



Early Years

A strong start for every child

Australia is reshaping the early-childhood system. This is a rare moment that the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is uniquely positioned to meet, and influence what comes next.

We know that the foundations for learning, health and wellbeing begin early in life. And that these foundations and habits are shaped by far more than access to formal early learning alone. Critical early-childhood development takes place wherever life happens for babies, toddlers and kids: at home with family, in early education and care settings, and in communities.

It happens through relationships, responsive support and timely intervention, especially when families are facing disadvantage. Today, one in five children start school without the language, social skills or confidence they need and gaps can widen quickly, limiting opportunities well into adulthood. Parents doing it toughest often struggle to reach out for the support they need.

Parenting can be difficult at the best of times. Getting children the right supports shouldn't feel like an obstacle course. That's what BSL's Early Years Integrated Approach is all about.



Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**



A history of improving outcomes for children and families

1930s–1960s

Support for vulnerable families anchored BSL's purpose from the start with the establishment of a Children's Health Clinic, the Ecumenical Migration Centre and free milk in schools program which was later adopted by the Victorian Government.

1970s–1990s

BSL conducts research to deepen understanding of, and solution to, childhood disadvantage, brings HIPPY (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) to Australia and pioneers the family day care trial.

2000s–2020s

Establishes Goodstart Early Learning with partners and playgroups, parenting support and bilingual engagement show what accessible early years support looks like for families facing the steepest barriers.

Today

BSL's Early Years Integrated Approach brings years of experience and current best-practice into a tested, reform-ready model for early childhood.

BSL's research, policy and advocacy work also strengthens early years outcomes, for example our collaborative advocacy helped secure the Three-Day Guarantee, giving every child access to early learning and easing pressure on families.

“ My little boy started kindy knowing how to ask teacher for help. That's huge.



From homes to playgroups to policy tables, we amplify the voices of families to build brighter futures

An integrated, community-led response

BSL's Early Years Integrated Approach (EYIA) brings services, communities and families together around the needs of young children – instead of working with children and families in silos.

We work with local partners to integrate the services that families use, like playgroups, creating a joined-up experience for families in three key areas:



Early childhood development: Linking families to integrated services across early learning, disability supports, allied health and support for home learning.



Parent education and support: Coaching and foundational supports that build parenting confidence and help with managing money or finding a job.



A voice in policy development: Accompanying research, evaluation and advocacy for inclusive systems and sustainable reform, so that lessons from this work can be scaled and sustained.

Rooted in lived experience, evidence and decades of practice, we're focused on ensuring families that experience disadvantage can access the right supports, when they need them.

We carry our work from community practice to national reform. This is the BSL practice-to-policy cycle.



What you make possible

We invite your support so more families can give their children a strong start and so we can use this evidence to change the system for the better.

Contributions support children and families with the access to quality care and services that makes the most of this one precious life, together. Every child and family deserves to reach their full potential.

Help the person. Change the system.



We started from zero. Now I feel confident about my daughter starting school next year.



1,000+ parents, carers and children engaged every year.



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The Brotherhood of St. Laurence respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which our organisation operates. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.

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