



# 'FAMILIES MATTER' – in Greater Shepparton

**Edition 6**  
**December 2006**

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## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2007

It is great news that Shepparton was a finalist in 2 areas at the recent Early Years Awards. We submitted 3 of the Best Start Projects and were finalists with the "Reshaping Maternal and Child Health Service" and "Breastfeeding Friendly City" projects. To all those involved in the development and implementation of these a sincere "well done". It is our understanding that these will be annual awards and we will certainly be submitting more nominations in the future.

Without being party political, the return of the Labor Government ensures consistency in the early childhood area. Over the past 3 years we have seen significant advances in this area with the creation of the Office for Children, the Child Safety Commissioner and the Premiers Advisory Council. These have seen early childhood having a high profile in the areas of policy, service development and delivery. It would seem from the brief information to date that these will continue and Victoria is indeed an exciting place to be in relation to children and their families.

Climate change seems to be in the news at the moment and it is disturbing to see the impact we are having on the environment. Many in the community are being proactive in their actions and this is to be commended. As practitioners in the early childhood field I believe we have an obligation to future generations to lead by our own actions as well as pass the message onto those we work with.

I would welcome your ideas and initiatives that we could publicise in relation to what you are doing at your local level to address these critical issues confronting us. Please get your contributions in!

As the year draws to an end I would like to thank all those working with young children and families for your work this year and wish you well for the festive season and year ahead.

Steve Dawkins  
Manager Family and Children's Services



**On behalf of the 'Families Matter' production team I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and safe and Happy New Year. We look forward to keeping you up to date on all family and children 'happenings' in 2007. Enjoy your break.**

## **NEW CENTRAL CONTACT NUMBER FOR MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH**

The Maternal and Child Health Service for Greater Shepparton now has a new central contact number. All parents and service providers now need to ring 5832 2677 to make contact with the service, as opposed to contacting individual centres. MCH centres no longer have land line phones.

The central intake call centre is located at Goulburn Valley Health and staffed by 2 hospital employees. Parents are able to make appointments, be put through to a MCH nurse (nurses will carry mobiles), or make enquiries about other services offered such as immunisation. If a parent rings a centre based number the call will be transferred to the central contact number.

The introduction of a central intake number was one of the recommended outcomes of the Maternal and Child Health service development and review conducted in May/June by Catherine Curtain. It is hoped this will alleviate some of the administration tasks for the nurses, enabling them to spend more time consulting with and outreaching to families.

Another recommendation from the service review has seen every MCH nurse equipped with a computer in order to bring the service into the modern technology world, enabling them to receive and send emails, record appointments and reminders electronically (this enables the central intake centre staff to view and make appointments for every nurse) and eventually have the infant/child cards inputted and kept electronically.

To date the transition has been fairly seamless with a few points still being ironed out. If anyone has any questions or feedback about the change please feel free to contact Steve Dawkins on 5832 9782 or Scott Stokes at GVH on 5832 2322.

## **NEW 'BREASTFEEDING WELCOME HERE' MAP**

A new version of the Greater Shepparton 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here' map is now available and is currently being distributed to early childhood centres and family support agencies across the municipality. Another 3 businesses/organisations have been listed on the new map, displaying the Australian Breastfeeding Association logo, and bringing the total number of official 'Breastfeeding Welcome Here' venues to 88. Hopefully we can hit the 100 mark when the next update and review is conducted!

Well done to all members of the Breastfeeding Workgroup on their great work and commitment over the past 12 months and for steering Greater Shepparton towards becoming a 'breastfeeding friendly city'.

## **QEC CONFERENCE**

The annual QEC (Queen Elizabeth Centre) conference was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November on the grounds of Melbourne University. The conference attracted a diverse range of professionals from all over Australia and again proved to be a major success with excellent international and Australian keynote speakers, plus a moving monodrama by Indigenous playwright and actor Tammy Anderson, on her experience of growing up in a family environment marred by violence and abuse.

The Greater Shepparton Best Start project team was invited to present several initiatives and programs on the second day of the conference. The Adolescent Antenatal Care and Education Program (AAC&EP), Family Centred Practice initiative, Reshaping Maternal and Child Health services (Patricia Smith experience and Koori Outreach project) and the Playgroup initiative were showcased to a small but enthusiastic group of people during the concurrent session. Much discussion occurred during and after the presentations with a number of professionals from other municipalities particularly interested in the AAC&EP and Family Centred Practice training.

Well done to all of our local presenters and to QEC for organising another fantastic conference.

## **LAUNCH OF THE GREATER SHEPPARTON FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORY – 3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION AND TRANSLATED VERSIONS**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Greater Shepparton Family and Children's Services Directory is now available and was launched in conjunction with the Arabic, Albanian and Dari versions of the directory on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December at the Arthur Dickmann Children's Centre.

The new version of the directory can be obtained from the Family & Children's Services department at Council if copies have not already been sent to your organisation.

The translated versions will be available from the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Maternal and Child Health centres, Centrelink and TAFE. The Family & Children's Services department will keep the master copy of each translated directory so additional copies can be obtained by phoning 5832 9790.



## **COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION – EMERGENCY FAMILY & COMMUNITY GRANTS**

The Country Women's Association will distribute \$4 million in emergency aid grants over 2 years to drought affected communities. The grants may be used to meet the immediate household needs of rural families and to fund community based activities.

**Individual grants:** Grants of up to \$2000 per household are available to drought affected families in rural communities. This includes farmers, farming dependent contractors, service providers and local rural businesses. These grants are available to help meet the essential household expenses and other basic necessities such as food, clothing, fuel, emergency medical and dental costs, rates, electricity and telephone expenses. Applicants may apply more than once provided that they have not already received the maximum under the 2006-08 funding.

**Community grants:** Grants of up to \$3000 are available to community groups, schools and not-for-profit organisations to help meet the costs of holding events and providing support to drought affected communities. Examples include community events, excursions or information sessions. Grants can also be used to fund support packs, such as food hampers or clothing packs or to maintain community facilities where there is a wide benefit to the community and the upkeep is usually dependent on fundraising.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Victoria: [www.cwaofvic.asn.au](http://www.cwaofvic.asn.au) or phone (03) 9827 8971

## **DROUGHT PERSONAL SUPPORT LINE 1300 655 969**

***Every day from 3 pm to 11 pm***

The Drought Personal Support Line begins operation on 22 December 2006, operating from 3pm to 11 pm, 7 days a week (including public holidays), offering callers from rural communities affected by drought confidential support and information, as well as referral to other support services.

Experienced people who understand the impacts of drought on rural communities will answer calls on the line.

People who call out of hours have the option of leaving contact details for the service to call them back.

The service can stay in touch with people over a period of time if the callers think that is helpful.

Callers may ring to express their frustration or distress over the effects of drought, or they may be concerned about family members or friends. Some callers may be very distraught, while others may only need a neutral 'sounding board' with whom they can discuss various issues.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Drought Information Line (Tel. 136 186) provides information and referral on a wide range of issues including: financial assistance, support for non-farm businesses, water information, on-farm assistance and personal support. The DPI Drought Information Line can connect people through to the Drought Personal Support Line to talk over the effects of the drought.



## **CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING CALENDAR**

### **Professor Anne Buist explores Postnatal Depression**

*Assessment of maternal mental state  
Why women don't seek help and how they present when they do  
Key issues in mental health in the perinatal phase  
Attachment - Maternal mental illness and child outcomes*



**When:** Tuesday 20th February 2007

**Where:** School of Rural Health  
University of Melbourne  
(Graham Street, Shepparton)

**Time:** 2.30pm – 4.30pm

**Prof. Anne Buist:** Associate Professor in Psychiatry, Austin Health, University of Melbourne, and Co-ordinator of the National Postnatal Depression Program - beyondblue.

If you would like to listen to Prof. Anne Buist speak – **Please RSVP** by Phone (58236000), Fax (58217345) or Email ([jennifer.lorains@gvhealth.org.au](mailto:jennifer.lorains@gvhealth.org.au)) to **Jen Lorains by Friday 2nd February 2007**

## **WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH 'KIDS GO FOR YOUR LIFE', 'SMILES FOR MILES' AND WALKING SCHOOL BUS?**

KGFYL was launched at Shepparton's Guthrie St Primary School on November 30 with a visit for the Go for your life Activity bus and local sporting identity Adrian Hickmont.

Kids - 'Go for your life' (KGFYL) is an initiative managed by Diabetes Australia and Cancer Council Victoria to help Victorian children develop lifelong healthy habits, as well as reduce childhood obesity. Twelve local councils throughout the state, including Greater Shepparton City Council received funding to promote this initiative in the community, particularly within Primary Schools and Early years settings with the KGFYL Award program supporting settings to create supportive environments for healthy eating and physical activity.

All Primary Schools and early years centres are encouraged to be involved and will be supported with their initiatives to achieve the award. To register and find out more visit [www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au)

### **Key Messages include:**

- **Tap into water everyday** - Promoting water consumption
- **Plant fruit and veg in your lunchbox** - Increase consumption of fruit and vegetables
- **Limit 'sometimes/occasionally' foods –target soft drinks, chips, chocolates, and lollies** - Decreasing consumption of high-energy foods and drinks
- **Stride and Ride** - Increase active transport
- **Move, Play and Go everyday** - Increase active play/physical activity
- **Turn off, Switch to Play** - Decrease screen watching



The Smiles 4 Miles Nutritional and dental health program will be implemented in 50% of the Kindergartens in the Greater Shepparton area, Greater Shepparton City Council and GV Health are working in partnership to support Centres to create supportive environments for healthy eating and good dental health including policy development, curriculum activities, parent education etc.

With Key messages:

**Eat Well,**

**Drink Well,**

**Clean Well**



The Walking School/kinder Bus is a people powered bus, with volunteers that walk a set route picking up children at designated 'bus stops' along the way.

There are **many benefits** for all involved including:

- Increasing physical activity levels
- Reduced traffic congestion around schools
- Improved road safety skills
- Getting to know your neighbourhood



The success of this VicHealth initiative relies on volunteers. **Volunteers are needed in the Shepparton, Mooroopna and Tatura areas.**

Can you help out one day a week or even once a fortnight? Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. If you are unable to commit on a regular basis, consider being an emergency contact. You will be called upon to assist when no one else is available.

If you would like more information or would like to be involved in any of these programs please feel free to contact Jenny Burrows, Greater Shepparton City Council ph: 58329863 or email: [jenny.burrows@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:jenny.burrows@shepparton.vic.gov.au)

## **INTRODUCING THE GREATER SHEPPARTON BEST START/ELF BOOK BAGS**

The Greater Shepparton Community Literacy Working Party has been successful in receiving funding from the Goulburn Valley Community Fund to expand the current baby book bag initiative across the municipality in 2007.

The initiative will deliver ELF/Best Start Book Bags to families when they attend the 4 week, 8 month, 18 month and 3.5 year 'ages and stages' visit at their local Maternal & Child Health centre or through the Enhanced Home Visiting service. Staff from FamilyCare will also be involved in order to reach vulnerable families with the initiative.

In February 2004, the Greater Shepparton Community Literacy Working Party was established as part of the Greater Shepparton Best Start Demonstration project. Literacy emerged as a key action area through the Best Start community consultations and a working party of key stakeholders was established to identify, implement and evaluate strategies aimed at addressing low literacy levels of children within our community.

At a planning meeting this year, it was recommended by the workgroup that the Berry Street Victoria ELF-Early Learning is Fun™ project be implemented across Greater Shepparton as the key early literacy strategy for the municipality.

As a result of this decision, the group investigated funding potential and thanks to a grant of almost \$20,000 from the Goulburn Valley Community Fund, together with financial contributions from Greater Shepparton City Council and coordination by Berry Street Victoria, the first step will involve the introduction of the four ELF/Best Start Book Bags for babies and children in our local community.

Currently Best Start has one baby book bag distributed at the 4 month ages and stages visit while in Mooroopna where ELF is currently operating, parents receive 3 book bags at various ages and stages visits. The workgroup believed it was important for all parents using the MCH service to receive the same book bag and that the message about reading to babies and children from a young age and the various benefits of this practice needed to be reinforced at a number of key 'transition' points during the child's life.

On another note a big thank you to all members of the Community Literacy workgroup for their hard work and valuable contribution to the many initiatives and projects currently operating across Greater Shepparton with an early learning and literacy focus. 2007 is set to be a busy and exciting year for the workgroup.



## **NEWSLETTER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS**

Do you have information to contribute to the Greater Shepparton Family & Children's Services Newsletter? It could be an upcoming conference, staff movements, funding opportunity or anything to do with family and children's services. If so please send it through to the contact person listed below.

Contact person – [Belinda Whitelaw, Best Start Service Development & Resource Officer](mailto:belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au)  
58 329 790 or email [belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:belinda.whitelaw@shepparton.vic.gov.au)  
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