

HOPE

HOPE IMPACT REPORT 2023

The journey begins here



Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share the HOPE Impact Report for FY23. This year HOPE has exceeded all expectations, assisting 111 families and 157 young children — well above the 90 families as planned.

As the program has developed, we have a better understanding of the crucial window of opportunity provided in the first 2,000 days of a child's life, and we have expanded HOPE to cover this period.

Children who develop in nurturing environments are more likely to become happy and productive members of society with a lower likelihood of physical and mental health issues, risk-taking behaviour, conduct disorders, and criminality.

HOPE's innovative holistic approach does not neatly fit with government portfolios that separately address health, education, social justice and family needs.

The HOPE Program's approach is made possible by the generous support of donors, providing an opportunity to effectively address the needs of a family that can include intergenerational trauma, exposure to family and domestic violence, substance use, mental ill health, homelessness, and unsafe environments.

By engaging with philanthropists, corporations, and foundations as well as government we are building momentum for the HOPE Program, and we are providing more evidence of the impact the HOPE program can deliver. I am also looking forward to the Australian Catholic University research findings due shortly.

HOPE is a truly unique program, addressing homelessness, trauma support, brokerage, and education to ensure:

- young parents are receiving the skills and knowledge that will enable them to thrive
- young children are developing in safe home environments
- family relationships are strengthened, and the cycle of intergenerational trauma can be overcome.

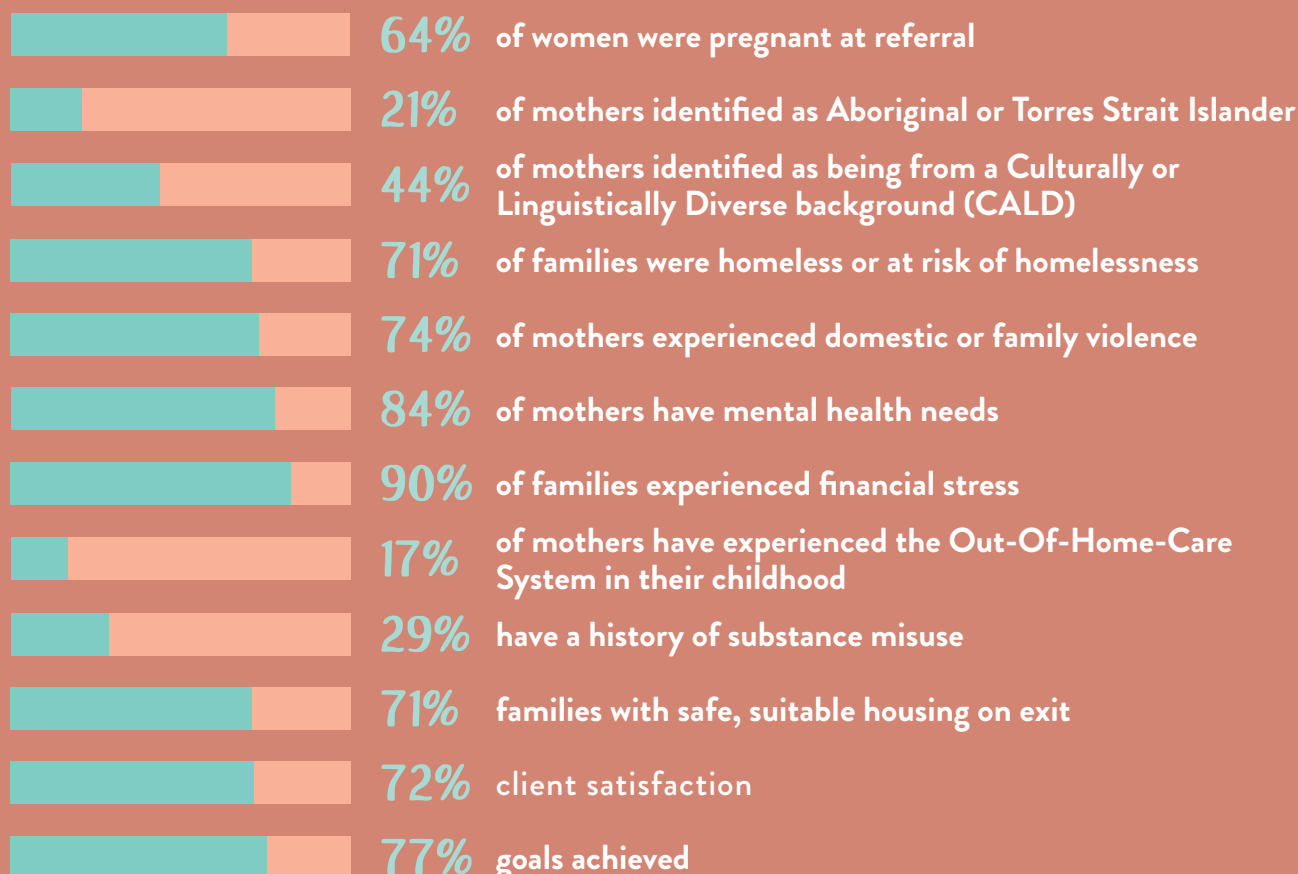
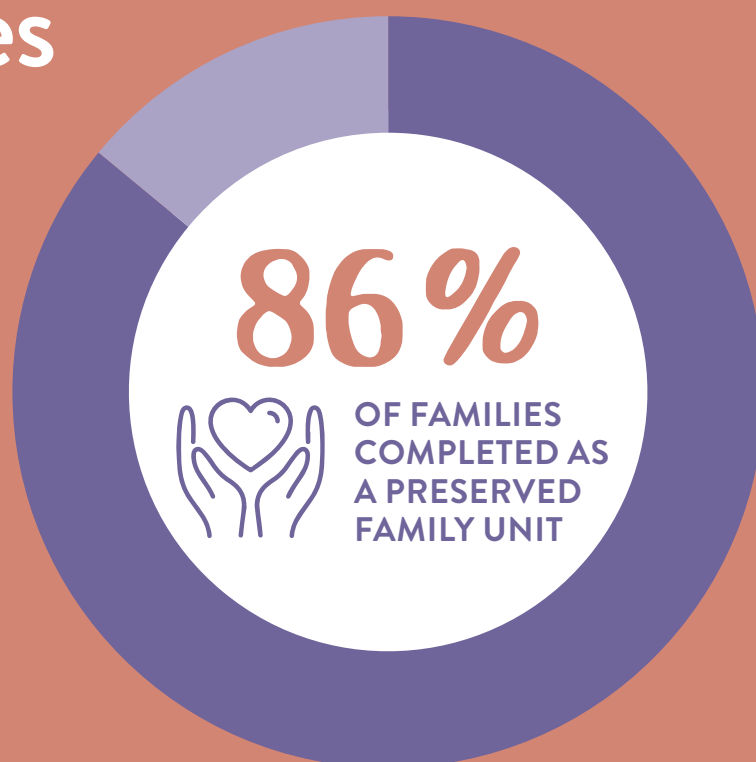
We thank all our generous supporters for allowing us to strengthen the HOPE Program and provide assistance to grow the numbers of young families that can be supported. The benefits your support gives to at risk young families is immeasurable.



Alastair McGibbon
Chief Executive Officer
CatholicCare Sydney

The difference HOPE makes (FY23)

During the year
HOPE reached



Why the first 2,000 days are so important to a baby's future

The evidence is irrefutable that the first 2,000 days of life are a crucial window of opportunity to give children the best possible start in life.

These critical early stages are a time of rapid brain growth, accounting for 90% of all brain development, and the development of our language skills, sensory skills, communication, and emotional development are at their peak. Healthy early development, supported by nurturing and good relationships and a strong supportive foundation, makes it more likely that children will have happy, healthy, and bright futures.

The first 2,000 days have an enormous impact, early life experiences are predictive of educational outcomes, physical and mental health, and lifestyle choices. A high number of stressful events in the first 2,000 days can lead to delayed language skills, behavioural and conduct disorders, risk-taking behaviour, increase a child's chance of getting involved in the juvenile justice system, be more likely to smoke, be above a healthy weight, have a range of physical health issues, experience mental health issues, and misuse drugs or alcohol.

Confident parenting and supportive caregivers with strong attachment and emotional connections can buffer the effect of adverse experiences and are associated with future resilience and positive outcomes.

The HOPE Program works with young families to access resources they might need to play and engage with their babies, introducing age-appropriate toys and books and encouraging young families to enjoy being with their children and spending time nurturing and playing with them.

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study reports the prevalence of maltreatment in Australia and the strong link with mental health disorders and physical health risks later in life. The Study revealed 1 in 4 Australian children experience sexual abuse, 1 in 3 Australian children experience physical abuse, and 4 in 10 Australian children experience exposure to domestic violence.

Improving parenting skills and supporting healthy family relationships are fundamental to the prevention of child maltreatment and improving outcomes throughout life for children. This is especially important for young parents who have a higher chance of struggling with anxiety and depression and are more likely to be experiencing additional challenges with parenting.

The study found that Australians who experienced child maltreatment were:

2.8 x

more likely to have any mental health disorder

2.6 x

more likely to have severe alcohol use disorder

6.2 x

more likely to be cannabis dependent

4.5 x

more likely to have attempted suicide
in the past 12 months



HOPE Program updates

HOPE is a 12-month therapeutic support program that helps protect babies and young children from early trauma by supporting young families to address the causes of stress and distress in their lives and to build healthy, nurturing relationships with their infant. Practitioners usually visit young families in their homes once a week.

Our inclusive approach to young families in the HOPE Program helps empower all family members responsibilities towards their children and enables us to work in a culturally inclusive manner.

HOPE Playgroup and Groupwork are new additions to the HOPE program, implemented to provide young families with the opportunity to meet and connect with other young families experiencing similar life challenges, build a support network, and reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation. They also provide an opportunity for young parents to make lasting connections with other young parents

HOPE Playgroup and Groupwork



who understand their lived experiences and parenting challenges.

Many young mothers feel uncomfortable attending regular playgroups because they can feel judged by older parents. This specialised service was implemented to encourage young mothers to attend a playgroup that is familiar, non-judgemental, welcoming, and in a relaxed setting with other young parents.

Supported playgroup helps develop young parents' knowledge of the importance of early learning experiences for their children. It exposes parents to different play ideas and activities which they can implement at home with their children. Many young parents face significant challenges around meeting their own developmental needs, while also trying to meet the developmental needs of their children. HOPE Playgroup helps build the foundations for a child's social, emotional, and physical development and builds parents' confidence and parenting capacity in a relaxed and friendly environment.

HOPE Groupwork provides parenting education and workshops in an environment that is trauma-informed, structured, and client-centred. It is an opportunity for young parents to engage in skills-based group work to build their confidence, self-esteem, and social connection.

Groupwork began with the offering of Baby First Aid & CPR delivered to young parents in the program. To ensure that parents can focus on the Groupwork and learning opportunities, the HOPE Program provides free childminding to families in attendance whilst providing an opportunity for children to play and connect.

Playgroup and Groupwork opportunities are essential in the HOPE Program as they provide a well-rounded, supportive, and meaningful service that will deliver better long-term outcomes for young parents and their children.

HOPE Education





HOPE Education is another new service, offering young parents an opportunity to nurture and invest in their future, with practical opportunities to take part in work and study, fostering more equitable and economically independent lives. HOPE Education works one-on-one with young parents to help build their confidence and skills to explore, engage with, and sustain education and employment.


HOPE Education aims to offer career, employment, and education support to all HOPE Program parents who are interested in pursuing goals in these areas. The program's

flexibility means young parents can attend as many sessions as they require — from one session to write a resume to weekly sessions for the duration of their time in the HOPE Program. Parents can attend online on their phone or laptop, or in person at CatholicCare Sydney.

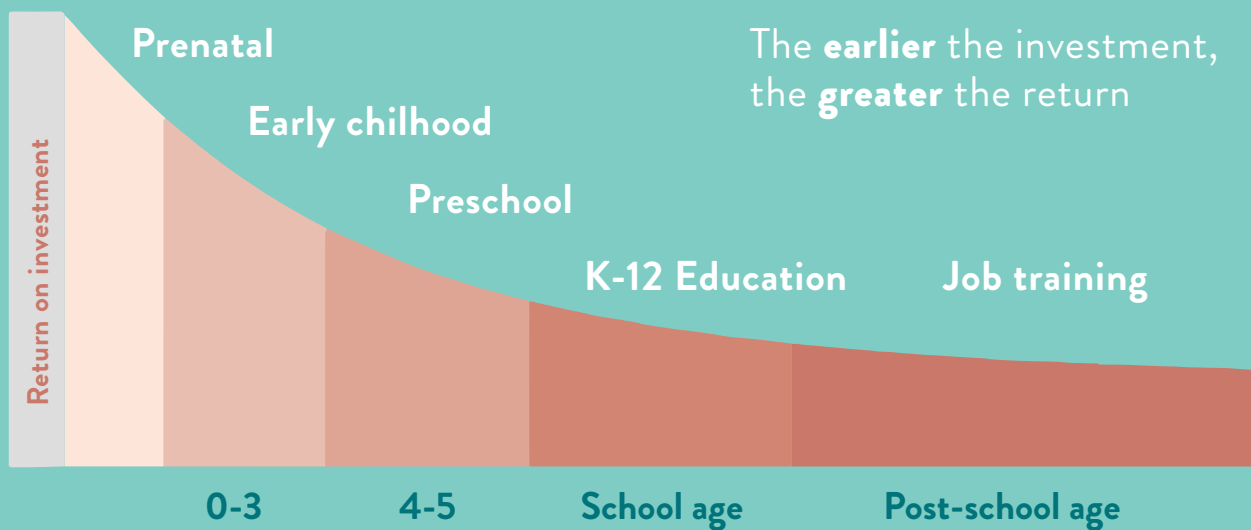
HOPE Education Specialists are experienced educators, employers and life coaches. The role combines careers counselling, employment consultancy, mentoring, and study coaching.

In HOPE Education's first year:

	5 parents enrolled in qualifications to progress their careers in community services, health administration, as a teacher's aide, and in real estate
	2 parents secured employment
	1 parent commenced a childcare traineeship
	8 parents wrote a resume

	2 parents linked with women in trades groups to assist them to pursue careers
	2 parents actively applied for jobs independently for the first time
	1 parent enrolled in a specialist refugee/migrant employment program
	1 parent living with disability engaged with an apprenticeship centre to gain disability support

Benefits for society and the economy



Early interventions have much higher economic returns than later interventions in areas including education, health, crime, and welfare.

NSW Health research suggests the cost of late intervention is \$15.2 billion a year, or \$591 for every Australian, through high-intensity and crisis services – with the cost carried across government sectors including health, child protection, policing, and welfare. The highest costs occur in out-of-home care, police, court, and healthcare costs related to youth crime.

Funding obstacles

Although both the Federal and State governments invest in prevention and early intervention programs for young parents, it is often through a single government portfolio like Health or Social/Community Services. Because the HOPE program provides a holistic range of services depending on the unique challenges each family faces, such as support with education, housing, financial management, employment, and playgroup it does not fit neatly into government funding streams.

It is largely thanks to philanthropic funding that the service has been able to support over 300 families across Sydney.

Case study



Georgia was 21-weeks pregnant when she was referred to the HOPE program by her hospital social worker.

Georgia, a 20-year-old woman, grew up in the foster care system. Both of her parents had substance misuse issues, and she was placed into care when she was 3 years old. Georgia's biological mother passed away when Georgia was 6, and she has no relationship with her biological father.

Whilst Georgia found growing up in the foster care system difficult, she struggled when she had to leave care once she turned 18. With nowhere to go, Georgia spent some time in and out of refuges in her home State, before making the big decision to leave and start over.

Georgia had packed her bags and arrived in Sydney with what she was carrying. Moving to a new State meant that Georgia had no family or social support. Georgia spent some time living on the street and sleeping rough. Whilst briefly staying in backpacker accommodation, Georgia fell pregnant. Eventually, she reached

out to a local women's service and was offered a place to stay in a women's refuge. This is where Georgia first met with her HOPE case worker, Kristen.

"From the moment I found out I was pregnant, all I could think about was finding a safe and stable place to call home for me and my baby."

Initially, Georgia found it hard to open up and trust people because of her negative experiences in the past. Kristen visited the refuge weekly to build a positive working relationship with Georgia. Georgia was soon moved to a family refuge in preparation for the birth of her baby. Although her pregnancy was unplanned, Georgia was looking forward to being a first-time mum and began sharing her hopes with Kristen.

Knowing how worried Georgia was about bringing her baby home to a refuge, Kristen advocated strongly to Housing NSW to place her on the waitlist for a property; however, it was unlikely a property would be offered to Georgia in time for the birth of her baby.

“My case worker really helped me settle into my new role as a ‘mum’. Her support as I dealt with trauma from my past has given me the confidence to give my baby the happy life she deserves.”

-Georgia



The HOPE program has transitional properties through a partnership with community housing providers, and in the weeks before giving birth, a vacant property became available for Georgia. With the support of the women's refuge and the HOPE program, Georgia received essential furniture, white goods, and household items. Baby items were sourced from local charities. Georgia was excited to finally have her own space and prepare for the birth of her baby.

Georgia gave birth to a baby girl just three weeks after securing safe housing.

"I've never felt love like I did the first time I held my baby girl; Lilly is just perfect."

Once she was home Georgia began to settle in with Lilly, however she soon shared with Kristen that she was lonely and experiencing low moods. Kristen and Georgia began to case plan around Georgia's needs, whilst focusing on her strengths. Some of her case plan goals included accessing counselling support for her mental health and giving her a space to work through her past trauma in the context of being a new mum.

A further goal to ease her isolation was to join a local young parents' playgroup. Kristen accompanied Georgia and Lilly to the young parents' playgroup a few times before Georgia began to feel comfortable attending on her own with Lilly.

"My confidence has grown, and I've made some friends, it's nice being with other mums and learning from each other as we play with our babies."

Georgia also linked in with a perinatal mental health counsellor, she was motivated and on the way to achieving her goals.

As Georgia became more settled in her parenting role, she started to think about her future. Kristen was able to source a laptop for Georgia through a partner charity and then referred her internally to HOPE Education. Georgia met with HOPE Educator Jacqui and began exploring education and career pathways. Georgia showed an interest in social work, community services and early childhood education. Through these sessions, Georgia was supported to begin a community services TAFE course but soon experienced the challenges of studying and raising a baby on her own. Georgia decided to put her studies on hold and instead pursue paid employment.

"Once Kristen helped me get my Working with Children Check I was able to apply for a traineeship in a childcare centre. Lilly is at the same centre now, so my baby girl is getting the social stimulation she needs, and I am earning money and feeling really hopeful about our future."

Kristen is now supporting Georgia and Lilly to secure permanent accommodation as they prepare to complete the HOPE program.

“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 the right combination of supports.”

-Emma

Practice Manager



Many thanks to our supporters

We extend our heartfelt thanks for all financial and in-kind support made during the year and gratefully acknowledge our generous supporters.

The assistance we receive from you makes it possible to carry out our work and leaves a long-lasting legacy on young lives.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults”

Frederick Douglass, 1855

Charitable Foundations

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Government

NSW Health

Community Housing Providers

Amelie Housing
Hume Community Housing
Metro Community Housing

Community

Mummies Paying It Forward
Dandelion Support Network
Bankstown Sports Club

Get involved with HOPE



We need to raise \$25,000 for each young family that participates in the 12-month HOPE Program,

this covers all support costs required including housing, brokerage for urgent necessities, and program services including counselling, education and behavioural support.

We aim to support more than 200 young families in the next two years — with an estimated cost of \$5,000,000.

You can help us reach our goal in the following ways:

- 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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