

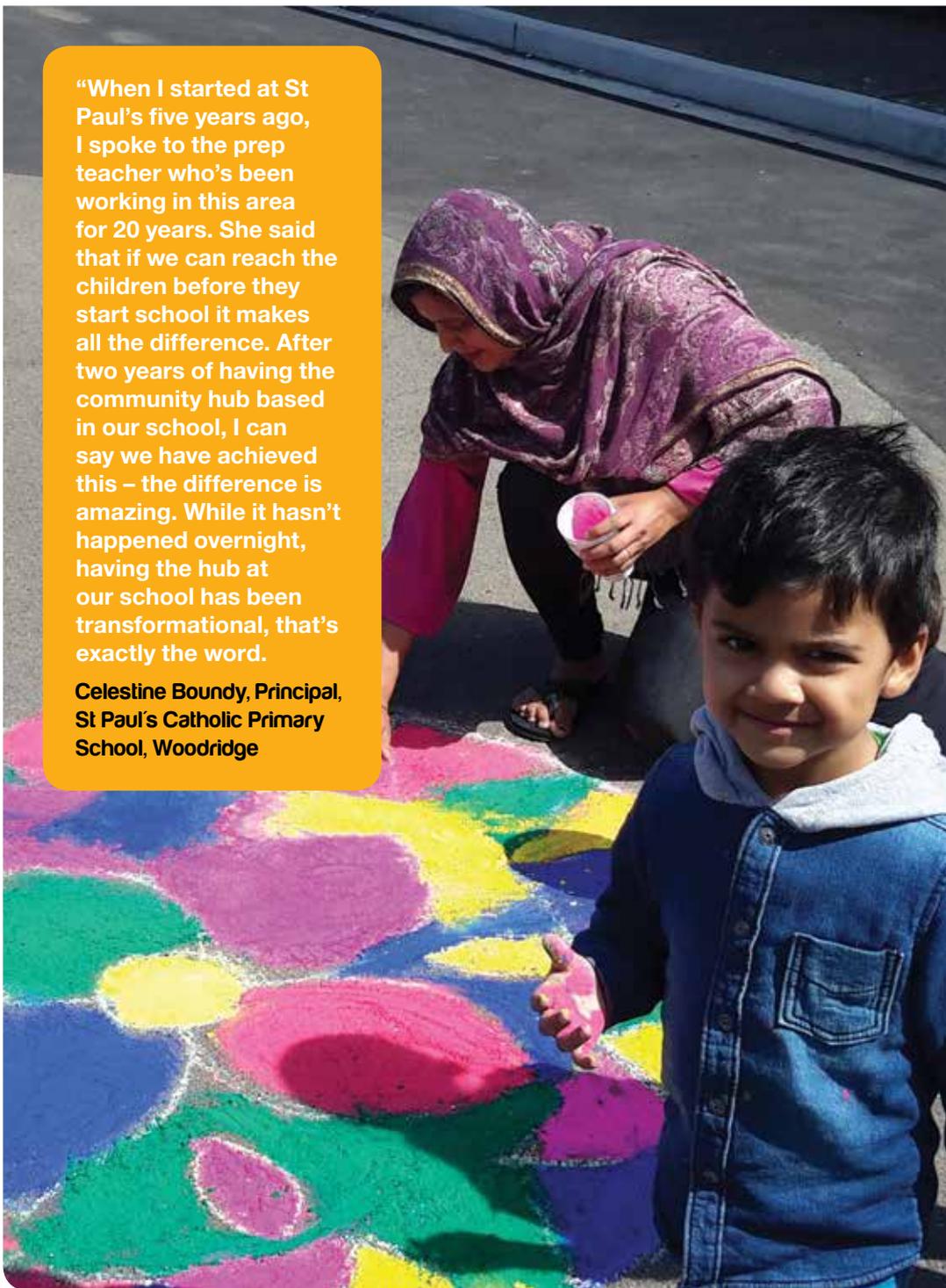
National Community Hubs Program

2016
Annual
Report



“When I started at St Paul’s five years ago, I spoke to the prep teacher who’s been working in this area for 20 years. She said that if we can reach the children before they start school it makes all the difference. After two years of having the community hub based in our school, I can say we have achieved this – the difference is amazing. While it hasn’t happened overnight, having the hub at our school has been transformational, that’s exactly the word.

**Celestine Boundy, Principal,
St Paul’s Catholic Primary
School, Woodridge**



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All photographs inside this report are from our community hubs. In the interest of protecting participant identities, photographs do not relate directly to stories, quotes or specific hubs with which they appear.

From our Chairman

Migrant and refugee women and their young children are among Australia's most vulnerable residents. In many cases, they are the forgotten faces of Australia's settlement services system.

The national community hubs program supports these women and children and their families.

At the end of 2016, through Community Hubs Australia, we were operating 40 community hubs in primary schools and community centres in Australia's three major eastern cities.

The resoundingly positive impacts of our hubs continue to be researched and documented. We know they are engaging hard-to-reach migrant women, preparing vulnerable pre-school children for smooth transitions into school, helping families to learn and practice English, and opening up opportunities for women to participate in their local communities and the workforce.

Our hubs have become embedded fixtures within each of their host schools. Hubs are building the cultural competence of schools and enabling them to play a far greater role in their local communities.

As awareness of the hubs' success grows, so does their support base. Our existing network will almost double in size in 2017 thanks to a significant increase in federal and state government funding.

Early intervention to support migrant women and their young children is a preventative investment that lays the foundations for the future economic wellbeing and social cohesion of our community.

School-based community hubs facilitate this intervention and empowerment at the local level. For a remarkably small investment, hubs are delivering outcomes that are changing individual lives – and knitting together the social fabric of our society.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the hub teams and school principals across our hubs during the past year. Their outstanding leadership and compassion within local communities is changing lives. Thank you all.

Peter Scanlon

Chairman
Community Hubs Australia





“In the Hub we are not alone. It’s a place that connects people. The hub is like a second home and we get inspired by each other.”

Hub parent of Egyptian background

About Community Hubs Australia

Community Hubs Australia Incorporated (CHA) 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.

Our priority is to help build greater community connectedness and social cohesion.

Our national community hubs program, established in 2013, focuses on engaging with and supporting migrant women with pre-school children.

CHA is funded to operate 70 community hubs throughout Australia, 30 of which will become operational during 2017. Forty existing hubs are located in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.



From our CEO

I'm very proud to present this report summarising the breadth of work undertaken by our hubs in 2016. Across the network, more than 13,000 families from 101 countries attended our hubs 300,000 times, for English, pre-school, vocational training, or general engagement activities.

Each one looks and feels different, depending on the needs of its local population and availability of services. Most of our hubs are based in primary schools (state and independent), with two based in community centres. Schools are safe, trusted places in the hearts of their communities. By embedding hubs in schools we are scaffolding a gateway to services and support onto existing community infrastructure. Our hubs are places where women from different cultures meet, make friends and seek support in a safe, welcoming, family-friendly environment.

Without exception, success of the hubs is due to the hard work of our hub teams, especially our coordinators and hub leaders, and to the school principals and leadership teams who can see the benefit of the hubs to their schools, as well as to local communities.

In 2016, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute conducted a review of hubs' impact on school readiness, and found this to be overwhelmingly positive – a summary of their research is contained in this report, and the full report is available from our website.

In 2017, we are expanding our hubs network to 30 new sites, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, and complementary funding from the NSW State Government's Office of Multicultural Affairs. This investment will almost double the size of our hubs network.

We also want to support organisations who would like to start their own hub, and in 2016 we published the first edition of our Community Hub Guide. This comprehensive guide captures the collective knowledge and experience of people working across our hubs network, and is freely available on our website.

Finally, on behalf of the whole hubs' team, a big thank you to our partners, funders, supporters and families. It is a pleasure to work with you all.

Dr Sonja Hood

Chief Executive Officer
Community Hubs Australia



The 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.

The national community hubs program is resourced through one of Australia's biggest partnerships between the philanthropic sector and federal, state and local governments. The Australian Government Department of Social Services is the primary funder of the program. Each hub costs about \$60,000 per annum to operate. For a relatively small investment, community hubs deliver a big social return.

In 2016 there were:

40 hubs

In **38** schools and
2 community centres

Across **7** LGAs and **3** states

They engaged **13,000** families

From **101** countries of origin

Who attended activities
over **300,000** times

"Developing personal relationships with families is the most important part of my job. It's the personal relationships that get people coming back. When they come back, you know there is trust and they feel connected."

**Lina, hub leader,
Chester Hill Public School Hub**



Reach and participation

In 2016, our community hubs directly engaged with almost 13,000 families from 101 countries. Over 90% of hub participants were migrant women and their young children.

Each hub is different. Each hub leader develops their space and timetable to respond to the specific needs of their local community, the priorities of their host school, and the availability of local services.



The **306,713** attendances at community hub programs and activities, included:

61,523 at playgroups and early years sessions

25,552 at children's language and literacy programs

96,052 at healthy lifestyle programs

15,667 at English classes and conversation programs

10,000 at formal/informal vocational training.



“Our hub has really brought the community together – our staff, parents and families are there for each other, both in times of need and times of celebration. If we can start to really change the way our community thinks about itself, then we’ll start to change the way other people think about us as well.”

Alan Smith, Principal, Holy Child Primary School, Dallas

The impact of community hubs

In 2016, across 39 hubs¹, we achieved the following:

Volunteering	Almost 8,000 volunteering opportunities were taken up through hubs.
Employment	390 hub participants – more than 90% of them women – gained employment.
Partnerships	Almost 300 organisations partnered with hubs to support the delivery of programs and services such as playgroups, English lessons, computer classes, education sessions, school readiness programs, health and fitness programs, homework clubs, financial literacy and vocational pathway programs.
Service referrals	Over 8,000 service referrals were made on behalf of community hub families, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,822 to family support services• 1,063 to pre-schools• 762 to education and training providers• 708 to community health services• 658 to early intervention services• 516 to migrant resource or settlement services• 426 to maternal and child health services• 320 to emergency aid• 313 to a GP/doctor• 289 to domestic/family violence support• 110 to accommodation support.
School readiness	Independent research into the activities of 4 hubs operating in the City of Hume found that the support provided through the hubs is contributing directly and indirectly to promoting school readiness among CALD, migrant and refugee pre-school children. ²

¹ Our 40th community hub, Regents Park State School Hub in Logan is not included in 2016 performance data as it joined the NCHP in the second half of the year.

² Moore, Tim et al. Exploring the impact of community hubs on school readiness: Draft report two, Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute/The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. February 2017. Available at www.communityhubs.org.au.



Impact: engaging women and children

Many migrant and refugee women live in some of Australia's most disadvantaged socioeconomic communities. Many are the primary carers for pre-school children while their husbands look for or attend work.

These women may speak little or no English, lack the confidence and flexibility to participate in classes and community activities, and are often unaware of the range of services available to them.

These factors mean they can quickly become house bound and isolated from the rest of the community. They can be difficult for traditional service delivery models to reach.

Their young children are also vulnerable, at a critical stage in their early development. Without access to early childhood learning and development experiences, these children are at risk of starting school developmentally behind their peers and suffering lifelong consequences as a result.

Our hub leaders work hard to engage these women by attracting them into the hubs, building trust-based relationships, and eventually connecting them with their school and the local community.

During 2016, our hubs succeeded in reaching women and children from more than 13,000 families and just over 100 different countries of origin, living in seven of Australia's most disadvantaged communities.



“Initially, we all thought about school readiness in the context of children developing good oral language skills and appropriate social skills.

Since having the hub, our sense of what that means has actually changed. We have a much stronger belief about the whole child. We understand that students need a strong sense of health and wellbeing, first and foremost – particularly when you’re dealing with children who have come from refugee backgrounds and have experienced trauma.”

Debbie Cottier, Principal, Springvale Rise Primary School, Springvale



Impact: preparing children for school

In 2016 the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute undertook a qualitative study to assess the impact of hubs on school readiness.

According to the report, 'school readiness' has three major elements:

- children's readiness for school
- schools' readiness for children, and
- the capacity of families and communities to provide the opportunities, conditions and supports needed to optimise school readiness, especially for vulnerable children.³

The Institute has found that children from backgrounds where English is not spoken at home 'are among the most developmentally vulnerable in the Australian community and interventions are therefore needed to ensure they arrive ready to capitalise on the rich learning environment provided at school. Such interventions should focus on all three components of school readiness simultaneously.'⁴

In late 2016, the Institute assessed the impact four community hubs in Victoria are having on the school readiness of their youngest participants. The research study found that the community hubs model is enhancing CALD children's school readiness by providing a multidimensional response.

³ Moore, Tim et al. Exploring the impact of community hubs on school readiness: Full report version 1.0, Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute/The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. February 2017. p2.

⁴ Ibid, p22.

The researchers reported that:

'...the community hubs are largely succeeding in their central task – of ensuring that children arrive at school ready and able to take advantage of the learning and social opportunities that schools provide. All hubs reported marked improvements in children's skills and abilities upon school entry, including increases in early literacy and numeracy, as well as increased capacity to adhere to basic routines necessary for school.

These improvements made the transition to school far smoother for new students, their families and school staff, compared with the experience prior to hub implementation.

The hubs were also found to:

- provide practical connections into early learning and increasing participation among CALD, migrant and refugee children in playgroups and kindergartens
- help greatly in building positive relationships between staff (both early childhood and school staff) and parents
- promote positive collaborative relationships between school and early childhood staff
- help build the capacity of families and the quality of the home learning environment, and
- contribute to a better integrated support system for children and families.

In our hubs in 2016 there were:

61,500 attendances at playgroups and early years programs

25,000 attendances at children's language and literacy programs

“During orientation you can easily pick the children who have participated in the school readiness program at the hub, they are ready to learn and have social skills that ease the transition.”

Prep teacher, Chester Hill Primary School



Impact: learning English



Many migrant women who arrive in Australia speak little or no English and may have a minimal education background. If they are also the primary carers for young children, they will struggle to access English tuition and practice, and their children may be missing out on essential preparation before starting school.

English tuition that is largely geared towards the workplace does not satisfy the needs of stay-at-home mothers with young children. These women need to learn English that helps them run a household, engage with their children, speak with teachers and have social conversations.

Nationally, during 2016 there were over 15,000 attendances at English classes and conversation programs in our community hubs.

Unfortunately, some of our hubs do not have the resources to provide English language support to meet the needs of migrant women in their communities. Funding received from NAB's Sharegift scheme is helping CHA, in collaboration with AMES Australia, to develop a pilot program to train volunteer English tutors who can support families in hubs where there is no funding for formal English tuition.

Shivani

Shivani was a radiographer in India before relocating to Australia with her family. They arrived on a temporary 457 skilled visa after her husband accepted a placement in a Sydney hospital.

Despite being well educated, Shivani spoke very little English on arrival. She spends most of her time at home caring for their two pre-school children. She was feeling cut-off from the community and didn't know where to go to learn English or establish new friendships.

She heard about the community hub at her son's school and started bringing her younger children to weekly playgroup sessions. Shivani is now learning English through the hub and has developed firm friendships with several other women. Her pre-schoolers are now helping her practice English and are happily mixing with other children in the hub.

Westmead, NSW

Linh

Linh regularly attends one of our hubs in the City of Brimbank. She has been in Australia for 11 years but only started learning English recently, after she started coming to the hub.

When Linh came to Australia from Vietnam, she didn't know how to start classes, and ever since has required an interpreter to interact.

Now, thanks to the volunteer English teachers in her hub, Linh's confidence is growing and she is participating more in school activities and taking an active role in her children's education.

St Albans, VIC

Impact: community and workforce participation

It can be difficult for Australian-born women with English as a first language to re-enter the workforce after several years spent at home raising children. For a migrant woman who has no English and limited experience of our culture, it is almost impossible.

Our hub leaders report that migrant women are eager to find work as soon as their child-raising responsibilities permit. Given our society needs a strong bilingual workforce, particularly in areas such as aged care and childcare, these women represent a potentially valuable labour market resource.

The continual flow of success stories from our hubs bears testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of migrant women from all cultural, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, once given the right opportunities.

“Many parents speak to me about the difficulties they’ve experienced in finding employment after completing training in aged care, child care and nursing. I advocated on their behalf to the local Migrant Resource Centre, with the result of that organisation coming into the hub to deliver a three week program to help families find employment.”

Alison, hub leader

In 2016 there were:

17,700 attendances for training and skill-based volunteering

762 referrals to ongoing education and training

390 people placed in jobs



Bushra

Bushra began attending the Holy Child Primary School Community Hub when her young son started school in 2011. She had received no education in her homeland, Iraq, and was keen to pursue study through the hub.

Bushra attended beginner's English classes and when she had sufficient English, she successfully applied for a position as a playgroup leader with the City of Hume. Over three years, Bushra continued to improve her English and employability, and eventually secured a position as a translator and multi-cultural aide at the school. She has become an integral member of the school community.

Dallas, VIC



Our supporters

A big thank you to:

Our funding partners

Australian Government
Department of Social Services
Scanlon Foundation
NSW Government
Office of Multicultural Affairs
Sharegift Australia
Besen Family Foundation
Dymocks Children's Charities
KS Environmental Group

Our support agencies

ACCESS Community Services ,QLD
Settlement Services International, NSW
Hume City Council, VIC
The Smith Family, VIC
City of Greater Dandenong, VIC
(up to October 2016)

Our schools and community centres

Logan, QLD

Mabel Park State School
St Francis College
St Paul's Catholic Primary School
Woodridge State School
Woodridge North State School
Regents Park State School

Bankstown, NSW

Banksia Road Public School
Chester Hill Public School
Georges Hall Public School
St Brendan's Catholic Primary School
Yagoona Public School

Blacktown, NSW

All Saints of Africa
Bert Oldfield Public School
Blacktown North Public School
Colyton Public School

Parramatta, NSW

Information and Cultural Exchange
Rydalmere Public School
Westmead Public School

Brimbank, VIC

Deer Park North Primary School
Holy Eucharist Primary School
St Albans Primary School
St Albans Heights Primary School
Stevensville Primary School

Dandenong, VIC

Dandenong Primary School
Dandenong South Primary School
Dandenong West Primary School
Springvale Rise Primary School
St Anthony's Primary School

Hume, VIC

Bethal Primary School
Broadmeadows Valley Primary School
Campbellfield Heights Primary School
Coolaroo South Primary School
Craigieburn South Primary School
Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
Holy Child Primary School
Meadow Heights Primary School
Meadows Primary School
Roxburgh Rise Primary School
St Dominic's Primary School
Sunbury Heights Primary School

We'd like to say farewell to Mabel Park State School and to the City of Greater Dandenong, who left the network in 2016, and welcome to Regents Park State School who joined us in 2016, and to Marsden State School who joins us in 2017.

And finally – a big thank you to our hub leaders, coordinators, principals, leadership teams, and everyone across the network.



'Thanks to our community hub, our families now have much more pride and confidence in our school.'

Kaye Mills, Principal, Sunbury Heights Primary School, Sunbury

For more information

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