



## Australian-first scholarships to support DV affected kids

Research by the Childhood Domestic Violence Association has found that exposure to domestic violence has a huge impact on children, potentially leading to short- and long-term negative mental, behavioural, and social effects.

Further, children who witness physical, emotional or verbal domestic violence growing up are twice as likely to abuse drugs, and six times more likely to die by suicide.

Australian Charity of the Year 2018, Friends With Dignity will soon launch the eighth round of its Little Friends Scholarship program, an Australian-first initiative established in 2017 awarding bi-annual monetary scholarships to children throughout Australia who have faced, or are facing, domestic or family violence.

The educational and extra-curricular scholarships help to cover a variety of expenses from helping kids attend camp and after-school activities with their peers, to providing uniforms.

The first seven rounds of the program have seen a total of 347 Little Friend Scholarships awarded to children aged between 5-18 years of age nationally since its launch in 2017, totalling \$149,460, with a minimum of 40 scholarships on offer in round eight.

"Two scholarships are guaranteed to be awarded per State or Territory, with the remaining balance being awarded on an 'as needs basis'", said Friends With Dignity Director and Chief Financial Officer, Julia McKenna.

"We established the Little Friends Scholarship program to ensure all children who are facing or have faced domestic violence have the ability to normalise their lives."

"The scholarships are designed to help young domestic violence survivors re-build their confidence by finding something they are good at, and ensuring their education continues.

"This initiative is needed now more than ever due to the nature of the lockdown and confinement of Covid, with demand for electronic devices at an all-time high."

The not-for-profit organisation responded to requests from the community to contribute to their Little Friends Scholarship program by launching the Little Friends Scholarship Community Fund in round three, allowing the general public to also help children in need.

"Donations to the Little Friends Scholarship Community Fund can be large or small. All funds received will be pooled together in \$500 amounts (the size of a scholarship), and all donations over \$2 are tax-deductible."

Normally, all Friends With Dignity programs are on a referral basis from organisations and refuges, however, the Friends With Dignity Little Friends Scholarship program affords parents the opportunity to submit an application personally.

"The Little Friends Scholarship program gives parents the opportunity to tell their children's stories, and how the scholarship will improve their lives," said Ms McKenna.

"The application still needs to be co-signed by a support worker, GP, school principal, school counsellor, or the like.

"Many of the children that have historically applied for a scholarship are suffering from significant trauma. Some even with PTSD, which we would equate to that suffered by our servicemen and women returning from a war zone."

Friends with Dignity is appealing to the corporate sector, charity groups, philanthropists and the community at large to throw their support behind its Little Friends Scholarship Program.

The national not-for-profit organisation is interested in more corporates coming on board to help these young victims, to ensure every child has the ability to further their education and/or build their confidence through sport or the arts.

"We have recently been overwhelmed by the financial support of the Scholarship Program from Jeunesse Kids as founding corporate partner, James Frizelle Foundation, doTERRA Healing Hands Foundation, CCI Giving and the K & J Prendiville Foundation," said Ms McKenna.

"The continuing support of St Aidan's Anglican Girls School, Community Groups and the general public via the Little Friends Community Fund, will see many more children be able to further their education and participate in activities with their friends, that they would not be able to pursue due to the financial hardships brought on by domestic violence.

"We are especially hoping to attract corporate support in other States now that we can demonstrate that each State will be awarded a minimum of two scholarships, so children in their own backyard will benefit.

"The need within our communities is so large - the more assistance we can receive in raising funds, the more children can be assisted and know an entire community is behind them and wanting only the best for them."

Round eight applications open on the 25th January 2021 and close on the 26th February 2021.

To apply for the Little Friends Scholarship Program, the online application can be found at:

<https://www.friendswithdignity.org.au/little-friends-scholarship>.

The Little Friends Scholarship Community Fund website can be found at MyCause:  
<https://www.mycause.com.au/page/179288/little-friends-scholarship-community-fund>.

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