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MONEY PLANNING & BUDGETING

Sandwich lunches and home schooling - how Sally raised nine kids

By Sally as told to Rosamund Burton
17 April 2018 – 4:35pm

I have nine children and until last year I mostly home schooled them for over 20 years.



I'm 51 and I have seven boys and two girls ranging in age from 11 to 26. I started having children when I was 25 and kept going until 39. I never planned to have a large family. People assumed I was Catholic. I wasn't. I am Christian, but that didn't influence my desire for so many kids. It was the love, joy and contentment they gave me.

My husband was out a lot with his work, so I couldn't afford to be sick. Sometimes the responsibility was overwhelming. I'd think, I've got nine lives to feed and clothe, and raise up to be fit for society.





Sally with three of her nine children: Daisy 13, Ezra, 15 and Moses, 11.

Photo: Kate Geraghty

My husband was the breadwinner, and had well-paid jobs, but there was still only one wage to cover the mortgage and living costs. We always lived in a nice home, but we couldn't afford family holidays, and there was never money to take the kids to the movies or out for a meal. I had about \$250 a week to spend on groceries every week. We had cereal and toast for breakfast. Lunch was a Vegemite sandwich and fruit, and dinner was basic – mince, sausages, potatoes, rice, and pasta. There were never any leftovers.

I home schooled my kids because I wanted to be with them as they grew up. I home schooled for 15 consecutive years and my eldest, Sabella, never went to school. I was asked, "Do they listen to you, because you're the mum and you're with them all the time?" But they did. What they may lack in education is made up for in the nurturing of individuality. I gave them room to be different, rather than conform to a classroom.

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My husband and I separated in 2010. Sabella had completed her secondary education, and started at the Australian Institute of Music, and the other eight went to a Steiner school for a year. That was the first time any of them had attended school.

After the separation money was tight. My car was repossessed, my kitchen ceiling collapsed, we had no heating and an empty fridge, so I had to get Centrelink assistance. Over the last seven years I have lived in rented accommodation in Sydney, Victoria and the Canberra area. Two of the boys went to a public school and I home schooled the others.

I've struggled financially since separating, and I left the house I rented in Queanbeyan in March 2017 because I couldn't afford the rent. I came back to Sydney and four children and I moved into a 3-bedroom home my three eldest children were renting because we had nowhere else to go.

We were put on the Priority Public Housing waiting list and in July moved into a four-bedroom house in Bidwill, near Mount Druitt. It was run-down and the exterior walls were covered in graffiti, but I thought, "Who am I to think that I deserve better than this?" I painted it, put in a new floor, and dug the garden, which was thick with rubbish.

My 22-year-old son lives here with me, and my three youngest who since August 2017 have been at a Christian School. My family allowance payment is \$544.82 a fortnight, and my Newstart payment is currently \$376 per fortnight. My rent is \$210 a week, and the rest goes on food and bills. Our clothes are mainly from op shops, hand me downs, or on sale. Occasionally, I get food from church organisations, which is a humbling experience. I'm just surviving, but I don't have any savings, which is scary. Currently, I'm struggling to save up to go to the dentist, because I need a filling.

I came from a middle-class family, and I've had to learn to be so frugal. But I feel rich now with simple things – my family and health. I believe in surrounding myself with beauty, and can always pick a flower, and put leaves on my table. I buy myself a box of chocolates occasionally.

Now I am no longer home schooling and have more time my dream is to become financially independent.

* Sally's surname cannot be used for legal reasons



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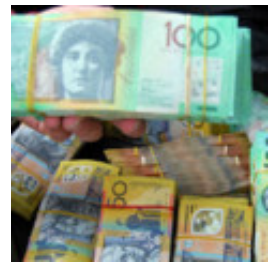
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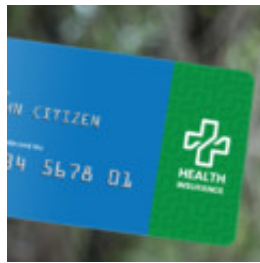
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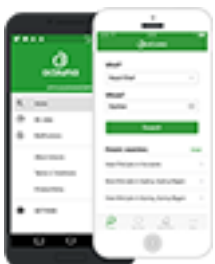


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