**Media release**

3 May 2017

**CHA invites schools in Wollongong to join the national community hubs program**

Community Hubs Australia is seeking expressions of interest (EOI) from primary schools in Wollongong to join the national community hubs program, which supports migrant and refugee women and children. This program will bring settlement support within Wollongong into the national community hubs network.

All primary schools are invited to submit an application under the community hubs EOI for Wollongong. The EOI is now open, and closes at 11.59 pm on Monday 15th May 2017.

Our hubs are predominantly located in primary schools and operate in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. They are located in communities with high migrant and refugee populations and high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. Expanding the network into Wollongong will support migrant and refugee women and children to be more engaged with the local community.

Community Hubs Australia CEO Dr Sonja Hood believes this will support greater community connection in the area.

“There is great work happening within schools and through community services in Wollongong. Our hubs focus on engaging women and pre-school children, and developing connections with existing services,” says Dr Hood.

“The heart and soul of the program is the hub leader, who is placed in the school and devotes their time to engaging with migrant and refugee women and children, and supporting broader community connection.”

“Wollongong is the first ever regional pilot of the community hubs model, and we are excited for hubs to become a part of this vibrant community,” adds Dr Hood.

Community hubs work with permanent and temporary migrants, and humanitarian entrants, whether they arrived in Australia last month or last decade. The hubs focus on engaging with and supporting migrant and refugee women with pre-school children. These are among Australia’s most vulnerable and isolated residents. In many cases, they face barriers to accessing Australia’s settlement services system.

Independent evaluations indicate that community hubs significantly increase the uptake of services among migrant families. They serve as the vital ‘missing link’ in the service delivery chain, providing family-friendly gateways linking migrants with their school, local services and each other. Hubs have opened up access pathways that are changing the way service providers do business.

The national community hubs program is resourced through one of Australia’s biggest partnerships between the philanthropic sector and local, state and federal governments. For a relatively modest investment, community hubs deliver a big social return.

CHA delivers the national community hubs program, encompassing 55 community hubs throughout Australia, with another 15 to become operational during 2017.

During 2016, our hubs engaged with almost 13,000 migrant families from 101 different countries and partnered with almost 300 organisations. Hubs recorded over 300,000 attendances at activities and programs (including more than 15,000 attendances at English classes), made more than 8,000 service referrals, and generated almost 8,000 volunteering opportunities. A total of 390 hub participants – more than 90% of them women – gained employment.

For more information go to [www.communityhubs.org.au](http://www.communityhubs.org.au)

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**Community Hubs Australia**

Community Hubs Australia Incorporated is a not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to provide assistance to disadvantaged and vulnerable people living in Australia including migrants, refugees, international students and other temporary migrants.

Founded in 2015, we coordinate one of Australia’s biggest partnerships between the philanthropic sector, and federal, state and local governments, schools and service providers to fund and facilitate place-based programs to help build greater community connectedness and social cohesion.

**National community hubs program**

Community hubs work with permanent and temporary migrants and humanitarian entrants, whether they arrived in Australia last month or last decade. Hubs focus on engaging with and supporting migrant and refugee women with pre-school children. These are among Australia’s most vulnerable and isolated residents. In many cases, they are the forgotten faces of Australia’s settlement services system.

Hubs bridge the gap between migrant women and the wider community, giving them the best chance of achieving positive settlement outcomes. Independent evaluations indicate that community hubs significantly increase the uptake of services among migrant families.

They serve as the vital ‘missing link’ in the service delivery chain, providing family-friendly gateways linking migrants with their school, local services and each other. Hubs have opened up access pathways that are changing the way service providers do business.