



Brotherhood  
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

# Breaking the cycle of disadvantage

Submission to the  
Education State  
Early Childhood Consultation

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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Brotherhood of St Laurence  
67 Brunswick Street  
Fitzroy Vic. 3065

ABN 24 603 467 024

Ph. (03) 9483 1183

[www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au)

For further information or to discuss this submission, please contact:

Rob Hudson  
Group General Manager Programs & Policy  
Brotherhood of St Laurence  
Email: [rhudson@bsl.org.au](mailto:rhudson@bsl.org.au)  
Ph. (03) 9483 2428

# Recommendations

## **Empower parents as first teachers and equip them to create a rich and safe home learning environment.**

1. Develop and extend the availability of high quality early learning programs for 0–3 year olds that focus on strengthening parental capability. These ought to be available across Victoria as part of the universal early years services platform, and offered to families who could most benefit.
2. Extend the availability of home-based learning programs that equip families of 3–5 year olds with the skills to build their child’s school readiness. These should be available to families who could most benefit, and complement other early years services.

## **Harness early years services as a platform to build parental participation and to strengthen local communities.**

3. Support early years services to use a two-generation approach that focuses both on the child and on building the capabilities, skills and economic participation of parents experiencing disadvantage.  
Explore the potential to leverage Commonwealth Government funds to support this approach.
4. Develop funding models that support integrated early years hubs that engage with the circumstances of families and their local community.

## **Align local efforts and resources through place-based approaches.**

5. Provide funding and policy support to trial Collective Impact approaches aimed at lifting child outcomes in communities experiencing disadvantage.

## **Support families experiencing disadvantage to access early years services.**

6. Expand support available to connect newly arrived communities, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, with early years and child development services.

## The Brotherhood and early childhood education

The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) is an independent non-government organisation with strong community links that has been working to reduce poverty in Australia since the 1930s. Based in Melbourne, but with a national profile, the BSL continues to fight for an Australia free of poverty. We undertake research, service development and delivery, and advocacy with the objective of addressing unmet needs and translating the understandings gained into new policies, new programs and practices for implementation by government and others.

The Brotherhood works to prevent and intervene early to address disadvantage. Key projects in the Early Years include:

- The design and delivery of an innovative ***Intentional Play and Learning Program*** which assists parents to support their children's learning and development through play. These playgroups are principally attended by public housing residents and newly arrived communities.
- Establishment of the ***Connie Benn Centre*** at the base of the Atherton Gardens Estate in Fitzroy. This Centre is an integrated community hub for local children and their families and is delivered in partnership with the City of Yarra.
- Developing and expanding the ***Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) to 100 communities around Australia***. This home-based parenting and early childhood learning program works with families with young children aged 4 and 5 years old in disadvantaged communities. A pilot of ***HIPPY Age 3*** commenced in 2015.
- Piloting a ***Two-generation Approach*** in partnership with Goodstart Early Learning to simultaneously support children and their families to move out of circumstances of disadvantage. In addition to offering high quality early learning, care and family support, this approach builds parenting skills and economic and civic participation. The first pilot commenced in the growth corridor of Whittlesea in 2015.
- Being a founding partner in ***Goodstart Early Learning***, the largest not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services in Australia. Goodstart is a social enterprise with a mission to raise the quality of early learning and improve social inclusion.
- Coordinating the ***Atherton Gardens Network***, which is aligning the efforts of early years services, schools, community organisations, council services and Victoria Police to achieve a shared objective of strengthening and empowering children, young people and families living on the Atherton Gardens Estate, a high-rise public housing estate in Fitzroy.
- Designing and delivering a ***Refugee Child Outreach*** as part of a suite of ***Family Support Programs*** for refugee and other newly arrived communities, delivered by the Brotherhood's Ecumenical Migration Centre.
- Research projects, including the ***Parent Child Stress*** project funded by Melbourne University and the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute.

## Overview

The Brotherhood welcomes the Victorian Government's commitment to making Victoria the Education State and appreciates the opportunity to inform the development of reforms to early childhood education and care.

The Brotherhood believes reforms ought to be focused on lifting outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage, given the well-known connection between childhood vulnerability and lifelong disadvantage.

Too many of Victoria's youngest children are at risk of being left behind in their first few years of life. These children are more likely to fare poorly at school and to leave school early. Some may face extended reliance on income-support payments and other social services, suffer poorer health, be socially isolated, or even find themselves in trouble with the criminal justice system.<sup>1</sup> The talents and potential that these children can contribute to our economy and broader community are in danger of being wasted. The costs to the individual child and the broader community are immense. Victoria's early years system can play a big part in altering this trajectory.

### Victoria's early years system faces challenges

While recognising the many strengths of Victoria's early years system, there are a number of key systemic challenges:

- **Children and families who could most benefit from early years services are at greatest risk of missing out, or participating at a lower rate.** The barriers to using early years services identified by families we work with include cost, availability, transport, housing insecurity and transience, lack of awareness of services and a reluctance to engage for cultural or personal reasons.
- **The early years system is complex for families to navigate and understand their entitlements.** The interplay of federal, state and local government programs, and the disconnection between early years education and care and child and family services add to this complexity. There is no effective mechanism to connect families with the supports they need, or to identify and reach out to families who are missing out. The siloing of services prevents a holistic approach to the available offerings.
- **Universal early years services are not narrowing the equity gap.** High quality preschool is beneficial to all children. Those that attend preschool have a lower rate of developmental vulnerabilities by the time they start school than those that don't. However, attending preschool alone does not redress the equity gap in outcomes between children from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds compared with their more advantaged peers.
- **There are inequities in the geographic and socioeconomic distributions of early years supports.** Private providers of key allied services such as speech and occupational therapy are clustered in more advantaged socioeconomic areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Social Exclusion Monitor, based on HILDA data and developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Melbourne Institute, reveals that early school leavers are two and a half times more likely to experience deep social exclusion than those who complete Year 12. The monitor measures the accumulation of deprivation using 30 indicators across seven life domains: material resources, employment, education and skills, health and disability, social connection, community and personal safety.

- **There is emerging risk in the growth corridors:** Some 60–80 babies are born weekly in the local government areas on Melbourne’s fringe. The provision of essential infrastructure and civic support, including early years services, has not been able to keep pace with the burgeoning populations in these areas. Warning signs of the emerging economic and social challenges include high proportions of children who are developmentally vulnerable, comparatively poor school attainment and high rates of youth disengagement.
- **There is a lack of engagement with the skills and capabilities of a child’s family and the circumstances of their local community.** The developmental vulnerability of children is often a product of, and compounded by, the disadvantage experienced by their parents and the paucity of resources in the local community.
- **One in five children is starting school with developmental vulnerabilities.** Many of the children go on to experience poorer school and life outcomes.

### A child’s early learning and development is influenced by many factors

The rapid development of the brain and other biological systems that takes place from conception means that the first five years are the most critical in setting a child up for a successful future.<sup>2</sup> It is in the early years that the foundations for future learning, behaviour and health are laid.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, skills beget skills: the skills we develop as infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers are cumulative and form the basis for later skill development.<sup>4</sup>

A child’s early learning at home and in the outside world contributes to a chain of effects that either reinforces initial achievements or exacerbates initial difficulties. Accordingly, their life chances are shaped by a range of ecological determinants: the quality of their home environment, the circumstances of their family, their early years service contact, socioeconomic and cultural capital of their local community and broader societal factors.<sup>5</sup>

Development delays are apparent in children as young as two.<sup>6</sup> If such delays are not effectively addressed, they can persist and intensify, setting a child trajectory towards poorer school and life outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

### Some children are at greater risk of developmental vulnerabilities

While children across the social spectrum experience developmental vulnerabilities by the time they start school, these are more prevalent among certain groups. Often, a child’s school readiness

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<sup>2</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2004, *Young children develop in an environment of relationships*, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, <<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/activities/council/>>

<sup>3</sup> JP Shonkoff 2012, ‘Leveraging the biology of adversity to address the roots of disparities in health and development’, *PNAS Early Edition*, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> JJ Heckman 2011, ‘Effective child development strategies’, in E Zigler, W Gilliam & S Barnett (eds), *The pre-K debates – current controversies and issues*, Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co., Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>5</sup> U Bronfenbrenner 1981, *The ecology of human development: experiments by nature and design*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>6</sup> LJ Harrison, S Goldfeld, E Metcalfe & T Moore 2012, *Early learning programs that promote children’s developmental and educational outcomes*, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Health and & Australian Institute of Family Studies.

<sup>7</sup> F Hilferty, G Redmond & I Katz 2009, *The implications of poverty on child readiness to learn*, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Canberra. (PC 2013, p. 2).

is profoundly affected by location and the opportunities and supports provided by their local communities; their parent's income, health, education and employment status; their own health and wellbeing; whether they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and the English language proficiency of their family.<sup>8</sup>

### Early developmental vulnerability can have lifelong consequences

If a child is not 'school ready' this can lead to disengagement from learning, and in turn to behavioural problems and poor educational achievement.<sup>9</sup> Those children who are developmentally vulnerable when they start school tend to perform (on average) more poorly throughout their school life than their advantaged peers. The probability of leaving school early is higher for these groups, and their probability of attending higher education is lower.<sup>10</sup> Almost half of early school leavers find themselves on the margins of the labour force, either in part-time or casual jobs or out of work altogether.<sup>11</sup>

### Early years services can make a difference

The earlier the intervention, the greater the chance of improving a child's outcomes.<sup>12</sup> High quality early education and care programs can provide a counter-balance for children growing up in circumstances that do not provide the support they need to learn and thrive. They can offer a stimulating, rich and supportive environment and model positive adult-child interactions. They can also build the capacity of parents and caregivers to nurture their child's development and provide a stimulating home learning environment. Well-connected services can also provide a platform for linking families to social, civic and economic opportunities and strengthen the social capital of their local community.

### Some of Victoria's most disadvantaged children are missing out

Alarming, some of Victoria's most disadvantaged children are missing out on early childhood education. The Productivity Commission identified the following groups as disadvantaged when it comes to participating in early childhood education and care services: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally diverse backgrounds with limited English spoken at home, children whose parents are long-term unemployed, children whose mother has not completed high school, children in low-income households, and children with a parent or sibling with a disability.<sup>13</sup> Tellingly, these same groups of children are at higher risk of being developmentally vulnerable on the AEDC by the time they start school. A combination of these factors can compound disadvantage.

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<sup>8</sup> R McLachlan, G Gilfillan & J Gordon 2013, *Deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia*, Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.

<sup>9</sup> ARACY 2009, *The implications of poverty on children's readiness to learn*, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth; McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children in M Wake, A Sanson, D Berthelsen, P Hardy, S Misson, L Smith & J Ungerer 2008, *How well are Australian infants and children aged 4 to 5 years doing? Findings from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Wave 1*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, citing ABS 2012, *Education and work*, Cat. no. 6227.0 data. See also Dandolo Partners 2012, *Second interim evaluation of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions*, Melbourne.

<sup>12</sup> JJ Heckman 2013, *Giving kids a fair chance: a strategy that works*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>13</sup> Productivity Commission 2014, *Child care and early childhood learning: dDraft report*, Canberra, pp. 627–32.

The Brotherhood expects a decline in the participation of children experiencing disadvantage in early childhood care and education, particularly those from low-income households, if the Australian Government's proposed changes to eligibility for childcare subsidies proceed. From 2017, access to subsidised childcare will be reduced for households that do not meet a new activities test. This represents a major policy shift from the current universal entitlement to two days subsidised care per week, with significant impacts on both parents and children. It will mean that some children will find themselves moving in and out of early childhood education and care settings as their parents' situation changes, or even missing out altogether.

### **A strong universal platform is pivotal to addressing disadvantage**

There is a need for further policy and program responses to be developed as part of Victoria's universal early years' service platform. This involves offering a greater scale and intensity of services to the children, families and neighbourhoods most at risk of disadvantage before it accumulates and escalates. This kind of proportionate universalism<sup>14</sup> reflects the imperative for the early years system to be responsive to the needs of different families. Families can access targeted services through a universal service platform without the stigma that might be attached to using these services. A strong universal platform also provides the opportunity to develop a more integrated service response, making it easier to navigate the system and to identify the children and families who would most benefit from additional support.

For some children and families, there is a need to invest intensively for a long period. To be effective, these investments need to be sustained throughout a child's schooling.<sup>15</sup>

### **Key enablers of change require consideration of children in their family and community context**

Key enablers, within a universal system for preventing and intervening early to address disadvantage in early childhood, include:

- broadening the range and availability of quality early years education and care offerings for children experiencing disadvantage in the pre-natal period, infancy and pre-school years, and in the early years of school, delivered in home, group and centre or school settings.
- equipping parents to be their child's first teacher, to engage with and support their child's learning and development and to create a rich and safe home learning environment.
- using early years services as a platform to support parents to build their capabilities, social connections, civic and economic participation, and to strengthen communities.
- aligning local efforts and resources and engaging local communities in shaping solutions.
- supporting low-income households and children in families with other indicators of disadvantage to access early years services.

The Brotherhood endorses the shared statement of ten principles to underpin an outstanding ECEC system that have been developed by key community agencies in Victoria's early years sector<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> *Fair society, healthy lives* (The Marmot Review) cited by S Goldfeld 2015 (forthcoming) Using the Australian Early Development Census to change children's chances, seminar presentation, 1 October.

<sup>15</sup> R Cassen, S McNally & A Vignoles 2015, *Making a difference in education: what the evidence says*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

This submission contains a range of practical recommendations and case studies that reflect the Brotherhood's knowledge and experience of tackling disadvantage in the early years. We have drawn on our own and other research together with our practice knowledge and have consulted with families.

Given the parallel Roadmap to Reform process, this submission does not focus on child and family services at the tertiary end of the intervention spectrum.

## Recommendations

### Broaden the range of quality early years education offerings available for children experiencing disadvantage

While all children benefit from quality early years programs, children experiencing disadvantage have the most to gain. There is clear evidence that high quality interventions can have an enduring and significant impact on the life chances of young children and ultimately help arrest the cycle of disadvantage. Longitudinal studies of early intervention programs (such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project) for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the United States demonstrate the positive and long-term effect of early environmental enrichment on school achievement, employment outcomes and social behaviours.<sup>17</sup>

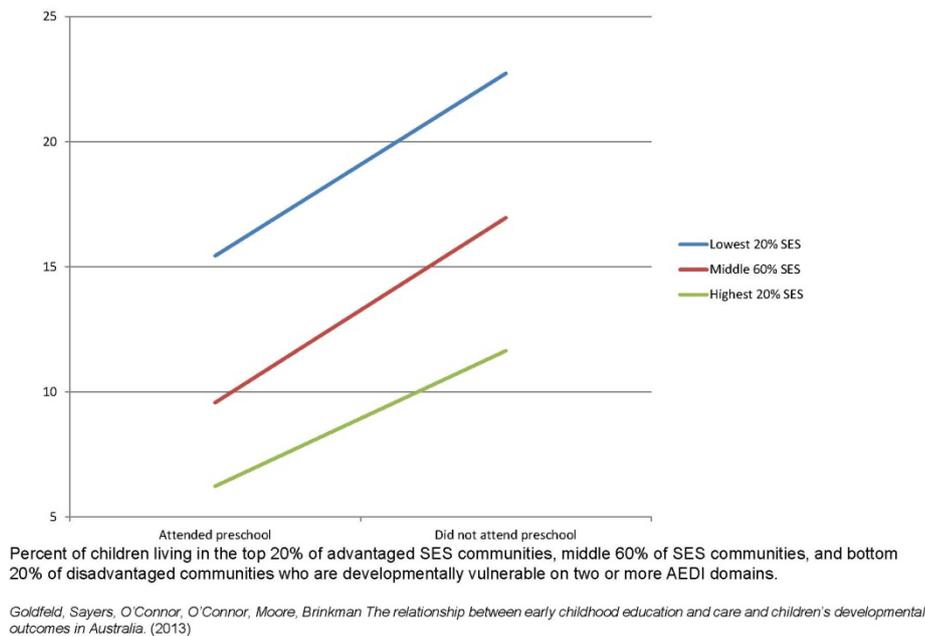
Australian evidence reveals that attending preschool is associated with improved outcomes. Children who attend preschool have a lower incidence of developmental vulnerability by the time they start school than those that do not. However, preschool alone does not address the gap in outcomes, as the following graph reveals.

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<sup>16</sup> Early Learning Association of Australia 2015 (unpub.), Ten principles for and early childhood education state, produced 9 October 2015 on behalf of 17 organisations.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, S Dockett, B Perry, B & E Kearney 2010, *School readiness: what does it mean for Indigenous children, families, schools and communities?*, Closing the gap; HighScope Educational Research Foundation 2014, *HighScope Perry Preschool Study*; KPMG 2011, *Reviewing the evidence on the effectiveness of early childhood intervention: report to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs*; McLachlan, Gilfillan & Gordon 2013; Moore, T & McDonald, M 2013, *Acting early, changing lives: how prevention and early action saves money and improves wellbeing*, Paddington, NSW.

## Equity and ECEC



This clearly points to the need for additional targeted interventions if Victoria is to narrow the gap for children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds before they start prep.

We have reviewed the evidence from a range of US, European and Australian early education and pre-school intervention programs targeting disadvantaged children and their families.<sup>18</sup> Our key conclusions are that more effective interventions:

- involve an early start—ideally before birth, in infancy or at the latest, pre-school
- include a combination of centre-based activities and home visits
- have a strong dosage, lasting at least two years and running for at least three half days per week
- ensure parental involvement
- focus on both cognitive and social and emotional skills
- are of high quality and have a structured curriculum and activities
- engage and build on the aspirations of the local community
- are free or subsidised and voluntary
- are connected to a universal services platform
- are culturally responsive. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities, programs benefit from enhancing cultural values and using Indigenous frameworks for interaction.

Victoria needs diverse early years education offerings to meet the needs of different families in the pre-natal period, infancy, pre-school years and the first years of school. A range of interventions ought to be piloted and evaluated to build Victoria's limited evidence base of what works—the

<sup>18</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence 2015 (unpub.), Background paper for the Early Years Leadership Team, September 2015.

type of intervention, the age and stage of development at which it occurs, and the target (child *or* parent only or child *and* parent).

To this end, the Brotherhood is supportive of the right@home trial of sustained home nursing visits (commencing in the pre-natal period and continuing until a child is aged two) underway in three Victorian locations. The Victorian Government has also committed to enhancing the Supported Playgroup Program with the addition of *smalltalk* in 2016. An evaluation of this intervention to assess its effectiveness will be critical to inform future service development.

Major service gaps remain for the 0–3 age group, for those who do not engage with kindergarten or other centre-based ECEC services, and for families that would benefit from home-based programs that equip them to provide a nurturing environment for their child’s learning and development. The following sections of this submission outline some approaches that could be further developed in Victoria.

## Empower parents as first teachers and equip them to create a rich and safe home learning environment.

Since a child’s most powerful learning comes from their family, the quality of parenting and the home learning environment is pivotal. In most cases, parents are the best placed to help improve their child’s life chances.

Research indicates that the most effective way to boost a child’s later achievement is to support their parents to actively engage in learning activities at home.<sup>19</sup> However, children from families experiencing disadvantage are less likely to be exposed to rich, supportive and stimulating home learning environments. They tend to be read fewer books, hear fewer words, and receive less cognitive stimulation than their peers.<sup>20</sup>

While the chances of having a more supportive home environment are higher for children from an advantaged background, it is also the case that many children from lower SES backgrounds can also have a good home learning environment. The home environment, while influenced by SES, is not determined by it. Accordingly, by helping parents change family interactions at home we can influence a child’s outcomes, even if it is not possible to have a major impact on the family’s socioeconomic resources.<sup>21</sup>

There is need for programs and approaches that support early childhood learning and development in the home environment and build the skills and confidence of parents to nurture their child’s development.

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<sup>19</sup> OECD 2012, *Encouraging quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC)*, Research brief: parental and community engagement matters, OECD, Paris, p. 4; C Desforges & A Abouchaar 2003, *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review*, research report no. 433, Department for Education and Skills, London; and A Harris & J Goodall 2006, *Parental involvement in education: an overview of the literature*, University of Warwick, Coventry.

<sup>20</sup> R Reeves & K Grannis 2014, *Five strong starts for social mobility*, Brookings Institute, Washington, DC

<sup>21</sup> Cassen, McNally & Vignoles, p. 24.

## Supporting the learning and development of 0–3 year olds

From birth, babies learn from the positive and negative influences around them. Without support, many Victorian families are not always well equipped to provide the sorts of experiences that enable their infants to thrive.

The Brotherhood has developed an Intentional Play and Learning Program to support families experiencing disadvantage in the earliest years of their child's life. While this emerging model needs to be subject to further evaluation, we believe it combines critical elements that underpin successful interventions to address disadvantage. It is targeted at child *and* parent, is centre *and* home based, involves intervention over an extended period, is culturally responsive, and has a high quality, structured curriculum.

### **Learning through intentional play**

The Brotherhood's Intentional Play and Learning Program is run from the Connie Benn Centre in Fitzroy. The program is attended principally by families from the surrounding high rise public housing estates—mostly refugees and other migrants who are unfamiliar with Australian parenting norms and early years systems.

Families typically attend two to three playgroup sessions a week and can also receive home visits. The program is facilitated by paid and volunteer early years' educators.

There is a dual focus on the learning of parents and their children. It is a high quality early learning program that also builds the capacity of parents as their child's first teacher. There is a strong focus on positive parent–child relationships.

The program is based on the National and Victorian Early Years Learning Framework principles. Parents engage in experiences and activities that build on their child's interests and help them to understand how their child learns through play, appropriate to different stages of development. Social and emotional development is underpinned by the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) Program. Home visits support parents to transfer learnings from the program into their home environment and to deal constructively with the real life challenges inherent in parenting.

A 2014 review<sup>22</sup> found the program contributed to increased parental skills and confidence; strengthened child–parent relationships; improved socialisation and relationships for children; enhanced learning through play and replication of activities at home; positive transitions to kindergarten and school; and improved wellbeing, networks, friendships and support for parents.

While welcoming the enhancement of Supported Playgroups with *smalltalk* from 2016, we note that the geographical coverage (only half of Victoria's LGAs), program duration (8–10 weeks) check) dosage (once weekly) and criteria (0–3 years) are limited. We have also been advised that the funding of *smalltalk* will result in the closure of a number of playgroups that currently attract Supported Playgroups funding, including some targeted at culturally diverse communities. There are also many families who do not live in the Supported Playgroups catchment areas and others

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<sup>22</sup> S Muyeen, C I'Anson & T Szirom 2014 (unpub.), The importance of play: an evaluation of three supported playgroups at the Connie Benn Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

who could benefit from more intensive support. Some not-for-profits self-fund programs facilitated by early years educators, but these are few and far between and are often oversubscribed.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Develop and extend the availability of high quality early learning programs for 0–3 year olds that focus on strengthening parental capability. These ought to be available across Victoria as part of the universal early years service platform, and offered to families who could most benefit.**

#### **Bringing quality early education into the home environment**

Bringing an intentional focus on early education into the home creates an opportunity to encourage parents to build skills as their child's first teacher in a way that is responsive to their surroundings. It is an empowering approach that offers the chance to strengthen parenting capacity and confidence and enhance family relationships as well as improving school readiness.

Home-based programs recognise the powerful role played by parents in the development of their children. They can give children and families the extra assistance needed to help narrow the gap in developmental outcomes. They also provide a much needed avenue to engage difficult to reach families that might not otherwise participate in early years education programs.

Importantly, home-based options offer a cost-effective and nimble approach. They also provide a window into the home environment, which can provide the trigger for families to be linked to other services where needed.

#### **Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)**

HIPPY is a free, two-year, home-based early childhood learning and parenting program targeted at families with children aged four and five years.

Around 1000 Victorian families are currently participating in HIPPY across 16 locations that are home to high numbers of children with developmental vulnerabilities. At the time of enrolling in HIPPY, 13% of children did *not* attend any other early learning activities such as playgroup, kinder, childcare, music, library or sports; 67.7% of families held a Health Care Card; 42.5% were living in a home where a language other than English is spoken; 22.6% of children had been diagnosed with a recognised medical condition; and 14.4% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Home tutors visit weekly and support parents to guide their child through a structured learning program. Families spend around 15 minutes a day, five days a week, doing educational activities together. The program is designed to be integrated into the daily life of the family and is culturally appropriate. The curriculum is aligned with the AEDC domains, the Australian Early Learning Framework and the National Quality Framework. The Age 4 material includes sound, print and letter awareness, concept development, sequenced numeracy, shapes, colours, problem solving, social and emotional development, active listening and active play. The Age 5 material supports children's learning as they move into formal schooling and includes social emotional development, creativity, thinking and reasoning, communication and active play.

Peer-to-peer learning and strengthening local community capacity are pivotal to the HIPPY model. The Home Tutors are usually past or current parents participating in the program, and are trained

and coached by a local Coordinator. They are supported to enter (or re-enter) the paid workforce as HIPPY tutors, and this provides a platform for acquiring further vocational skills that will equip them for future employment.

Parents are also encouraged to participate in regular group meetings. This increases opportunities for shared learning, friendships and access to broader community supports.

HIPPY has been operating internationally for over 40 years and since 1998 in Australia. HIPPY in Australia has been the subject of a series of research studies and a national evaluation. Key findings<sup>23</sup> are that HIPPY:

- is highly cost effective compared with other programs, yielding a return on investment of \$2.43 for every \$1 spent
- significantly improves school readiness. While HIPPY children scored an average of eight points below the Australian norm on the ‘Who Am I?’ test at the beginning of the HIPPY program, after two years of HIPPY this gap had been closed
- contributes to large, statistically significant improvements in pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills
- significantly improves children’s socio-emotional functioning including their interpersonal relationships, play and coping skills and decreases problems with conduct, hyperactivity and peers. The HIPPY group’s mean socio-emotional difficulties score was better than the Australian population norm by the end of the program, despite these children having started HIPPY with a mean total difficulties score that were worse than the Australian norm
- improves parenting skills and parent–child relationships. HIPPY parents adopted less hostile, and more warm and nurturing parenting styles by comparison with a matched sample;
- lifts parental engagement. Teachers reported that HIPPY parents were more involved in their child’s learning and development and had greater contact with the school than non-HIPPY parents;
- is an effective intervention with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

HIPPY is delivered in 100 communities across Australia with funding from the Australian Government. Acting as a prime provider, the Brotherhood supports local community organisations to deliver HIPPY to ensure program quality and consistency.

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<sup>23</sup> See M Liddell, T Barnett, F Diallo Roost & J McEachran, J 2011, *Investing in our future: An evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)*, final report to the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations; C Godfrey 2006, Responses to an early childhood educational intervention with disadvantaged families: an exploratory study, PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne; and the Closing the Gap review of early childhood parenting, education and health intervention programs.

There is a need to make evidence-informed home-based learning programs available for more Victorian families.

Inspired by promising reports from HIPPY Age 3 in Canada<sup>24</sup>, the Brotherhood commenced piloting a HIPPY Aged 3 program in 2015 with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait families at Inala in Southern Queensland. The program has a strong focus on supporting parents to engage in hands-on, interactive play with their children and on nurturing the relationship between the parent and child. It provides a pathway into the Age 4 and 5 years curriculum. An evaluation will be undertaken.

## **Recommendation 2**

**Extend the availability of home-based learning programs that equip families of 3–5 year olds with the skills to build their child’s school readiness. These should be available to families who could most benefit, and complement other early years services.**

Harness early years services to provide a platform to build parental participation and to strengthen local communities.

A two-generation approach that supports both children and parents experiencing disadvantage

Given the strong relationship between a child’s developmental outcomes and the socioeconomic, education and employment status of their parents, one of the best things we can do is invest in building the skills and capabilities of parents to participate in their community and secure stable work. This is particularly important for jobless families, those in precarious work, and mothers who may not have engaged in paid work for several years.

The Brotherhood is partnering with Goodstart Early Learning to pilot a service model that takes a two-generation approach to supporting families living in growth corridor communities. The aim is to give both children and their families the support and skills they need to help make a good life. As well as offering high quality early education and care and parenting programs, the model will also focus on the economic and civic participation of parents and strengthening local community networks. The intensity of support provided will depend on the circumstances of the family.

The model brings together interventions aimed at lifting a child’s outcomes, informed by the evidence of the factors that help a child overcome disadvantage.<sup>25</sup> Core elements include:

- high quality early learning and care services
- family support and parent engagement to support the wellbeing of families
- career planning, training and access to employment opportunities
- financial programs to build economic participation and assets
- a focus on building civic engagement and community connections.

<sup>24</sup> HIPPY Canada 2014, *Performance management results: program year 2012–13*, at [www.HIPPYCanada.ca](http://www.HIPPYCanada.ca). AL Brown 2012, *The impact of the Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program on school performance in 3rd, 7th and 9th grades*, presented at the 17th International Roundtable on School, Family and Community Partnerships. Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>25</sup> The model has been inspired by the work of the Annie E Casey and Aspen Foundations in the USA.

The long-term goals include: children making a successful transition to school; families able to support their child’s learning and development; parents in paid work; strong social networks; strong community capabilities to enhance outcomes for children and families; and community members involved in developing responses that meet their aspirations and needs.

**The Jindi Centre in Whittlesea**

The Brotherhood, in partnership with Goodstart Early Learning, opened the Jindi Family Centre in Mernda in early 2015.

While the Census data suggests that Mernda is doing relatively well, emerging risk factors include mortgage stress, family violence, social isolation, lower qualifications and skills, remoteness from employment opportunities and limited civic infrastructure. The community is experiencing rapid population growth and is home to the largest proportion of 0–4 year olds in Whittlesea.

Applying the two-generation model requires the partners to work in different way and take an integrated approach. Programs and services include:

<b>Early years education &amp; care</b>	<b>Family support</b>	<b>Economic participation</b>	<b>Community connections</b>
MCH Playgroups Kinder, long day care Speech therapy Occupational therapy Inclusion support Library outreach and reading programs	Parenting support Child and family practitioner Information and referrals	Employment-related workshops Training programs Financial education	Volunteering opportunities English conversation classes Local newsletter Family & community events Community use of Centre facilities Parent & Carer Committee

Each child in Jindi’s early learning program (and from 2016 children in playgroups) has an individual Education and Wellbeing Plan, which maps the child’s development and wellbeing across the AEDC domains. This is developed jointly by parents, an early childhood educator and the Jindi Centre Manager, who meet regularly to review progress. Emphasis is placed on the parent’s aspirations for their child’s future development and the actions that they, Jindi and other services can take to realise the child’s potential. The development of each child is considered within the family context, enabling identification of strategies to build family capability and to connect with services that can assist the child and their family.

For most families the universal service system, the general offerings at Jindi and their own resources provide all that is needed to give their child(ren) a good start. However there are some families that require a modest level of additional support such as parenting programs and financial advice, and a small number of families that require more intensive support. The interdisciplinary team at Jindi seeks to provide and connect families with the support they need.

For those families requiring more intensive support to move out of social exclusion and disadvantage, the Jindi Two Generation Intervention works to:

- support the child to receive the best early childhood education and support in their transition to school
- support the parent/s to be the best parent they can be
- support the parent/s to build social connections and their involvement in community life
- support the parent/s to engage with meaningful education and employment.

Engagement with the surrounding community is central to Jindi's work. Aspirations identified by the people of Mernda in our consultations include building a sense of community and belonging and reducing isolation. To advance these aspirations the Jindi parent–staff community has established a parent/carer & child engagement group and co-designed a range of community connection activities.

The model could be cost effectively replicated given that operational costs are largely covered by leveraging existing funding streams attached to long day care (Australian Government), kindergarten and maternal and child health services. Capital costs are comparable to early years hub funding currently available from the Victorian Government on a matched basis.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Support early years services to use a two-generation approach that focuses both on the child and on building the capabilities, skills and economic participation of parents experiencing disadvantage.**

**Explore the potential to leverage Commonwealth Government funds to support this approach.**

Early years services can provide a platform to strengthen local communities. As illustrated above, early years services can provide the crucial soft entry point for families to access targeted programs and strengthen community connections.

Such entry points are particularly important in areas with high concentrations of unemployment, lower educational attainment or structural change, such as the loss of manufacturing industries. They are also critical in growing communities on the fringes of our cities, where a large percentage of Victoria's babies will be born over the next 20 years. With limited social infrastructure and economic opportunities, families without strong social and emotional supports are more vulnerable to social isolation and exclusion.

By focusing not just on the child, but on the circumstances of the parents and the surrounding community, early years services can play a critical role in building on local aspirations and strengthening social capital and community resilience.

There are a number of promising innovative examples. Doveton College is a birth to Year 9 community learning centre that integrates services and supports within the school and involves a philanthropic and government partnership. Tasmania's Child and Family Centres are another example of this approach.

### **Tasmanian Child and Family Centres**

The Tasmanian Government has progressively opened 12 Child and Family Centres since 2011 in communities with high service needs. The Centres provide a single entry point to universal, progressive universal, targeted, and specialist early years services and supports from pregnancy through to age five years.

Each Centre has two staff funded by the Tasmanian Department of Education: a Centre leader and a Community Inclusion Worker. Services and supports in the Centres are provided by government (delivery of universal programs), non-government organisations (e.g. playgroups, childcare) and by the community (e.g. toddler haircuts, garden maintenance). Services include those available across the state as well as additional supports tailored to local needs, such as:

- early learning programs (e.g. Launching into Learning, play group, toy library, childcare)
- child health and early childhood intervention services (e.g. speech pathology)
- family health services (e.g. family planning, midwifery services, pregnancy exercise classes)
- parent education (e.g. Being a Parent course, Family Partnership Training)
- adult education (e.g. literacy education, art workshops, self-defence)
- family support services (e.g. outreach services, counselling, transport to appointments)

The establishment of each Centre was supported by a Local Enabling Group comprising community members and service providers that informed Centre design. Local Advisory Groups then provide ongoing operational and governance support.

Key findings of a 2015 report were that the Centres had a positive impact on parents' use and experiences of services and supports for young children. Parents found the Centres welcoming, respectful and inclusive places that were helping them develop positive child, family, school and community connections.<sup>26</sup>

The Victorian Government already provides capital investment in early years service hubs but many of these lack the operational funding needed to maximise their impact. Mere co-location of services, while a step forward, is a missed opportunity. The Brotherhood recommends that funding for new early years services infrastructure in targeted areas be tied to delivering:

- **a clear model of intervention:** including tangible outcomes, measures and evaluation.
- **integration (rather than co-location) of services:** There is emerging evidence that collective, localised, 'one-stop-shop' approaches that are non-discriminatory, and combine child-focused services (care, education, play, health) with parent-focused services (health, welfare and social support including transitional labour market supports) can enhance child and family access, health and wellbeing.<sup>27</sup> Integration of service reduces the possibility of children 'falling

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<sup>26</sup> CT Taylor, K Jose, D Christensen & WI Van de Lageweg 2015, *Engaging, supporting and working with children and families in Tasmania's Child and Family Centres: report on the impact of Centres on parents' use and experiences of services and supports in the Early Years*, Telethon Kids Institute. Perth.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, UK Department for Education, *The impact of Sure Start Local Programmes on seven year olds and their families*, research report DFE-RR220, Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck, London.

through the gaps', and enables a coordinated and holistic response to the needs of families. It also eliminates the need for families to repeat their stories and reduces duplication between services. Key principles that underpin integration are shared vision and mission agreed by all agencies involved; joint identification of desired outcomes and measures; shared leadership to drive the vision, access resources and build relationships both within a centre and across the community; coordination to drive integration at the service level and engage the community; a single entry point, preferably through a universal service; shared data and a common case management system.<sup>28</sup>

- **partnership-based governance:** bringing together not-for profit providers, local government and local community organisations.
- **community engagement:** This involves talking with people in their community about their aspirations, and facilitating ways to advance these. It supports community members to consider the future they want for their children and how this can be achieved. It also supports local volunteer effort.
- **co-investment:** from the lead community agencies and all levels of government.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Develop funding models that support integrated early years hubs that engage with the circumstances of families and their local community.**

Taking a place-based approach that aligns local efforts and resources and involves local communities in shaping solutions.

The neighbourhood in which a child grows up can have a significant impact on their development outcomes. Some neighbourhoods in Victoria are experiencing concentrated and entrenched disadvantage.<sup>29</sup> There is a growing consensus that there will not be significant progress in addressing locational disadvantage unless the affected local communities are deeply invested in place-based solutions.<sup>30</sup>

Place-based initiatives focus on bringing about change in a geographical area. Common attributes of place-based work include a local governance mechanism to bring different voices together and make decisions, development of a shared approach, coordination of efforts, targeted investment and the tailoring of programs, services and policies to advance local aspirations. At their best, place-based initiatives build on local assets and strengths, involve all interested groups from residents to government departments and are structured to build the community's capacity to contribute to local solutions.<sup>31</sup> They do not obviate the need for population-level measures to address disadvantage.

<sup>28</sup> See Murdoch Children's Research Institute 2009, *Integrated services for young children and their families*, MCRI, Melbourne.

<sup>29</sup> T Vinson & M Rawsthorne, *Dropping off the edge 2015: persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services & Catholic Social Services, Richmond, Vic.

<sup>30</sup> Vinson & Rawsthorne; Australian Public Service Commission 2007, *Tackling wicked problems*, Australian Government, Canberra; Department of Human Services 2008, *Neighbourhood Renewal: evaluation report 2008*, DHS, Melbourne; Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, *Governance models for location based initiatives*, Australian Government, Canberra.

<sup>31</sup> Best practice elements of place-based approaches focused on children are highlighted in TG Moore, H McHugh-Dillon, K Bull, R Fry, B Laidlaw & S West 2014, *The evidence: what we know about place-*

Instead, place-based responses are complementary measures which recognise the culture, needs and attributes of particular communities, and which adapt mainstream policy and programs to better fit local conditions.

While place-based approaches can be helpful in any neighbourhood, there is a strong case for investing in communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

### Collective Impact is a promising approach

Different approaches—such as coordination, collaboration, partnerships and co-location—have been attempted in Victoria to join efforts to improve outcomes for children.<sup>32</sup> A more recent approach is Collective Impact. It is designed to overcome the challenges inherent in multiple layers of governance, conflicting priorities of funders, competition between agencies to attract funding and a lack of data sharing. Advice from those using Collective Impact in Australia is that it has strengthened previous attempts at collaboration and makes combined efforts more productive.

The underlying premise of Collective Impact is that no single organisation or government can create large-scale, lasting social change alone. Collective Impact is a structured and rigorous approach that seeks to align the efforts of many stakeholders. Core elements of the Collective Impact approach<sup>33</sup> include:

- a common agenda for change, including all sectors of the community developing a shared understanding of the problem and a joint plan of agreed actions to solve it;
- collecting data and measuring results consistently to ensure shared measurement for alignment and accountability;
- a plan of action that outlines mutually reinforcing activities that each participant commits to deliver;
- open and continuous communication across many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and create common motivation;
- a backbone organisation with skill sets to support the initiative, coordinate partners, track outcomes and mobilise investment.

A local example is the Go Goldfields initiative in Maryborough, which is achieving some striking improvements in child development and youth engagement. Go Goldfields has recently adopted the Collective Impact framework to drive its efforts, backed by funding support from the Victorian Government.

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*based approaches to support children's wellbeing*, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Health, Parkville, Vic..

<sup>32</sup> The Murdoch Children's Research Institute recently concluded major research into the Australian place-based landscape to understand how to better promote children's wellbeing through place-based initiatives. Four key reports can be downloaded from [www.rch.org.au](http://www.rch.org.au)

<sup>33</sup> <http://collectiveimpactaustralia.com/about/>

## Go Goldfields

Set up in 2012, Go Goldfields is a community-driven initiative designed to fight entrenched social disadvantage. In 2010 Central Goldfields Shire had the highest child protection, re-reporting and out of home care rates in the DHS region; 60 per cent of children starting school required speech pathology; it had the lowest levels of post-secondary qualifications in Victoria, coupled with high levels of youth unemployment. Despite significant resourcing, there were few indications of improvement.

An alliance of stakeholders developed the Great Outcomes Action Plan 2012–14 which included shire-wide approaches to achieve a reduced incidence of re-notifications to DHS Child Protection Services; improved communication and literacy skills for children; improved opportunities and positive life experiences for children and their families; improved community connectedness for children, young people and families; improved connection to appropriate training and education to achieve employment outcomes; and increased breastfeeding rates. A new Action Plan for 2015–17 strengthens the focus on youth and family literacy (extending it from the early years), parenting, family violence and ensuring that vulnerable families are included in broader community networks, social infrastructure and service responses.

Go Goldfields uses a place-based planning approach with initiatives driven by the community. Key initiatives aimed at prevention and early intervention include:

- major reforms to early years services to embed a focus on literacy. This has meant a change to practice at the maternal and child health service, libraries, kindergartens and schools
- early intervention to tackle language and developmental delays through a comprehensive redesign of speech pathology and related services
- a program of parent–school engagement involving all schools in the shire
- parenting support and connections for vulnerable families.

Central Goldfields Shire provides the backbone (coordination) support including mobilising resources, establishing the evidence base, consolidating and sharing data. The work of shire staff is aligned to the Action Plan.

In 2015 a Collaborative Table has been established as the key decision-making body, replacing the former Alliance and Government Steering Committee. The membership has been broadened to include not just services, community groups and government agencies, but importantly local businesses and residents with relevant ‘lived experience’.

The initial plan received \$2.5m from the Victorian Government’s Regional Growth Fund. Significant co-investment and in-kind contributions were leveraged from the Shire, Rotary, individual businesses and community agencies and from the Best Start program (after it joined the Alliance). The Victorian Government has committed a further \$2m to the 2015–17 plan; and there have been commitments of \$420,000 from Central Goldfields Shire and \$300,000 from Best Start. The ten20 Foundation is also providing financial and in-kind support as part of its Opportunity Child initiative.

Having a fully funded plan and flexible funding has been pivotal to maintaining the commitment

and enthusiasm of Go Goldfields partners over an extended period, building the capacity of local services to do things differently and leveraging co-investments.

An evaluation<sup>34</sup> of the 2012–14 plan reported major improvements. Highlights include:

- Reading levels in Prep-aged children have improved—up from 60% to 80% achieving Level 5.
- Developmental vulnerability of Prep children has decreased.
- The proportion of Preps requiring speech pathology has decreased from 60% to 27%.
- Increased student–parent engagement is reported by schools.
- There are increased positive connections between schools and vulnerable families.

The Brotherhood recommends the trialling of Collective Impact approaches to lift child outcomes in additional communities across Victoria that are ready and willing to engage with this approach. This would require a long-term commitment of flexible funding from the Victorian Government and an enabling policy environment that promotes devolved decision making and allows local tailoring of policies, services and programs.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**Provide funding and policy support to trial Collective Impact approaches aimed at lifting child outcomes in communities experiencing disadvantage.**

### Supporting low income households and children in families with other indicators of disadvantage to access early years services

#### Refugee children and those seeking asylum are particularly vulnerable

Between July 2010 and June 2015, some 2463 children aged 0–5 years arrived in Victoria on humanitarian visas, with large concentrations living in the local government areas of Hume, Greater Dandenong, Wyndham, Brimbank, Maroondah, Casey, Whittlesea, Greater Geelong, Melton and Maribyrnong.<sup>35</sup> It is estimated that a further 500 children in this age bracket are currently living in the Victorian community while seeking asylum.<sup>36</sup>

Families that are new to Australia can experience challenges in understanding and accessing unfamiliar service systems. Many refugees and asylum seekers encounter additional challenges given the vulnerability that flows from forced displacement, torture and trauma, grief and loss. They often have limited access to health, education, employment and income support and may have

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<sup>34</sup> Go Goldfields evaluation 2012–2014 (publication forthcoming)

<sup>35</sup> Department of Social Services 2015, Settlement Reporting Facility data.

<sup>36</sup> Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2015 Data on IMA BVE holders by age in Victoria, April 2015

faced severe financial hardship and prolonged uncertainty about their future. These experiences can impact negatively on the development of children.<sup>37</sup>

The Brotherhood has seen this first hand. In providing occasional child care to newly arrived families participating in the Adult Migrant English Program, we observed that many refugee children were unable to engage in play, were distressed and fearful and delayed in some areas of development. In setting up our Refugee Child Outreach program (see below) we learned that many of the families did not have toys or basic items including pencils or crayons to stimulate their children's development.

We have also seen the remarkable difference that connection with culturally responsive early years services can make to the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of such children, particularly if the services build on the resilience, sense of community and resourcefulness of refugees.

However, there are a range of barriers to participation:

- Those from countries with less developed social infrastructure can have difficulty understanding the purpose and breadth of early childhood services in Australia. Many of the refugee families we work with lack understanding of what early years services do, how to access them, and whether they are eligible.
- Families may frequently change address, making it difficult to stay connected to maternal and child health and other services. Staff of the Brotherhood's Refugee Child Outreach program note they are working with an increasing number of single women with children who are homeless, in transient housing, or have no fixed address.
- A study by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health found that although refugee community members valued kindergarten participation, the complex enrolment procedures, lack of awareness of fee subsidies, a shortage of places and distance acted as barriers to participation.<sup>38</sup> Families we work with similarly identify cost and a shortage of places as reasons their children are not attending kinder and childcare.
- Newly arrived parents are often focused on the most pressing day-to-day needs, like securing housing, learning English, managing health issues and employment. Attendance at MCH and in early education programs may not be a priority.<sup>39</sup>

In order for children of refugee background to get the best start to life in Australia, their parents must be supported to understand and access appropriate early childhood services as soon as possible. While Settlement Services support humanitarian entrants in their first five years, high case-loads together with the priority placed on housing, employment and income support work against taking a child-centred approach.

In response to this gap, the Brotherhood has for some years run the Refugee Child Outreach program, which currently operates in limited parts of Melbourne, aided by Australian Government funding.

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<sup>37</sup> N Shallow & V Whittington 2014, 'The wellbeing of refugee children in an early childhood education context: connections and dilemmas,' *The Journal of Educational Enquiry*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 18–34

<sup>38</sup> Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2011, *Refugee status report: a report on how refugee children and young people in Victoria are faring*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

### **Refugee Child Outreach**

*'We are currently working with a newly arrived Congolese family with five children and a sixth on the way. I've got their four-year-old into the local kinder because the family were unsure of how to do this. I've also hooked the family up with MCH and a playgroup—they didn't know these existed. I connected the mother to prenatal care and took her to have her first ever ultrasound. We've also had a family visit to the library and toy library and practised some play and reading together at home with the kids. And I've helped them to get hold of the car seats that Australian law requires.*

RCO Worker

Refugee Child Outreach aims to improve the developmental outcomes of refugee children by building the capacity of their families to understand and access early childhood services and building the cultural responsiveness of mainstream services. The program recognises that children's early experiences will shape how they form relationships in adult life, their participation in the workforce and their future inclusion in society.

The program is targeted at newly arrived refugee children under eight years of age who are not linked into early years services. The program has proved effective at:

- linking families into childcare, kindergartens, playgroups and early years services. Over 85% of the families in Western Melbourne were either linked back into maternal and child health services after not attending for several years, or introduced to maternal and child health after the arrival of their newborn child.
- building parents' understanding of the importance of play to child's learning and development through delivering play-based sessions within their home and assisting families to access play materials
- facilitating linkages to speech pathologists, occupational therapists and other specialists to address developmental delays
- accessing dental care. Many children in the program had very poor dental hygiene and had never seen a dentist
- identifying domestic violence and connecting families to support services
- supporting early years services to improve their cultural responsiveness and engagement with culturally diverse communities.
- reducing social isolation, particularly for single mothers
- facilitating peer support that builds social capital and local networks.

The program began in Fitzroy in 2005, but now reaches a broader geographic area including Hume, western Melbourne (Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Moonee Valley) and inner Melbourne (Yarra, Stonnington, Port Phillip, Melbourne). Since 2007, the program has attracted funding from the Australian Government.

In the last six months RCO has piloted a volunteer program to increase the support offered to families. Some volunteers have experienced resettlement with children in the early years themselves and speak community languages matched to those in the program.

We are also aware that VICSEG provides similar supports through a family mentoring program. This is targeted at particular cultural groups in Wyndham, Hume, Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Melton and is funded by philanthropic support.

However substantial service gaps remain for families living outside the areas and the groups supported by these programs; for refugee families who have lived in Australia for over five years, even though they may still be facing settlement difficulties and have multiple children to support; and asylum seekers living in the Victorian community (including those on the new Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas). We are also aware of mothers on Temporary Spouse Visas who have separated from their partners, often because of domestic violence, and are ineligible for this service. These mothers and their children are particularly vulnerable and isolated.

The Brotherhood recommends developing a Victoria-wide approach to supporting newly arrived families, particularly refugees and asylum seekers and those with limited English, to connect with early years services.

**Recommendation 6**

**Expand support available to connect newly arrived communities, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, with early years services and child development supports.**