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Sisterly acts that pay dividends for life

EVELYN YAMINE

SOMETIMES all it takes is a little help from a sister to get you through – even if she's not your real one.

A program formed to help young troubled girls break the cycle of poverty and domestic violence has successfully enabled them to complete their studies and enter the workforce. But it can no longer help as many girls because of lack of funding.

The SISTER2sister program, run by the Life Changing Experiences Foundation, partners up a teenage girl, aged from 12 to 18, to a “big sister” – a successful corporate or business woman who

becomes their mentor.

Foundation CEO and founder Jessica Brown said the program, running for nine years, teaches “at risk” young girls from lower socio-economic areas ways to change their lives for the better.

Ms Brown said there were about 200 girls on the waiting list for the program but they had only been able to fund 25 girls this year because they did not have government funding.

According to a focus group study, the girls who took part in the program all were either working or completing their studies, except for some stay-at-home

mothers, with many the first ever to seek and gain employment in their household instead of going on welfare.

Lyndsey-Fay Macnaught, 18, took part in the SISTER2sister program in 2010 and said her mentor helped get her on the right track.

Ms Macnaught will complete her HSC this year and said she had found the confidence to pursue her dream of becoming an actress.

“I didn’t have a proper female role model as I didn’t live with my mum and my sister is younger. I was a little bit lost and just needed some kind of guidance.”



Foundation chief executive Jessica Brown with “little sister” Lyndsey-Fay Macnaught. Picture: Justin Lloyd