



# Community hubs

Connect. Share. Learn.

# National Community Hubs Program

# 2019 Year in Review



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# What are community hubs?

Community hubs are welcoming places where migrant and refugee families, particularly mothers with young children, come to connect, share and learn. Hubs bridge the gap between migrants and the wider community and are usually attached to primary schools.

## Hubs connect and support communities

Community hubs are designed to:

- build and engage culturally diverse communities
- connect preschool children with playgroups and school readiness programs
- help hub users (particularly women and children) to learn and practise English
- build pathways to volunteering and employment.

By leveraging existing school infrastructure, hubs also connect women and children with each other and with organisations that can provide health, education and settlement support.

## Funding and governance

Community hubs are supported by funding partners including the Scanlon Foundation, the Australian Government, and state and local governments. Local schools, the private sector and the community sector also provide support.

The national hubs program is guided by advisory groups at three levels:

- at the local level, school principals and key partner agencies
- at the state level, government and stakeholder organisations
- a national advisory committee of experts from a range of disciplines.





### **Growth of the National Community Hubs Program**

Early research into social cohesion done by the Scanlon Foundation showed there was a significant gap in the support available to migrant and refugee women caring for pre-school children. This research also told us that a community-focused, place-based approach was vital to support this cohort and help them integrate successfully in the community.

In 2008 Hume City Council were piloting an Early Years' hub program supporting vulnerable migrant women and children. In 2010 the Scanlon Foundation partnered with Hume City Council to further expand their Early Years' hub program, and Community Hubs Australia was born from this partnership. By 2011 there were nine trial hubs open. We have grown consistently from 2010, with new hubs being planned or opening every year since. At the end of 2019, there was a total of 74 hubs across four states.

In 2020, we will grow to more than a hundred hubs across five states.

### **About Community Hubs Australia**

Community Hubs Australia (CHA) delivers the national hubs program with assistance from specialist support agencies in each state, on behalf of our funding partners. CHA seeks to develop social cohesion in Australia by helping culturally diverse people (migrant, refugee, temporary visa holders) to integrate into Australian communities.

We work with governments, philanthropic and community organisations, business and other not-for-profits to fund and facilitate local programs that increase social connection and reduce isolation.



# From the CEO



Welcome to our 2019 Year in Review – a summary of some of the many highlights from across a very busy 12 months.

The national community hubs program has been on a consistent growth trajectory for a decade, and in the last year we have: expanded into new communities and new schools (including three Liverpool schools in 2019), welcomed new hub leaders, received new government funding, run new programs, entered into new partnerships, and connected with many of our newest Australians. In 2020, we will open our hundredth hub – so our growth isn't slowing down just yet.

Across Australia, more than 500 organisations come to hubs to provide programs to families who might otherwise be hard to reach. In addition the Australian Government provided two critical pieces of funding in 2019 to increase service provision in two areas: conversational English, and childminding. This has resulted in a huge increase in the number of women learning English and developing work skills across our network.

2019 was a big year for Community Hubs Australia. In April, the Federal Government announced ongoing funding for our hubs, securing the future of the national community hubs program. This is a watershed moment for something that started as a pilot in Melbourne more than a decade ago.

In addition to ongoing funding, the Government also announced new money to significantly grow the hubs' network. At the start of 2016 there

were 40 hubs operating in three major urban areas. In 2020 there will be more than 100 hubs across five states, including both cities and regional centres.

In September 2019 we hosted 131 delegates in Melbourne at the Community Hubs Australia conference. The conference, held every second year, provided us all — hub leaders, school principals, support coordinators and our staff — with an opportunity to come together and share stories, important learnings and ideas, and connect with the wider Community Hubs Australia network.

The conference helped reinforce why we do what we do. We heard about the women and children we are supporting, and the difference that hubs are making in their lives. The passion and commitment of hub leaders, principals and support coordinators were on display in the hub leader presentations, and through the shared stories of hub participants.

The conference also celebrated the most important factor in our network – our people. Thanks to our hub leaders and coordinators, our managers, our school principals, and partner agencies, and to the CHA team. It is a joy to work with you all.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Scanlon Foundation, who have backed the hubs model from its inception, and stewarded the network's development and growth over a decade. In 2019, the Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to the national community hubs program. Their support is critical to our success, and we are all very grateful for it.

**Dr Sonja Hood**

CEO – Community Hubs Australia



***“Our hub at St Paul’s is all about connection and trust. It has been incredibly satisfying to see how powerful that connection and trust can be. I have witnessed friendships form between cultural groups that have never been connected.”***

St Paul’s Primary School  
Queensland

# Our connected communities

## Who comes to hubs?



Hub families came from 118 nations



9,750 families engaged with a hub in 2019



85%

85% were women with dependent children



42% arrived in Australia after 2015



They spoke 80 different languages



30% spoke little or no English



89% visit a hub at least weekly

## Where are hubs?



74 hubs across Australia



4 states – VIC, NSW, QLD, SA

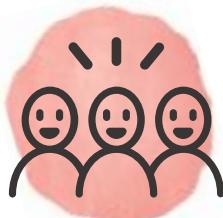


16 metro and regional LGAs

## Why do people come to hubs?



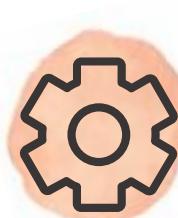
Playgroup,  
children's language  
and literacy



Make  
friends



Improve  
English



Learn of  
services



For other  
skills



Job  
skills



Volunteer

## Who we work with



8 support  
agencies



580  
organisations and  
10,924  
referrals



73  
schools and  
one community centre

# Our partners

Across our network, hubs worked with 580 organisations in 2020, to provide services and connect with families.

Health 99  
Corporate Fitness  
Kinchela Boys Home  
Ridge Comm Centre  
Achievement Program  
ta Active Therapy  
group AFL Sports  
garten Alphabetical Crea  
Anglicare Aquatic Safety Train  
lia Arabic welfare services Arc Art Heal ARTIE A  
Resource Centre Association for children with disabilities  
Community Centre Auburn Diversity Services Inc. (Ac  
Australian College of Optometry Australian Hearing Ipswid  
Women's Centre for Human Rights Australian Refugee Assoc  
Community Garden Banksia Gardens Community Service Banks  
town women's health centre Baptcare Baptist Church BCA Natio  
Best Start Bethany Community Support Big Fat Smile Big Tr  
Blacktown City Libraries Body Shop Boost Boost Therapy Boronia  
Boys & Girls Come out to Play Breaking the cycle PCYC Brimbank  
Broadmeadows Leisure & Aquatic Centre Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Healthy Lifestyle Team, DDACL C & K Woodridge North C&K Calamvale  
NSW Careworks Casey Safety Village Catholic Care Cauli and brocc Ce  
Centre of Policy Development Centro Church Century 21 CFA CGD Arts  
bourhood Centre Child Care Child health Children first childrens health qld Chisolm  
Greater Dandenong Children and Family Services City of Greater Dandenong Libraries City  
co CMRC CMY – Refugee Education Support Program Coles Collingwood Park Early Learning Cen  
Community First Step Community Health Community Hubs Australia Community Kitchen SSI Comm  
Community Services Council for Intellectual Disability Councillor Kerry Silver Councilor Sheila Ireland Cr  
Cumberland Multicultural Community Services Curtin University Online Cvgt D.E.T. /Foundation House /Healin  
House Dandenong West Kindergarten Deer Park Lioness Dental Health Services Victoria Department Housing  
Centrelink diabetes NSW and ACT Diabetes victoria Dianella Health Dianella/Multicultural Center for Womens Heal  
Childcare and Kinder DPV Health Dvac Dymocks EACH Early Links Eat Up Education & Training Education suppo  
Council Fairfield City Council Playgroup Fairfield LGA Hubs Fairfield West P School Fairfield Women's Health Centre  
First response Paramedics Fitness & nutrition Fitted for Work Flinders University Food Bank Australia Food for life Fo  
MCH Geelong Libraries Girl Guides Victoria Good shepherd Good Start (QLD Health) Goodna Aquatic Swimming pool  
Early childhood education Government House Granville Police – Community Liaison Officer Granville PS Green Apple  
Heart foundation Heatherhill Kinder Helen from PHOR Helping Hands Helping Hands Helping Hearts Out & About Hippie  
Hume Council SMALL TALK Hume Homestead Hume JobLink IMS Inala St Vincent de Paul Infinity Q-Care Informatic  
City Council Ipswich Libraries Jacana Football Club Jamie's Oliver Jesuit Social Services JobCo Kambu Kangan  
Art Ed KS Environmental Kumara LAST teacher Lead Learning Links Legal Aid Lego Brick Building Leichart Con  
gardens Logan city Council Environmental Logan East Neighbourhood Centre Logan Libraries Logan Together  
Macedonian Welfare Association Sydney Malticultural Health Many Rivers Marlene McGrath Estate Agent MDA  
Mission Melbourne Football Club AFL Melbourne Victory Men's Shed Sunbury mensched Mercy Metro Assist Me  
Monash Health Community Monash University Museum of Art Mount Druitt Community Health Centre Mountaha's  
Development Australia Multicultural Network Multicultural Network Bankstown Multicultural Sports Org Multicultural  
Nemy's Egyptian Style Beauty therapy NewAccess Noble Park Kinder Northern Community Legal Centre Nova St  
Qld Office of Sport One Box One Degree Community Fund One world for children services – training, long day  
Citizens Parent at WPS Parent Connect parent volunteer Parents Next Parks Community Network Parramat  
Phoenix Learning Physi Kids Playgroup NSW Playgroup Queensland Playgroup Victoria Plus Fitness Prace Pr  
gy QPASTT Queensland Health Queensland Playgroup RACV Rail Rain, Hayne and Shine Animal Farm Ra  
Redbank Community Centre Redbank Library Refugee Association of Logan Refugee Clinic Refugee Health R  
Castle and Inflatable Slide Riverview Community Centre RMIT Roadsafe South East Romero Centre Royal  
Leisure Centre SA Health SA Police Safe Steps SafeResolutions Salisbury Communities for Children Sa  
Secondary School SEDA Shared reading NSW Shazia Hamid Sherie Ly (parent) Sheriffs Office Shilo Chu  
SMRC/ Family Life Shine Song room South East Community Links Southern Cross Institute of Education  
Activities Centre Springvale Legal Service Springvale Neighbourhood house SSI SSI Ability Links SSI  
Doms Care St Francis College St Pauls Parish St Vincent de Paul STARTTS  
hood House Support for new arrivals Surf Life Saving NSW Sussex Neigh  
Sydwest Multicultural Services Sydwest/Ability link/MCC/  
TAFE CALD Co-ordinator WS TAFE Granville TAFE  
Zoo Terry White Chemist The Deer Park Club The  
network The Parks Community Network The  
Travellers Aid Australia Triple P Tursa Employment &  
ASPIRE UOW UOW Music Con Various  
Police Vic Seg Vicki Balaam  
University Victorian Legal  
VLA Washhouse

Ability Links Ability Links  
 Aboriginal Corporation Aboriginal Corporation  
 Access Community Act For Kids Access Community Act For Kids  
 AEDC AEDC  
 Afrod Afrod  
 Ready Ready  
 Afrula Afrula  
 Creative Creative  
 Labs Labs  
 Learning Learning  
 Academia Academia  
 Arts and Culture Arts and Culture  
 Aussies Aussies Asylum Seekers Asylum Seekers  
 (Aussie) (Aussie) Aussie Kids Children  
 Australian Australian Multicultural Multicultural  
 Association Association Vietnamese Vietnamese  
 Bankstown Council Bankstown Public Public  
 Bankstown Public  
 National Training Group BCE BCE  
 BCRG BCRG Be- long  
 long  
 tree House Billy's Buddies Blacktown Art centre Blacktown Art centre  
 Multicultural Services Bosley Park Public School Bosley Park Public School  
 Council Brimbank Council Active communities Active communities  
 Bulla Icecreams Bunnings Bunnings Dandenong Dandenong  
 Bunurong Bunurong  
 Early Childhood Centre Cancer Council Cancer Council  
 Cancer Institute Cancer Institute  
 Cancer Society Cancer Society  
 Carers Carers  
 Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health Centre for Multicultural Womens Health  
 CGD Bush Crew CGD Waste and Sustainability CHA/Hume council Chester Hill Neigh-  
 College Chobani Team City Of Canterbury Bankstown City of Greater Dandenong City of  
 of Hume City of Salisbury City Projects (FCC) Clay House -Casula Powerhouse clyde and  
 tre Commonwealth bank Communities for Children Community Centres SA community first  
 CommunityPlus Community First Step – Usha Connect Child & Family Connecting with your kids Core  
 Craigieburn Library Craigieburn Mens Shed creating Links Cultivating Communities Cultural in Mind  
 Minds D@cor Dallas Neighbourhood House Dandenong Council Dandenong Neighbourhood  
 Department of Education & Training Department of Housing Dept of Immigration Dharmakarta DHS  
 Dina Greenland Dinnmore Bushrats Distinctive Options Diversitat Djerrwarri DoE DPV & Westmere  
 art teacher at Staines Memorial College EMPLOYMENT Energy Victoria Ombudsman Evolve Fairfield City  
 Fairtrading Family Place Family relationship Centre Family support Fathering Project First Five Forever  
 Foundation House Free to Feed Fresh Plus Fun Arts Creative Entertainment Gamblers Help Geelong Council  
 Goodna street life GoodStart Goodstart Early Learning Princes Hwy, Dandenong Goodstart to life Goodstart  
 Griffith University Growing Minds Happy Feet HARMONY ALLIANCE Harmony Place Harvest Harvest Angels  
 Program Hiredup Hothlyn Bakery Housing Hume City Council Hume Council – Joblink Hume Council Enviro team  
 on and Cultural Exchange Inger Rice Foundation Inspire community Interact Intertrading Pty Ltd IPC Health Ipswich  
 Karabai Karitane Kelloggs Kelloggs KENG Keysborough Learning Centre Kiama Community College Kildonan Kind  
 Community Centre Lentara Uniting Care Lifestyle Therapy Training Solutions Lizard Log Park Local Doctor Local Kinder  
 er Lost in Books LTTS Lutheran Community Care MacArthur Community College Macedon Further Adult Education  
 Meadow Heights Education Centre Meadows P.S. Meat Processors Groups MECA Medicare Local Melbourne City  
 Metro Trains Metropolitan Fire Brigade MHEC Mindspace Australia Mission Australia Mission Possible Mobile Minders  
 s helping hand Mpavilion MRC Mt Druitt TAFE outreach - Mark Multicultural Centre for Women's Health Multicultural  
 al Youth QLD. Multilink Music therapy My Time Playgroup Myers Nadia Naturally Slim & Fit NDIS NDIS – Early Links  
 ear Education NSW Dept. of Justice NSW Health Services NSW Police NSW Refugee Health Service Nutrition Australia  
 care, art therapy sessions Open Door Open libraries Oral Health Oz Harvest OZCARE Paint Fairfield Read Parent &  
 ta Active Parramatta council Partnerships in Training Pastor Phil PCYC Penguin Random House Phoenix Education  
 omoting Healthy Lifestyles in Refugee Families – Helen Prosper QL opal Retirement QLD Child Health Qld Uni Technolo  
 rainbow Place Long Day Care RASEC Pilot Reading and writing Australia Reading Out of Poverty Red Cross Australia  
 elationships Australia Reptile Encounters ReSPIN Restore Psychology Retired TAFE teacher – Mary Ricardo's Jumping  
 children Hospital Royal Life Saving Society – NSWÂ Royal Melbourne hospital Runaway Fitness Ryde Aquatic and  
 lvation Army Salvation Army Ingle Farm Salvo Lawyers Save the Children Savers Plus, Berry St Scarf Second Bite  
 urch Sibel Chieflittles Sikh community Sing and Grow Smart Start Early Learning Centre Smiling Mind Smith Family  
 Southern Migrant Resource Centre Spectrum Splash out OT Sporting Schools Spotlight Springvale Learning and  
 Auburn Community Kitchen SSI Ignite SSI Refuge Employment Program St Albans Library St Dominic's PS St  
 ate Government Stephannie Alexander Sunbury Baptist Church Sunbury Community Health Sunbury Neighbor  
 bourhood House Sydney Community College Sydney Region Aboriginal Corporation Sydney water sydwest  
 SSI/Mission of Australia Tadah Patterns TAFE (Bankstown Tafe (St George) TAFE AMEP TAFE Bankstown  
 NSW TAFE NSW Health TAFE Outreach TAFE Qld TAFE Queensland Take Two Talking Matter Taronga  
 Family Place The Hunt Club The Life Program The Make over room The Movement the multicultural  
 Smith Family The Waterwell Project Time 2 Sing TIS TMG Tony Sowsbery Toongabbie PS Torch  
 Training Uniting Chuch Indoorpilly Uniting Church UnitingCare Lentara University of Qld UNSW  
 Fam- ily Assistance Providers VASS VEPS – Teachers Vetea, Australia Accademy Vic  
 VicRoads VICSEG Victoria and Family Victoria Legal Aid Victoria Police Victoria  
 Aid Vietnames womens association Visy Care Visy Care Learning Centre  
 Water Well Project WAVSS WAYSS WCIG WECEN Wellwood Health  
 West Justice West Morton Health Westcare Community Services  
 Western Legal Services Westfield Airport West westmoreton oral  
 health Westvale Men's shed Wetherill Park Police William  
 Stimpson Public School Wollongong Council Wollongong TAFE  
 Women's Health Service Woodridge North State School  
 Woodville Alliance Woolworths Woolworths Craigieburn  
 Central Workways WSFRS WWP Admin Staff  
 referrals WWP Teacher Yagoona PS YMCA  
 YMCA foodbank Yoga teacher  
 Youth Family

Services  
 Zonta  
 Zonta Club  
 of Ipswich

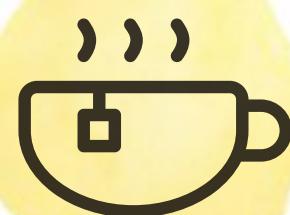
# Engagement



The numbers of families engaging with hubs continues to grow.

**9,750**  
families came to a hub in 2019

Many adults come to a hub initially to access programs for their children.



They soon find something for themselves.

Across all hubs nationally, adults and children attended activities

**427,910**  
times

Community hubs are person-centred and aim to connect women, children and families with schools, services and their local communities. Each hub does this differently as hub leaders are required to plan their programs and tailor their approach to suit the local community.



Hubs foster a sense of belonging for families and the result is that parents become more engaged in their children's education, they attend school activities more frequently and volunteer at school more often.

In 2019, 9,750 families engaged with a hub. Adults and children across the national network attended hubs 427,910 times. That number increased by 30,000 from 2018.

All hubs are different as they respond to their local community's needs, and each hub offers a range of opportunities for people to connect, share and learn. People who came to hubs engaged in activities ranging from taking an English class or bringing their child to a playgroup or school readiness program. Some came to do yoga or Zumba, others came to sew, do gardening or to cook. Some came to learn new skills, to undertake a qualification, or to simply have a cup of tea and chat with a friend from their community.

There are many wonderful examples of how we have strategically increased engagement and provided opportunities for the wider community to participate. It has been a two-pronged approach: firstly tailoring programs at a local level, to respond to the specific community needs. Secondly, responding at a national level and providing support across all hubs.



## Onsite childminding

The Australian Government provided funding for onsite childminding within the hubs during English and skills training programs. Caring for small children and domestic responsibilities are major barriers to attending English classes, and for many women, these training opportunities wouldn't be accessible to them until their children are older. This leaves them at risk of isolation or financial dependency.

Childminding in the hub is convenient and accessible, and the response from women across our network has been overwhelmingly positive. The availability of childminding is not just increasing attendance, but is a means of including women in these programs who would otherwise be missed by traditional systems of learning.

There are hundreds of women who participate in hub activities who want to work in Australia. Only a small percentage of these women have employment, or as much employment as they would like. The hubs' childminding program is just one way that community hubs are bridging the gap between migrant women and the workforce.

Some of the women who have come to the hub to learn English have built their language skills, and their confidence with speaking English so much, that they are now pursuing vocational qualifications. They are looking into a future where they can work, earn their own money, and participate in their community in ways not possible without English.

# Engagement: Examples from across our network



## A men's group

St Dominic's Primary School Hub has become a welcoming meeting place for men living in the Broadmeadows area in Melbourne's north. In the past three years, the school has seen an influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq. While many of the women from these communities quickly connected with the hub at St Dominic's, their partners and other male family members were not so quick to do so.

Hub Leader, Caroline Menassa, says it was also clear that men in the community had different needs. So, in 2019, in partnership with Foundation House and Uniting Parents Next, St Dominic's formed a men's group.

A psychologist, a facilitator and an Arabic-speaking volunteer are available to men who attend the group. They can receive support and advice about cultural differences, intergenerational difficulties, language and employment issues.

*"We don't need to know everyone's story – we just need to be mindful that everyone has experienced something,"* says Caroline.

*"The group meets once a week, and largely involves men who came to Australia with their families as refugees over the past two years. The group focuses on practical things such as road rules and safety, and a Men's Shed has also developed. In amongst the discussion of practical things there is also a focus on mental health and wellbeing, with discussions around trauma and men's role in a new culture."*

She says that finding the right organisations to partner with has contributed to the success of the program.

**"We don't need to know everyone's story – we just need to be mindful that everyone has experienced something."**

## A multicultural women's group

A collaboration between Deer Park North and St Albans Heights Primary School hubs saw the formation of a multicultural women's group. The two hubs joined forces to deliver a women's group that engaged socially isolated women. They did this by fostering social and cross-cultural connections and focusing on positive mental health and self-care. Women from both sites attended weekly sessions and workshops to improve self-esteem, through mindfulness, photography, health sessions, and collaborative art pieces.

A standout highlight for the group was the Women's Circus, described as: *"a session full of fun and laughter!"*. In the weeks following the Women's Circus, the women continued to talk about it and asked the hub leader *"to continue the group and to attend the Circus again as they just loved it! Such an amazing way to get them to push their boundaries, test their abilities, work together and experiment with something that they would have never done otherwise."*

**"A session full of fun and laughter!"**



# Engagement: Examples from across our network



## Domestic and family violence prevention month

A Community Hub Australia grant funded a month-long event on family violence prevention at Marsden State School in Queensland. A series of comprehensive workshops and information sessions helped raise awareness, and there was a range of activities to connect women and children with trained domestic violence workers and support services.

The four events were organised by hub leader, Penny Dearlove, who invited local organisations to get behind the sessions. Each session included a morning tea and an information session, and a private area was set aside to enable anyone affected by domestic violence to receive support from skilled practitioners.

Themes covered over the four sessions included breaking down stigma and common misconceptions about family and domestic violence. There were presentations from the 99 Steps Domestic Violence Support Service for culturally and linguistically diverse women and included other presenters who focused on surviving and thriving after family violence.

Week two covered safety planning with a school-based police officer providing information about online, technological and personal safety tips. Children and domestic violence were

the focus of week three, with a play therapist explaining her role and how play therapy can help children who have witnessed violence to express and process their emotions. The final session centred on hope and included a community barbecue and a summary of services available to those experiencing violence who are seeking to make their lives safer.

Penny says more than 60 women and children attended the sessions. *“The community hub served as a connecting point to help people find out about things important to them,”* she says.

**“The ripple effect of this has led to an increase of open conversations around personal and family safety and increasing connections through shared experiences. It has also provided essential education regarding accessing help.”**



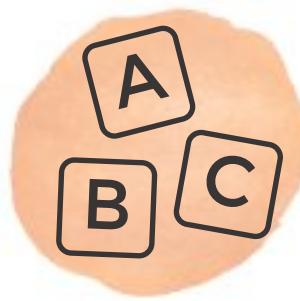
***“The feedback from children is that they and their families feel safe and welcome at St Augustine’s Parish School as a result of their participation in the activities of the hub. We love our community hub and cannot imagine a time when we did not offer this service to so many of our wonderful families. We are grateful for the opportunity to have this hub, our hub leader and the support of Community Hubs Australia in serving our families and their children.”***

St Augustine’s Parish School  
South Australia

***“The community hub at St Paul’s Primary School works in two ways – firstly, it services and supports children through programs such as breakfast club and homework club. Secondly, it looks outwards to the community, and it supports our parents. Because of the hub, parents feel connected and enjoy a sense of belonging. When parents feel supported, the sense of wellbeing filters through to their children. The children then become more engaged, they feel safe and they feel that they belong.”***

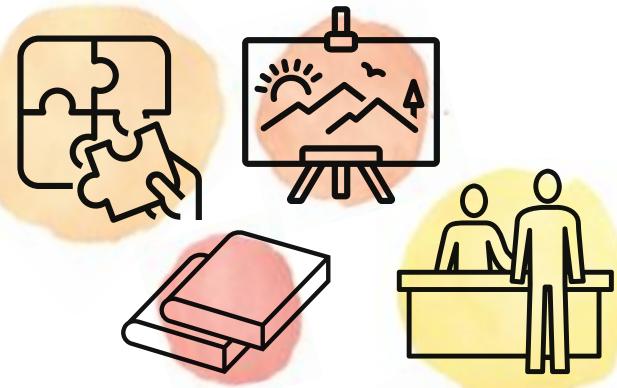
St Paul’s Primary School  
Queensland

# Early childhood



The main reason people came to hubs in 2019 was to join playgroups and participate in early childhood programs.

The programs accessed include playgroup, kindergarten and school readiness programs, mother-child language programs, paid and volunteer childminding, and service referrals such as early intervention, health services (such as Maternal and Child Health services), and other support services.



**59%**

of those with children under 5 don't take their children to services outside the hub.



Children attended playgroups and early years programs

**90,351**

times and children's language and literacy programs were attended

**26,860**  
times.



## Playgroups

Part of our mandate is to help prepare preschoolers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds for kindergarten and school, and programs targeted at children in their early years are one of our core services. We know that nearly 60 per cent of participants with preschool age children don't take their child to any other programs outside the hub, so the hubs' early learning programs are filling a vital gap in preparation for school.

Our programs provide learning opportunities, not just for children, but also their parents. When a parent brings their child to a playgroup they gain an understanding of the importance of early learning. They also see how important it is for them to be involved in their child's learning journey.

We know that children from culturally diverse backgrounds can face significant socio-economic disadvantages. This vulnerability puts them at higher risk of developmental delays. Attending a hub in the early years provides opportunities to develop language and social skills, and prepares them for school in many ways.

# Early childhood programs: Examples from across our network



## Books and Bubs at Rydalmer Public School

*"Books and Bubs started with a requirement of a dedicated story time for children under five, and some fun craft activities. Our facilitator was very new to Australia but was teaching scripture back in her own country. She facilitated it with a beautiful story or concept each week (seven in total), and a craft activity related to the story or the concept.*

*We were hoping for more participation, and wanted to keep it sustainable, so we invited all the parents to tell a story and we put together a roster. Each week is 'owned' by a parent or a carer who tells a story of their choice. I help them in resourcing stories and the crafts. In this program so far we have had first time story tellers (in English) who regularly attend English classes in the hub, a 10 year old home-schooled boy, a grandfather (who owned a week to celebrate Father's Day), an external story teller (founder of 'The Know How Science Club'), and Manager of Ermington Library (our local library). Officeworks have provided crafts and supplies, which has helped me make it more sustainable and run it smoothly."*

***"Books and Bubs helps develop routines for my children as well as prepare them for school and preschool. They enjoy the rhymes and songs at the start of each session.***

***At the start of this year, being new to Australia, it was hard as a mother with young kids not knowing anyone. I had felt very isolated. The hub leader, Seetha, Books and Bubs have been extremely welcoming. They have helped me build friendships with other mothers, and given me a sense of belonging to this community."***

Allie,  
a participant at Books and Bubs





## School readiness programs support children and schools

Principals from our host schools have said many times over that you can tell the children who have been through a school transition or school readiness program at the hub. They have usually made a friend or two, are eager and ready to learn, and have the social skills needed to ease into the school routine. Hubs' school readiness programs also prepare the school for the child, providing insights so the school can be culturally inclusive and respectful of diversity.

The Murdoch Children's Research Institute's evaluation of school readiness programs within a community hub found that:

- children have improved literacy and spoken English skills
- children are more familiar with their school, helping them to feel comfortable and develop a positive attitude
- referrals to additional support and services were made when needed
- behaviour improves among children attending hubs.



# Early childhood programs: Examples from across our network



## Annie's story

### Pre-prep at Riverview State School community hub

The pre-prep program at Riverview State School community hub in Ipswich, Queensland, has helped Annie\*, a five-year-old girl, come out of her shell and harness the confidence she needs to start school. After attending playgroup at the hub, Annie commenced the pre-prep program. When she first joined, she was shy and rarely spoke to anyone other than her mother and best friend.

Hub leader, Sonya Morrisey, says this was a concern as the start of school loomed closer. But recently there has been a real change in her demeanour.

Sonya explains, *"Initially when she was asked a question or spoken to, she would either not respond at all, or she'd wave and nod her head. Occasionally, if she was very excited, a couple of words would pop out and she would seem almost surprised and she would revert straight away to not talking. But in past months she hasn't stopped talking and she shares stories and directs other children in play. She has blossomed to become a confident, funny little girl. She meets me at the gate every morning and helps me to open the Hub and welcome other children into our space."*

Sonya attributes these positive changes to the connections Annie has made by attending pre-prep and playgroup, and through developing a sense of belonging within the school community.

*"It has been a privilege to watch her grow in confidence – I had fears halfway through the year as to how she would cope with starting school, but now I believe she will fly."*

*"To have the chance to see this kind of growth and development is truly amazing and it's why I come to work each day."*

\*(Annie is not her real name)

**"It has been a privilege to watch her grow in confidence – I had fears halfway through the year as to how she would cope with starting school, but now I believe she will fly."**



## Toy Well pilot

A partnership with Save the Children delivered the Toy Well pilot across five hub sites in 2019. This free, volunteer-run toy library service, aims to ensure all children can experience the transformative power of play. The pilot involved all three Geelong hubs (Northern Bay College – Wexford and Hendy campuses, and Bell Park North Primary School), Dandenong Primary School and Dallas Brooks Primary School. A group of parent volunteers and community professionals participated in the Toy Well volunteer training.

The pilot has facilitated access to high quality early years educational toys (through a toy library based in the hubs) for children and families to play with at home. Volunteering opportunities

were also available for interested parents to share the responsibility of managing the toy library service. Hubs recruited parent volunteers to oversee the tasks of registering parents, and overseeing borrowing and returning of toys.

We are extremely grateful to Save the Children for partnering with the hubs, executing and facilitating the partnerships, and for implementing the program. Due to the success of the pilot we are looking to expand to more hubs in Victoria and Queensland in 2020. The pilot was made possible by funding provided by the Besen Family Foundation, the Trawalla Foundation and the Bennelong Foundation.



# English



English language  
is at the heart  
of all programs  
offered.

The development of  
English language continues  
to be a core service for  
our hubs.

There was a significant increase in attendance at English classes in 2019.

While the number of hubs running English classes has increased, this rise in attendance can partly be attributed to funding for more conversational English classes, and onsite childminding.



In 2019 there were  
**48,750**  
attendances at  
English classes  
across the network





## Conversational English

In mid-2018, Community Hubs Australia received funding from the Federal Government to run a pilot program to deliver English conversation classes across the hubs network and to incorporate English language support and conversational English across all hub activities.

When considering how we could provide English classes that were accessible to everyone, we looked at some of the barriers that people, particularly women, face when it comes to learning English. Onsite childminding and a lack of confidence are major hurdles to attending English classes. We planned an approach to address these obstacles and help create a more inclusive community.

A grant from the Federal Government paid for onsite childminding, automatically removing a major barrier to attending English classes for many women. Unsurprisingly, the number of participants attending English classes correlated with the availability of childminding. Where childminding was available, attendance at these classes increased.

English language develops informally and incidentally, and the programs offered by the hubs allowed this organic language development to take place. This approach meant that hubs were a safe place to practise English. They were also a place to make new friends and perhaps learn a new skill.

Across the hubs different approaches included informal learning through programs catering to women and their children (such as playgroups) and personal interest programs (such as kitchen

garden schemes and sewing classes). Some hubs delivered a combination of formal non-accredited classes as well as informal programs, and some offered formal accredited classes. All programs were delivered within hubs.

English classes were scheduled according to the needs and availability of women, which meant they could build their confidence in speaking English in a less pressured environment.

The hubs model works so well because the classes are person-centred and place-centred. They are on school premises making them easy to get to, the classes are held during school hours so domestic responsibilities are easier to manage, there is no visa class criteria or restrictions around length of time in Australia. The classes are free of charge, childminding is available and is also free of charge, making them accessible to those with financial restrictions. The classes focus on everyday practical English and provide a fun way to learn, as well as an opportunity to connect with the local community.

By coming to English classes in hubs many hub participants have developed English language to a level that has enabled them to progress to the hub's vocational learning. This has increased their employment prospects.

Hubs are places that allow for community connections to be made. English language develops naturally in this safe environment. Our model provides an environment that is ripe for learning, with support and resources in place to ensure that women can access opportunities to learn English in a way that works for them.

# English

## Who is coming to English in the hubs?

Women with children are the main group of people attending English in the hubs. Most of the women are aged under 45 and have at least one child living with them. In many cases their children are very young (preschool age or younger). Most of the women don't have an education beyond school, and some have no education at all. The majority of women did not work but have said they would like to.

Very few of the attendees at English class speak English at home, and many don't believe they speak or read English well. The majority of women coming to English class in the hub don't go anywhere else to learn English.

They come to hubs to learn English because it is a positive and supportive place, and they feel comfortable in the hub learning environment. The convenience, accessibility, proximity to home and onsite childminding are just some of the reasons they come to hubs.

Hubs' English conversation classes fill a critical language learning gap for many women and are providing a pathway to more formal English classes and to vocational learning opportunities. Hubs provide a safe welcoming and supportive environment in which to learn English.



**“We don't have to worry about being judged . . . the hub is a very safe space for us to learn and practice English without any hesitation.”**

\*Data taken from 2019 English Census.



## Alia's story

### **"This is my first ever English class."**

When Alia migrated from Afghanistan to Australia in 2013 she spoke little English and was not feeling confident about learning. During a Harmony Day celebration at Westmead Public School, Alia discovered her local hub.

Alia, who is in her late 30s, joined the Westmead hub's English classes and has since joined in many other activities, such as the Healthy Eating program, the Sit and Chat program and New Healthy Women. But it is learning English that has perhaps made the biggest difference to Alia's life in Australia.

Hub Leader, Richa Aryal explains,

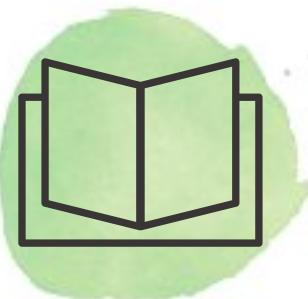
***"When Alia started English classes, she told me: 'this is my first ever English class.' She said she'd never had confidence to learn English and always had a fear of being judged. She was scared and didn't trust herself. Gradually she started improving her language skills and she made many friends. At the end of Term 3 she was able to give a short speech about her journey of learning English – this was a great achievement for Alia and a turning point in her life."***

After beginning her language journey at the hub, Richa said Alia had built enough confidence to enrol in TAFE, where she continues her English studies.

# Volunteering and employment pathways



Many women who access hubs eventually want to join the workforce and give back to their community.



Hubs offer formal and informal training courses.



People can access vocational training in partnership with TAFEs or other registered training organisations.



Volunteer and paid work opportunities within hubs and the wider school community are available.

**26,104**

volunteering opportunities

**276**

people found jobs as a result of connecting with a hub

People attended formal and informal training

**16,434**

times

### Saleema's story

Saleema, a hub participant in Hume, improved her English language so much that she went on to undertake a Certificate III in Children's Services. She says:

***"If no childcare it would be very hard for me."***

Saleema went on to be employed as a childminder by a hub.

***"I looked for job, one I can do it, as I don't have any experience [in Australia]. The English teacher that was at the community hub suggested I worked with the childcare program during English class - that was the first job. After six months I got asked to work at another school as a playgroup leader, it [felt like] too big a step. But I took it ..."***



The connection between English, volunteering, and employment is very clear. When participants learn English through hubs, their confidence increases, and they begin to see what is possible for themselves and their families.

# Volunteering and employment pathways: Examples from across our network



## Partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic Volunteer Tutor Scheme

In 2019 hub participants trained as volunteer English students in a partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic. The Melbourne Polytechnic Volunteer Tutor Scheme (VTS) (run as part of the Adult Migrant Education Program), gives volunteers free training and ongoing support through professional development workshops. Tutors continue to improve their own proficiency in English, while teaching English to newly arrived women, in a safe and comfortable environment.

Four hubs within the Hume local government area in Melbourne supported a group of hub participants to become volunteer tutors. A pilot program was rolled out at community hubs in Craigieburn South, Good Samaritan, Roxburgh Park and Roxburgh Rise during 2019.

Twenty-five people were involved in the initial training program, hosted by Roxburgh Park community hub. Twenty-three completed this training course with a view to engage in a 20-week Volunteer Tutors in the Hubs program. Training covered the refugee/migrant experience, the settlement journey, cross-cultural communication, adult learning, teaching strategies, English as an additional language (EAL) and settlement resources.

The pilot program included free onsite childminding for the volunteers' children, tutor groups in the hubs, and plenty of support from their hub leader. The hub leaders were vital to the program's success. They were responsible for selecting and inviting women to participate, preparing and packing up venues, employing and supervising child minders, travel assistance, regular communications, celebrating achievements, ongoing encouragement and assistance, and supporting volunteer tutor clubs.

At the end of the six-week training, participants were presented with a certificate of completion. They were then matched with students or volunteered in the tutor clubs in the hubs.

The Hume-based hubs have many women from Syrian and Iraqi backgrounds. Many would find it difficult to develop their English language skills without the support of volunteer tutors, who are also a valuable bridge to the wider community.

A school principal involved with the Volunteer Tutoring Scheme describes it as a "pathway to other possibilities."

*"This program offers an opportunity for us to connect with the most vulnerable women in our community, and to give them a safe place to connect with other women and with other members of their communities," he said.*

*"The school is part of a wider community network, and without the school communicating with others – connecting – people fall through the cracks. In education we call it 'FISO' – a framework for improving student outcomes. It's what schools should be doing – connecting with the right people, such as Melbourne Polytechnic and the council, to ensure we can do it."*



*"The Volunteer Tutor Scheme in the hubs is aspirational, in terms of the opportunities it presents to vulnerable women and also in its capacity for showing children what they are capable of achieving."*

To help them find paid work, tutors receive a reference letter from the scheme.

The impact of the program has been significant. Of the 23 women who completed the program, 14 are active tutors, and three are waiting to be matched with a student. Some have gone on to find paid work and can no longer volunteer.

## **Classroom helper training in hubs**

The Prairievale Public School, the hub leader and the school worked together to deliver the Parents as Teachers and Classroom Helpers (PaTCH) program. This program was developed 'by teachers for teachers' to train parents to become classroom helpers and help them to support their own children's learning at home. It also provides practical experience in the classroom, which in turn supports the teachers at the school providing them with volunteer helpers. The program began with an information and registration day attended by up to fourteen parents and continued through with nine parents returning to continue with the course. These parents completed three weeks of theory and three weeks of practical volunteer work.

**"Thank you so much for providing the PaTCH program, it was such a great experience and I can't wait to continue my volunteering next term."**

# Celebrating our hubs network

**“I want to thank the teams across the country, and acknowledge their hard work and dedication. The success of the hubs’ network is a testament to you all.”**

Peter Scanlon AO  
Chairman – Community Hubs Australia



**“When I tell friends, or sometimes strangers, what I do and why it is possible, they are in awe of the existence of the program...I feel that I need to spread the word that there are refugees and migrants making great efforts in becoming good citizens.”**

Hub English teacher  
VIC

**“Presentations showcasing what other hubs have achieved through accessing services and partnerships have empowered me to know that so much more is possible in my hub with partnership support.”**

Hub leader  
New South Wales

**“On what they like about hubs: Everyone is eligible. They don’t need the green Medicare card. Some people are in the visa process, some are casual work, some are isolated and just want socialising with community and some are with young children.”**

Hub participant  
VIC

**“I feel like I belong.”**  
Hub participant  
VIC

**“I learnt so much from different people in different parts of Australia. We got to know about so many programs from other states...”**

Hub leader  
New South Wales

# 2019 Conference



***"The conference was a great way to extend this outreach and to meet and talk with other providers and hub leaders. Putting a face to the name Peter Scanlon was extremely beneficial – what a visionary individual he is and how motivating."***

School Principal  
South Australia

***"I particularly enjoyed the ability to learn more about what happens in other schools/hubs and in other states and it was great discussing resourcing and programming through the café conversations. Hearing the impact of hubs on communities across the country was inspiring."***

School Principal  
Queensland

# Thanks to funding and program partners

Scanlon Foundation

Australian Government

Victorian Government – Department of Premier and Cabinet

NSW Government – Multicultural NSW

Queensland Government – Department of Education

Hume City Council

Uniting VIC TAS

KS Environmental Group

Government House Victoria, and the Governor and Mr Howard

UniSuper



## Support agencies

**New South Wales:** Illawarra Multicultural Services, Settlement Services International Ltd, Liverpool City Council

**Queensland:** Access Community Services

**South Australia:** Lutheran Community Care

**Victoria:** E-focus – Himilo Community Connect Project, Hume City Council, The Smith Family, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

## Host schools and centres

We say goodbye to Maronite College of the Holy Family in NSW and Redbank Plains State School in Queensland, and Himilo Community Connect in Victoria, who left the network at the end of 2019.

We'd like to thank Marsden State School community hub for the beautiful cover art work.

Thank you to our hub leaders and hub families for the photos included in this review.

# Thanks to our schools and hubs

## Queensland

### Logan

St Francis College  
Marsden State School  
St Pauls Catholic College  
Woodridge State Primary School  
Woodridge North State School

### Ipswich

Fernbrooke State School  
Redbank Plains State School  
Riverview State School  
Staines Memorial College  
Woodlinks State School

## Victoria

### Hume

Coolaroo South Primary School  
Dallas Brooks Primary School  
Broadmeadows Valley Primary School  
Bethal Primary School  
Campbellfield Heights Primary School  
Craigieburn South Primary School  
Good Samaritan Primary School  
Holy Child Primary School  
Mount Ridley College  
Roxburgh Rise Primary School  
St Dominic's Primary School  
Sunbury Heights Primary School  
Meadow Heights Primary School  
Meadows Primary School  
Roxburgh Park Primary School

### Brimbank

Deer Park North Primary School  
Holy Eucharist Primary School  
Stevensville Primary School

St Albans Heights Primary School

St Albans Primary School

### Dandenong

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

### Banyule

Himilo Community Connect Project  
**Greater Geelong**

Bell Park North Primary School  
Northern Bay College – Hendy Hub  
Northern Bay College- Wexford Hub

### Greater Shepparton

Gowrie Street Primary School  
St Georges Road Primary School  
Wilmot Road Primary School

## New South Wales

### Paramatta

Maronite College of the Holy Family  
Toongabbie East Public School  
Information and Cultural Exchange  
Rydalmere Public School

### Fairfield

Bossley Park Primary School  
Fairfield West Public School  
Prairievale Public School  
Smithfield Public School

### Canterbury Bankstown

Banksia Road Public School  
Chester Hill Public School  
Yagoona Public School  
Bankstown Public School

Bass Hill Public School

Sacred Heart Catholic School

Villawood East Public School

### Blacktown

Bert Oldfield Public School  
Colyton Public School

### Cumberland

Granville Public School  
Westmead Public School

### Liverpool

Hoxton Park Public School  
Marsden Road Public School  
Heckenberg Public School

### Wollongong

Warrawong Public School  
Wollongong Public School  
Wollongong West Public School

## South Australia

### Salisbury

Karrendi Primary School  
Para Vista Primary School  
Paralowie R-12 School  
St Augustine's Parish School  
Salisbury Primary School

### Port Adelaide Enfield

Blair Athol North School  
St Brigid's School



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