

Supporting Parents – Developing Children

Supporting Parents – Developing Children (*SPDC*) was initiated in 2007 with the Scanlon Foundation offering to commit \$1 million dollars to improve social cohesion in the City of Hume. The Federal Government seized upon the opportunity to seek a whole of government approach to the delivery of services in this Local Government Area (LGA). The outcome is that all levels of government, from local council to state, to Australian government departments provide support for the project. The City of Hume CEO organised a number of community round table forums around an existing common area of focus: Early Childhood Development. To learn more, visit: <http://scanlonfoundation.org.au> or <http://www.hume.vic.gov.au>



A playgroup at the Bethal Primary School early years hub (Bethal is a state school).

Governance

The Hume project, *Supporting Parents – Developing Children*, is overseen by two governance committees. The Program Governance Steering Committee, chaired by the Scanlon Foundation, consists of Federal and State government funding bodies and the City of Hume. They meet twice per year. The Local Hume Governance Committee has an operational focus and is made up of local service delivery agencies. This group meets quarterly.

Innovation

The focus for the innovation is families from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), in nine primary school communities and southern

neighbourhoods in the City of Hume in Victoria. The project began by focusing on the literacy of mothers as a pathway to improving the educational outcomes for their children. Consultants with a strong knowledge of Hume were commissioned to propose a suite of programs under the banner: *Supporting Parents – Developing Children*. Four programs are funded. These include the Bilingual Storytime Program, Flexible Mother and Child English Language Program, Playgroup Enhancement and Supporting Early Years Hubs. Service agencies, nine primary schools, TAFE, and the Hume library are involved in implementing the project.

It takes a little while to understand the project, [but] from our perspective, this project is the ultimate early intervention. It brings together a whole range of issues. (Denise, Department of Human Services)

It was the first local government to develop a charter on social justice. (Anna Boland, Project Coordinator)

The best potential for “making a difference” is to undertake a number of coordinated and connected actions systematically and simultaneously within a defined area. (Tony Fry, CEO, Scanlon Foundation)

Some of the dads were unemployed. Through the project they got involved in gardening, which led to a Certificate 2, which improves their prospects of employment. (Denise, Department of Human Services)

This Project has been supported by the following partners:

- Australian Government Departments including:
 - Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations,
 - Department of Immigration and Citizenship through the AMEP
 - Department of Human Services – CRS Australia
 - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Victorian State Government Departments including:
 - Department of Premier and Cabinet
 - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
 - Victorian Multicultural Commission

Opportunities for funding partners to connect with the community through forums, a conference, tours and case studies are essential. Within the community, a hub strategy group has been formed which is comprised of representatives of all school community hubs, early years and community services. They meet three times per year to review how they can facilitate partnerships for the community.

The most challenging factor for the project is the commitment of appropriate resources for the project's ongoing sustainability post 2014. The engagement of the school community in seeking funding support from local businesses, corporates, service organisations as well as ongoing government support is being pursued. The Hume City Council is also in the process of establishing a Hume Hubs Development Fund.

The leadership from Hume City Council cannot be undersold. The CEO's commitment and that of the commissioned consultant has

Factors for effective engagement

(see all 10 factors on p. 22)

The most important factor for effective engagement of philanthropy and education in the Hume project is good communications.

Models over time Guiding principles and practices used in the project for effective engagement of philanthropy and education ...

First wave



(The Scanlon Foundation approached the local government with a concept)

- *Ensure alignment between philanthropic and local goals:* investigate local community needs and identify a group with track record in your area of mutual interest and build a relationship with them.

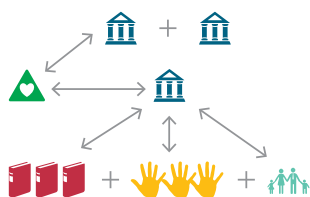
Second wave



(Scanlon Foundation initiates connections with Federal and state governments to strengthen the support to the local schools and families)

- *Create the links between local need and government priorities sooner rather than later:* this provides an opportunity for stronger coherence, targeting of resources and the potential to secure further support (from in-kind to financial)
- *Build on an existing common area of focus:* this will help improve the level of engagement in the project.

Third wave



(Schools, not-for-profits and families are engaged via the Scanlon Foundation's support of the local council)

- *Look for projects that are ready to be enhanced and/or expanded:* this strength-based approach will help build momentum, as roles, other needs and resourcing are clarified.

been outstanding. In these whole of community projects, you always have to ask, 'what would happen if I left?' You have got to keep the project embedded in the community so it will be sustained into the future. (Tony Fry, CEO, Scanlon Foundation)

Impact

The kindergartens had really low attendance. As a result, children were starting school 'behind the eight ball'. There are quite entrenched social issues and so the strategies to address these are all around partnerships that focus on improving learning in the family. The schools all collaborate, but focus on different issues relevant to their school-family needs. (Anna Boland, SPDC, Coordinator)

What are the main outcomes?

The project has the overarching objective to increase social cohesion in the community. This means increasing the confidence of mothers to access services and programs for their preschool aged children; improving the literacy, language and learning outcomes for mothers and their children; improving employment and training pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) mothers and creating a sense of belonging and support in the community.

How is information gathered?

The Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute is conducting the evaluation. Workshops to develop the local community's skills and knowledge in the evaluation process were conducted. Pre-program and post-program surveys were distributed to the playgroups and the Mother and Child English Language Program to ascertain shifts in the use of services and children's school readiness and social skills.

How do you share the information gathered and with whom?

The Scanlon Foundation commissioned the Centre for Community Child Health to develop an interactive web-based 'tool-kit'. The purpose is to identify the successful features of the SPDC project so they can be introduced in other communities throughout Australia with high numbers of CALD and socio-economic disadvantage.

Going forward, the secret to the project's ongoing success will be supporting the coordination and leadership role, as well as the project's governance and evaluation. You don't get anywhere without evidence. You should not underestimate the importance of funding evaluation. (Tony Fry, CEO, Scanlon Foundation)