

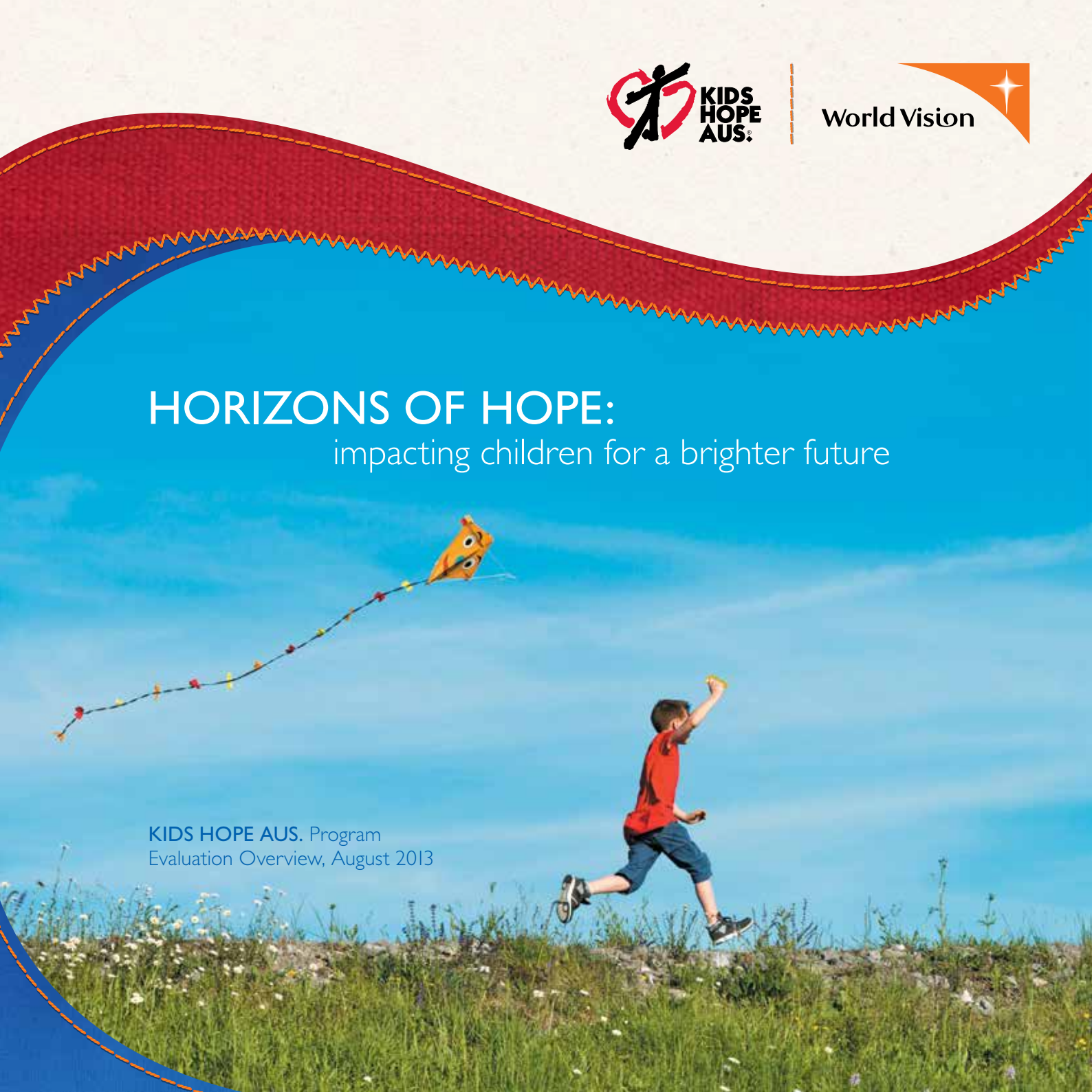


World Vision

HORIZONS OF HOPE:

impacting children for a brighter future

KIDS HOPE AUS. Program
Evaluation Overview, August 2013





Horizons of Hope references the following publications:

- Bayer, J.K., Rapee, R.M., Hiscock, H., Ukoumunne, O.C., Mihalopoulos, C., Clifford, S., & Wake, M. (2011) Study Protocol: The Cool Little Kids randomised controlled trial: Population-level early prevention for anxiety disorders, *BMC Public Health*, 11:11.
- Mathers C.D., Loncar D.: Projections of global mortality and burden of disease from 2002 to 2030 for the World Health Organization.

Primary data collected throughout the evaluation process remains the property of World Vision Australia. The identity of all respondents has been protected and fictitious names have been used in some cases.

Credits

Author: Gabrielle Mahony

Horizons of Hope:

KIDS HOPE AUS. Program Evaluation Report
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Horizons of Hope: KIDS HOPE AUS. Program

Evaluation Summary Report

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Acknowledgement

World Vision acknowledges and thanks evaluation partner Griffith University and student Peter McAloney for key results incorporated into the main **KIDS HOPE AUS**. Evaluation Report. Statistics, key evaluation outcomes and recommendations included in this overview can be reviewed in detail in the Horizons of Hope: **KIDS HOPE AUS**. Program Evaluation Summary Report 2013, available online at worldvision.com.au/kidshope.

The evaluation described herein is the work of World Vision Australia **KIDS HOPE AUS**. This work was undertaken to advance learning and as a requirement of World Vision's program design, monitoring and evaluation system.





World Vision

KIDS HOPE AUS. works with churches and schools to provide one-to-one mentoring to invest in the lives of vulnerable children. The love and care of an adult sharing one hour a week with a child can be life changing.

The **KIDS HOPE AUS.** mentoring program has been running for eight years. Learn more about the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** story, how the program works and explore highlights of the 2012 evaluation report, in this evaluation overview.

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◀ KIDS HOPE AUS., World Vision Australia (L-R): Gabrielle Mahony, Marilyn Leermakers, Wendy Jarrott-Smith, Gabby Shaw, Helen Gribi, Kirra Lewis and Tim Smith (absent). Photo: Ilana Rose/World Vision

The KIDS HOPE AUS. story

KIDS HOPE AUS. is the largest early intervention school-based mentoring program in Australia. Currently there are over 350 church partnerships reaching an estimated 3,800 primary aged children across the country.

KIDS HOPE AUS. reaches socially, emotionally and/or academically vulnerable children aged 5-12 through one-to-one mentoring in state government primary schools. Through the positive and nurturing impact of a caring adult spending one hour a week with a child, children build self-esteem, improve in school and build opportunities for a bright future.

How the program works

KIDS HOPE AUS. builds strong, sustainable community partnerships between primary schools and local churches.

Children are selected by their educators and carefully matched to volunteer mentors. Mentors come from a range of partner churches throughout Australia.

Each week a mentor will meet with a child for a one hour mentoring session in the school grounds. A non-religious and professional program curriculum is provided by World Vision's **KIDS HOPE AUS.** team.

Evaluation report

A 2012 evaluation of the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program found 39 “treasures” showcasing the positive impact of the program. The evaluation report made 83 recommendations to grow the profile, reach and influence of **KIDS HOPE AUS.** over the next 3-5 years. Building on current program success, the report provides valuable evidence of the impact and importance of **KIDS HOPE AUS.** and the positive role of mentoring in the lives of vulnerable children.

Insights included in this overview have been gleaned from the Horizons of Hope: **KIDS HOPE AUS.** Program Evaluation Summary Report 2013. Please visit worldvision.com.au/kidshope to read the complete summary evaluation report.

Four areas of interest were addressed by the evaluation report. The key evaluation questions were:

KIDS HOPE AUS. = children, relationship, faithfulness and prayer

Children – because every child matters

Relationship – because love is only possible person to person

Faithfulness – because if I say I will, I will

Prayer – because it is our language of hope

1. How does the program contribute to improving the welfare of children?
2. What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the program design?
3. What were the unanticipated outcomes?
4. What demand and capacity is there to scale up the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program?

Existing and new data was analysed during 2010 and 2011. In brief the key methods included:

1. A review of key program documents – ie. reports, training evaluation results, audits and “Stories of the Week” provided by mentors.
2. 30 key informant interviews with school staff, church representatives and parents.
3. Use of internationally recognised surveys to measure self-esteem, student behaviour and general academic achievements (Queensland and Victoria only).
4. Analysis of 2010 Teacher Evaluation Survey results through which teachers report the progress of mentored children during the year.



Improving the wellbeing of children



What is the difference that **KIDS HOPE AUS.** makes?

KIDS HOPE AUS. helps to build self-esteem and resilience in children and brings hope to their parents.

This is evident from the feedback provided by mentors, parents, teachers and children.

Through **KIDS HOPE AUS.** a child who was once shy and “slipping through the cracks” finds the courage and self-esteem to pursue his dream to become a House Captain. The day he becomes House Captain is a moment of celebration and pride for the child, mentor and teacher. A “difficult to manage in class” child now looks forward to their mentoring hour with great anticipation. Their teacher reports this is making a world of difference to the child’s class behaviour.

“While Katie and [mentor] Prue were making sand castles, Katie all of a sudden asked, ‘Do you know what is the greatest thing that has happened in my life?’ ‘No,’ said Prue, ‘what is it?’ Katie quickly replied, ‘The day mum signed the forms to let you come and see me.’”

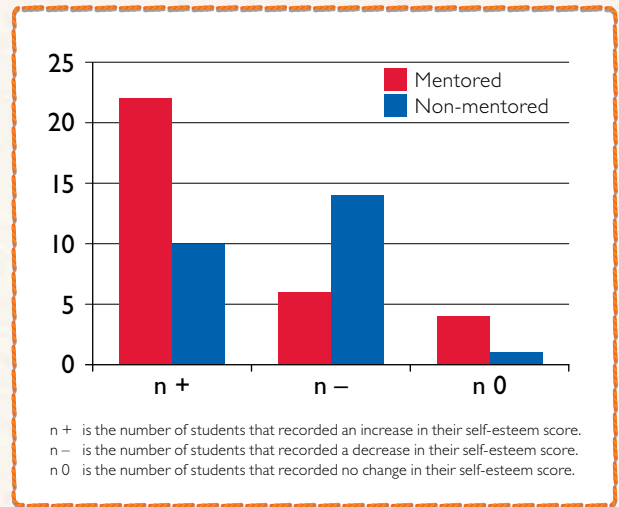
– Story of the Week



Self-esteem grows for KIDS HOPE AUS. kids

Evaluation research indicates that self-esteem increases for those children who have one-to-one mentoring once a week.

Graph 1. Direction of change in self-esteem



“This program changes lives and you will probably never know how precious this gift is to our young people.”

– Primary school principal, Victoria

“The value of this partnership has been in the improved resilience of our students. The letters and feedback we receive from parents and students is very positive.”

– Primary school principal, Queensland

“I guess that “hope” is the correct word for it ... it is great support and ... comfort in knowing that she’s been looked after.”

– Parent, Queensland

“It may be a kid’s hope now but there’ll be a whole lot of adults in the future who will have a whole lot of hope down the track, which may not have been the case if they hadn’t had this now.”

– Parent, Victoria

Evaluation of the data indicates “that mentored students had greater numbers of higher self-esteem and less numbers of lower self-esteem” according to Griffith University researcher Peter McAloney. The data “shows that the mentored students’ population group had more students improving their self-esteem rather than decreasing whereas the control group had more students decreasing in self-esteem”.

McAloney further explains that “mentoring does have a statistically significant positive effect on self-esteem for young at-risk children. The findings confirm the predicted effect that a child’s self-esteem will improve as a result of the consistent involvement of a committed caring adult.”

Behaviour improves for KIDS HOPE AUS. kids

The research survey of mentored and non-mentored children showed “no significant effect from mentoring on frequency or intensity of behaviour”. Parents interviewed, however, reported an improvement in behaviour.



“Teachers report that our students are more settled [in class] and happier and that there is some evidence of improved academic outcomes over time. The commitment of the mentors has been welcome and inspiring. They never let the students down and have created a relaxed informal setting for them to engage in conversations that matter.”

– Primary school principal,
Queensland

One mother from Victoria shares, “There were times when it was almost a daily event he’d get in trouble for one thing or another”. Since her son began a mentoring relationship through **KIDS HOPE AUS.** she says, “Those events are becoming quite infrequent”.

She further reflects beyond behaviour to the additional impact on his sense of self. “I suppose in that sense, it also gives him the belief that he is actually a good boy and he’s not all bad. Sometimes he felt like he was.”

Mentoring from a caring adult has the power to influence a child’s self-perceptions for the better. And this has roll-on effects on their behaviour; their ability to socialise and self-manage. Teachers who responded to the Teacher Evaluation Surveys cited several examples of positive “classroom” and “playground” behaviour change along with improved “self-regulation”.

KIDS HOPE AUS. kids gain confidence to do better at school

KIDS HOPE AUS. is not an academic tutoring program. Improved academic performance however, is a desirable secondary benefit from the self-esteem and confidence a child develops through one-to-one mentoring.

Following the Gonski report, and also evidenced in the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** evaluation research, declining literacy rates among Australian children need attention. Overall, however, feedback from teachers suggests positive improvement among mentored children in literacy and numeracy.

Some feedback from children shows how a mentor can play a role in supporting academic development.

“Three years ago, I really needed help in math, and when Mr M came along, he helped me with math. If he had not come I would have failed. I’m really glad he showed up. He helped me improve over the last two years. Although he’s been teaching me math, he also helped me bring a smile.”

– Child feedback provided to mentor

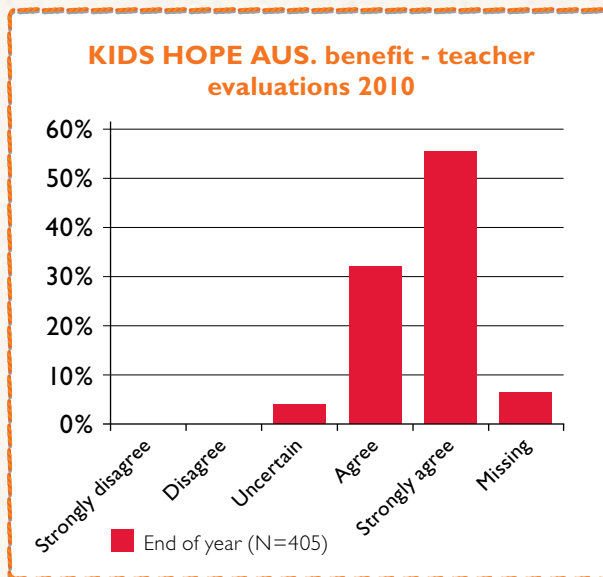
Children are more likely to attend school on days they have mentoring. Genuine friendship between mentors and children fosters anticipation and excitement on the days when mentors come to school.

Teachers agree: the mutual respect, time shared together, educational fun and friendship involved

in the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program is making a difference to children's self-esteem and general resilience. Improvements in behaviour, confidence and outlook have a marked impact on children's lives.

As one school principal from Queensland explained: "Our kids are happier and healthier as a result of **KIDS HOPE AUS.**"

Graph 2. Overall benefit of KIDS HOPE AUS. mentoring





KIDS HOPE AUS. kids form strong friendships

The value of friendship in the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program cannot be overlooked. It is one of the core values, and often reflected in feedback from children, mentors, and school and church staff. Feedback indicates that children and mentors share a deep respect for one another and real desire to spend time together, time that is often joyful and educational. This is not only the foundation for child wellbeing but the evaluation report shows it is the defining experience of children and mentors throughout the program.

One primary school principal recalled a conversation with one of his students: "The day I most look forward to is Thursday because that's the day my mentor comes. Even though we have so much fun, he has taught me so much and I could not thank him enough. He is an awesome mentor and friend."



Highlighting key strengths and opportunities for improvement

KIDS HOPE AUS. is simple, child-focused, easy to implement and effective

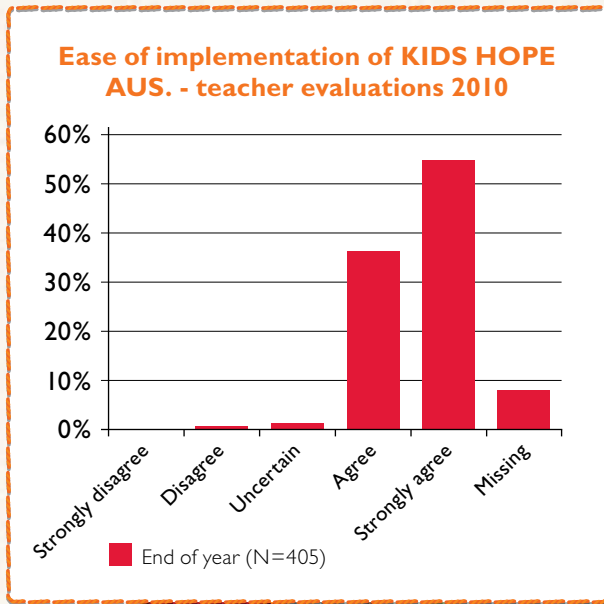
The child is always the focus of **KIDS HOPE AUS.** The program respects the secular nature of the school environment while fostering ongoing relationships with churches. The program is easy to implement and it is effective.

"KIDS HOPE was unanimously voted best program at the school in 2011 by all the teaching staff."

— Senior pastor and
KIDS HOPE AUS. coordinator



Graph 3. Ease of implementation



“The most significant part of the mentoring relationship is the commitment the mentors make to focus solely on the child’s agenda. There is no hidden agenda to do the “school’s work” for us. It’s all about the kids and their needs.”

– Primary school principal, Queensland





Mentors are committed for the long term

Each mentor candidate is expected to have an active church life and a willingness to commit to at least 12 months participation. The willingness of mentors to commit for the long term is known to contribute to positive outcomes for children.

Faith plays an important role in mentor perspectives on commitment. Christians believe they are accountable to serve God, their church community, the school community and the children. This personal sense of duty and call to faithful service, supported by a larger community of believers, contributes to mentor commitment and program success.

Commitment is vital when reaching vulnerable children

“I think if you do put your hand up, you need to be willing to give yourself, well, at least a year and probably more. I think a lot of these children are in circumstances where their families perhaps are having difficulties and relationships are not settled. So part of the witness of the love of God is the faithfulness of being there each week and just turning up and you're there again and again and again.”

– KIDS HOPE AUS. mentor, Victoria

whose sense of stability and ongoing commitment in their own life circumstances is often lacking.

Faithfulness is a core value of the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program.

KIDS HOPE AUS. gives churches the opportunity to express their purpose and responsiveness to needs in the wider local community. Churches' strong shared purpose in being there for children strengthens the commitment demonstrated by mentors and their church communities to partnering with local schools.



"I think it's a very crucial role that they're playing in my kids' lives. Because I'm of a firm belief that it takes a community to raise a child ... they really are having to deal with some very adult concepts and some very harsh life realities that you really wouldn't wish on any child. School is a bit like a fishbowl, everything just gets magnified ... that's when all of these issues percolate up. But for them to have someone who's not their teacher, who's not a [school] friend, but who is an adult and can listen to what they have to say, to see what they're saying with adult eyes, is very important. So yes, I actually really treasure their mentors ... it's a lifeline, really. I view it as a very valuable asset. I view it as a lifeline for me because it is something that I don't have to worry about so much."

– Parent, Victoria

"If I say I will, I will." – KIDS HOPE AUS. core value

KIDS HOPE AUS. builds strong partnerships

KIDS HOPE AUS. fosters successful church-school relations.

According to feedback from school principals, teachers, coordinators and pastors, the quality of church-school partnerships formed through the program is well-regarded.

One school principal said, "Our expectations have been more than realised, community-school links have been forged and the benefit to our students has been immense. [The] **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program is one of the most successful mentoring programs I have experienced in my extensive career."

Church-based **KIDS HOPE AUS.** coordinators are also instrumental in the development of strong partnerships.

Parents see the benefit of KIDS HOPE AUS.

Parents demonstrate a high degree of willingness for their child to participate in **KIDS HOPE AUS.** They have confidence that the school principal, chaplain and/or teachers recommending the program have their child's "best interests" at heart. Most expressed a belief that they did not need to interfere in their child's mentoring relationship.

Possible stigma and parental fears associated with a child's participation in **KIDS HOPE AUS.** were considered in the evaluation, as well as the fact that a parent's understanding of the program can often impact the views of the child.

Overwhelmingly, parents are encouraged by the support mentoring offers and see the positive impacts for their child.



KIDS HOPE AUS. reaches vulnerable children

Selection of children for one-to-one mentoring relationships is based on socio-economic disadvantage and/or social, emotional or academic difficulties, as assessed by the school.

Vulnerability can also be defined by a particular circumstance or situation that places a child at risk. We understand a number of children who fall into the following categories are being selected for mentoring:

- those who may have been bullied in a previous school;
- those who have experienced family separation resulting from dysfunction or a parent working overseas;
- those who have a serious illness or disability;
- those who have a sibling or parent with health issues, including physical disability, psychiatric illness or addiction;
- those who have experienced the death of a close friend or family member.

For many children having a positive and caring relationship with an adult outside of their family is a lifeline.

“All of the kids had needs but some of them were children that really needed to have another significant other in their life.”

– Mentor, Queensland



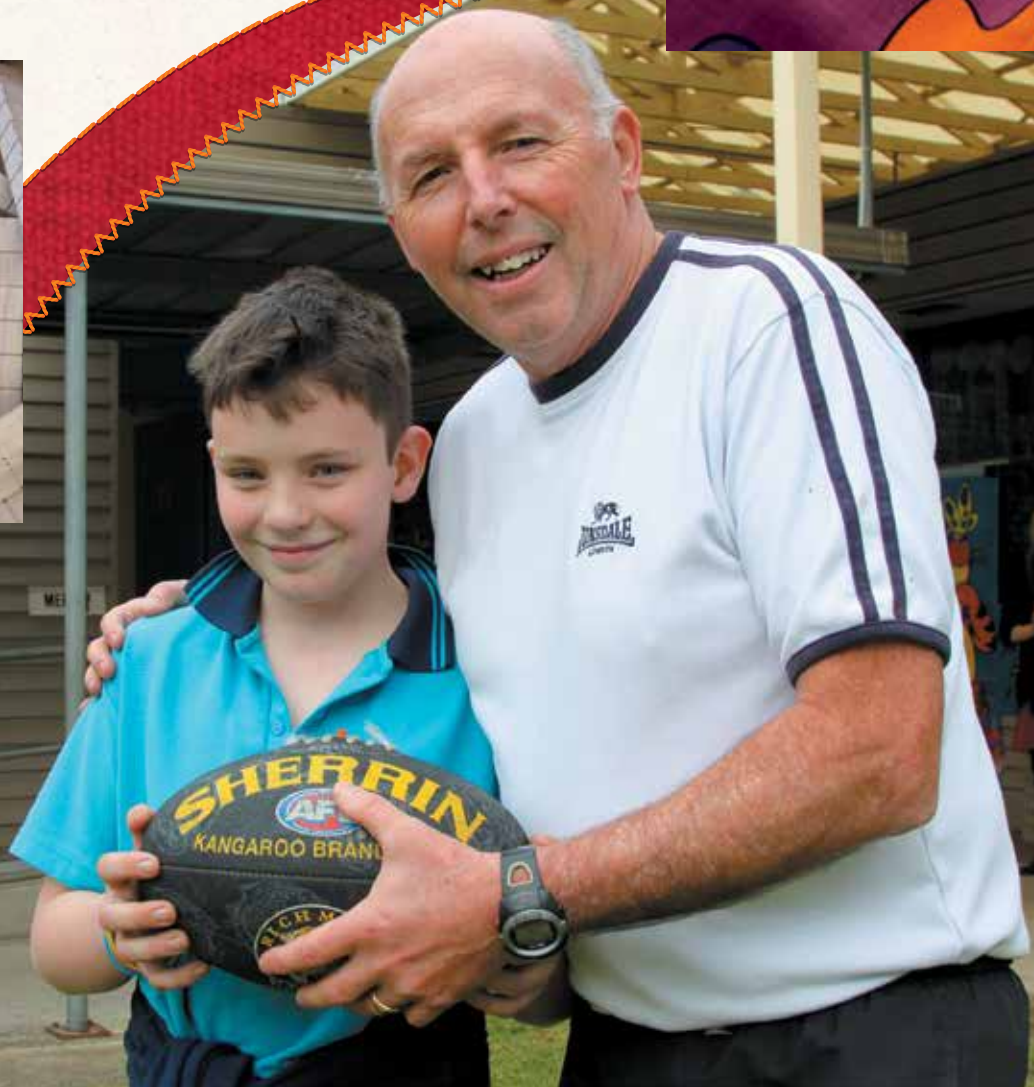
Mentors are carefully screened and matched

Mentors must complete the relevant child protection check legislated by the state and a comprehensive pre-interview questionnaire.

They receive ongoing monitoring from the school and their **KIDS HOPE AUS.** church coordinator. They are also carefully matched with specific children to maximise the benefits of the one-to-one mentoring relationship.

Effective screening and matching that considers personality and shared interests have lasting positive effects on the mentoring relationship. A parent from Victoria observed the lovely friendship that developed between her child and mentor:

“It really is very sweet. They’re just two peas in a pod. They just get along so well, and I think the trick to this program is picking personality types and interests to get something to click, and you’re home and hosed. You’ve just got to match the personalities.”





Coordinators are trained and supported

Training and support for church coordinators is integral to the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program. Analysis of the data suggests that the training offered by **KIDS HOPE AUS.** staff is extremely well received by coordinators. Coordinators also report feeling very supported by **KIDS HOPE AUS.** staff after training

To provide additional support to coordinators and mentors, **KIDS HOPE AUS.** is piloting the role of “**KIDS HOPE AUS.** Associates” in New South Wales. Associates will be volunteers who will act as a back-up to **KIDS HOPE AUS.** staff. **KIDS HOPE AUS.** staff also encourage refresher training as it provides tools to equip coordinators and mentors to be able to build effective mentoring relationships.

“[The training] was practical, it emphasised the fact that we’re not there as evangelists, we’re there as mentors, to care for somebody, showing the practical love of God but we’re not there preaching the Gospel to them. I think that was clear but it was also clear that this is ... a practical way to show love to people.”

– Mentor, Victoria

Strong community ownership

The success of **KIDS HOPE AUS.** is founded on strong community ownership of the program. Churches and schools have ownership over the program and how it is run in their community. The relationships with schools are managed by the churches. World Vision’s role is to provide support, and to build the capacity of churches and schools to run the program themselves.

Pursuing financial sustainability

KIDS HOPE AUS. is a low cost program working towards financial sustainability.

- It is not only the largest early intervention school-based mentoring program in Australia, it continues to grow: from 52 church-school partnerships and around 520 mentored children in 2005, to 330 partnerships in 2011 and around 3,300 mentored children mentored, representing 535 percent growth.
- The increase in the number of school-church partnerships has enabled a reduction in **KIDS HOPE AUS.** operating costs per child. In 2005, the cost per child was \$367. This had reduced to \$110 per child by 2011.



Currently, the program's Church Affiliation Fees are determined on a sliding scale based on the number of members attending that church. For example, a church with 450 adult members contributes \$770 per year. If this church has 10 mentors, this equates to a cost of \$77 per child per year, which is less than \$2 per week per child, well below the cost of a cup of coffee each week.

- Annual membership costs and donations contributed to **KIDS HOPE AUS.** by churches represents a reliable source of funding, supporting 50 percent of the program's overall operating costs, including staff salaries, training events and essential resources for churches and schools to run the program.
- Grants and other funding streams are required to increase the program's financial sustainability and these will be sought to grow the program in the next 3-5 years.





Opportunity for improvement

Acknowledging the scale and reach of **KIDS HOPE AUS.**, the evaluation addressed both the program's areas of risk and areas for improvement.

Grace and flexibility are required for scheduling conflicts

It is the nature of life, and busy schedules, that sometimes a mentor cannot make their one hour session in a week, or on occasion a child may be sick or absent. This conflict of schedules can provide upheaval and disappointment.

The **KIDS HOPE AUS.** team works on setting clear expectations, encourages open communications between teachers, mentors, coordinators and principals, and fosters an attitude of grace when sudden schedule changes simply cannot be avoided.

Setting clear expectations for teachers

With many children failing to achieve academic standards, but not quite eligible for formal government assistance, some teachers look to mentoring for tuition support. However, this is not the primary aim and intention of the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program. Nor is it the skillset of many mentors.

Whilst the concern that children in this category risk "becoming invisible" and "falling through the cracks", mentoring aims to address self-esteem and resilience



Unexpected outcomes

Mentoring is a chance for change, not punishment

When children misbehave in class, there is evidence to suggest that a small number of teachers may choose to discipline these children by denying them opportunity to meet with their mentor. Research shows that for a child struggling with behavioural issues in class, mentoring is exactly what they need.

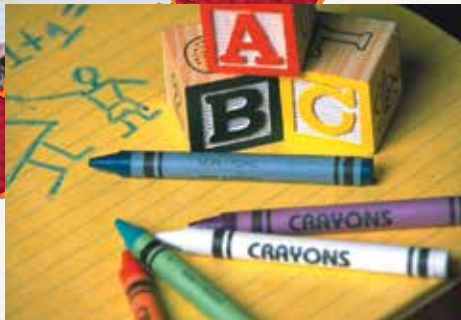
Dr Stephen Larmar, psychologist and educator at Griffith University, explains: "Withdrawing the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program for acting out children who desperately need it will never lead to positive gains for the child or the school."

KIDS HOPE AUS. coordinators and mentors are working with school principals and teachers to help establish these values to ensure children get the best chance in life they need.

With teachers reporting positive differences in children's behaviour and other improvements due to the program, we expect more teachers will see the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** difference too.

that leads to school improvement. It is important that **KIDS HOPE AUS.** continues to inform school staff and others of this difference and set clear expectations for schools and churches.

Evidence supports the claim that prioritising children early in their primary years is an early intervention strategy with the potential to improve their readiness to learn and thereby impact their academic development.



Parents trust **KIDS HOPE AUS.**

The evaluation revealed strong support from parents for the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** program. There was no evidence in the evaluation of fear, tension or jealousy between mentors and the families of mentored children.

Some parents reflected on the possible stigma attached to having a child nominated for mentoring:

“I would say ‘look, you need to really just think of your child. Is this going to be good for your child?’”

– Parent, Victoria



KIDS HOPE AUS. kids are “lucky”

There was no evidence of mentored children being discriminated against or bullied by other students for their involvement in mentoring. In fact, the evaluation discovered that children involved in **KIDS HOPE AUS.** are generally perceived as “lucky” by other students. Mentored children are perceived positively by their peers. The hope and enthusiasm shared by children, mentors, teachers and principals is creating positive momentum.

The ripple effect – where all things are possible

A guiding principle for church partners is that all things are possible under God. This sentiment underpins the hope that drives **KIDS HOPE AUS.** Where healthy friendships are allowed to flourish, great things can be achieved. Clearly, great things are being achieved through mentoring friendships.

No one could have anticipated the extent to which these friendships would flourish, or the extent to which this would cause a “ripple effect” within and beyond the lives of both mentored children and their mentors.

One teacher spoke of the positive ripple effect **KIDS HOPE AUS.** mentoring is having not only on the mentored child in her class, but also on the child’s family. With the progress achieved through mentoring, this child was now functioning well at school, allowing his mother to work full-time.

“ ... with God, all things are possible.”

– Matthew 19:26

In another example, one church became a **KIDS HOPE AUS.** partner when the congregation learned of the great loss experienced by one child who had moved into the community. At the request of the child’s school principal, the church rallied to support and provide mentoring for this child after

the loss of both his parents in an accident and the passing of his prematurely born sister.

One of the most exciting examples of the **KIDS HOPE AUS.** ripple effect is a partnership established by a church and school in Queensland. Successful mentoring led the church to increase its outreach to the broader community. Over time, the church and school embarked on an unprecedented initiative; the church was invited to co-locate within the school's new multi-use facility. School staff report that the value of this dynamic partnership has been recognised outside the school community. The school has gone from being the least attractive school to the most attractive school in the area.

KIDS HOPE AUS. is demonstrating the power, influence and ripple effect that one-to-one mentoring can have when responding to children's needs. It is evident that **KIDS HOPE AUS.** can reach beyond the child and positively impact families and communities.

"Three years ago [we were] called 'THAT school', now it's called 'that school'. The cultural shift has been so significant. Not just **KIDS HOPE AUS.**, others have helped. When we change the culture of a school ... we change the community and its future."

– **KIDS HOPE AUS.** coordinator
conference presentation





Room to grow

There is a growing need and demand for **KIDS HOPE AUS.** mentoring and scale up is warranted.

Unfortunately a school's participation is dependent on whether a suitable local church partner can be identified. The challenge to meet this growing demand requires steps to diversify **KIDS HOPE AUS.** and extend networks and reach.



Opportunities

Expansion opportunities exist for **KIDS HOPE AUS.**

The program could be considered within the early-years preschool setting, Indigenous Australian communities and international settings. Attracting new churches and growing and maintaining the number of mentors will be crucial for expansion. This will require further investment in research, program design and development and improved monitoring and evaluation processes. Expansion and diversification will also require more financial investment.

The evaluation recommends further research and evaluation efforts in order to attract government and other bodies who are struggling to address the burden of disease brought about by clinical disorders arising out of childhood. The World Health Organization predicts that by 2030 depressive disorders arising out of childhood will be second only to HIV and AIDS in the global burden of disease. (Mathers and Loncar) The impact extends "beyond mental health to adult relationships, employment opportunities, and even early mortality". (Bayer, et al) Mentoring programs like **KIDS HOPE AUS.** have the potential to play a role in supporting the best possible health outcomes for children.

ONE CHILD • ONE HOUR
ONE CHURCH • ONE SCHOOL



The KIDS HOPE AUS. evaluation

KIDS HOPE AUS. is an extremely well-run and effective program. It is widely celebrated by churches and school partners for building individual friendships and strengthening community relationships. It is reliable and easily implemented – the clear program of choice for many schools. It is valued by parents and, most importantly, it is making a difference to child wellbeing.

Horizons of Hope: **KIDS HOPE AUS.** Evaluation Summary Report is available in full for download at worldvision.com.au/kidshope





“All kids need is a little help, a little hope
and somebody who believes in them.”

– Earvin “Magic” Johnson

KIDS HOPE AUS. contact information

National Office:

World Vision Australia
1 Vision Drive, Burwood East Vic 3151

Mail address:

GPO BOX 9944 Melbourne Vic 3001

Phone: 03 9287 2761

Email: auso.kids.hope@worldvision.com.au

Websites:

worldvision.com.au/kidshope