



WRISC FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT GRANTED \$5000 TOWARDS CHILDREN'S PROGRAM BROKERAGE

Thank you to **STREETSMArt Action Against Homelessness** for their support of children and their families experiencing family and domestic violence in the Central Highlands region of Victoria.

Research clearly shows that experiencing family violence has a significant impact on children's relationships, development, wellbeing and ability to learn. WRISC believes children should be able to be children – they should be able to say “I am free to be me”. These vital funds will assist us to make a long-term difference in the lives of many children and families.

In a family where one or more members uses physical or verbal violence and threats of violence in an ongoing way there is often a constant underlying sense of fear and tension and a need to be 'on guard' all the time. It is difficult to relax, remain calm and provide children with positive attention in such an environment.

The immediate impact can be observed in the way a child behaves at school and at home. Some will act out aggressively; some will withdraw into their own world, some will focus all their effort and attention on school work in order to block out what is going on at home. They feel unsafe at home and experience a sense of isolation, loneliness and hopelessness.

Once the child is safe, and no longer living in an atmosphere of fear, it is important for them and their family to know that there are other ways of relating within a family and there is hope for them and their family. It is important to break down the isolation and secrecy of family violence and build up a supportive community around the child and family.

Aims and Predicted Outcomes for grant money:

- By removing some of the “barriers” to accessing therapy sessions for a child (eg. lack of therapist availability, transport, distance from services etc.), children will be able to attend therapeutic appointments and begin the journey of freedom from family violence.
- Greater family connections through enabling quality “family time” and special outings - fostering, improving and repairing relationships within the home.
- More flexibility to assist children and families affected by violence in the home.

SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW STREETSMART FUNDING HAS BEEN USED BY WRISC TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES EXPERIENCING FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

'Jayden', 'Josh' and 'Taylah' came with their mum for a "single session" at WRISC. They had a chance to speak as a family about what had happened, and then with a counsellor on their own about their individual needs. When they all came back together, they came up with a 'family plan' that has really helped make life at home more bearable. They are no longer fighting amongst themselves as much and they really enjoy their weekly picnic in the park and home movie night. They also LOVED going to the movies together with mum – made possible by StreetSmart Funding.

During a single session follow up call it was discovered that 'Hannah' was still really struggling many weeks after the most recent incident of family violence and the single session at WRISC that occurred soon after. She was not engaging or learning at school and was really acting out at home. The single session therapist suggested she may benefit from some play therapy from a local private therapist as the WRISC play therapist could not take any more clients. Hannah was able to "play out" and explore some of the things that had happened in her family, as well as freely express some of the strong feelings she was holding and did not understand. Things improved dramatically at school and her behavioural issues and relationships with her mother and siblings improved significantly. This could not have happened without StreetSmart Funding.

'James' participated in some individual equine therapy sessions with a private, Medicare-rebated therapist in his town – these suited his issues and temperament perfectly and has settled him right down, and given him some confidence and clarity in amongst the confusion of his family life. This was made possible by the 'gap' paid for with StreetSmart Funding.

'Gemma' joined a Children's Therapy Group coordinated by WRISC's Children's Counselling Program. She enjoyed having a place where she could openly talk about her experiences, among other children who would tell similar stories. She was able to come each week because a taxi picked her up from school each week – paid for by StreetSmart Funding.