

Community hubs work: Insights from the Hub Census 2025

October 2025



Introduction

Community hubs are welcoming, place-based spaces, embedded in primary schools, that support families from culturally diverse backgrounds to connect with each other, their school, and the wider community. They also link families with organisations that provide services such as health, education, and settlement support, harnessing existing school infrastructure and local networks to create trusted entry points.

The Hub Census 2025 offers a detailed snapshot of who attends hubs, why they come, and the difference hubs make for families - often mothers with young children - across Australia. The insights confirm that hubs remain a vital bridge for those who might otherwise be less connected to one another, schools, services, and opportunities.

Hubs are quietly helping governments achieve big goals: strengthening social cohesion, improving children's school readiness, supporting women's workforce participation, and building stronger communities.

Independent analysis by Deloitte Access Economics¹ found that in 2023, the National Community Hubs Program generated \$65.7 million in social benefits nationally - a return of \$3.50 for every dollar invested - underscoring the value of hubs as a cost-effective model for long-term impact.

The findings of the Hub Census 2025 are consistent with those of 2023, demonstrating that hubs continue to deliver stable, reliable outcomes across key areas: connection, stronger communities, school engagement, English language learning, and productivity. Behind the numbers are everyday stories - a child starting school with confidence, a parent volunteering for the first time, a family finding their place in a new community - that show how hubs turn investment into meaningful change.

Hubs strengthen social cohesion where it matters most. In 2025, 92% of participants said their hub helped them feel part of the community – a powerful reminder of how local, school-based hubs build inclusion and belonging.

¹ Deloitte Access Economics, 2023. Social Return on Investment evaluation of the National Community Hubs Program - <https://www.communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Executive-Summary-2023-SROI-National-Community-Hubs-Program.pdf>.

Why this matters

For many families, the first years in a new country - or periods of social isolation - can be overwhelming. Language barriers, limited networks, and unfamiliarity with local systems often make it harder to access services, support children's learning, or feel part of the community.

Community hubs respond to these challenges in a simple but powerful way: by providing safe, welcoming spaces where families - often women with pre-school aged children - can connect, learn, and contribute. Embedded within primary schools, hubs are often the first trusted step into the education system, helping parents feel more confident in their child's education, children more prepared, and families more engaged in community life.

By focusing on relationships first, hubs build trust that enables access to wider opportunities - whether that means joining a playgroup, learning and practising English, volunteering, or taking the first steps into work. This locally tailored, relationship-based model is why hubs consistently deliver outcomes that matter to children, families, schools and community and align with government priorities.

In 2025, this role is more important than ever. Amid increasing focus on social division in public debate, hubs demonstrate how community-led development strengthens inclusion and belonging, helping communities remain resilient and connected.

The community hubs network

- Operates across New South Wales (25 hubs), Queensland (24 hubs), South Australia (10 hubs), and Victoria (41 hubs).
- Will expand to the Northern Territory, Tasmania and other new regions with an election commitment of a further 25 hubs from the Albanese government this year.
- Is coordinated nationally by Community Hubs Australia (CHA), with locally based agencies employed to support hubs on the ground and local partners delivering services and support families need.
- Is embedded in 100 primary schools (Catholic, government, and independent), forming trusted and safe spaces for families.
- Focuses on four key pillars: engagement, early childhood, English language, and vocational pathways.

Methodology

The Hub Census 2025 ('Census') was conducted over one week, from 4–8 August 2025, across 94 participating community hubs. In total, 3,581 participants took part.

Who took part in the Census?

- 93% of respondents were women. Of these, 75% were under 45 years of age. Most respondents (87%) have at least one dependent child at home and 46% of this group have pre-school aged children.
- 78% spoke a language other than English at home.
- 78% were born overseas, including 4% who had arrived this year.
- 60% were Australian citizens.

This profile confirms that hubs are reaching people most likely to face barriers to participation – women with young children, migrants, and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. These groups are often among the hardest for governments and services to engage directly, making the Census an especially valuable tool for understanding their needs and experiences.

The Census collected quantitative data only, providing a clear numerical snapshot of participation, activities, and outcomes. Qualitative insights, drawn from quarterly hub reporting, are included alongside Census results to highlight experiences from within hubs and deepen understanding.

Almost half of participants attending playgroup don't go anywhere else – and 86% say the hub helped their child be ready for school.

45% of participants come specifically to improve their English, and more than half have never attended another English class in Australia.

National overview

The Census provides important insights into how and why families engage with hubs:

- **Frequency of engagement:** 86% of participants reported attending their hub at least once a week, underscoring how regularly families rely on hubs for support and connection.
- **Top reasons for visiting:** the three most common reasons participants gave for attending were to spend time with others and build social connections, to learn English, and to participate in playgroup activities with their children.
- **Variation and tailored impact:** results varied across states and between metropolitan and regional hubs, reflecting the flexibility of the model to meet local needs. For example, demand for English language classes is consistently strong, though in Victoria it was particularly high and influenced the overall national results. In other regions, families engaged more heavily in playgroups, which are a cornerstone of the hubs program. This demonstrates that hubs are locally responsive, with each hub adapting to the priorities of its own community.
- **School engagement:** participants spending time in hubs reported being more likely to engage with their child's school and to better understand how it operates. This confirms that hubs act as a bridge between families and schools, strengthening home - school partnerships that are central to education policy goals.

Hubs create pathways into volunteering, training and work – with 8% of participants finding a job through the hub in the past 12 months.

What hubs are delivering

1. Hubs increase connection and reduce isolation

Hubs are, first and foremost, about connection with 11,659 families engaging with their hub since January this year.

The main reason people come to hubs is to spend time with other people (52%), improve their English skills (45%), for their children to join in playgroup (41%), to gain skills (34%), to learn about services (33%) or to learn about life in Australia (26%).

And of those with pre-school aged children, 85% are bringing them to the hub, and almost half (47%) of these don't take their children anywhere else.

In other words, the hub is critical for connection.

Hub participants tend to find the hub through connection – 44% through their hub leader or their school, and 32% from a family member or friend.

Through the Census, 92% of hub participants said coming to the hub helped them feel part of their community and 83% said the hub helped them feel less lonely.

INSIDE HUBS: ROXBURGH PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL, HUME, VIC

At Roxburgh Park Primary School, the hub's sewing group has become much more than a class - it's a place for connection, confidence, and contribution. Parents who once felt isolated now gather each week to sew capes for Capes 4 Kids Australia, a program that gifts handmade capes to children in hospital. As they choose fabrics, share stories, and work side by side, friendships are formed, and a sense of belonging grows. Parents describe the joy of knowing their efforts bring comfort to children while also giving them purpose and pride. For many, it's their first chance to connect meaningfully with others in Australia, showing how hubs turn simple activities into powerful pathways for community and inclusion.



2. Hubs make communities stronger

Hubs strengthen trust, inclusion, and resilience – and help government investment reach the people who benefit most. They do this not only through direct engagement with families but also by building partnerships with local organisations.

Since January, hubs have made 8,426 referrals to external support services and worked with 522 local partner organisations delivering programs and services locally, such as family support, education and training, and emergency aid. These partnerships extend the reach of government investment and ensure families can access the right help at the right time from where they are.

- 44% first heard about their hub via the school/hub leader; 32% via family or friends - evidence of strong grassroots reach.
- Participants are highly diverse: 78% born overseas (4% arrived this year); 78% speak a language other than English at home.
- Participants report engaging more with their child's school and local services after joining the hub.
- Results vary by state and metro/regional context (e.g. English demand notably higher in Victoria and South Australia), showing hubs adapt to local needs rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model.

INSIDE HUBS: BANKSIA ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL IN CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN, NSW

At Banksia Road Public School community hub, a health consultation with Jean Hailes, a national women's health organisation and hub partner, became the spark for something much bigger. During the consultation, parents began opening up about their experiences, listening deeply, and supporting one another.

This trust and openness flowed into the hub's parent wellbeing program, where women continued to share and encourage each other. Friendships naturally formed and have since carried into playgroup, where parents now laugh, chat, and welcome new families into what they proudly call their 'hub family.' Hub staff have also noticed stronger relationships with families, with more trust and openness shaping every interaction. What began as a single consultation has grown into a culture of connection, demonstrating the hub's role in building supportive networks that extend well beyond a single program.



3. Hubs support people with diverse language ability

Hubs welcome everyone – regardless of how they arrived in Australia or how long they have lived here. The Census told us that 78% speak a language other than English at home, and that 45% listed their main reason for coming to a hub was to improve their English skills. Of the 45% who come to a hub to learn English, 52% first attended an English class in the hub, meaning it is an accepted and accessible space for adults to learn.

English classes contribute to improvements in speaking, listening, reading and writing – but more than that, it improves the self-confidence of participants, their ability to connect and talk with others and to look for a job when they're ready.

INSIDE HUBS: PARRAMATTA WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL, NSW

At Parramatta West Public School, the hub's English classes highlight both the dedication of teachers and the determination of participants. Many parents arrive with little or no prior access to English, feel nervous about speaking or even attempting a conversation. With patient guidance and a supportive environment, they begin to practise the basics, celebrate small victories, and grow in confidence week by week. Participants describe the classes as life-changing - giving them the skills to understand school newsletters, talk with teachers, and navigate daily life. For families, the hub is often the only place they can learn English in a safe, welcoming setting, opening doors to greater independence, confidence, and opportunity.



4. Hubs deliver important outcomes for schools

Hubs enhance children's readiness for school and deepen parent engagement in learning.

- Almost half (47%) of parents/carers who bring pre-schoolers to playgroup don't access similar services anywhere else.
- 80% of parents/carers with children at the school said the hub helped their child be ready for school (rising to 87% among those with pre-schoolers).
- 87% of parents/carers with children at the school said the hub helped them understand the school better.
- 85% of parents/carers with children at the school said the hub helped them support their child's education.
- The Deloitte 2023 SROI evaluation proved that hub activities have contributed to an improvement in outcomes and reduced development delays for children participating in hubs valued at \$7.3 million. This is through a combination of children accessing early years programs contributing to their educational outcomes, plus the opportunity for their families to be better connected with the school.
- And in further evidence: In a survey of hubs in Ipswich/Logan (Qld)², 99% were happy with hub activities; 97% felt supported as parents/carers; 95% felt more involved in their child's care/education; and 100% reported their child benefited.

INSIDE HUBS: DARLING HEIGHTS STATE SCHOOL, TOOWOOMBA, QLD

At Darling Heights State School, the hub is helping families prepare children for school by connecting them with early learning opportunities. Each month, the hub partners with First 5 Forever to run interactive sessions in a local park. Parents and children sing, read, and play together, while also receiving tips on how to support learning at home. Families say these sessions have boosted their confidence to engage in their child's education and given children the chance to socialise, practise routines, and develop early literacy skills. For many families, it's their first step into Australia's early learning system - a vital bridge that supports smoother transitions into school life.



² Community Hubs Australia's Early Childhood survey, Ipswich and Logan community hubs, June 2025.

5. Hubs create pathways and improve productivity

Hubs create supported, practical pathways into volunteering, training and employment - particularly for women with young children.

- 60% of women currently don't have a job in Australia; 52% want to work the same or more in the next year.
- Among overseas-born participants, 40% had a job before migrating but 24% are currently employed - showing untapped potential hubs can help unlock.
- 8% of participants reported finding a job through the hub in the past 12 months (mostly casual or part-time roles). Anecdotal evidence from hub leaders and quarterly reporting suggests the true figure is higher, as participants who move into work often reduce their hub attendance and are less likely to be captured in the Census survey.
- Further evidence from South Australia shows³: 95% of volunteers in the hub reported a greater sense of purpose; 95% felt better connected; and 32% are seeking employment or considering workforce re-entry.
- Supporting this, Deloitte's 2023 SROI evaluation estimated that employment gained through hubs generated \$17 million in benefits, with volunteering valued at a further \$0.5 million. These findings highlight the role hubs play in helping newly arrived families build skills, confidence and pathways into the workforce.

INSIDE HUBS: ST BRIGID'S SCHOOL, PORT ADELAIDE ENFIELD, SA

At St Brigid's School volunteering is at the heart of how the hub builds confidence and opportunity for women. Huma and Anna, two regular volunteers at playgroup, are a great example. By welcoming families, helping with activities, and creating a warm, supportive environment, they've not only made the hub more inviting for others but also built their own skills and networks. For many women like them, volunteering at the hub is the first step to connecting with a community, developing confidence, and exploring future pathways into informal or formal training or work. It shows how hubs harness the skills and generosity of families to create stronger schools - while also opening doors for women to feel empowered and prepared for what comes next.



3 South Australian Government's Community Neighbourhood Development Survey, May 2025.

Conclusion: What the Hub Census 2025 tells us

The Hub Census 2025 provides clear evidence of who attends hubs, why they come, and the impact hubs have across communities.

The findings show that hubs are:

- Strengthening connections by reducing isolation and giving families a trusted space to belong.
- Building stronger communities by linking families with schools, connecting them to local services, and partnering with organisations that provide support close to home.
- Improving school outcomes by preparing children for the classroom and giving parents the confidence to support their child's learning.
- Supporting English language learning in practical, everyday ways that help women navigate life, education, and employment.
- Contributing to productivity by helping women move from participation to volunteering, and often towards training and employment.

Together, these insights underline the unique role of community hubs: local, trusted, and adaptable to the needs of each school community. The stories of participants who have found their first friends, supported their child's education, or taken steps towards work all add weight to what the data makes clear – hubs matter. Partnerships and service connections are central to this impact, ensuring families have the support they need to thrive.

As the network grows, the Census will remain a tool for guiding the National Community Hubs Program and ensuring hubs continue to play a vital role in strengthening families and building cohesive, inclusive communities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Bec Kotow
Chief Executive Officer
Community Hubs Australia
rebecca.kotow@communityhubs.org.au
0459 807 715
www.communityhubs.org.au

The National Community Hubs Program

The National Community Hubs Program is a proven, place-based model that helps families from culturally diverse backgrounds – particularly mothers with pre-school aged children – connect, share, and learn. Hubs are embedded in primary schools and provide safe, welcoming spaces where families build relationships, practise English, join playgroups, volunteer, and take steps into education and employment.

The program is funded through a partnership between philanthropy, all tiers of government, and the education and community sectors. Locating hubs within schools ensures they are accessible, trusted, and closely linked to children's learning. Each hub is managed by its host school and tailored to the needs of its local community, supported by local partner organisations and coordinated nationally by Community Hubs Australia.

The hubs program focuses on four pillars:

- Engagement – helping families connect and engage with their community.
- Early childhood – running playgroups and supporting school readiness.
- English – providing opportunities to learn and practise English.
- Vocational pathways – encouraging volunteering and supporting access to training and employment.

The impact is significant. Since January this year, hubs engaged 11,659 families and made 8,426 referrals to external services, working with 522 local partner organisations to deliver programs and support. A 2023 evaluation by Deloitte Access Economics found the program generated \$65.7 million in social benefits, returning \$3.50 in value for every \$1 invested.

For further detail, see the [Program Overview](#) or the [Mid-Year Update 2025](#).

About Community Hubs Australia

Community Hubs Australia Limited is a non-profit organisation committed to strengthening social cohesion. We oversee the delivery, reporting and continual improvement of the National Community Hubs Program, which helps connect families from diverse backgrounds with their schools and communities.

We work in partnership with federal, state and local governments, as well as business, philanthropic, not-for-profit and community organisations, to deliver a proven grassroots program that builds connection and belonging.