



The CALEDONIA
Foundation



KIDS AT RISK

Hosted by Geraldine Doogue
Polly & Me screening and
discussion

9:30pm, 9 September 2010
during Child Protection Week

The Oasis: Australia's Homeless Youth Impact Report

Documentary filmmaking as a tool for social change is relatively new to Australia – with philanthropic foundations traditionally reluctant to fund in this area. *The Oasis* demonstrated the latent power of documentary film to deliver a high return on social capital.

More than two years after the initial screening and live panel discussion on ABC Television in April 2008, we continue to measure the enduring impact of *The Oasis* documentary. Supported by a comprehensive education and outreach campaign, the documentary has helped ensure that youth homelessness remains on the national agenda.

The partnership with ABC Television was teamed with two major initiatives funded by the Caledonia Foundation: 1) the National Youth Commission (NYC) Report on Youth Homelessness; and 2) a comprehensive education and outreach campaign.

The NYC Report was the result of an independent, national inquiry which informed the range of evidence-based recommendations. In 2007, the NYC held 21 days of hearings in all states and territories. Formal evidence was given by 319 individuals and 91 written submissions were received, including seven from government departments. The NYC report in 2008 provided context and credibility to images presented by the documentary, it showed that the experience of *The Oasis* youth was representative of a greater problem, not an isolated case.

The education and outreach campaign based on *The Oasis* documentary was designed to combine grassroots support for vulnerable young people, with the possibility of effecting long-lasting social change. In 2008, all Australian secondary schools and philanthropic foundations were provided with *The Oasis* DVD, comprehensive Study Guide and a copy of the NYC Report. The Study Guide was updated in 2010 and is linked to the curriculum of every state and territory.

In 2010, The Caledonia Foundation launched the second phase of its *Oasis* initiative, with two short films *Polly & Me* and *Wall Boy*. The second phase has a specific focus on prevention and early intervention.

Direct impact

- > **1.1 million+ audience** on ABC Television across the five city and regional markets
- > **8 million+ TV viewers** exposed to the issue of youth homelessness during National Youth Week, 2008
- > **876,000 audience** on ABC TV for *The Oasis: Australian's Homeless Youth Discussion* with Tony Jones
- > **Every secondary school in Australia** supplied with *The Oasis* DVD and education kit
- > **2000+** participants in ABC online forum

Attributable impact

- > Salvation Army **Red Shield Door Knock Appeal** ↑10.5% to \$8.8m
- > **More than \$1.3m in new donations** to The Oasis Youth Support Network in Surry Hills from philanthropic foundations, corporate entities and individuals.
- > Significant increase in donations from existing donors to Oasis Youth Support Network
- > Federal Government established **target to halve homelessness by 2020 and provide an additional \$1.2b over four years**



"One of the best resources we
have used"
Teacher Survey response
November 2008

Education and Outreach

- > *The Oasis* documentary, report and study guide was distributed to every secondary school in Australia; CEOs of Australia's top 100 companies; 200 key State and Federal Ministers and Shadow Ministers; and over 300 philanthropic foundations.
- > 1,000 DVDs distributed to the Salvation Army network across Australia.
- > 10,000 copies of *The Oasis* distributed at Carols in the Domain, Sydney 2008, raising \$105,000.
- > *The Oasis* documentary used as a resource for Social Justice classes, PDHPE, Society & Environment, Religion & Society, Media Studies, Value Education, Community Development Studies.
- > Schools survey: 70% of teachers surveyed showed the whole 88 minute documentary, 68% used the study guide.

The study guides aimed to provide the framework for thought-provoking lessons and class discussion. *The Oasis* website (www.theoasismovie.com.au) was designed to be a complementary teaching resource with information and features 18 short films, extracts and useful links.

The Oasis documentary and study guides inspired a number of fundraising and volunteer initiatives driven by school involvement across Australia including fundraisers, soup kitchens, donation of pens and books for street schools and appeals for swags for the homeless. Activities initiated by hundreds of secondary school across Australia included:

- > Oasis Cup – an annual match between Scots College and Cranbrook Boys school commenced in 2009 and raised >\$40,000
- > Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School (VIC): Year 12 students held a benefit concert entitled *Kids Under Cover*, raised \$45,000
- > Fintona Girls School (VIC) coordinated a "Sleep Out" event

A number of schools also used *The Oasis* as a starting point for special projects on homelessness, including students at St Josephs College and Scots College who created their own mini-documentary based on the issue.

National launch of *The Oasis* curriculum materials

in June 2010, The Caledonia Foundation launched its new study guide materials for *The Oasis* that are mapped to the curriculum of every state and territory for a range of subjects including PD/Health/PE, English, Geography, Civics and Media studies. The materials will be available via on The Oasis documentary website, the Teaching & Learning Exchange (NSW) and Education Services Australia, a national body who develop curriculum content on behalf of the Australian, ACT, NT, Queensland, SA, Tasmanian, Victorian and Western Australian governments.

"My students were low ability and generally disengaged with most texts presented to them. They were absolutely engrossed in *The Oasis* and for some time it has changed their attitude towards young people in crisis – seeing a lot of parallels with their own lives."

Teacher Survey response
November 2008



"[*The Oasis*]... will give an opportunity for Australians to put a face to the statistics, particularly the faces of Owen, Emma, Trent, Haley, Darren, Beau and Chris, the seven young people at the centre of the show."

Julia Gillard, MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Speech to ACOSS National Conference,
April 2008

Political awareness

- > Youth homelessness back on the national policy agenda.
- > National Youth Commission (NYC) recommendations adopted within Government White Paper on Homelessness.
- > Federal Government announced commitment to halve homelessness by 2020 as well as providing an additional \$1.2 billion over four years.
- > NYC Report launched during Youth Week 2008 by Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing.
- > Acknowledgement of the Oasis youth in Federal Parliament by both Government Ministers and the Leader of the Opposition.
- > Education and outreach program launched by Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing at Parliament House, Canberra alongside screening of *The Oasis*.
- > Hundreds of articles in key metropolitan and regional newspapers and specialist coverage in journals such as Big Issue.

The Oasis documentary and the NYC Report generated hundreds of reports on radio, television and print media. It is estimated that television coverage on the issue of youth homelessness across all networks reached more than 8 million Australians. The Channel 9 Today Show promoted the ABC screening and promoted dialogue on the issue of youth homelessness over four consecutive days with guests such as Captain Paul Moulds invited to speak about the issue.

The Oasis captured the attention of senior bureaucrats and ministers across Australia including Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek, each of whom referenced *The Oasis* in public communications.

The Federal Government addressed the issue of youth homelessness in its White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home*, released in December 2008. The Federal Government White Paper has been well received by key advocacy groups, service providers and practitioners in the homelessness sector.

The Federal Government White Paper provides an additional \$1.2 billion over four years, comprising \$800 million commitment for new support services for homeless people and \$400 million for social housing, to house the homeless.

In 2010, efforts continue to ensure that the Federal Government delivers in accordance with its commitment. Youth homeless sector leaders have requested additional resources to provide immediate housing in response to existing needs.

"...a fabulous documentary that I know many members of the House would have watched and been very moved by."

Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing
Speech to the House of Representatives
Parliament House, Canberra
May 2008



"The stories of these kids like Owen, Hayley, Darren and Trent and his girlfriend have been an amazing reality check...I wanted to thank you for showing such an amazing film. It really hit home."

Shanae from Victoria (16 years old)
Extract from email to Paul Moulds
April 2008

Community Impact

- > Reunion of young people with their parents as a result of *The Oasis* documentary.
- > An attitude shift and greater understanding in the local community towards the Oasis Youth Centre in Surry Hills.
- > Employment opportunities offered to homeless youth: eg., Mirvac, Woolworths and Property Industry Foundation.
- > More support for the Oasis social enterprise – Property Plus Group which employs some of the young people from The Oasis (including government contracts).
- > 10.5% increase in Red Shield Door Knock Appeal: \$8.8 million in donations in 2008.
- > Public interest created by critical mass resulting in increased philanthropic and corporate donations to the Oasis Youth Support Network.

The Oasis documentary, the NYC report, outreach strategy and education kits contributed to a groundswell of activity in support of the broader issue of youth homelessness and the Oasis Support Network. The sheer volume and range of contact and commentary, including thousands of emails, letters, conversations and telephone calls, provides some insight to the impact of *The Oasis* documentary on the broader community.

The diversity of the feedback also demonstrated the reach of *The Oasis*. The documentary had captured the attention of mums and dads, politicians and young people, including those who had once stayed at the Oasis Youth Refuge, but are now in jobs, in stable housing, and/or with families.

New voices, new perspectives

As part of the media component of the outreach campaign the young people supported by Oasis received formal media coaching. The coaching was designed to arm them with skills to deal with media and to attend to our duty-of-care to a group of vulnerable young people whose lives were being thrust into the spotlight. This gave *The Oasis* youth an unprecedented opportunity to be the 'experts' on youth homelessness.

The Oasis also served as a platform for many individual youth homelessness services and organisations right across the country to be heard.

In 2010, young people from The Oasis continue to be heard as a result of programs offered by Foxtel and The Australian Centre for Photography.

"I can't tell you how profoundly moved I was by the stories in this documentary, and how impressed by the intelligent and engrossing film-making involved in its production. It is so raw and brave, so honest about the fragile lives these young people lead."

Governor General of Australia, Ms. Quentin Bryce (May 2009)

"Robbin and I have been overwhelmed and enormously humbled by the reaction to the documentary. So many people have stopped us on the street, emailed us, rang us, messaged us, wrote to us and encouraged us...Even locals who misunderstood and opposed us have told us they now know what we are trying to achieve and do. Every Salvation Army centre across Australia is reporting increased giving from the public. I sense we have changed the nation."

Captain Paul Moulds,
Director, The Oasis Youth Support Network.



"The fact that the documentary was not a "one off" is commendable...you have impacted the present and the future with your ongoing commitment."

Commissioner Linda Bond, Territorial Commander, Eastern Territory, Salvation Army.

Philanthropic support

The Salvation Army services across Australia benefitted significantly from increased financial contributions following the screening of *The Oasis*. Media and anecdotal reports indicated that other community based youth services also received substantial publicity and financial support due to greater community awareness of the issue and willingness to support services in their local area.

The Oasis Youth Support Network in Surry Hills, Sydney, continues to receive extraordinary corporate and philanthropic support. The experience of Oasis in Sydney throughout 2008-09 provides an indication of how Australians were moved to respond to the issue nationally.

A snapshot of some of the support received in the first few months after *The Oasis* screening:

- > Nokia renewed its commitment to provide \$100,000 each year to run the StreetConnect van.
- > Oasis Ball 2008 achieved record fundraising: \$247,000
- > Carols in the Domain Sydney, record fundraising: \$105,000
- > Societe Generale donated \$160,000 over two years which allowed five new beds to be opened at the Oasis Youth Refuge Surry Hills.
- > Commonwealth Bank Capital Markets Ball raised \$100,000
- > Video Ezy donated \$176,250 in 2009

Donations that were received by The Oasis Support Network, Surry Hills between July 2008 and March 2009:

- > Corporate donations: \$110,450
- > Private Trusts and Foundations donations: \$355,400
- > Individual contributions: \$168,000 compared to \$68,000 received in FY2008.

Two years later, we continue to see strong philanthropic interest in ending youth homelessness. Philanthropy Australia established two Homelessness Affinity Groups in Sydney & Melbourne in 2009. The same year, Virgin Unite declared youth homelessness as one of their key issues and partnered with The Oasis Youth Support Network in NSW.

The Oasis Youth Support Network in Surry Hills directly received more than **\$1.3 million** in new donations from philanthropic foundations, corporate donors and individuals in the year following the Oasis documentary screening.*

*This figure does not include the increase in donations as a result of the documentary from existing donors or functions (eg., Carols in the Domain, Door Knock Appeal or the Oasis Ball) or increase in donations received by the Salvation Army nationally.



"The Caledonia Foundation has been courageous and effective, and have really given sophisticated advocacy in a vital sector an enormous boost."

Rhonda Galbally AO
CEO, Our Community

Enduring legacy

The Oasis has demonstrated its enduring impact years after its original screening in 2008. In addition to increased financial support, the following initiatives were inspired by the documentary:

- > The Foxtel Foundation commenced its film, music and media training for youth from the Oasis Support Network. The first short films were launched in March 2009 and still continues.
- > The Australian Centre for Photography commenced an annual program for youth from The Oasis Support Network from 2009
- > Video Ezy stores distributed *The Oasis* DVD nationally as a free overnight rental (during April 2009).
- > The Salvation Army launched a major public awareness campaign on youth homelessness in September 2009.
- > NSW Forum on Homelessness featured short films from *The Oasis* in August 2009.
- > Developed a homelessness module for senior public service training programs in collaboration with the Centre for Social Impact (UNSW) and the Public Services Commission. The first training program was delivered in February 2010 to 40 public servants from Australia, NZ, Canada and the UK.

The Oasis has facilitated greater recognition and engagement with the work of the Salvation Army and Captain Paul Moulds from the Oasis Youth Support Network. In 2008, Paul was named a finalist for Australian of the Year NSW and the Local Hero Award; and featured in the Sydney Magazine's 100 most influential Australians issue. Since the ABC's screening of the documentary, Paul has had numerous opportunities to speak at high profile events on the subject of youth homelessness in Australia and overseas.

The documentary and community response prompted significant changes to the Salvation Army's strategy and response to the issue of youth homelessness. Initiatives included the formation of a National Youth Network and the re-badging of all its existing youth services under the name Oasis.

Youth homelessness is now a key social justice issue for The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army launched a public awareness campaign on youth homelessness in September 2009 and The Oasis Foundation in 2010.

Philanthropy Australia established an inaugural Homelessness Affinity Group in Melbourne and Sydney in 2009. The groups aim to share knowledge and build collaborative funding arrangements for projects that address homelessness.



" *Polly & Me* tells one of the hundreds of stories that Mirabel encounters on a weekly basis. *Polly & Me* covers some of the most crucial issues threatening those vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society today, each one a victim of their environment and circumstance. I hope everyone who sees *Polly & Me* is galvanised into action because collectively we have the power to change this. Children are helpless - we are not."

Jane Rowe, CEO
The Mirabel Foundation

Prevention & Early Intervention

The Caledonia Foundation remains passionately committed to pursuing solutions to end youth homelessness. In 2010, the Foundation launched the second phase of its *Oasis* initiative, which has a specific focus on prevention and early intervention.

Central to the second phase is the screening of *Polly & Me* on ABC1 at 9:30pm on September 9. The screening will be accompanied by an informed audience discussion hosted by Geraldine Doogue.

Polly & Me* and *Wall Boy

Polly & Me and *Wall Boy* are based on true stories sourced during the period of filming *The Oasis* documentary. The story at the heart of *Polly & Me* serves as a starting point for building the vital community conversation about prevention and early intervention strategies for vulnerable children. *Wall Boy* reminds us of the important role of outreach workers on the streets.

Both films are accompanied by a comprehensive education and outreach strategy to be rolled out following the launch in 2010. With the support of like-minded philanthropists, the outreach and education campaign will aim to:

- > Raise awareness about vulnerable children in Australian society
- > Build community capacity to prevent childhood abuse & neglect
- > Draw the attention of policy-makers to the importance of investing in early prevention and intervention.

The education and outreach is a collaboration driven by a Steering Group with representatives across prevention and early intervention. The Steering Group includes:

- > Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY),
- > The Salvation Army & The Oasis Youth Support Network
- > The Benevolent Society
- > The CREATE Foundation
- > Families Australia
- > Good Beginnings Australia
- > The Lighthouse Foundation
- > Lou's Place
- > The Mirabel Foundation
- > National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect
- > The Smith Family
- > The Caledonia Foundation is also indebted to Professor Dorothy Scott from the Australian Centre for Child Protection.

"Acts of abuse are nearly always private and well hidden from public view...it is our belief that the prevention of the damage is overwhelmingly preferable to rescuing damaged children and families as portrayed in *Polly and Me* after abuse has occurred. Good Beginnings has a vision for every Child in Australia to have a good beginning through helping to promote and support positive parenting."

Jayne Meyer Tucker, CEO
Good Beginnings Australia

"*Polly and Me* is a shocking depiction of a child whose fundamental need for love, security and safety is invisible to the damaged adults around her. The film powerfully lays bare *Polly's* absolute isolation: she has no one to turn to, no one to speak up for her and no community to support her. The Benevolent Society sees families like this in our communities every day. *Polly and Me* is a reminder that Australia's top priority must be safe, healthy children and strong communities."

Richard Spencer, CEO
The Benevolent Society

Conclusion

The screening of *The Oasis* documentary on ABC Television, NYC Report and outreach activities have had an indelible impact on the Australian community. Each time we speak to Paul Moulds we are heartened by new stories that demonstrate the impact of *The Oasis* as it continues to find new audiences through the distribution of DVDs and community screenings – both nationally and internationally. The challenge now is to harness the momentum of community and political support for the cause of youth homelessness to ensure that the Federal Government's 2020 target is reached.

The Caledonia Foundation will continue to support initiatives related to *The Oasis* project like *Polly & Me* and *Wall Boy* to ensure that youth homelessness – particularly prevention and early intervention – remains on the national agenda.

