

# Broadmeadows Best Start



**Local Evaluation - assessment of  
achievements, 2003 – 2005**

# Methodology



# Focus



- Partnership as a whole
- Three specific projects:
  - Story Telling and Play Groups
  - ATSI Programs
  - Transition to School Program

# Key Questions

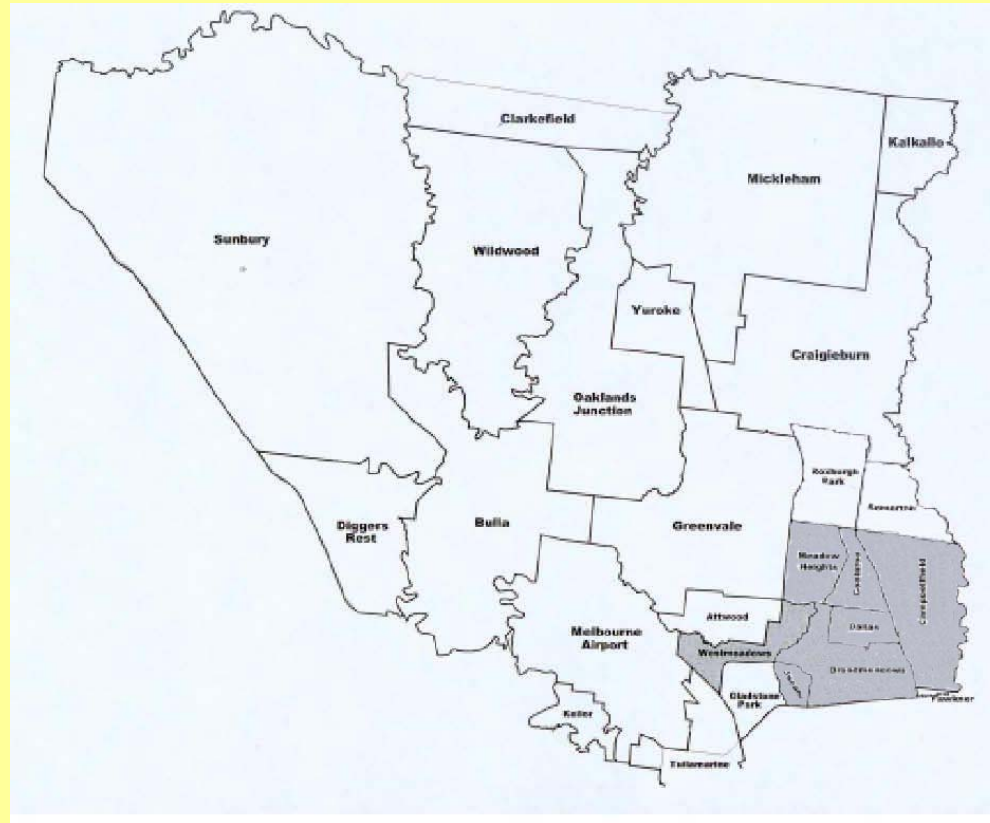


1. What has changed in the Early Years Service System?
2. How was this achieved?
3. Where has the change been most evident?
4. Over what timeframe did the changes occur?
5. Who was involved?

# Key Descriptors



1. What activities have been the most successful?
2. What activities have been the least successful?
3. What do you think needs to occur now?



# Catchment Area



n | t c o n s u l t i n g p t y l t d

# Characteristics



- Targeted neighbourhoods:
  - Broadmeadows;
  - Dallas;
  - Jacana;
  - Campbellfield;
  - Coolaroo;
  - Meadow Heights; and
  - Westmeadows.
- High numbers of children;
- Lower than the Melbourne average household income;
- Higher rate of single parent families than the municipality as a whole.
- Culturally diverse, with the main cultural groups being Turkish, Arabic speaking and Vietnamese.
- Many of the residents of the area indicated that they did not speak English well.

# How did the service system operate before the introduction of *Best Start*?

- Agencies rarely spoke to each other;
- Few connections across services, including very little contact between preschools and primary schools.
- Little understanding of the nature of other services.



# Service system achievements



- Increased communication between service providers;
- Increased cooperation between agencies and professionals;
- Increased sharing of resources;
- Increased knowledge and understanding of individual services;
- Increased respect for other professionals;
- Opportunities for collaboration in service delivery;
- Collaboration leading to refocusing of existing resources to improve service access; and
- Increased number of programs offered for children and families.

# Specific service changes



- Increased capacity to meet needs of families through collaboration and sharing of resources;
- More agencies working in partnerships with M&CH;
- Increased numbers of families attending play groups, with playgroups also being set up in primary school sites;
- Increased number of children attending preschool / child care in year before school (2.7% between 2004 and 2005); and
- Preschool and primary school staff are now attending joint professional development sessions, focussing on the early years.

# Most Effective Strategies



- Development of trust and improved working relationships;
- Strengthening of partnerships through joint projects;
- Greater awareness of how to relate to CALD communities and reduce the barriers which these families face in accessing services;
- A more holistic approach to working with families is emerging;
- An increase in referrals of families from the universal services to support services;
- Stronger connections between the library, schools and preschools;
- Attendance at story time at the Global Learning Centre (GLC) has increased;
- Connections between ATSI workers and other service providers resulted in increased engagement of ATSI families in services and the development of specific ATSI focussed programs within agencies.

# Extending changes to the whole of Hume



- Facilitated playgroups;
- *Transition to School* program;
- Collaboration of agencies in developing and implementing *Communities for Children*;
- Collaboration regarding development of new schools.

# Barriers to achieving positive changes



- Frustrations regarding perceived slowness in changing or lack of commitment are common within partnerships;
- Competition between agencies identified by some agencies as a barrier to effective partnering;
- Need to respect differences between agencies and focus on achieving common, agreed goals and objectives, targeting improved outcomes for families and children.

# Future focus



- Needs of ATSI children - outcomes are yet to be realised;
- Engagement of transient families;
- More resources are necessary.

Has the Broadmeadows *Best Start* partnership achieved its objectives?



# Key Drivers



- Change in government policy – from one of competition to one of supporting and encouraging partnership;
- Change in policy and practice within Hume City Council;
- Dedication and commitment of service providers to continue to work with each other;
- Leadership and direction provided by local government and the partner agencies;
- **Best Start** provided an important platform to facilitate the development of a more integrated and responsive service system;
- Quantifiable changes will continue to become evident over time.

# Framework for the Early Years Service System



- A well functioning community is a healthy community.
- Develops from an inter-play between the economic, social, natural and physical environments.
- Individual families and children well-being determined by a complex interplay of social, economic, cultural, spiritual and environmental factors.

# Framework, *cont.*



- Building Blocks of the Service System:
  - the micro level: individual children and families);
  - the meso level - the broad range of organisations which provide services for children and families; and
  - the macro level - Federal, State and Local Government policy.

# Framework, *cont.*



- Macro Level: Policy development needs to engender positive change, focussing on improving outcomes for families and children;
- Meso, or middle Level: challenges for organisations to change culture;
- Micro Level: families need to have access to affordable housing, sufficient income from employment to support their households, access to affordable quality health care and education, access to support services in a timely manner and information to increase their awareness and knowledge to support parenting.

# The Framework, *cont.*

