

# Berry Street Snapshot



## **Our History - where we've come from**

Established in 1877 as the Victorian Asylum, Berry Street's core activity has always been protecting children in need, and strengthening families, so they can provide better care for their children.

In the early days, our greatest challenges were high infant mortality and poverty. Our primary tasks were supporting unwed or rejected mothers and their babies and finding new homes for babies and children who were abandoned.

## **Our Present - where we are today**

Today, Berry Street is the largest independent child and family welfare organisation in Victoria.

We provide an extensive range of services to children, young people, women and families across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.

Today, our greatest challenges are: to help children and young people recover from the devastating impact of abuse, neglect and violence; to help women keep themselves and their children safe from family violence; and to help struggling mothers and fathers to be the parents they want to be; and to contribute to, and advocate for, a fairer and more inclusive community.

Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act, with a voluntary Board of Directors, Berry Street is a Public Benevolent Institution with Deductible Gift Recipient and Income Tax Exemption status.

## **Why we are needed**

There are more than 340,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect across Australia each year (over 900 a day) and nearly 35,000 children in Out Of Home Care (6,000 in Victoria). These are strong indicators that far too many children are not having a good childhood.

We believe all children should have a good childhood.

## Our Focus

We know that a good childhood is the foundation for a healthy society and that whilst parents have the primary responsibility to provide their children with a good childhood, they cannot do this alone. All children have the same rights and fundamental need for safety, stability, love and support. The trauma experienced by the children and young people with whom we work adds complexity to meeting their needs, but we know it can be done and we never give up.

### *Berry Street continues to focus in two main areas:*

- The rights of all children to a good childhood; and
- Supporting those children, young people and families with the most complex issues arising from their personal experiences of abuse, neglect or violence

## To be effective we know that we need to:

- Forge strong relationships with our clients and help restore a belief in themselves and their future - *because we know that learning to trust again is the essential step in healing*
- Stick with these children, young people and their families - *because we know that they have been let down far too often*
- Help children and young people recover from the trauma of abuse, neglect or violence - *because we know that with support and opportunities, children and young people can reach their full potential*
- Look beyond challenging behaviour to identify and build on strengths - *because we know every person has strengths that, if acknowledged, will provide a platform for healthy development*
- Include family members and other significant people in planning and caring for children and young people - *because we know it is critical to strengthen connections and build positive relationships*
- Respect people's cultures and spiritual beliefs - *because we know how important these can be in developing identity and a sense of self*
- Involve our clients in planning, decision-making and the way we help to meet their needs - *because we know that taking control of their own lives builds resilience and independence*
- Acknowledge and promote the human rights of children and young people - *because we know that a good childhood is every child's birthright and that this means a better society for us all*

## Our Values - What drives us

Berry Street's five core Values are Courage, Integrity, Respect, Accountability and Working Together. These values guide everything we do and require us:

- To never give up, maintain hope and advocate for a 'fair go': **Courage**
- To be true to our word: **Integrity**
- To acknowledge each person's culture, traditions, identity, rights, needs and aspirations: **Respect**
- To constantly look at how we can improve, using knowledge and experience of what works, and ensure that all our resources and assets are used in the best possible way: **Accountability**
- To work with our clients, each other and our colleagues to share knowledge, ideas, resources and skills: **Working Together**

## How you can help

To continue this critical work, Berry Street depends on the support of government, business, individuals, groups and the community. You can help us by understanding what we do, providing financial support, volunteering and helping us to promote this important work. For more information, contact [www.berrystreet.org.au](http://www.berrystreet.org.au).