

About our Buddy Bags program

Alannah & Madeline Foundation Buddy Bags program is an initiative that provides essential items to children and young people who are experiencing crisis, trauma or just doing it tough.

Every year, tens of thousands of children and young people across Australia experience family or community violence, hardship, crisis, or traumatic events. The impact of these experiences can result in children and young people feeling scared and unsettled, often placing them in unfamiliar environments without their belongings.

Alannah & Madeline Foundation provide Buddy Bags to children and young people all around Australia, to address their immediate material and personal care needs, and to help to instil a sense of security and comfort.

Buddy Bags are filled with brand new, carefully selected items that focus on the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of children and young people. We include new pyjamas, socks, and underwear so they can be dressed in clean clothes, a toothbrush, toothpaste, face washer and a hairbrush for their personal care needs, a book to relax the mind, a trauma informed toy for healing play, and the all-important teddy bear to cuddle for emotional comfort.

A Buddy Bag is something tangible a child or young person can call their own, and sends a message that they are special, that people care for them, and that they matter.

The Buddy Bags program is funded by donations from our community of donors and supporters and are provided free of charge to a range of agencies including women's refuges, domestic violence services, crisis accommodation, out-of-home care, and health services who provide these bags to children and young people throughout Australia.

Buddy Bags are loved and appreciated by children and young people, families, and agencies alike, for the joy and comfort they bring in a time of need.



How Buddy Bags started

The Buddy Bags program was piloted between September and December in 2007 to assess if the program model was going to be valuable and effective. The pilot saw the Alannah & Madeline Foundation distribute 400 Buddy Bags to six foster care agencies and domestic violence refuges in Melbourne.

The response from the pilot was overwhelmingly positive!

The introduction of the Buddy Bags program was seen as beneficial by all stakeholder groups participating in the pilot. The children, their parents or carers and agency workers all indicated that providing Buddy Bags positively enhanced the experience of children entering emergency care or of workers looking after children in care.

Buddy Bags also helped start to restore a sense of safety and security in their lives – a key step in their recovery from trauma.

Who helps get Buddy Bags to children in crisis?

Our receiver agencies include refuges, emergency foster care and community agencies working in conjunction with the Foundation to deliver Buddy Bags to children in crisis.

What is inside a Buddy Bag?

Our Buddy Bags are thoughtfully packed by valuable volunteers with items applicable for the age of the child receiving them - as the needs of a baby are vastly different for those of a teen. All items in our Buddy Bags are brand new.

Our Buddy Bags are packed in the following age groups:

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years





- 6-8 years
- 9-12 years
- 13-16 years

Contents included in Buddy Bags were developed through discussions with agency workers, and the social work and trauma consultancy team at the Foundation.

- Backpack
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Bath products
- Hairbrush or comb (age dependant)
- Face washer
- Pyjamas
- Underwear x 2
- Socks
- Book (age appropriate)
- Trauma informed toy
- Teddy bear
- Hand-knitted beanie
- In addition, Buddy Bags for:
 - 9+ contain a journal
 - 9+ contain ballpoint pens x 2
 - 9+ girls contain period products

Also included are additional donated items that are new and beneficial for children and young people, such as phone cards, activity books, baby blankets etc.





How do Buddy Bags help children experiencing crisis?

Children accessing the services experience significant trauma and often these children have left their home in a hurry, not being able to take anything with them and arrive with just the clothes they are wearing.

By giving children belongings of their own, we help begin the process of restoring a sense of safety and security and provide much-needed routine and continuity in young lives that are in turmoil.

A Buddy Bag is something they can call their own, no matter where they go. Buddy Bags give a child much more than just tangible items.

Buddy Bags provide comfort on arrival. PJs, socks, and underwear provide something new and clean to wear. Activity or reading books provide a distraction. Journals encourage older children to express their thoughts and feelings. A trauma informed toy supports the important aspect of play to heal from trauma. Backpacks will often double as a school bag.

A teddy bear gives them something to hold on to and cuddle, which is important in a strange and unsettling environment.

Buddy Bags also provide some respite to more than just the children who receive them. Think of the parent: on top of the reasons that led them to accessing services in the first place, mum or dad can't give their child or children what they need – not even a toothbrush – to then see a smile on their child's face. For agency workers, they deliver some happiness to people who are experiencing incredible trauma. Buddy Bags also

help build initial trust and rapport with the refuge worker or foster carer and enable critical conversations to begin earlier.

Our impact so far

Since the inception of the Buddy Bag program the Alannah & Madeline Foundation has provided over 125,000 Buddy Bags to vulnerable children and young people across Australia as the first step on their journey to safety and recovery.



Postcards from children and young people who have received a Buddy Bag.

Learn more

To learn more about the important work of the Alannah & Madeline Foundation please visit www.alannahandmadeline.org.au

Every child has a right to be safe.

