

CHARITY

You can help young families doing it tough this winter by joining our Cots for Tots campaign.

RELIEF IN TOUGH TIMES

HANNAH-JOY expects her "miracle" boy any day. "I've started getting back pains. I think he's going to be seven pounds. We're naming him Zenith-Daniel," Hannah-Joy said.

The *Leader* met the 22-year-old in her Doveton flat. She was wearing a maternity dress donated by St Kilda Mums.

"I was told I wasn't going to have babies," she said.

"I was over the moon, I was

so happy."

She moved into her flat with her boyfriend four months ago, but before that was in crisis accommodation after being evicted.

Once a car detailer, Hannah-Joy said she quit work because she was worried her baby would be exposed to toxic chemicals, and she is now on the Newstart allowance.

"It hasn't been easy. By the time we get food there's nothing left," she said.

St Kilda Mums gave her a cot, pram, baby clothes, blankets, a bouncer, maternity wear, nappies, play mat, toys, and mother care and baby care packs.

"They were there when I needed help the most, through the tough times," she said.

"I was struggling with preparing for a baby."

She wants to give her baby supplies back to St Kilda Mums when she can, and to run her own car detailing business one day.

But for now she's focusing on her planned water birth. "It's any day now. I talk to him through my belly. You can have a connection with an unborn baby," she said.

"I just want a happy healthy baby."

**Main story:**  
Dana McCauley

**Case studies:**  
Nicole Precel



FOR women giving birth in poverty, the cost of baby essentials can be impossible to meet.

Maternal child health nurses report finding babies across Melbourne sleeping in drawers, suitcases and with their parents, putting their young lives at risk.

But the St Kilda Mums charity is on a mission to give these babies a safe place to sleep. Its members source new and used cots and other crucial baby supplies, which nurses

and social workers give to those who need them most.

The *Leader* today launches a campaign calling on the community to help secure 200 more cots for babies in need.

**ABOUT** 200 teens will deliver babies at the Royal Children's Hospital this year, and numbers are rising.

**ON ANY** given night, 20,300 Victorians are homeless. A quarter are families with children.

**THIS** year 7400 refugees and asylum seekers will come

to Victoria, needing basic necessities, housing and healthcare.

In weeks ahead, we'll throw the spotlight on the devoted volunteers behind St Kilda Mums, and grateful families whose lives they touched.

Founding member Jessica Macpherson said she hated hearing of babies sleeping in drawers because there was no other option. She started St Kilda Mums in 2009 after a visit to a maternal health nurse with her own baby.

"I saw mums who didn't have what I had," Ms Macpherson said.

So she and friend Peta Magick started leaving baby supplies at their local maternal child health centre. They also started checking toys, blankets, baby formula, cots and prams to ensure they were safe.

Word spread of the pair, who by then had expanded operations to Ms Macpherson's porch, and requests for help started flooding in.

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