



the greatest gift you can give  
a child is a good beginning

## MEDIA FACT SHEET

Updated April 2009

### Good Beginnings Australia

#### [Overview](#)

#### [Benefits of early support for young children and parents](#)

#### [Good Beginnings' programs](#)

#### [Evaluating outcomes for parents and children](#)

#### [Partnerships between government & non-government organisations](#)

Good Beginnings is a national not-for-profit organisation that provides practical, community-based parenting programs and assistance to ensure children get the best start in life, from supported playgroups and literacy programs to fathering initiatives and at-home volunteer visiting for new parents.

Since 1997, Good Beginnings has helped **40,000 young children and their families** through **free programs** that focus on the wellbeing of young children and their parents:

- Parenting education programs
- Supported playgroups
- Fathering initiatives
- Literacy and numeracy programs
- At-home volunteer support for new parents
- Culturally sensitive programs in Indigenous communities
- Intensive extended support for vulnerable or at-risk families with complex needs.

**More than 100 staff and 600 trained volunteers** support, educate and encourage parents to provide them with the knowledge, practical skills, community networks and confidence to raise their children well.

**Good Beginnings has 80 programs and 29 sites around Australia**, including:

ACT: West Belconnen

NSW: Sydney (Ryde, Macarthur, inner west, north shore), Broken Hill

NT: Palmerston, Katherine

Qld: Townsville, Caloundra, Mackay, Port Douglas

SA: Adelaide (Elizabeth, Salisbury), Port Augusta

Tas: Hobart, Brighton, Risdon, Glenorchy, Derwent Valley, Devonport

Vic: Dandenong, Doveton, Traralgon, Latrobe Valley, Roxburgh Park

WA: Perth (Hakea)

Families can contact Good Beginnings directly ([www.goodbeginnings.net.au](http://www.goodbeginnings.net.au)) or be referred by health workers, teachers, other service providers or protection services.

### **Benefits of early support for young children and parents**

Good Beginnings' work is based on the simple fact that the nurturing and care children receive in their early years strongly influence their development into adulthood.

Research shows that **proactive intervention in early childhood (0-8 years) has profound benefits**, and that one way to provide good outcomes for children is to support and **empower mums and dads to be the best parents they can be**.

Parents are doing one of the most vital jobs in the country – bringing up the next generation of Australians - yet **too many Australian children still do not have a good beginning in life** because of the wide range of difficulties many parents face during children's early years.

Any parent can find themselves needing help due to **everyday challenges** such as:

- going through family conflict, separation or divorce
- being isolated from close family or friends
- coping with their own or a child's mental or physical health problems
- having limited education or parenting knowledge
- dealing with a financial crisis, domestic violence or abuse
- having a partner in jail.

**Strong, resilient, supported children cope better when times are tough.** The more children are supported and encouraged, the better equipped they are to deal with life's ups and downs, and the more likely they are to develop into well adjusted, healthy, productive, caring adults. **The earlier support is provided, the better** – children's development and education begins at birth, not when they start school.

### **Good Beginnings' programs**

The organisation's child-focused services **address risk factors and emerging difficulties and strengthen protective factors** to improve the chances of a good outcome for children and their families. Different programs are provided according to the needs of families in each community:

- **Good Beginnings Connect** is the community-centred consultation process that underpins all the organisation's activities from the time it is invited to assist a community. The Connect approach helps families, schools, residents' groups and other community members identify what they need to make their communities more caring, supportive, family-friendly places that foster children's wellbeing. The resulting initiatives could range

from a mothers' or grandparents' group to a school breakfast program or a redeveloped playground.

- **Universal Supported Groups**

- **Play and Learn** are free playgroups designed to provide young children with learning opportunities through play, guided by parents and a trained early childhood worker, and parenting support provided by a trained family worker.
- **Parents and Play** are free group activities to help parents engage with their children using a holistic approach covering areas such as literacy, play, body movement, speech, nutrition, fine motor skills, self esteem, social skills, safety and fun.
- **Fathering programs** include Dads Connect, where expectant fathers have the opportunity to prepare for the responsibilities and life changes of becoming a dad. (All Good Beginnings programs encourage participation of dads.)
- **Volunteer Family Support** – free home visiting services for parents with babies or young children, where families are linked to trained volunteers known as community parents who help them deal with issues such as depression or isolation.

- **Targeted Support Groups**

- **Contact Play and Learn** groups are designed to increase the skills and involvement of parents - often fathers - who have supervised access visits with their children within the Play and Learn playgroup environment.
  - **Parents+Plus** is a flexible program for families involved with child protection services where their children are in care, and may include parenting education and an early learning playgroup for the children and parents.
  - **Play 2 Grow** uses the Parents+Plus model to assist and support families with complex needs who have come to the notice of child protection services, or families who have recently been reunified.
  - **Aboriginal and cross-cultural programs** provide early learning opportunities for Aboriginal children and parenting skills for the families.
  - **Prisoners and their Families** program offers parenting education and support program to assist parents in prison or on remand (particularly dads) to connect and bond with their children in order to strengthen family bonds, provide positive parenting experiences and deter reoffending.
  - **Turn Around Project** is a support program that provides educational, social and health services for children and their families; counselling for children and parents; family intervention; and a range of groups, workshops and activities for children and parents to do both separately and together.
- **Intensive Family Support** - provides professional support over an extended period for families with complex needs, usually in their home.

### **Evaluating outcomes for parents and children**

Good Beginnings is making a significant difference to Australian mums, dads and children, improving the chances of young Australians getting a good beginning. All Good Beginnings

programs are evaluated and measured; feedback from parents is particularly valued as evidence of success. For example, in 2007:

- 85 per cent of parents in universal supported groups reported improved skills in playing with and teaching their children
- 68 percent receiving volunteer family support reported improved parental and family functioning
- 88 per cent receiving intensive family support reported an improved ability to cope with parenting.

### **Funding & partnerships**

Good Beginnings receives the majority of its funding through federal government grants, supplemented by state government funding and private donations from corporations, charitable trusts and foundations and a small number of individuals.

Good Beginnings is calling for increased government investment in community-based early childhood support programs. In 2008, Good Beginnings and the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) submitted a five-year prevention plan to address escalating child abuse and neglect in Australia. It calls for federal government commitment and investment in a preventative strategy to support state and territory governments and non-government organisation partners.

For further information on Good Beginnings, visit [www.goodbeginnings.net.au](http://www.goodbeginnings.net.au)

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