

## The future begins with babies



# Dear Friends,

Since the HOPE program began in 2019, it has helped over 180 young families in the Sydney area to stay together and build greater hope for the future.

Sadly, we know that too often young parents have missed out on secure and healthy early childhoods themselves, so HOPE has been carefully designed to provide young families with the right combination of supports to help break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

The program is specifically planned to be a 12-month therapeutic program for at-risk young women with babies and children in their *first 1000 days*. The program aims to provide the young women with the support they need to heal from trauma, build their parenting skills and create a nurturing and safe home environment while also assisting them to make positive choices for their future.

The HOPE program's early achievements are only possible because of the generous and visionary foundational support of our early partners Access EAP, Curran Access

Children's Foundation, Charitable Works Foundation, Phillips Family Foundation and our other supporters who have helped us to get the program to where it is today.

We know there is more work to be done and we invite new partners to join us so that many more (300+) young families can begin their journey to empowerment and self-reliance over the next three years.

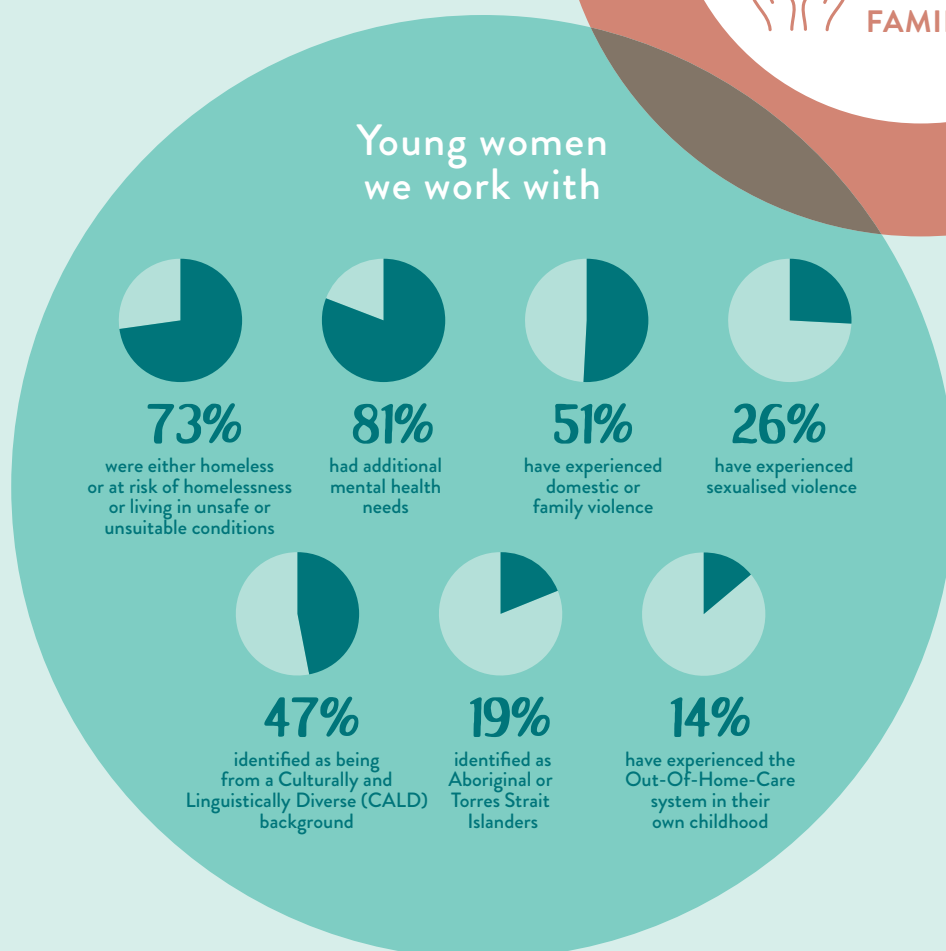
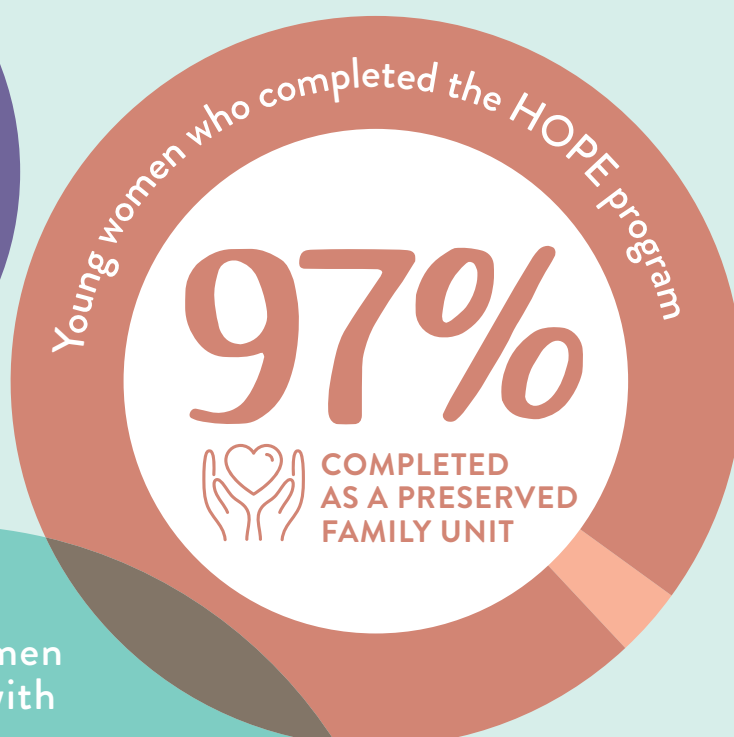
We trust you will find our first *Impact Report* informative, and we thank you for your part in enabling HOPE to establish, develop and achieve these pleasing early results.



**Alastair McGibbon**  
CatholicCare Sydney  
Chief Executive Officer

# The difference HOPE makes

2021 – 2022



# Why the *first 1000 days* are so important to a baby's future

Evidence from a broad spectrum of research shows us that development during the *first 1000 days*, from pregnancy until a child is two, lays the foundations for later learning, wellbeing, mental and physical health.

During this time, a baby's neurological and physical development is shaped by their environment and experiences. The interactions and relationships they have with their parents and primary caregivers are critically important. Healthy early development, supported by nurturing and good relationships, makes it more likely that children will have happy, healthy, and bright futures.<sup>1</sup>

Infants can experience trauma in environments that are unsafe, unsuitable, or unpredictable. This might be an environment where there is a lack of access to necessities including supports for parents, safe and stable housing, strong community networks or adequate income to cover the basics. It may also include exposure to domestic and family violence, or other forms of trauma in the home. Some of these traumatic events are known as "adverse childhood experiences" or ACEs for short.<sup>1</sup>

Early trauma can affect all aspects of development and functioning, including health and wellbeing, mental health, social functioning, and cognitive development. There is now a growing understanding of how neurological pathways that originate in early childhood contribute to challenges faced by adults, such as mental health issues, obesity, heart disease, criminality, and poor literacy and numeracy.<sup>2</sup>

# Why the *first 1000 days* are so important

A significant predictor of how adversity will impact a child is the strength and security of their relationship with their parent. A nurturing relationship can help make a child more resilient to negative events. Without a nurturing relationship to support them, children may be more traumatized by early negative life experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Parenting is a very personal experience influenced by culture, traditions, environment, and our own lived experience of parenting as children. The approach to parenting most adopted by new parents mimics that which they received as children. This can be helpful for those who received positive childhood experiences. However, often families with complex vulnerabilities may have done the very best they could with the resources they had but may have created unhelpful or harmful approaches to parenting. These circumstances can perpetuate poor life outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Human brains adapt to our circumstances – this is something that has benefited us in the past – but this also means that children’s brains change in response to the adversity they experience. While the changes might help the brain to deal with stress and trauma when it occurs, they may create other behaviours and responses that are less helpful and even harmful for the child in other situations or as they further grow and develop.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that relationships also help children to recover from early trauma. For example, recent research (Perry in Developmental Trauma Close Up. 2019) has shown us that the experience of early loss and trauma does not dictate a child’s future in isolation from other factors. More influential for the child than their early trauma is the quality and quantity of their safe relationships. This is an incredibly hopeful message from the research.

## REFERENCES

1. Parent Infant Foundation. “Understanding early trauma and the importance of early relationships.” 2022, p5
2. Moore, T.G., et al. “The First Thousand Days: An Evidence Paper – Summary.” Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. 2017, p5.
3. Daines, Chantel L., et al. “Effects of positive and negative experience on adult health.” BMC Public Health, 2021, [www.bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-10732-w](http://www.bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-10732-w)
4. Lyons, Shoshannah., et al. “Developmental Trauma Close Up.” Beacon House, updated 2020, [www.beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Development-Trauma-Close-Up-Revised-Jan-2020.pdf](http://www.beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Development-Trauma-Close-Up-Revised-Jan-2020.pdf)

# How the HOPE program works

HOPE helps protect babies and young children from early trauma by supporting young women to address the causes of stress and distress in their home and build healthy relationships with their children.

HOPE young women (16 – 24yrs) are pregnant or have an infant under the age of two years and they are experiencing stressors which may get in the way of them being the best parent they can be.

The Program is underpinned by attachment theory, trauma-informed practice, and an understanding of child development. It works by empowering young women through choice and information which increases their parenting capacity in turn and strengthens the parent-child relationship. Women become confident in their roles including as caregivers, and children feel safe, loved, and nurtured.

The HOPE program establishes safe, trusted, and predictable therapeutic relationships with the young women, which is often a first-time experience with services. It draws on one-to-one work using a strengths-based model of therapeutic psychoeducation intervention. HOPE practitioners walk alongside the young women as they address their own past trauma, learn how to emotionally care for their baby and keep them safe, develop healthy coping mechanisms and increase their problem-solving skills to help equip them to address any future difficulties.



# How the HOPE program works

HOPE is a 12-month therapeutic support program for young women with a child/ren in the *first 1000 days* (0 – 2 yrs). Practitioners usually visit the young families in their homes once a week.

Families typically complete the program in 12 months. For some, there may also be an additional three months. This is significantly longer than other programs in NSW.

*In 2022 in South Western, Central Eastern and Inner Sydney it is estimated that roughly 300 young women aged 16 – 24 yrs will be at risk of coming to the attention of statutory child protection which could result in their recently born or soon-to-born baby being removed from their care.*



# The situations that lead young women to HOPE

## 1 A woman in need is identified

A young woman is identified as needing additional support to meet her needs or the needs of her child and is seeking assistance. They are introduced to the HOPE program by their local hospital, NSW Dept of Communities & Justice, a primary health worker or clinician, or they self refer. In some cases the child has been assessed as at risk of serious harm (ROSH).

### *The young women are facing two or more of the following challenges:*

- Living in unsafe or unsuitable housing; being homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- Domestic or family violence
- Being a victim/survivor of sexualized violence
- Mental health struggles
- Substance use
- Impact of their own childhood trauma
- Prior experience with the Out-of-Home Care System
- Prior experience with the criminal justice system

## 2 The family joins the program

Family participates in HOPE's therapeutic program with access to:

### *Housing*

The HOPE program works with the young family to find a secure, safe and stable housing.

### *Case Manager*

The HOPE worker has explored with the young mum her stressors and risk factors and there has been lots of opportunity for her to reflect and build awareness and understanding, acquire new skills, and make child-focused decisions now and into the future.

### *Education Specialist*

HOPE provides a wide spectrum of support to help prepare the young woman to re-engage with education or to get a job. Support is tailored and the young woman works one-on-one with the Educator. The focus is on exploring career types and entry requirements and working towards an enrolment or a job.

### *Brokerage*

Brokerage to support immediate needs and tenancy e.g. rental bond, moving costs, food vouchers, urgent specialist health appointments, baby and home essentials.

## 3 On completion of the HOPE program the desired outcome is the young family is safely together as a unit and has the capacity and skills necessary to keep their child safe, healthy, and achieving appropriate milestones. The young mother has increased self-determination and empowerment.

*HOPE also supports young women through referrals to other services and community support groups.*

*Infant Maternal Health Supports  
Specialist Health Services  
Family Support Services  
Child Care Services  
Supported Play Groups*



# Why investing in women matters

Around the world, investing in women has a proven multiplier effect.

Women and girls use the knowledge and skills they develop to benefit their families, communities, and countries, not just for their own personal profit.

Yet even in Australia, women still face many barriers to equality of opportunity to create healthy and secure lives for themselves and their families. Domestic violence occurs more often to women than men, and many women have children at home when it happens, and evidence tells us that hearing or seeing family violence can and does cause trauma to children.

Sadly, more than half (51%) of the young women in the HOPE program have experienced domestic or family violence and a quarter (26%) are survivors of sexualized violence. Unfortunately too many young women have experienced both.



# Why investing in women matters

Research also tells us that half of all female sole parents don't earn enough to support their families and rely on government payments as their main financial support.

HOPE young families are amongst the lowest income families in the community.

*“Our HOPE program helps young women learn that they are important, their voices matter and they deserve a life of love and stability. Young women are empowered to build strong futures for themselves and raise powerful, connected, and healthy children”*

**Emma Neill**  
Practice Manager,  
HOPE program



# Many thanks to our supporters

We celebrate financial and in-kind support made during the Financial Year 2022\* and offer our heartfelt thanks to each of our incredibly generous supporters for making it possible to carry out this work.

Alongside the generous funders listed here, we also acknowledge the inspiration, encouragement and financial support of the other individuals not listed and the part they play in HOPE's continued impact and development.

*\* 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022*

## **Charitable Foundations**

Curran Access Children's Foundation  
Charitable Works Fund  
Tenix Foundation  
Betty Wade Charitable Foundation

## **Corporate**

Access EAP  
Jemena

## **Individuals and Family Foundations**

Phillips Family Foundation  
The Harris Family  
Eureka Benevolent Foundation  
Edwin and Nil  
Karen and Matthew Hope  
D'Leanne Lewis

## **Government**

NSW Health

## **Community Housing Providers**

Amelie Housing  
Hume Community Housing  
Metro Community Housing

## **Community**

Mummies Paying It Forward  
Dandelion Support Network

# Ways to get involved in HOPE



*For each young family who participates in the 12-month program, we need to raise \$25,000 which covers the cost of all aspects of the program.*

In the next three years our aim is to support more than 300 young HOPE families.

Here are some ways that you can create opportunities for our shared community.

- Donate to CatholicCare Sydney
- Become a Corporate Partner
- Become a Housing Partner
- Host a fundraising drive
- Leave a legacy gift
- Share our work

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