

Our Founder - Susan Barton AM

Fact Sheet



For over 25 years Lighthouse Foundation has successfully supported over 800 young people to break the cycle of homelessness. Lighthouse provides homeless young people from backgrounds of long-term neglect and abuse, with a home, a sense of family, and around-the-clock therapeutic care that is proven to work.

“Protecting children in everyone’s business. All children deserve to have a loving home where they can feel safe, loved and supported.”

Susan Barton AM

Susan inspires us all

Susan Barton AM began caring for vulnerable young people in her own home more than 30 years ago following a life changing experience as a volunteer when she saw a child die from malnutrition in a Sri Lankan orphanage.

This was the catalyst that started her on the Lighthouse journey.

She began by opening the first Lighthouse home in 1991. Lighthouse Foundation has since raised multiple millions of dollars to radically transform the lives of more than 800 vulnerable young Australians.

Susan, who is a mother of six and grandmother of 11, pioneered a new approach to working with Australia’s homeless youth.

Lighthouse does not just provide many of our community’s most vulnerable people with a roof over their heads; it also provides them with vital skills, 24-hour support, intensive therapeutic care, a new sense of hope and a lifetime of care.

Susan believes that traumatised young people do not just need a house as much as they need a home - a place where they belong, feel cared for and honoured physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

Susan Barton AM has been recognised through multiple awards for driving change in the area of youth homelessness. She was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia in 2002; received the Melburnian of the Year award in 2009 and was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women for her significant achievements and contribution to the Victorian community in 2012.

Susan has co-authored two books that feature an extensive evidence and hands-on experience collated over the past 25 years: *Build your Teenager’s Self Esteem* (2000) and *Therapeutic Residential Care for Children: An Attachment and Trauma-Informed Model for Practice* (2011). Available for purchase via lighthousefoundation.org.au.

Susan has worked relentlessly to harness widespread community support and build Lighthouse into an organisation that has grown substantially and helped to truly break the cycle of homelessness.

She has not only transformed these lives, but also the way that homeless young people are cared for in many parts of the world. Susan Barton’s pioneering Lighthouse model has influenced professional practice internationally.

Susan Barton AM is one of Australian society’s genuine game-changers. Her inspiring story is a great example of how passionate, strong Australian women can literally change the world, as it exemplifies how dreams can be built into outstanding achievements through persistence and dedication.

