



### From the Lead Partners

We believe that the **Best Start** Partnership can be very proud of its progress and achievements in 2004.

We have continued to work productively as a Partnership with a strong spirit of collaboration that underpins our work together. The range of projects that we have undertaken as a Partnership are innovative and of tremendous benefit to young children and their families in our local community.

Most importantly, we believe that we are working better as a "whole of community" early childhood service system and the service improvements brought about by **Best Start** activities, are better targeted than ever before.

Two other highlights of the year include:

- A meeting with the Treasurer, Hon. John Brumby to highlight the work of **Best Start** in Broadmeadows and the benefits of a "joined up" government approach to responding to the needs of young children and families.
- We coordinated a single successful application by Partnership agencies to the Commonwealth Government, Department of Family and Community Services "Communities for Children" funding in July 2004. "Communities for Children" will commence in March 2005.

2005 is going to be a very exciting year.

*Phil Conrick: Executive Director,  
Broadmeadows UnitingCare*

*Nicole Mahony:  
Director of City Communities, Hume City Council*

*Mark Sullivan:  
CEO, Dianella Community Health Service*



### Welcome

### From the Community Facilitator

The membership of the Partnership group has remained consistent and strong throughout 2004, with the group setting priorities and developing an open and transparent system of allocation of **Best Start** funds. Examples of the "partnership approach" to improved early year's services are:

- Commitment to addressing the needs of the Aboriginal community in Hume
- pooling of resources from a number of agencies to run projects
- mapping of neighbourhood activities for children and families across all agencies to identify service gaps
- new service protocols to support the transition to school
- joint professional development activities with schools, preschools and community agencies working towards shared goals
- input into the development of the Global Learning Village strategic plan "Learning Together" as part of Hume City Council's commitment to be known as a "learning community"

Common benefits identified by Partnership members to date are new levels of communication and collaboration with Hume City Council. New programs and activities have been set up, in a more timely manner compared to before **Best Start** funding.

Overall, the Partnership is working well to develop an integrated early year's service system in Broadmeadows that can be replicated across Hume beyond the life of **Best Start**.

*Judith Gray: Community facilitator*

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Update on the Partnership

## Summary of reports and events attended in 2004

- "Parents as First Teachers" Literacy Expo (over 400 parents and children)
- Two joint professional development programs for Primary School and Preschool teachers (over 120 early years professionals)
- Two community forums "Giving Children in Hume a Better Start to Learning" (over 80 community leaders and workers from multicultural agencies)
- Access to Preschool Report 2003-4 (data from 14 Primary schools used for planning purposes)
- Data base of Playgroups in Hume compiled 43 playgroups and made accessible on the Hume Council website
- Number of playgroups have increased from 30 in 2003 to 43 in 2005
- Playgroup Leaders Recognition of Achievement Certificate presentation (over 25 parent leaders)
- Development of Lahinch Street Maternal and Child Health site as a community hub.
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training for agencies in Hume (over 60 participants)
- Increasing numbers of innovative programs where children and parents are learning together eg. Kids Unplugged creative arts activity program, Mother Goose speech and language program, Funsmart literacy program
- Early development of the Preschool /primary school cluster groups (19 primary schools and 10 preschools) to implement shared projects within each neighbourhood
- Revised Action Plan 2004-5 printed and disseminated to community agencies (1,000 copies)



Helen Broderick and Anne Morton: Linking Maternal and Child Health and Primary School activities



Broadmeadows UnitingCare and Orana Family Services at the announcement of the successful application for the Commonwealth Government "Communities for Children" funding in November 2004

### "Whole of community" approach to improving access to preschool

Some of the results for 2005 are:

- Improvement in the numbers of children attending preschool from the Campbellfield and Campmeadows neighbourhoods
- Significant improvement in enrolments in the KODE preschool in Glenroy from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

## Participation in community consultation

### Community Forum " Giving Children in Hume a Better Start to Learning" 27th July 2004

Best Start engaged Consultant Creina Porter to conduct a community consultation with Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community representatives that was promoted by Hume City Council through the Global Learning Village. The aim of the consultation was to provide information to community agencies and leaders about the benefits of early childhood learning and make recommendations about how this message is best promoted to the newly arrived communities in Hume. The forum was attended by over 40 people representing the Turkish, Iraqi, Lebanese, Greek, Pakistani, Somali, Samoan and Hmong communities in Hume. The Hon. Maria Vamvakinou, and Consultant Kathy Walker addressed the forum highlighting the concern about the number of children who are unprepared for formal learning structures when they arrive at school.

Distribution of the early years message was suggested through bilingual workers, community radio, Interfaith Leaders Network, women's groups, festivals, shopping centres, immunisation sessions, school newsletters, doctor's surgery, grandparents and senior citizens groups.

A second follow up forum was conducted a month later to devise community messages and finalise recommendations.

### Recommendations from the Forum

- Need for information about programs for young children and families acknowledging that culture and first language will be respected and valued.
- Provide the message orally through language groups as well as translated information.
- Use translated enrolment forms for preschools and more flexibility to ensure outreach with interpreters to promote enrolment.
- Guided visits by parents from bilingual playgroups and women's groups to local preschools to ensure awareness of the benefits of a structured early childhood program as preparation for school.

### Outcomes of the Forum

In December 2004, **Best Start** Service Improvement Funding was allocated for;

- Access to Preschool poster translated into 5 community languages
- Early Years Service Pathway poster (children 0-8 years)
- Strategy for the use of bilingual workers, translators and resources to be allocated for use in preschools by the end of the 2005 year
- Organisation of outreach community information sessions on the early years programs for newly arrived families conducted by VICSEG



Ethnic community leaders and peak agencies attended a forum "Giving Children in Hume a Better Start to Learning"

**Sending a message that each family's culture and first language is respected and valued in early years' services**

## Partnerships at work

### Aboriginal Best Start Partnership

**Cementing new relationships between local Aboriginal people and mainstream health, education and community programs.**

The Aboriginal Group has met regularly throughout 2004 to oversee and coordinate many initiatives. Members were presented with Certificates of Appreciation at the last **Best Start** meeting for 2004, in recognition of their considerable efforts to raise the profile of their community in Hume.

The culmination of the year's work was the conduct of a Cultural Awareness Training event at the Hume Global Learning Centre, on the 30th November, attended by over 60 participants. The session introduced the Aboriginal Partnership Group to an audience of local workers, teachers, police and representatives of community agencies, including local and state government representatives. Hume City Council hosted the occasion.

The event gave participants a better understanding of Aboriginal people, the past, the present and their aspirations for the future and discussed ideas about how best to work together to address problems locally. Discussion explored the cultural and communication barriers that make Aboriginal people reluctant to seek access and assistance within mainstream services.

Convener, Daryl Nayler, introduced new worker, Yvonne Ingram as the Ante-natal/Post natal worker with Dianella Community Health Service at Broadmeadows. Yvonne has provided an important point of contact with new mothers, linking them to supports in the community. Moira Rayner and Deb Murray, working in state and commonwealth government positions in the Northern region, have both provided important links to support Yvonne as members of the Aboriginal Partnership Group.

The session highlighted the increasing number of Aboriginal people living in the Hume/Whittlesea corridor. Hume City is the 8th largest indigenous population in Victoria, with children under 5 years making up almost half of the population.

There was keen interest in collaboration between local agencies to work to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and families to give them a better start in life. Senior members of the Broadmeadows Police were present and were keen to support this approach in order to link the Aboriginal people they are in contact with more readily to local community supports available.

Local agencies and schools are encouraged to organise future Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training to introduce the workers and programs available in Hume.



"Koorie Santa" entertains the children at the Wondara Christmas party at Broadmeadows UnitingCare

### Collaborative activities in progress

- Hume City Council is in discussions with the state government to apply for funds for an Indigenous Project Officer by the end of 2005.
- The Hume Indigenous Advisory Council is working towards the development of a Treaty/Memorandum of Understanding with the Aboriginal community
- Information Resources Directory for Aboriginal families is being developed by Northern Division of General Practice.
- Development of further Koorie Playgroups at KODE preschool with Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
- Development of the Wondara Aunties Group with Broadmeadows UnitingCare in partnership with Dianella Community Health, based on the model of the Kookaburra Club in Preston.
- Baby Diary developed by Wondara Aunties to be given to all first time Aboriginal mothers in Hume highlighting cultural identity and child development messages.

**Contact Barney Stephens, Principal at the KODE school  
Ph. 9300 1288 if you are interested in getting involved in  
any of these initiatives.**



Playgroup Leaders are recognised at the Best Start November launch

## Partnerships at work

### *Playgroup Coordination*

#### **Hume Best Start Playgroup Coordination Project – Storytelling Kits**

The **Best Start** Playgroup Coordination Project was formed to support and resource playgroups in Hume and document information about local playgroups. One initiative developed in conjunction with Hume Library Service has been storytelling kits for playgroups. They are based on similar kits used by libraries for their storytime sessions. Ten books are included around a theme and there is a folder of craft ideas and templates for playgroups to use. Also included is a folder of songs, rhymes and information for parents on sharing books with their children.

The kits are aimed at encouraging playgroups to incorporate story reading, songs and rhymes into their sessions to support early literacy development in their children and to increase parent's confidence in reading to their children.

**If you are interested in having a storytelling kit to use in your playgroup, contact Anna Boland on Tuesdays on 9351 1364 or 9309 8531 at Banksia Gardens Community Centre.**

The Playgroup database has identified 43 current playgroups in Hume and can be found on the Hume City Council website under Child and Family and Young People/Playgroups. [www.hume.vic.gov.au](http://www.hume.vic.gov.au)  
Please pass this information onto families that may be new to the area.

*Anna Boland: Playgroup Coordinator*

## Partnerships at work

### **Anglicare and Hume City Maternal and Child Health Service working together in the Neighbourhood Renewal area of Broadmeadows**

#### *Playgroup at Lahinch Street Maternal Child Health Service:*

Piloted in Term 2 2004, the Lahinch Street Playgroup is an active group with 14 regular mothers attending and between 11 and 16 children participating. The group consists mainly of Turkish and Arabic-speaking families, with a predominance of Arabic speakers. The children are aged between 6 months and 3 years, with a majority around 2-3 years of age. It's an energetic group, which aims to deliver some of the activities, particularly song and story telling in the children's first language. The playgroup is focused on providing opportunities for parents and children to develop their interpersonal relationships as well as the beginnings of preparation for early childhood programs including preschool.

In term 2 2005, a Parent child Mother Goose program will also be piloted, given the demand flowing from the playgroup. This program, run by a trained Mother Goose facilitator with an Anglicare Family Support worker, aims to enhance parent- child relationships through storytelling, rhymes and language activities.

#### *Outreach Services at Olsen Place:*

Anglicare and Maternal and Child Health service are providing a weekly outreach service at the Homeground office at Olsen Place. The service is focused on providing families with young children the opportunity for a health check with the Maternal Child Health Nurse as well as information and support around a range of family and parenting issues if required.

#### *Outreach to Blue Gum Caravan Park*

St. Vincent's de Paul and the Maternal and Child Health Nurse are working together to connect with families in transition.

*Helen Broderick: Coordinator of Maternal & Child Health Hume City*

*Lee-Anne Biggs: Broadmeadows Family Services*

**STOP PRESS** A new business partnership with Crazy John's mobile phone company has generously funded Neighbourhood Literacy programs for children before they start school. This program will start in two primary schools in Broadmeadows.



## Hume City Council

### *Leadership to continue the work of Best Start*

#### New levels of service planning and coordination at management and neighbourhood levels

*What will happen to the Best Start initiatives once funding for the demonstration project ceases in December 2005?*

Two key documents linking the activities of **Best Start** with future planning at Hume City Council are very positive signs of sustainability of strategies in the Best Start Action Plan for the years ahead.

Council has ensured the "whole community approach" to improving early years services is evident in the Hume City 2030 Plan and in the "Learning Together" Global Learning Strategy 2004-8. The following extracts from these reports are provided.

#### **Extract from: Hume City Plan 2030**

##### ***Theme 4 Lifelong Learning***

Outcome: A Learning Culture

Community Actions by 2008

Complete the **Best Start** program, identify strategies and commence implementation of these strategies to ensure: Maternal and Child Health Centres optimise opportunities for early development, playgroups support children's learning, all children attend high quality preschool services, ensuring that they are fully prepared for primary school education; children's literacy and numeracy skills are substantially improved; libraries are well utilised by children, and that parents are educated and skilled in their role in children's education.

#### **Extract from "Learning Together" Global Learning Village Strategy 2004-8**

Vision: *"Hume being a learning community where people embrace learning as a way of life, for all their life, thereby creating a community that values learning as the key to strengthening individual and community wellbeing."*

*Theme 2: Starting Out: Starting School*

*Working to ensure that children have two years of early childhood programs before school entry and increasing parental involvement in children's early education.*

*Theme 5: Language, Literacy and Numeracy skills*

*Encouraging a focus on early literacy activities in playgroups, childcare, preschools and primary schools and through the Maternal and Child Health Service.*

## Partnerships at work

### *Preschool /School Transition Project*

#### New relationships for primary school and preschool teachers

Early childhood consultant, Kathy Walker reports on her work with the Transition to School Project in 2004. *"I saw a significant shift in attitudes and awareness across the early childhood and school sectors of the importance of working more closely together. It resulted in a trial of children's portfolios given to parents, shared Professional development and a greater understanding for all staff in both sectors of the learning needs through play based curriculum. It also highlighted the need for marketing literacy in the preschool years more rigorously. The challenge for this project is to build on this momentum in 2005."*

#### **Results**

By December 2004 there was a noticeable growth in awareness between early childhood and school staff of each other's roles, needs, challenges and curriculum challenges.

Shared professional development topics included: play based curriculum, school readiness and transition, and how to build bridges across the two sectors.

The Transition Project Committee, including childcare, preschool and school staff met regularly to ensure initiatives got underway in the fourth term of 2004. Schools with preschools on site have demonstrated ways that staff can collaborate within the Privacy legislation to ensure parents are involved in sharing information about their child.

- Children's portfolio, to be given to parents at the end of the preschool year was piloted in four services in 4th term and will be evaluated in term 1 of 2005. The aims of the portfolio are to provide:
- A simple overview of children's learning, experiences and development for parents.
- The opportunity for parents to share this portfolio with Prep teachers during 1st term as a means of helping them get to know the child and family, and link with the child's previous learning experiences.

*Kathy Walker: Early Childhood Consultant*



The "Parents as First Teachers Literacy Expo", another example of Primary and preschools teachers working together to improve literacy levels

### One school's story

Jo Howard, **Best Start** Coordinator from Meadow Heights Primary School has taken up the challenge of linking and networking with the Tarcoola Preschool, located on an adjoining property to the school. Jo spoke at the November Partnership meeting about the benefits of this approach.

*" All Prep teachers have observed preschool sessions and Tarcoola teachers have visited Prep classes with the children. We planned our Prep orientation program to fit in with the preschool sessions to ensure greater uptake. When children enrolled in school during the year we requested parent's permission to contact their preschool to gain information to better prepare for each individual child. So far, all parents have been happy to agree to this.*

*Other benefits of this collaborative approach are that Tarcoola staff were able to run an excursion with the help of school staff to ensure the correct adult /child ratio was available.*

*Staff from both sites have welcomed the opportunity to develop a coordinated approach to the transition to school. Last year we had 96 children in Prep and 34% of the group had not attended early childhood programs when they started school. So you can see, we still have a long way to go to ensure the children who haven't attended preschool or child care have a more positive orientation to school."*

**Changes in work practices in preschools  
have been well received by schools**



Improvement in numbers of children attending Campbellfield and Campmeadows Preschools.

## Best Start Service Improvement Projects 2004-5

The following projects were voted at the Partnership meeting in November 2004, for allocation of **Best Start** funds.

- Development of Parent volunteer welcome program to recruit parents from partnership agencies to provide a welcome service for new families and link them to local programs, schools and community networks
- Development of Preschool/primary school cluster groups at a neighbourhood level to provide joint planning and resourcing of language and literacy activities, access to early childhood programs and opportunities for parent participation
- Development of a strategy for the use of bilingual workers, translators and resources for use in preschools (Council and non Council)
- Poster promotion of preschool and early learning to newly arrived groups
- Joint professional development program for partnership and community agencies.

The third and final year of allocation of **Best Start** funds will be finalised in June 2005.

## Update on the Partnership

In 2004 a consortia of local agencies; Broadmeadows Uniting/Care/, Orana Family Services and Dianella Community Health Service were successful in receiving /Communities for Children/ funding for four years. In March 2005, the consortia formed the Broadmeadows Early Years Partnership, expanding the Best Start Partnership Group to include new community partners; the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Melbourne City Mission and the Salvation Army.

A new Senior Project Manager and Community facilitator will work as part of a team with the **Best Start** facilitator, all located at Broadmeadows UnitingCare, 413 Camp Rd Broadmeadows. This continuity will ensure that a "whole of government approach" to improvements to early years services will involve Commonwealth, state and local government service coordination.

## STOP PRESS

**On Thursday 5th May at 11.30 am the Broadmeadows *Communities for Children* program will be launched at the Broadmeadows Town Centre Shopping Centre, outside the entrance to Bi-Lo supermarket. All parents with young children and service providers are welcome to attend.**

## Opportunities for parents to get involved

A community survey will be provided to parents to assist with consultation and priority setting for the new program.

Parents are welcome to join the **Best Start** Community Advisory Group, which provides an informal forum for feedback about suggested service improvements. The group will be continued into 2006, with support from the new *Communities for Children* program.

Please contact the Community facilitator.

**The Victorian Government Best Start Demonstration project is being implemented through a formal partnership of 15 agencies and schools in Broadmeadows, (28 members) with a signed partnership agreement, working together to strengthen and coordinate activities and programs for children and families.**