Kids Appeal (below) did not hit the ambitious fundraising target we had hoped for, the encouragement from many new and existing supporters and dedicated sponsors was outstanding.

Child Protection Week was the ideal time to formally acknowledge our strongest supporters with the presentation of Emmy's Crusader of the Year Awards (p7) and the perfect platform to proudly announce our new partnership with James Cook University (p3). Another example of how we're leading the way in developing Australia's child protection workforce is the second round of cadets graduating from our Indigenous Workforce Strategy Program (p6). We're also excited about upcoming opportunities with our new partner, travel.com.au (p8).

As the festive season and year end draw near, I ask you to take a moment to think of the many children and families who will struggle this Christmas with the pain and anxiety brought on by child abuse and neglect. Please support our Christmas appeal if you can.

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who supported us in 2010 and I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy Christmas.

Dr Neil Carrington
Chief Executive Officer



Channel Seven/ACT for Kids Appeal



This year, we marked Child Protection Week with the inaugural Channel Seven/ACT for Kids Appeal (3-10 September) which urged the public to face up to child abuse by making a donation to support our professional therapy services. With free ads and promotions running across Channel Seven throughout the week, we reached out to hundreds of thousands of viewers, raising almost \$90,000 in support of our programs. It's impossible to quantify how much this increased awareness of our organisation and cause will boost our future appeals.

Although we did not hit our fundraising target we were inspired by the incredible support from some of our most dedicated sponsors and passionate advocates. We'd like to thank 7 News Presenter and ACT for Kids ambassador, Kay McGrath, Channel Seven, 96five Family and PRIME Radio for helping us spread our message and encourage

Queenslanders to take action against child abuse. We would also like to especially thank Budget Direct for providing pro-bono call centre infrastructure and Publicis Mojo for pro-bono advertising. Their enthusiasm and support was truly overwhelming.

ACT for Kids is incredibly grateful to everyone who donated to the appeal including our new Kids Crusaders (regular donors), all volunteers and supporting businesses. We are honoured to have you all by our side as we work towards a brighter future for kids affected by abuse and neglect. With hundreds of thousands more people now aware of Australia's child abuse problem, and ACT for Kids' vital services, we're sure that our 2011 appeal will be even more successful.



Building Australia's child protection workforce

ACT for Kids' mission is to be the world leader in the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect and we pride ourselves on having a highly professional and passionate team. However, the sector as a whole suffers from a growing shortage of suitably trained workers and would benefit dramatically from a strengthened curriculum to better train and prepare future graduates. Leading the way, ACT for Kids has a number of programs in place to better develop the sector and ultimately improve the outcomes for children affected by abuse and neglect.

ACT for Kids Centre of Excellence

Developing programs to better equip university graduates and practitioners

ACT for Kids recently announced an innovative partnership with James Cook University (JCU) to establish the ACT for Kids Centre of Excellence within the JCU Townsville precinct. In partnership we will develop programs that will equip graduates with the skills to provide improved clinical and therapeutic support for abused and neglected children.

Our tailored postgraduate programs for practitioners working with high risk families will utilise a multi-disciplinary approach and significant Indigenous components and practical experience. With JCU, we will create complementary education and training opportunities, including student placements and internships at ACT for Kids, to increase practical competencies in the specialised field of child abuse and neglect therapy.

Dr Katrina Lines, ACT for Kids Executive Manager Programs and Research, believes the joint development and improvement of education and training will fill an identified skills gap in the child protection workforce.

"There are graduates with tertiary qualifications but no real practical experience in working with children and families who are traumatised from, or are at risk of, child abuse and neglect. There's also research about treating and preventing child abuse that hasn't flowed down through theory into education yet. There's currently no specialist education and training for this area of practice, and there should be. It's a very specialised field and therapists need appropriate training," Dr Lines said.

Collaborative research projects are also an important focus of the partnership in order to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of current programs and services.

Pro Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Arts, Education and Social Sciences at JCU, Professor Nola Alloway, believes our partnership is another step forward in research and quality education for the university.

"As a university we conduct nationally significant and internationally recognised research in a number of areas. Our joint research projects with ACT for Kids will help shape best practice for the treatment and support of abused and neglected children, and those at risk, and their families. Ultimately, it will build a world-leading body of knowledge in this field," Professor Alloway said.

Students interested in children's therapy for trauma from abuse will soon have access to specialist course content and teaching staff who work in the sector and have hands-on experience.

We're confident that our partnership with JCU will strengthen the child protection sector and boost the workforce. Together we will lead the way in education, training and research in child protection practice.



No wrong door policy significantly reduces child abuse

In 2006, ACT for Kids established the Active Parenting Program in an Indigenous community close to Cairns – a service for families at risk of child harm, to provide education for parents and access to help when they are under pressure. Originally only working with referred families, we are proud to report that the local community has embraced the service and our team is now approached directly by families. The team has achieved an incredible level of genuine trust with local families.

We attribute this success to the “no door is the wrong door” policy; the Active Parenting Program team of expert family coaches never turns away anyone who asks for help. Although there are limits to how many families we can work with at a time, we help people access other services where appropriate, provide professional therapeutic advice and a friendly ear to listen when people just want to talk. The positive impact in the community is evident; local child protection workers have provided feedback that reports and confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect have reduced.

The Active Parenting Program provides practical advice and assistance with a range of family issues including violence in the home, managing money, kids’ behaviour and school problems, alcohol and drug misuse. Now more families under pressure who need additional support know that they can access help without the need to meet certain criteria or fear judgement.

ACT for Kids’ family coaches also addressed the wider community need for counselling support and have arranged for a therapist to visit the region two days a week, make home visits and help families work through historical trauma and other issues.

ACT for Kids Senior Family Coach, Robyn Moylan, said the team is also aiming to provide the community with a child therapist to provide more specialised help for children.

“A child therapist for the region is an honourable goal, but it does need funding support,” Robyn said.

If you are interested in helping fund a child therapist for this far north Queensland community, please contact our Corporate Office on 1300 228 000.

Results show effectiveness of Active Parenting Program

Recent results for families participating in the ACT for Kids Active Parenting Program show positive change in child wellbeing, family relationships and home environment; effectively preventing child abuse and helping children avoid entering the child protection system. The program is offered at our Cairns and Gold Coast centres and is designed for parents who, although not yet officially involved with the child protection system, may need additional support and coaching to care for their children.

Measuring outcomes, not just outputs, is important for all ACT for Kids programs because it shows whether there is real change and impact on children's safety and wellbeing. Our goal is to make a real difference in the lives of children who are at risk or have suffered child abuse and neglect, so we are always assessing the effectiveness of our programs and using that insight to improve current practice and develop new programs. Active Parenting Program results show that the longer we work with families the more positive the outcomes and improvements are for parents and children.

ACT for Kids family coaches work with vulnerable families in their homes to build their skills and resilience, helping parents help to address problems that could adversely affect their children's safety and wellbeing such as relationship issues, financial stress, alcohol and drug misuse, unemployment or accommodation. They also connect families to beneficial services in their local community including playgroups, child care, support groups and even health and employment services.

Family coaches use goal-setting, feedback, expert advice, encouragement and other positive strategies to help their clients achieve a higher level of family harmony. Every family coach is a fully-trained Active Parenting Program case manager, as well as a specialist in their own right with qualifications in psychology, social work, allied health, education or Indigenous culture.

ACT for Kids Executive Manager Programs and Research, Dr Katrina Lines, said analysis of pre and post outcome measures show real improvement for families.

"Our results indicate that, on average, families make improvements in all areas of functioning. We measure child wellbeing, connections or relationships, family interactions, safety, environment and parental skills.

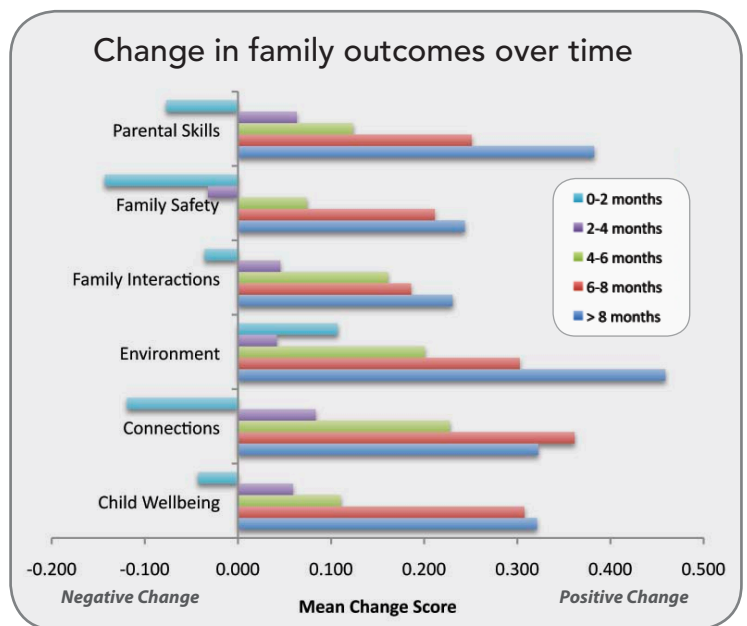
"We've seen improvement over the six-month program period and we have continued to work with some families beyond that period and can see that the longer a family participates in the program, the more positive their outcomes," Dr Lines said.

Family coaches work with the family to identify protective and risk factors and assess family functioning; they're then reassessed at the end of the program. Families are assessed on six key areas:

- Child wellbeing: child behaviour, achievement of developmental milestones, relationships with peers and provision of opportunities for social activities.
- Connections: relationships with family, friends and neighbours and knowledge of local support networks.
- Environment: financial management, habitability and stability of

housing, nutrition, health and transport.

- Family interactions: parent/carer and child relationships, the child's motivation to stay in the family and relationships between siblings.
- Family safety: presence or absence of domestic and family violence, abuse and neglect.
- Parental skills: parents' abilities to nurture children, manage child behaviour and provide play and learning activities and life skills learning.



The results are based on 389 families who were engaged with the Cairns (279) and Gold Coast (110) programs from July 2009 to June 2010, 23% of these families (86) are Indigenous. On average families participate for just over six months, the majority (63%) families remain with the program for six months or more.

The results, and certainly the experiences of family coaches, suggest that families benefit from engaging in the program for longer periods. Many families report complex problems that include intergenerational trauma, long-term unemployment and mental health and drug and alcohol issues that are difficult to address in a short period of time.

We can demonstrate that:

1. active and genuine partnering with families over longer periods delivers better results
2. active collaboration with other professionals improves outcomes for families
3. practical assistance for families reduces risks to children
4. improvements in key areas of family functioning have the potential to greatly affect the safety and wellbeing of children.

Developing Australia's Indigenous community service workers



Congratulations to ACT for Kids' most recent Indigenous Workforce Strategy (IWS) graduates on completing their Certificates III and IV in Community Services Work.

The innovative IWS was developed by ACT for Kids in 2007 to address a shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community service workers in the Cairns region. We recognised the need to go beyond just course material and genuinely engage and support potential students. Study is only one component of our IWS, our unique holistic approach also includes practical experience, study support, job readiness and assistance beyond graduation to ensure cadets' knowledge and skills are utilised in appropriate employment.

Our professional team works with cadets to secure full time work placements with government and non-government host employers for the duration of the course, with the aim to continue full time work within the sector when they graduate. Students receive academic, workplace and personal support from the ACT for Kids IWS staff which continues for six months after completion of Certificate III and includes assistance with job interview advice and practice, and tips on how to look for and apply for relevant community service roles.

This year, nine cadets successfully completed their Certificate III in Community Services Work, seven continued on to their Certificate IV, and five graduates have already secured ongoing employment prior to graduating. The results in 2009 were equally impressive and seven

graduates are still employed in full time roles secured on completion of their studies and work placement.

ACT for Kids Indigenous Workforce Strategy Manager, Trudie Gibbs, said the cadets are passionate about community service work and receive strong support through the program to go on and bolster the workforce.

"They work very hard, they're committed and demonstrate great enthusiasm about being able to provide a real support role in their own communities," Trudie said.

Helena David, a current graduate, is impressed with the program and support. "I know if I hadn't been given this opportunity by ACT for Kids, I wouldn't be in this position now. I have solid skills from the training they've provided and my work experience at a domestic violence service, plus reputable names backing me up. That's what this course is all about," Helena said.

We are proud of our graduates and know they will again go on to strengthen the child protection and community services workforce and in particular benefit all North Queensland communities.



Graduate Helena David

Emmy's Crusaders of the Year

We never cease to be amazed by the enthusiasm, dedication and passion of the many generous individuals who selflessly give up their personal time and share expertise to support ACT for Kids, not expecting anything in return for their efforts other than knowing they've helped kids in need. For the first time ever, we decided to formally acknowledge three of our most outstanding supporters with the presentation of the Emmy's Crusader of the Year Awards at this year's Annual Supporters' Celebration Dinner – a new tradition. Each of this year's winners received an Emmy's Crusader trophy and a beautiful gift from Edible Blooms.

Emmy's Crusaders of the Year for 2010...



Helen McGrory

for her longstanding commitment to child protection as ACT for Kids' leading volunteer.

Helen has been an ACT for Kids volunteer for more than five years and has pitched in to help out with all of our most popular events including our art exhibitions and annual supporters' celebrations. She has gift wrapped, sold merchandise, supervised children on day trips and even filled in on reception at one of our family therapy centres. Helen's greatest contribution has been through her involvement with our Tatts & Tiaras Day fundraisers where she consistently comes in as our top fundraiser. Helen's efforts have seen her raise close to \$20,000 to date. Helen is driven by her absolute determination to fight violence against children and the knowledge that child abuse is often a vicious intergenerational cycle.

We are incredibly proud and grateful to have Helen, Kay and Denis on our side in the fight against child abuse and neglect. We cannot thank you enough for all that you have done and continue to do in support of our cause.



Kay McGrath

for her lifetime commitment to child protection as an ACT for Kids Ambassador.

Kay has been actively involved with our organisation since its inception in 1988 as an ACT for Kids Ambassador. While Kay has continuously been generous with her personal time, she has also used her professional expertise and media profile to bring attention to child abuse. As a well known and respected news presenter for Channel Seven, Kay has been an influential personality and MC for a number of ACT for Kids events including our annual supporters' celebrations. She has recently volunteered much of her personal time to encourage Queenslanders to face up to child abuse during our Channel Seven/ACT for Kids Appeal.



Denis Looney

for giving generously of his time and expertise to provide outstanding leadership as ACT for Kids Executive Chairman.

Denis joined the ACT for Kids Board of Directors in 1993 and became Chairman in 2008. He generously took on the Executive Chairman role in July 2009 as a volunteer. For over a year he steered our organisation, dedicating significant time, energy and expertise – all while still managing his own businesses. He guided ACT for Kids through the global financial crisis, ensuring our professional child abuse therapy services continued uninterrupted and helped achieve many significant milestones.

Denis also received a Queensland Child Protection Week Award in the volunteer category for giving his time and expertise as ACT for Kids' Executive Chairman.

Now we'll travel better online!

ACT for Kids is excited to announce our new partnership with travel.com.au. Launched in 1997, travel.com.au offers business and leisure travellers access to great deals on flights, accommodation, holidays, hire cars, cruises and travel insurance. This partnership is a first for the company, with their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committee reviewing formal applications from charities earlier this year so they can focus their attention on selected charity partners, rather than simply respond to ad hoc appeals.

ACT for Kids was chosen as the official charity partner to work with travel.com.au for 2010-11, and attended their recent CSR launch to introduce themselves and mingle with staff. Chair of the CSR Committee, David Hill, said that as a relatively young company they wanted to support other young organisations and those that don't yet enjoy the recognition of some other charities.

"We want to partner with organisations that connect with our company values and inspire people to imagine the world as a better place.

"ACT for Kids is a great organisation working hard to improve the lives and outcomes for abused and neglected kids and we want to support that," David said.

ACT for Kids is working closely with travel.com.au developing great travel prize packages and promotion opportunity for our Platinum Class Lotteries. We're also eager beneficiaries of their assistance and expertise – their expert staff are working with us as volunteers on online projects. Tapping in to an innovative team with so much online and social networking experience is a great opportunity for us to develop our online profile and capability. Visit www.actforkids.com.au, sign up to our email news and alerts, "like" us on facebook and follow us on twitter to see our joint innovations!

Save the date!

9 January, 2011

Final Dress Rehearsal

Be the first to see Broadway's biggest blockbuster in Brisbane. Proceeds from tickets for the Final Dress Rehearsal go to ACT for Kids.



13 – 22 May, 2011

ACT for Kids 21st Annual Art Exhibition

White Canvas Gallery, 26 Church Street, Fortitude Valley. Opening night cocktail party, Friday, 13th May 6.00pm – 9.00pm. Ticket cost: TBC.

Please call 1300 228 000 if you would like more information.

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ACT for Kids is a not-for-profit organisation which provides free services to treat and prevent child abuse. We deliver professional counselling to abused and neglected children through our network of ACT for Kids centres. We have helped thousands of children and families overcome the pain of abuse since we were established as the Abused Child Trust in 1988.



ACT for Kids centres – Brisbane, Townsville, Gold Coast, Cairns
1300 228 000
mail@actforkids.com.au
www.actforkids.com.au

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