

The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation

The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation supporting children living in families affected by mental illness.

Kookaburra Kids helps children by empowering young people to build knowledge around mental illnesses, to hone social and emotional skills and develop strategies to foster long-term success.

“[We] Aspire to be recognised as national experts in empowering young people to grow beyond the impacts of familial mental illness.” Chris Giles, CEO AKKF

Founded in the Sutherland Shire in 2002, the Kookaburra Kids Foundation has grown into a large community organisation providing free programs in all major Australian capital cities

Supporting over 2,800 children, these national

programs include camps and activity days for children 8-18, plus targeted programs like the ‘Defense Kids Program’ for children with parents who have served, or are serving in the Australian Defense Force. In addition, a new support program “Kookaburra Kids Connect”, originally launched in 2020 in the COVID period, continues to provide vital online support and peer contact to young participants

“The program provides evidence-based and age-appropriate prevention and early intervention mental health services embedded within peer-based social and activity based format.” Dr. Virginia Williams, Research Director AKKF

As long-term partners, the Big Sister Foundation initially supported Kookaburra Kids with office space and funding to run annual camps run for children in Sydney’s South East .With demand ever growing, funding was then provided to foster sustainability in Kookaburra’s service model through development and mentoring initiatives,



fundraising, governance and leadership training.

As part of continuing support, Big Sister Foundation sponsored a pilot program in 2015 called 'Girls Taking Flight', providing mentoring for girls 18 and over, to foster confidence and support in the creation of their future goals. The program was adopted and funding was continued for 2 years.

In 2018, Kookaburra Kids embarked on a research program with the aim of optimising their existing program impact. This research is evaluating the evidence of the advantages of early intervention and mental health education in families. Conducted in conjunction with University of Wollongong, the five-year study seeks to demonstrate measurable outcomes and explore the effectiveness of Kookaburra's 'psycho-education program'. At the centre of the research is a 'co-design' process, relying on the support and feedback of children and families involved in Kookaburra's programs.

Largely funded by the Big Sister Foundation, the research program will improve program effectiveness and an evidence base of the long-term positive impact of the Kookaburra Kids has for children living in families affected by mental illness.

For further information on The Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation visit their website [here](http://www.kookaburrakids.org.au).