

Jayne Meyer Tucker, CEO, Good Beginnings Australia

Jayne Meyer Tucker, 45, had a good beginning, growing up in Mt Gambier in South Australia with loving parents and two sisters and a brother. Jayne's parents had actively sought a better life for their family, emigrating from Wolverhampton in Birmingham (UK) in the 1950s as so-called ten-pound Poms.

"Mum and Dad encouraged and supported us enormously, and we were brought up to believe that you could do or be anything you wanted with enough effort," Jayne says.

At 21, Jayne married her childhood sweetheart, Garry Meyer, but their life together was cut tragically short when they were involved in a serious car accident near Shepparton in Victoria in December 1987. Jayne's husband was killed and she was seriously injured, with multiple broken bones and head injuries. Her parents were advised to say their goodbyes, but Jayne finally pulled through, thanks in part she says to her supportive family and her own resilience. A year of intensive rehabilitation followed as Jayne regained her strength and mobility and came to terms with being a widow at the age of 23.

"Out of that experience I learnt about what's precious, especially time. After I'd recovered my health I realised that I needed to leave Mt Gambier, leave my family and reinvent myself if I was going to thrive rather than just exist."

Jayne spent some time travelling before settling in Kent, England, where she was Head of Division and lecturer/consultant at South Kent College. She also undertook further study in health and fitness, gaining a Masters in Public Health, a Certificate in Counselling, and a postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Training & Development, Organisational Development and Executive Coaching.

Between 1991-2001, Jayne was offered an opportunity to work with government in developing a health and fitness register and an academy of wellbeing, liaising with GPs to facilitate better coordination of preventive healthcare delivery across the health system. She was also seconded to a national governing body to design and deliver national vocational qualification management programs.

Jayne's interest in prevention led to her first involvement with the early childhood arena, when she became director in 2001 of the Sure Start program in Kent, an interdepartmental UK government initiative to reduce child poverty. The program is frequently cited as an example of innovative thinking, local community empowerment and a determined effort to reform historically inefficient public services

After six years at Sure Start, Jayne felt it was time for 'Jayne Mark III' and a return to Australia with her second husband Ron Tucker, an Englishman she married in 1997.

"While we visited Australia regularly and my parents and siblings had often spent summers in Kent, it was time to return."

Jayne came across Good Beginnings on the internet and arranged a meeting in Sydney while on a reconnaissance visit, securing the position of CEO following the retirement of founder Barbara Wellesley.

Sadly, both Jayne's parents had died while she was overseas: "We'd lost my father early to cancer – he died shortly after one of our visits back to Australia – and my mother died about seven weeks before we made the move back.

After 17 years away from Australia, Jayne says she found it a bit of a shock and a disappointment when she settled in Sydney to take up the position of Good Beginnings CEO in 2008.

"Australia wasn't what I thought it would be. I had this image of a vibrant, 'take action' country and thought we would be further along than the UK in terms of early childhood programs and parenting support services. Unfortunately that's not the case, but I like a challenge."

In 2008, Jayne was a delegate to the Federal Government's Australia 2020 Summit in the Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion group, which she says made her even more determined to advocate for better support and prevention programs children and families.

She is passionate about the need for a strong national prevention program to combat child neglect and abuse, with non-government organisations playing a much more strategic and hands-on role that taps into their networks, knowledge and strengths.

Jayne has an active member of various organisations in the sector, including:

- National Investment For The Early Years (NIFTeY) board member
- Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY)
- Australian Children and Families Research Centre Advisory Committee
- Centre for Social Impact Advisory Council Member

While Jayne and her husband do not have children, she is a keen advocate of the importance of all children having a good beginning, as she did. "I wouldn't be the person I am or survived what I've gone through, without the strong foundation that my parents provided. Every child deserves the chance to develop into well adjusted, healthy, productive, caring adults."

About Good Beginnings

Good Beginnings is a national not-for-profit organisation that provides practical, community-based parenting programs and support to ensure children get the best start in life.

Since 1997, Good Beginnings has helped 40,000 young children and their families through 80 programs available at 29 sites around Australia. More than 100 staff and 600 trained volunteers provide a range of free early intervention services that focus on the wellbeing of young children and their parents, and range from parenting education, fathering initiatives and supported play groups to at-home volunteer services and intensive support for vulnerable or at-risk families with complex needs.

Visit www.goodbeginnings.net.au for more details. For further media information and interviews or comment, or for client case studies, please contact:

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