



## Children in poverty need an equal chance

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As poverty week draws to a close, Australians are urged to not forget the growing numbers of children who are living in poverty.

According to Karyn Walsh, Coordinator of community organisation Micah Projects, publically available statistics, such as the ABS Census data, shows that child poverty continues to rise and is a major issue in all Australian communities, including capital cities.

“The data about the economic exclusion that children are experiencing is alarming. Here in Brisbane, 14.8% of households have a weekly income less than \$500,” says Karyn.

“In Brisbane 2,190 parents aged 16-24 years receive Centrelink payments and there are more than 10,000 jobless households with children under 15 years,” says Karyn.

Families need resources to enable them to fulfill their aspirations for their children. Poverty creates barriers for parents to provide the start in life that they want for their children.

“We need to avoid poverty being a reason for child protection intervention and children not having an equal chance to participate from early childhood through to becoming young adults,” says Karyn.

For many families and children other factors such as mental health, housing and domestic violence demonstrate the need for further investment in supporting children in the family unit.

Last year in Brisbane, over 900 notifications were made to Child Safety Services for neglect. 3,741 Domestic Violence Protection Order applications were made and 1,503 breaches of Domestic Violence Protection Orders occurred in 2010.

More than 1,000 parents accessed a mental health service in 2009 and in 2010 2,223 children accompanied a parent who received support from a specialist homelessness service in Brisbane.

“In 1987 Bob Hawke made an election promise that by 1990 no Australian child would be living in poverty. It is now 2011 and more than ever governments need to turn their focus on responding to children and their families,” says Karyn.

“In a prosperous country like Australia, children should not be left behind. Through no fault of their own,” she says, “more and more children are starting life with the odds stacked against them.

“Our children are our future, and should be given every opportunity to prosper and flourish, so that they will in time become full and productive members of our community,” says Karyn.

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