



Changing Children's Lives

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022

The Fathering Project // thefatheringproject.org // ABN 67605348776

In the spirit of Reconciliation, The Fathering Project acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country, and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



Message from our Outgoing Chair



I'm so proud of everything The Fathering Project does because every program undertaken, every service accessed, every social media post or piece of publicity, every personal contact, every event and every action taken by a dad or father figure to build better relationships with their kids and other kids is a huge win.

Nothing showcased this more than The Australian Fathering Awards managed by The Fathering Project for the first time in September 2022. The volume of nominations from across workplaces, communities and the country showed just how much we value and celebrate Australian Dads making a positive contribution to their children's lives and the lives of others. Huge congratulations to the award winning fathers recognised this year and the team for delivering a highly successful nationally prestigious event.

It's so important to mark these moments as we continue to navigate our way through COVID impacts. In the toughest of times for Australian families, I'm pleased to see general awareness and movement at various levels of Government to recognise the increasing value of fathering, especially with initiatives like extending paid parental leave. Work to advocate and build bipartisan relationships on behalf of fathers and speak up on systemic change needed by The Fathering Project and our colleagues not only resulted in this ground-breaking shift in parenting policy but also in us securing ongoing Federal Government Funding for two more years.

This support has enabled us to consolidate The Fathering Project's vision and strategy for the future, continue to build a strong team at Board, Staff and volunteer level and undertake a review of more than a decade of Australian and international fathering research with studies spanning the domains of child development. These findings, outlined in our 2022 Research Report, 'Why Fathers Matter', guide the program development of The Fathering Project to directly address the needs of the fathers and their children.

Personally, given it was my last year in the Chair seat, one of my biggest highlights this past year was being able to spend a couple of amazing days with many of The Fathering Project's key people and some great individuals in The Big Push bike ride from Sydney to Canberra. The collaborative spirit and support shown by everyone involved in that event is at the heart of all we do. Thank you to all who've come along for the ride this year.

Martin Black (Chair from October 2019 – June 2022)



Message from our Incoming Chair



As the incoming Chair, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Martin Black for his contribution and leadership over the past several years. Those years have not only seen impressive growth and maturity of The Fathering Project's programs and services but were also years where Australian families needed our support more than ever. Martin/Káti and the team have managed to increase support to Dads in workplaces, communities and online in an extremely challenging environment from a sustainability and delivery perspective. In talking with fathers across the nation, I know this is very much appreciated.

I'm looking forward to building on the team's success in the coming year with a focus on expanding our national footprint in schools alongside extending and deepening our corporate program. I'm also very excited to see and share new research insights coming out of our Telethon Kids Institute partnership.

We have a promising new year ahead and welcome even more collaboration with Government agencies, organisations and communities to ensure Australian Dads and their children continue to benefit from the work we do.

Geoff Lloyd, Chair (from June 2022)



Message from our Founder



Did you know our 10 year anniversary is coming up? This anniversary is a chance to pause, reflect and celebrate 'where we have come' as well as look to our future impact on and engagement with Australian fathers, father figures and children via schools, workplaces, sporting groups, communities and other places such as the online world. We've come so far in the past ten years – both in terms of The Fathering Project's capability and capacity but also as a society when it comes to amplifying the impact of fathers on children's lives.

I'd like to echo Martin and Geoff's comments about the integrity and resilience of The Fathering Project team who have maintained a high level of performance despite the ongoing COVID challenges. This has impressed me deeply and has been reinforced each time I attend an event or spend time with the team, volunteers, partners and supporters.

The Fathering Project's practical support in workplaces and communities combined with a future focus on research and innovation will ensure we head into the next ten years and generate data, collaborations and insights we can share across sector.

This is an exciting time for more donors, government and community groups to get involved, and in so doing change the future of millions of Australian kids.

Dr Bruce Robinson, Founder



Our Mission

Our mission is to educate, connect and empower fathers and father figures across Australia to prevent long term social, emotional, and cognitive difficulties and create the conditions for children to thrive



Message from our CEO



Welcome to our 2022 Annual Review, a year of coming together to 'Change Children's Lives'. As we emerged from COVID, The Fathering Project Board, team, our supporters and volunteers came together to manage the challenges and opportunities of the last 12 months and supported our fathers, families and communities across the country.

2021/22 was yet another turbulent year for the community sector which is still struggling from the effects of the pandemic, making service delivery challenging while families needed more support than ever with rising costs and resulting pressures. The Fathering Project works at the intersection of this tension, compounded by financial pressures and staff turnover, felt by many in the sector.

In conjunction with the board, our approach was to focus on long-term strategic planning and continuous program review to ensure we meet community needs.

We defined our pillars of practice and focused strategic growth on four key areas:

1

Optimising our service delivery

Review and re-alignment of the scope of our activities to meet community needs whilst leveraging organisational strengths to diversify income sources and create stronger impact.

2

Strengthening our identity and Impact

Clarification of the organisation's identity and focus on key impact areas to drive greater connection with fathers, families and communities.

3

Fostering deeper relationships

Building and growing our external relationships to support organisational growth and deliver greater impact.

4

Developing our organisation

Upskilling our people and optimising our processes and systems to enable strategic and operational success.

Underlying all of these is a commitment to equity and diversity with a focus on fathers and families who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, residents of regional, rural and remote areas, Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Our objective is to deliver an organisation that is positioned to act in a strong and sustainable way for the long term to ensure we continue to change lives and positively impact the people and communities we support in our core areas of expertise.

Within this overall objective, our most important commitment is to understand the needs of the community and deliver impactful services. Our place-based approaches are person-centred, bottom-up, collaborative and support fathers, families and communities.

In parallel we have engaged in positive and constructive social policy discussions to influence systemic barriers and improve the systems that impact people across a range of circumstances and communities in which we live and work.

Our goal is transformational and we aim to impact future generations through a preventative approach because today's parents are shaping tomorrow's parents.

I extend my sincerest thanks to every individual, family and organisation who gave us the opportunity to support them this year. To our board, staff, partners, volunteers and supporters, I am grateful to work alongside you in changing children's lives today and in the future.

Káti Gapaillard





Year at a Glance

What we are seeing in the community



Traditional views of family and men have changed significantly over the past decade. There have been considerable shifts in family structures with the role of men and fathers changing towards greater caregiving and 'home' roles, which in turn has fostered greater gender equality. The single-male-parent family group is projected to increase faster than any other family group over the next couple of decades.



Men are becoming more open and with an increased awareness of men's mental health and greater opportunity to speak out in open discussions which has led to an increase in men expressing their feelings.



We are seeing a range of concerning childhood and youth trends such as growing diagnoses of mental health problems, greater consumption of digital technologies and increasing substance abuse. Ease of access and social pressures have driven up the rate of children & youth using illicit substances especially under-age drinking and drug use. Gen Z is the first social generation to have grown up with access to the Internet and portable digital technology from a young age, known as 'digital natives' and levels of anxiety and mental health issues continue to increase amongst young people.



750 000+
children's lives
changed



450 000+
fathers
supported



94%
of Dads Groups
members used our
resources to impact
their cholds' wellbeing



90%
of Dads Groups members
experienced positive
change in their view and
knowledge of fatherhood



100%
growth of
volunteer
network



1000+
partnered
schools and
organisations



1300+
volunteers



2M+
reach per month
across digital and
traditional media

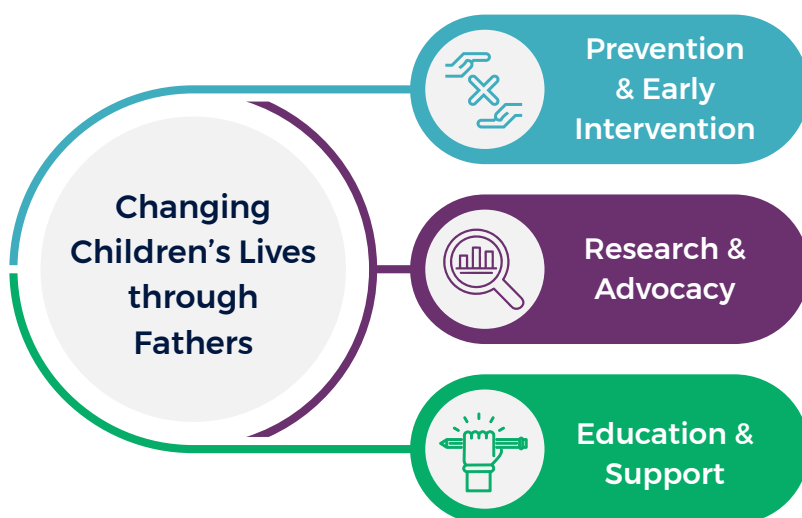


Our Impact

The Fathering Project programs contribute to the following outcomes for the Australian community:

- Improving mental and physical health outcomes
- Stronger and more connected families and communities
- Build and facilitate gender equity in families, communities and workplaces
- Prevent and address social issues including poor mental health and suicide, domestic violence, antisocial behaviour and child neglect
- Disrupting traditional and harmful models of parenting and create new ones
- Creation of a wrap-around safety net for fathers and families by meeting them at their place of need
- Break cycles of disadvantage and create a brighter future for all children.

We do this through...



Who we are

The Fathering Project (TFP) is a not for profit, non-denominational, research and evidenced based organisation that equips fathers and father figures to actively engage with their child's development and provide positive change to their child's life.

We improve every child's future by supporting their fathers and father figures, through programs and resources designed to help men become more effective in their first and most important role of being a Dad.

The Fathering Project is a harm preventative initiative that seeks to address the issues of suicide, substance abuse, self-harm and domestic violence, and to improve child development outcomes such as social and emotional development in babies and toddlers, school readiness, engagement and performance, socialisation and physical activity as well as confidence and resilience.



Education and Support

We support and educate fathers and professionals working with fathers, children, and families to prevent long term social and emotional issues and build strong and enduring relationships in families and between fathers and children.

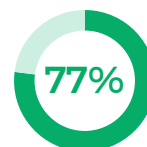


Dads Groups

We continue to have fantastic uptake and feedback from those attending our Dads Groups across the country. An inclusive and positive peer-based environment for Dads to meet, share and learn from each other.



We evaluate our programs by surveying our fathers, father figures and male role models, this is what they tell us.



Feel very supported, which allows them to effectively engage with their child



Experienced positive change in how important they saw their role as a father

A father's involvement in a Dad's Group significantly improves feelings of connection to a school over time.



Experienced positive change in their knowledge of child development and fathering



Felt more comfortable visiting their child's school



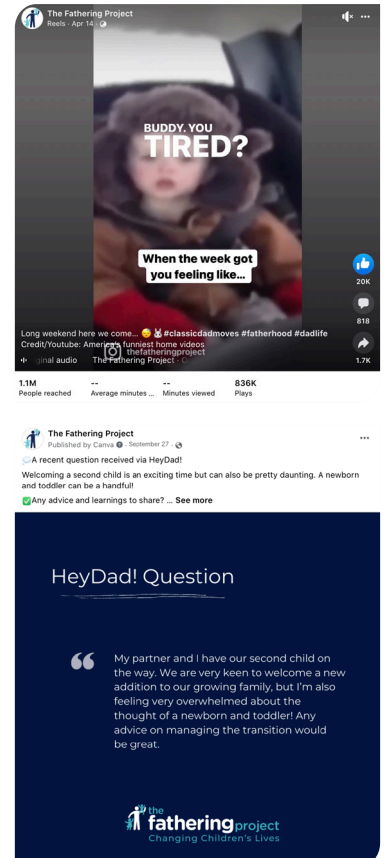
The Fathering Channel

Our digital education and awareness service providing accurate, engaging and accessible information which has become the go-to place for fathers families and communities.

Over the last two years, The Fathering Channel has gone from strength to strength, providing our audience with educational webinars, expert interviews, fathering advice from Dr Bruce Robinson and cooking segments encouraging quality time with kids.

In the past year we've introduced:

- 0 **Dad proof tips** - weekly tips on a Monday provide dads with advice, tips and strategies on a range of different topics from birth to late teens. Dad-proof tips also provide dads with advice on looking after themselves so they can be in the best shape for their kids.
- 0 **Hey Dad Q&A** - gives our audience an opportunity to provide their own tried and tested tips and advice to other dads. This series allowed us to get to know our audience better and understand their thinking and behaviour. It created a sense of community and each dad having each other's back.
- 0 **#ClassicDadmoves** - humorous, thought provoking and emotionally charged videos re-shared across our social media channels.



The Fathering Academy

In our 10 years of inspiring and equipping Dads to be the best they can be for their kids and families, our Dads Groups remain the most successful and influential vehicle for creating positive behaviour change in fathers and father figures. To ensure that our Dads Groups are as effective as possible, we launched The Fathering Academy for fathers and father figures who want to go to the next level in their leadership.

The Fathering Academy is the result of years of research and our own experience of what it takes to lead effective groups. We will provide all the training needs for our Dads Group Leaders to do exactly that, lead effective and meaningful groups within their communities.

We are taking best practice techniques for leading and facilitating men's circles to create the best environment possible for fathers to connect with other fathers, to connect with quality and relevant parenting content, and connect with and fulfill their most influential role, being a Dad to their kids.

The Fathering Academy is how we are leading the charge with providing quality training to passionate leaders that will positively impact fathers, their children and build stronger connected communities.

Father Inclusive practice

We provide research-backed and evidence-based guidelines to health, education and social service practitioners and organisations to optimise father inclusivity.

Through our expertise and training, we ensure early learning centres, schools and workplaces are best equipped to implement father inclusion, supporting families, and child wellbeing and development.



Prevention and Early Intervention

We deliver nationally accessible prevention and early intervention programs and services to improve father and family relationships and connectedness



Workplace programs

NEW working families program provides access to a series of workshops and resources which work to align policy, culture and workplace practice to support fathers and families.



"In an industry like ours, that is fast moving and where our people often work at unconventional times, or away from home, the work of The Fathering Project is important to ensuring that our workforce and their families are connected and supported. I'm personally committed to support and work alongside families to help make the working environment and family life connected. It's a must that fathers are present and connected in every way." - Steve Butcher, Executive General Manager, John Holland



Work and Families - allies or enemies?

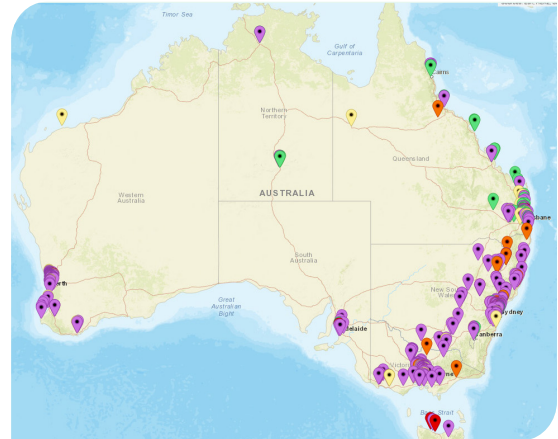
The emotional lives of children – the unseen stakeholders at work – are affected by their parents' careers



Programs and Services in early learning centres and schools

Designed by age group, we deliver programs, digital resources and events to support a large number of centres and schools across the country.

We had 308 dads and kids events with over 11 000 in attendance.



Programs for Disadvantaged Communities



A universal multi-layered approach to support fathers living in disadvantaged communities to improve family and child well-being and build stronger communities. We have opened up more hubs across NSW and WA and continue to expand. The hubs are staffed by qualified facilitators who provide wraparound support as well as access to resources and parenting education. We connect fathers with the required support services to ensure they are able to meet their children's need for stable housing, food, clothing and education.



Targeted programs for

- Incarcerated fathers
- New Dads - pregnancy - two years
- Community Aboriginal Fathering Program
- Fathers of children with a disability or additional needs
- Absent and separated fathers





The Community Fathering Hub in action: A father at the brink

We run community fathering programs for at-risk fathers and communities to prevent issues such as abuse, neglect, disengagement and trauma for over three years in WA and NSW, working with local services, schools, and police with outstanding results. We plan to extend and replicate its success in other locations touched by disadvantage.

Our staff supported a father who lived in a troubled neighbourhood. This dad was concerned about the environment that his kids were being brought up in. Of the 14 kids who lived in the block of flats, only three regularly attended school, police were called daily to violent incidents at the flats and the father was unable to provide effectively for his children.

This Father joined our Community Fathering Hub through the school his children attended. He called our staff one Monday night saying, "he couldn't go on". Our staff reacted promptly to the situation and provided immediate support for this dad and his children. We were able to give him food packages, connections to safer accommodation and local support.

These interventions were possible thanks to our generous donors and local partnerships.

Now living in a better environment and still with their father these kids are attending school regularly. Their dad is more engaged with their school and their academic achievements have improved. By working with our staff and other dads, the children can now benefit from a significant change in the approach of their father to their upbringing, education, and development.

A much happier, healthier, and connected family.





Research and Advocacy

We contribute to the global evidence base on the influence of fathers on the social, emotional, mental and physical health of their children and advocate for and raise awareness of the importance of fathers in families and the lives of children



Neglecting to invest in fathers will cost our children their lives

Key Takeaways

1. Disengaged and dysfunctional fathers damage children's lives
2. Existing Parenting programs fail to meet the needs of most fathers
3. Fathering programs create more equitable opportunities for workplace participation
4. The investment in fathering programs is an investment in children, families, and communities

Advocating for the role of fathers in their children's lives

In our 2022 Research Report, 'Why Fathers Matter', The Fathering Project has reviewed more than a decade of Australian and international fathering research with studies spanning the domains of child development. These findings guide the program development of The Fathering Project to directly address the needs of the fathers and their children.





Why we do what we do

Top 5 areas of risk for children impacted by dysfunctional fathering

1

Mental Health Challenges

- Low levels of father involvement (a combination of frequency and quality of father-child contact);
- Increase the risk of children developing internalised (e.g., anxiety and depression) and externalised (e.g., conduct problems, oppositional defiant disorder), low levels of life satisfaction.

**2**

Poor Physical Health

- Patterns of father involvement shape child health prior to birth. For example, low father involvement in antenatal care increases the risk of birth complications, preterm birth, and infant mortality.
- Children of physically inactive fathers are also more likely to be physically inactive.
- Children with fathers with low levels of parental involvement are more likely to be overweight.

**3**

Reduced School Engagement

- Children with disengaged fathers are more likely to have behaviour problems in school, struggle academically, be absent from school, and fail to complete their schooling – irrespective of socioeconomic status, race, and ethnic background.
- Children whose fathers have low levels of involvement during childhood have poorer educational attainment at age 20 years.

**4**

Delinquency and Incarceration

- International research has estimated that 70-85% of incarcerated youth grew up in a fatherless household or were exposed to dysfunctional fathering behaviours (e.g., abusive fathers).
- Low levels of father involvement also increases the risk children will exhibit bullying behaviours towards their peers. Low levels of father involvement also magnify the impact on the victims of bullying.





5

Increased Risk-Taking Behaviour

- Children with absent fathers are more likely to engage in cigarette, alcohol, and illicit drugs in later life.
- Children with fathers who are disengaged or provide inadequate support in early life are more likely to participate in increased risky behaviours in adolescence (e.g., unsafe sex, substance use).
- Youth aged 13-21 years who report low levels of closeness to father figures are more likely to experience dating violence victimisation (e.g., intimate partner violence).

**Addressing the Issues**

A proven strategy to overcome these issues has been the creation of fathering programs. Demonstrated in both domestic and international jurisdictions, fathering programs increase men's participation in parenting programs, allowing children, families, and communities to benefit from better engaged, responsible and skilled fathers.

The Fathering Project is the first intervention to be implemented, anywhere in the world, that focuses on the fathers of all children in the population of an entire country. From school and community fathering programs to workplace engagement, we support fathers where they are, offering evidence-based learning designed specifically for fathers.

Download the full research report at
<https://thefatheringproject.org/why-fathers-matter/>

Ground-breaking Research Trial

This year, as part of The Fathering Institute, we launched a world-first randomised control trial to evaluate the long-term impacts of father-inclusive programs. Conducted in partnership with Telethon Kids Institute, this trial will enable us to quantify the national impact of our programs and facilitate the translation of evidence into scalable practice. This is part of our ongoing goal to facilitate greater levels of research, scale and impact.



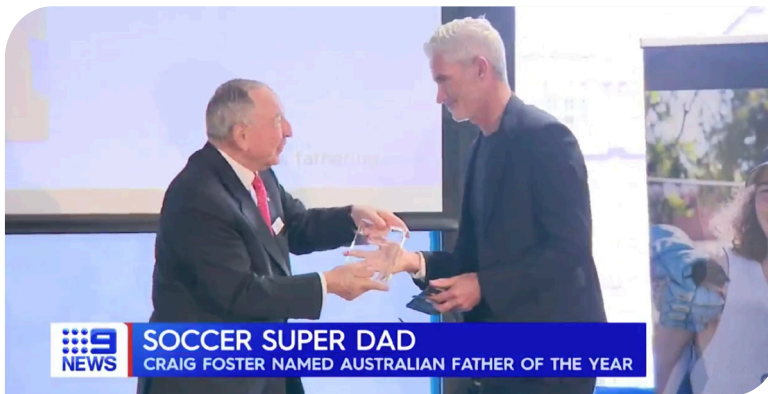


The Australian Fathering Awards

Recognising and Celebrating Outstanding Fathers and Organisations

We are very proud to celebrate fatherhood by becoming the new home of The Australian Fathering Awards. Originally launched in 1957, these awards honour the precious role and journey of fatherhood from birth to beyond.

We are thrilled with the success of the Awards event in September 2022. The award recipients demonstrate the clear impact and value of fathers and father friendly workplaces on children, families and communities. Huge congratulations to our winners and all nominees.



- **Australian Father of The Year** - Craig Foster AM
- **Australian Community Father of The Year** - Rick Pekan
- **Australian Sporting Father of the Year** - Isaac Thomas
- **Australia's Best Workplace for Fathers** - KPMG Australia

The Awards received wide media coverage, reaching over 6 million Australians through traditional and digital media promoting the significance of engaged fathers and father figures, and the positive impact this has on the future of our children.

We know that 2023 will only be bigger and better, and we can't wait to uncover everyday men and workplaces doing extraordinary things for families, communities and most importantly – our children.

Read more at australianfatheringawards.org.au





Connecting Online and in the Media



2M+

average reach per month across traditional and digital media

18 000

E-news subscribers

1M

#Classicdadmoves - organic social media reach

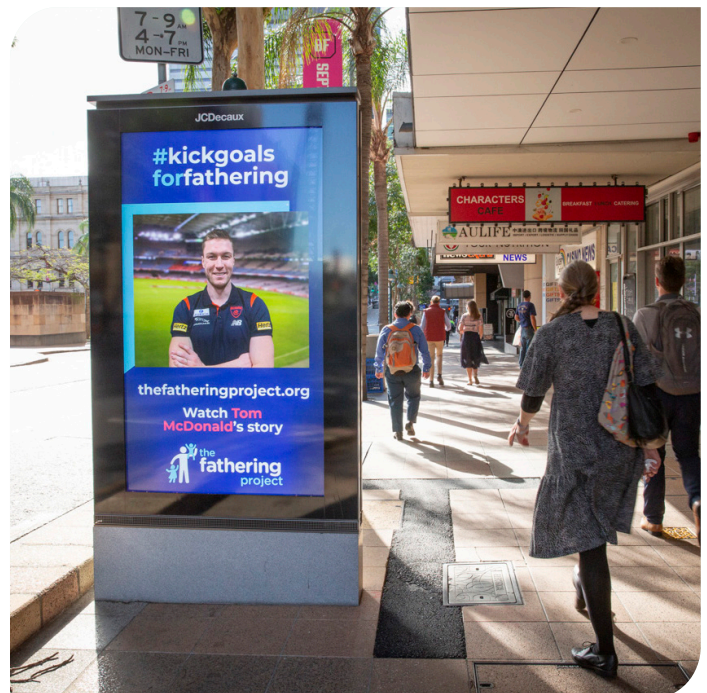
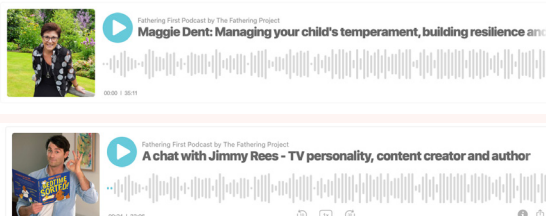
The Fathering First Podcast series 'Figuring it Out Together' has seen increased interest and engagement year on year. The podcast discusses key topics with experts and influencers on fathering across the ages.

Podcast download 2020/2021

3 275

Podcast download 2021/2022

8 300



Kicking Goals for Dad on Father's Day.

This year we built on the success of our 2020 AFL related Father's Day campaign content by developing a campaign with the support of AFL players and coaches titled Kicking Goals for Dad on Father's Day.

This included four AFL players/coaches promoting a special message talking about one Fathering goal they will focus on over the coming year and encourage all dads to set a goal, like a dad date, or special time to have with their kids. This campaign resulted in extensive national media coverage and increased traffic to The Fathering Project website and social media.



Thank you Partners, Funders, and Fathers



We cannot do what we do for Dads and families without the generous support of our partners, funders and fathers sharing their time, experiences, and expertise. Whether it is financial support or sharing your personal insights with us to better our programs, thank you for working with us to support every Australian child to thrive.



Get Involved

While we have achieved an extraordinary amount this past year, we still have a long way to go. There is a role for every Australian in supporting The Fathering Project. Whether it is funding support for our evidence based programs or amplifying our advocacy efforts via your social media, we need your help.

Partner with us

As a not-for-profit organisation, a lot of what we achieve relies on the generous support of the Australian community, individuals, large corporate companies, or small businesses. Your partnership is critical in helping us change children's lives.

There are many ways you can get involved:

- **Volunteer with us.**
- **If you're a school** – check out the range of services and programs we have for schools.
- **As a corporate**, let us design a tailored program for your employees.
- **Host a fundraiser or awareness-raising activity** at your organisation or club.
- **Event sponsorships and partnerships.**
- **Sponsor one of the award categories** for The Australian Fathering Awards
- **Become a key brand partner** on The Fathering Channel programs.
- **Host a lunch workshop** and invite us to speak at your next event about the critical role of fathers in child development.
- **Choose us as your organisation's preferred charity** by encouraging volunteering or workplace giving from your employees.

With your generous support, we can continue to work with fathers and father figures to change children's lives.



Join or start a Dad's Group

<https://thefatheringproject.org/dads/join-a-group/>

Join the conversation



JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER

Check out new content on The Fathering Channel

<https://thefatheringproject.org/fathering-channel/>



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

The Fathering Project is supported by the Australian Government.