

# Charities struggling to break the cycle of abuse

By Isobel Coleman

FOR Coast mum Janine and her two teenage daughters, the future looked very bleak.

After years of mental cruelty her partner had finally resorted to violence, and Janine took the girls and fled. But with nowhere to go, no support and all three suffering from very low self-esteem, their options were limited.

That's when Janine turned to Coast charity SunnyKids for help.

Now the family has a home, mum has retrained and found a job and the girls have become successful students. One is starting university this year.

"But the scenario would have been very different without our help," said SunnyKids CEO Chris Turner.

"I would have had grave concerns for the girls, as there was a great risk that they would end up leading a very disadvantaged life."

Mr Turner warned this week that more has to be done to help Coast charities and support services, which have been left devastated by the global financial crisis.

"We now have to turn away 50 per cent of referrals, yet we are still operating at 112 per cent capacity," he said.



**VULNERABLE PEOPLE:** Victims of domestic violence and their children need your help, says SunnyKids CEO Chris Turner (inset).

"Without these types of services, the numbers of those in trouble will continue to rise.

"The Coast seems to be a destination for people who are struggling, but when they get here it's not the paradise they expect. If they have relocated then they have also lost the support networks they had before, such as grandparents. It is

particularly hard for children, who may have left friends behind and may be struggling socially and emotionally."

Mr Turner said that, contrary to popular belief, 75 per cent of those in women's refuges are actually children.

"What we have is an inter-generational disadvantage, where

we are seeing the third generation of children coming through the refuge," he said.

"We have to break that pattern and build networks whereby these families can live in the community and support themselves."

SunnyKids receives \$300,000 a year, but it costs \$500,000 to run the service.

"At the very time our services are most needed, our income stream has diminished, so we are desperately trying to fundraise," Mr Turner said.

He believes statistics just revealed by an Australian Council of Social Services community sector survey provide "a good thumbnail sketch of the situation many Sunshine Coast charities find themselves in, however it probably only scratches the surface of the whole picture".

More than half of the organisations surveyed said they are unable to meet demand for services. And 61 per cent are managing their services more closely to ration tight resources.

Alarming, the leading cause for referral is family breakdown and violence.

■ **If SunnyKids can help your family – or if you would like to help – see [www.sunnykids.org.au](http://www.sunnykids.org.au).**

## BRIEFLY

### Breakfast meeting

THE 2009 Telstra Queensland Business Woman of the Year, Sue Scheinplug, will be guest speaker when the Zonta Club of Noosa marks International Women's Day on March 8 with a breakfast at Noosa Springs.

This year's theme is "Empowering Women to End Poverty by 2015". The breakfast is from 7am-8.30am, doors open at 6.30am. Tickets cost \$25 and are available at Richardson & Wrench Real Estate, Hastings St on 5447 4499 or from Carole Tretheway Design, Arcadia Walk, Noosa Junction, on 0414 713 955. There will be raffle and door prizes and the Zonta Club of Noosa will give proceeds to Unifem Australia.

### Rotary charity

COOROY Rotary Club will hold a charity golf day to raise funds to buy shelter boxes for use in emergencies locally, nationally and internationally. The boxes contain shelter and support materials for 10 people. A Rotary spokesman said more than 4000 shelter boxes were recently sent to Haiti. The golf day will be held at Cooroy Golf Club on March 15. Registration is at 9am and start at 10am for an ambrose event (teams of four), limited to 20 teams. Cost is \$35 per person. To register for the event, phone Elizabeth Henley on 5449 1096 or 0416 237 212, or see [www.cooroyrotary.org.au](http://www.cooroyrotary.org.au).

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