

# Communities for Children Cranbourne, Victoria Interim Evaluation Report



Prepared by:  
Communities for Children Cranbourne Community Partners &  
Windermere Child & Family Services

Prepared in partnership with:  
Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital  
Melbourne

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# Notes

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# In a Nutshell

## Introduction

Communities for Children (CfC) is an initiative of the Australian Government's Department of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). Under the CfC initiative the Australian Government has forged new and innovative approaches to policy development and service delivery. CfC has taken a collaborative approach in seeking to achieve better outcomes for children aged 0–5 years and their families in areas identified as 'disadvantaged'.

Forty-five community sites across Australia were chosen to participate in this initiative, in which non-government organisations were funded to act as 'facilitating partners' to develop and implement, in partnership with the local community, a strategic and sustainable whole of community approach to early childhood development.

This approach recognises that each community knows its local environment and its existing strengths, has the knowledge, skills and experience to understand local issues for families and young children, and is capable of using existing networks to facilitate local partnerships.

The Cranbourne site was one of the last ten communities chosen to participate in CfC, with Windermere appointed as Facilitating Partner (FP) in November 2005.

## The aim of the evaluation

The Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) was engaged in 2005 as the CfC Cranbourne site local evaluator. Since then CCCH has worked with Windermere to inform the local community about how the local strategies developed by the facilitating partner, in partnership with the community, have contributed to improving outcomes for children. In line with new FaHCSIA guiding principles the age range of children has been extended to those aged 0–12 years and their families. The original five national priority areas have been reduced to four:

- Healthy Young Families and Learning and Care
- Supporting Families and Parents
- Child friendly Communities and Reducing Disadvantage through Social Inclusion
- Family and Children's Services Work Effectively as a System

## The methods used

The first phase of local evaluation in Cranbourne began in 2005 and continued until June 2009. Two local evaluation reports were written in that period to report on outcomes and the activities that contributed to progress in these outcomes. The reports are the Interim Local Evaluation Report, June 2008 and the Final Evaluation Report, June 2010. Copies of these reports can be downloaded (20 MB) at: [http://www.windermere.org.au/files/Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.windermere.org.au/files/Final_Evaluation_Report_2010.pdf).

This Interim Evaluation Report, February 2011 is the first report of the current phase of local evaluation and covers the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010. Local evaluation continues to use an outcomes-based approach and consists of four key tasks:

- advising on community consultation methodology, including data collection and methods of analysis
- developing an evaluation framework for each strategy
- developing a range of data collection tools for each strategy; and
- analysing and reporting on the data collected using the tools to show progress made towards achieving better outcomes for children and their families in the Cranbourne site.

The participatory evaluation approach meant CCCH, the local evaluator, provided the FP and community partners with advice and support to evaluate their own strategies and activities. Copies of this report can be downloaded at: <http://www.windermere.org.au/files/InterimEvaluationReport2011.pdf>

## Project Background

FaHCSIA acknowledged the success achieved by the CfC Cranbourne project from 2005 to 2009 by providing \$2.475 million to Windermere to facilitate the project for a further three years from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2012.

On 16 February 2009 The Hon Jenny Macklin MP announced the establishment of the Family Support Program (FSP) with two core streams. CfC is one of four services under the Family and Children's Services core stream. During 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2011 CfC will transition to the FSP and integrate from 1 July 2011.

Windermere as FP remains strongly committed to evidence-based practice. It aims to ensure that an early years agenda is embedded in all key stakeholders' functions and practices, so that partnership activities have a holistic approach in seeking improved outcomes for Cranbourne's children.

# Communities for Children Cranbourne Activities

The new funding period beginning 1 July 2009 saw a reduction in the number of activities delivered and the redevelopment of two Community Partner activities which were then delivered by Windermere. As a result of these changes three new strategy groups were developed to replace the original five.

**The three local strategies and their activities are:**

## Strategy One

**Connecting Cranbourne: *Relationships to support healthy young families.***

**Dads Matter: *Support for all families in Cranbourne.***

The overall focus of this strategy is relationships. To improve the health of young families a number of strong relationships need to be promoted. The strategy works towards improving the coordination of child and family services so that Cranbourne's families stay connected with the service system from before their child is born, through to school age and beyond. The activities in this strategy work with families in their early years as well as engaging with services that take children into the transition to school and consider the developmental requirements of children 6-12 years.

### Parent Wise



Windermere's Biala Early Intervention Services delivered the Parent Wise program (formerly known as Transition to Parenthood) as an outreach service to engage hard to reach clients not accessing universal services. The Parent Wise family support worker used assertive outreach in order to work as early as possible with families. The worker met families in their homes and in the places where families go through referrals from state-delivered services such as Healthy Mums Healthy Babies and universal services such as medical services. The Parent Wise worker also linked families to other services.

### Mother Goose for All



Windermere's Biala Early Intervention Services delivered the Mother Goose for All (MGA) program as facilitated groups for parents and their babies and young children. MGA focused on the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs and stories while holding baby, as well as using cues such as looking at baby to promote attachment. The program ran during school terms for 10–12 weeks in local community venues. Clients were also linked to other early childhood programs.

### Dads Matter



The City of Casey delivered Dads Matter (DM) to improve overall family functioning by engaging a range of fathers, including, but not limited to, young fathers, non-custodial fathers, stepfathers, culturally diverse fathers, grandfathers and foster carers.

DM delivered fun, interactive, free or low-cost facilitated programs:

- Families and Children Together (FACT) was a weekly playgroup for dads and their children run on Sunday mornings. It promoted time-out for dads with their children and also offering an opportunity to meet other dads. Activities included sports and art (drawing).
- Splash & Tumble was a 'gym and swim' activity for dads and their children held weekly on Monday mornings.
- Pizza, Playstation & Paper Planes, a playgroup for dads and their children, was held every Wednesday evening at the Cranbourne library. This activity included playing the new PS3 and Xbox 360 game consoles, art activities, meeting other dads and story time.
- Dig it with Dad was a gardening program held weekly on Saturday mornings in conjunction with Chisholm Institute of TAFE Cranbourne.
- DIY Dad was held over four sessions on Friday mornings at Bunnings Cranbourne.

DM raised awareness and promoted the importance of fathering. The program's focus also included the role of men as mentors and peer educators. DM forged and maintained links with early childhood programs offered by existing services.

## Strategy Two

Cranbourne Kids Achieving: *Enhancing quality, access and integration.*

### Linking Early Years



The Early Years Development Officer for the City of Casey's Linking Early Years (LEY) program facilitated linkages and networks, and shared resources within the Cranbourne early years sector. This promoted better identification of child-raising issues and working more effectively with parents. LEY upskilled Early Years Practitioners (EYPs), including those working in private-for-profit Child Care Centres, through support, resources and professional development, to enable children in their care to receive the best of contemporary early learning opportunities.

### The Library Has Legs



This innovative, fun and responsive program was delivered by the Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation. The Library Has Legs (LHL) enhanced the development of language and literacy of young children and encouraged parents to share books and read aloud to their children from birth. Its outreach style of literacy promotion specialized in engaging disengaged families of children aged 0–5 years. LHL made the local library resources available beyond the library premises, in places where families go. Program activities were delivered in childcare centres, kindergartens, playgroups, schools, libraries and child and family places and built on any literacy program currently provided in these places.

### Enriched Communication



Windermere's Biala Early Intervention Services delivered the Enriched Communication (EC) program to equip parents to model and assist their children throughout their early learning years. EC provided children with early learning experiences before entering school that assisted them in language and communication development. It was a group-style program delivering holistic communication and language skills training through provision of Professional Development for Early Years Practitioners, and training of other service providers and parents/significant carers. EC was also accessible to all Cranbourne Early Years learning environments.

## Strategy Three

### **Cranbourne Child: *Family Hubs, Access points, referral pathways and volunteers.***

The community consultation process found that Cranbourne's families rely heavily on primary needs agencies (for services such as food relief, financial counselling, information service and crisis counselling), not only to fulfil primary needs, but also because those agencies understand the complex needs of this community and understand that the fulfilment of primary needs is crucial to the maintenance of sustainable family groups. This strategy recognises the critical role of such agencies and seeks to strengthen links and support partnerships between all family and child service providers to further integrate primary needs agencies into the wider service system. This will be done through building the capacity of the primary needs agencies and their volunteers to better meet the complex needs of families with children 0–12, and by improving delivery, access and outreach of information in the places where families and children go, such as shopping centres.

#### **Cranbourne Info Link**



Cranbourne Information and Support Service (CISS) provides comprehensive information service and resources relevant to parents and families in Cranbourne. Cranbourne Info Link (CIL) was delivered by CISS to establish information links by providing information out in the places where people go. A wide range of information was provided on topics including Legal Aid, Relationship Counselling, Financial Counselling, Budgeting and No-Interest Loans Schemes, Housing, Disability Support, Mental and Physical Health, Child Care, Respite Care, Emergency Aid and Family Violence, as well as referrals to organisations able to help clients with these needs. Information sessions were held regularly at Cranbourne Centro Shopping Centre to make information more accessible to those who needed it.

#### **Healthy Volunteering**



Cranbourne Salvation Army Support Services delivered the Healthy Volunteering (HV) program. The program consisted of one to two-day workshops to upskill volunteers in areas including Emergency Relief, Volunteering Principles and Practice, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Food Safety and Managing Aggressive Behaviours. This program aimed to increase the capacity of the volunteer pool to work with young families. Volunteers were trained up as 'Crisis service volunteers' and were able to respond more effectively to the complex needs of young families, particularly those attempting to function in crisis.

#### **School as a Hub**



Windermere delivered School as a Hub (SAH) at Cranbourne Park Primary School with aim of making the school a community hub engaging all families. The SAH worker facilitated other program workers to deliver early childhood activities at the school according to the needs of the school community. The worker gained funding to run a Breakfast Club at the school. SAH made early childhood services more accessible and strengthened links in relation to school transition. The program aimed to connect parents to the school community and each other.

## Strategy One

### Findings

Activity	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 5
Parent Wise	✓		✓
Mother Goose for All	✓	✓	✓
In this reporting period Dads Matter worked towards evaluation outcomes that were separate to the other activities in Strategy One			
Dads Matter	✓	✓	

### Parent Wise

Parent Wise is a new activity and therefore data is for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2010.

### Outcome Two: To increase the engagement of families in the early years service system.

#### Number of parents attending programs

The Parent Wise worker made progress towards this outcome by engaging ten mothers and nine fathers from 10 families to attend the program. (The families had a total of 13 children under two years of age. There was a total of 13 siblings.) From February to June 2010 the worker made 46 direct contacts/visits and had 75 phone contacts with the ten families.

#### Number of parents engaged through the referral process

The ten families attending Parent Wise had a total of 21 referrals to 15 professionals/organisations. These families attended Parent Wise as a result of referrals from a total of five different sources.

The number of parents attending Parent Wise activities and the number of parents engaged through the referral process represents a significant achievement as many of these parents could be considered hard to engage.

### Outcome Five: To increase the social connections between parents.

The following excerpt from a case study written by the Parent Wise worker illustrates the success of Parent Wise in using the referral process to work towards Outcome Five. The Parent Wise worker referred this socially-isolated family to Mother Goose for All to support the family to increase their social connection.



Parent Wise worker & participant

### Excerpt from a Case Study

*'My first introduction to Susan (not her real name) was over the phone after she was referred to me by the Social Worker at the Maternity Hospital. Susan had given birth to her fourth child and he was having issues with jaundice and so had to be readmitted to receive photo-therapy only days after his birth.*

*My first meeting with Susan was welcomed and I developed a family profile consisting of physical, psychological and emotional data, and any social networks that may have been utilized. From this history, Susan and I set about analyzing achievable goal setting that she and her family would like to implement, goals that would reflect the uniqueness and values of the family.*

*The latest issue being addressed is social interaction. Mum, Dad and two of the children are attending the Mother Goose for All program. Previously this family had no social outlet at all.'*

### Mother Goose for All

### Outcome Two: To increase the engagement of families in the early years service system.

#### Number of parents attending programs

Mother Goose for All (MGA) worked towards achieving this outcome by offering 74 sessions in the reporting period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010. There were 787 adult attendances and 1230 child attendances. The average attendance rate in the period was 66%. This represents significant progress as many of these families could be considered hard to engage.

#### Parent Surveys

Thirty five parents responded to MGA surveys in the report period. All of the 35 parents agreed or somewhat agreed that MGA helped them to find out about other services that might help their child or their family which indicates progress towards Outcome Two.



Happy Mother Goose for All participant

**Outcome Three: To increase the confidence of parents in their parenting skills.**

**Parent Surveys**

Most parents surveyed (33/35) agreed or somewhat agreed that MGA helped them feel more confident as a parent. (One parent did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.) This indicates progress towards Outcome Three to increase the confidence of parents in their parenting skills.

In addition to reporting feeling more confident as a parent, most parents (34/35) agreed or somewhat agreed that the program had helped them increase their skills in parenting their child. Most of the parents (33/35) agreed or somewhat agreed that MGA helped them learn and understand about their child's development. All of the 35 parents also agreed or somewhat agreed that MGA helped them learn new ways to play with and teach their child. Increased parenting skills, learning and understanding about their child's development and learning new ways to play and teach their child can support parents to feel confident and thereby assist progress towards Outcome Three.

**Outcome Five: To increase the social connections between parents.**

All of the 35 parents surveyed agreed or somewhat agreed that MGA helped them to feel more connected to their community and find support by talking with other parents.

Three parents made the following comments on social connection:

**Quotes**

*'[MGA is about] getting out of the house and having fun.'*

*'[I] have met new parents.'*

*'[MGA] gives me a chance to speak with other parents.'*

Feedback from parents indicates that MGA has made progress towards Outcome Five to increase the social connections between parents.

In addition, the following comments reflect how much parents value MGA:

**Quotes**

*'We would be lost without Mother Goose, it is our favourite activity.'*

*'[We] have very much enjoyed making this a weekly activity.'*

*'We love the people who go there – the mums, staff and children are great.'*

**Dads Matter**

**Outcome Two: Fathers are aware of the importance of their role.**

**Number of Fathers/Children Attending Groups**

Dads Matter (DM) worked towards achieving this outcome by offering four parenting activities to engage fathers and their children: Pizza, Playstation and Paper Planes; Fathers and Children Together (FACT); Dig it with Dad; and DIY Dad. A total of 95 weekly sessions were delivered. In the reporting period there were 1,156 attendances by fathers, 90 by mothers and 1,944 child attendances.

**Fathers Report Increased Understanding of and Confidence in Their Role**

Nineteen fathers responded to DM surveys. When asked if the program they attended helped them feel good about their role as a father, all the fathers (19/19) said it was very helpful or helpful. All the fathers (19/19) also said the program was very helpful or helpful in making them feel more confident as a parent. All the fathers (19/19) said the program was very helpful or helpful in prioritising spending more time with their child on a regular basis. Feeling good about their role, feeling more confident as a parent and prioritising spending more time with their child on a regular basis indicate progress towards the outcome of fathers being aware of the importance of their role.

The following excerpt demonstrates how parenting activities for fathers can successfully increase men's confidence as fathers, their parenting skills and knowledge. It is also an example of how much fathers within groups can support each other and break down social isolation.

**Excerpt from a Case Study**

*Bob (not his real name) was suffering from Post Natal Depression and having difficulty bonding with his baby daughter and in his relationship with his wife. He was struggling to find help because he was not a Health Care card holder.*

*'By chance, a friend gave my wife and me a flyer about a Dads Matter program delivered in Cranbourne. I decided that I had nothing to lose so went along to one of the activities. From that moment, almost a year ago now, I started to establish friendships with the other dads, and felt support amongst the group. Since then, I have been able to bond with my daughter and now have a stronger relationship with my wife.'*

**Outcome Three: Fathers put parenting skills into action.**

When asked if the program they attended helped them find new ways of having fun with their children, all the fathers surveyed (19/19) said it was very helpful or helpful.

In addition all the fathers (19/19) said the program helped them socialise with other fathers. The importance of socialising with other fathers is underlined by the case study excerpt under Outcome Two.

## Strategy Two

### Findings

Activity	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
Linking Early Years	✓	✓	✓
Library Has Legs	✓	✓	✓
Enriched Communications	✓	✓	

### Library Has Legs

**Outcome One: Parents and Early Childhood professionals have an understanding of the importance of children's developmental needs.**

#### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

Library Has Legs (LHL) worked towards Outcome One by offering a range of programs to children, parents and EYPs. In the report period LHL activities and events attracted 2,792 children, 970 parents/carers and 755 EYPs.

Activities and events included:

- Storytimes such as Koori Playgroup, Auslan and Special Needs
- National Simultaneous Storytime
- Little Rippers program
- Read Like a Demon in partnership with the Melbourne Football Club for reluctant readers aged 10 to 12 years
- New Parent Group: Introducing and modelling recommended books for new parents and their infants.
- Pacifica Playgroup Community Book Making Workshop; and Professional Development sessions (detailed below under Outcome 3).

#### LHL Narrative: Pacifica Playgroup

The LHL worker became aware that community book making funding was available through the State Library of Victoria. The worker liaised with the City of Casey to give the Pacifica Playgroup the opportunity for the children and parents to make a book of songs in Samoan and English. Seven adults and eight children from a local Pacific Island playgroup took the opportunity to work closely with the LHL worker and a State Library community book making facilitator. Playgroup carers and children contributed art, songs and singing to create a professionally published book complete with an ISBN. Collaboration between the LHL worker and the local radio station allowed a CD of the Playgroup singing to be recorded and published with the book.



Pacifica Playgroup Families

The State Library community book making facilitator made the following comments:

#### Quotes

*'Young children will be wonderfully engaged in a book that they create. First they look for photos of themselves, then they look for photos of their friends, then they look for the art work they created, they are then keen to know what the words say. The relationships created by the [LHL] project worker and the playgroup have resulted in the members coming to the Cranbourne library, and helping to facilitate a storytime session in English and Samoan.'*

*'Since the session, the project worker has seen a number of the playgroup members visiting and using the library. One playgroup member asked the project worker how often she conducted storytime at the library because her child "felt comfortable with you around".'*

#### LHL Taking Activities into the Community

In order to work as effectively as possible toward the outcome that parents and EYPs have an understanding of the importance of children's development needs, LHL took activities into the places where people go. LHL delivered activities in over 25 local venues including:

- Cranbourne Library
- Kindergartens and Child Care Centres
- Playgroups
- Two Primary Schools; and
- Cranbourne Centro Shopping Centre.

#### Early Years Professionals report increased access to material on early years development

Seventy-three EYPs responded to LHL surveys. Most EYPs (68/73) strongly agreed or agreed that their access to material on early years development had increased as a result of their involvement with LHL.

Three EYPs who attended LHL programs made the following comments:

#### Quotes

*'I highly recommend this as a great resource.'*

*'[LHL] has helped me with age appropriate stories and activities.'*

*'[The session] was very informative and I found a lot of information that I wasn't aware of.'*

In addition, most EYPs (61/73) strongly agreed or agreed that LHL has led to increased access to material on early years development for parents they have had contact with.

## Literacy Kits

Sixty-two loans of kits were made to EYPs in the report period.

## Resources

In addition, LHL distributed a total of 3,176 resources:

- Library bags
- Books for Kids book donations
- Let's Read books
- Read with Me brochure
- Bookmarks
- Stories
- Wrist bands
- Access and Inclusion books

EYPs reported that their access to material on early years development had increased as a result of their involvement with LHL. Additionally, they reported that their involvement with LHL led to increased access to material on early years development for parents they have had contact with. This indicates progress towards Outcome One that parents and EYPs have an understanding of the importance of children's developmental needs.

## Outcome Two: Children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills.

### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

As presented in detail under Outcome One, LHL delivered a range of activities and events at a range of local venues, with 2,792 children, 970 parents/carers and 755 EYPs attending.

### Resources

LHL made available a range of resources, as detailed under Outcome One, that were also intended to facilitate progress towards Outcome Two. EYPs borrowed Literacy Kits developed in a partnership between LHL, LEY and EC activities. A total of 62 loans were made from Cranbourne Library through the LHL worker.

### EYPs report increased knowledge of children's literacy, language and communication needs.

Most EYPs surveyed (64/73) strongly agreed or agreed that their knowledge had increased as a result of their involvement with LHL. (Two EYPs did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.)

### EYPs report increased confidence to act on concerns about literacy, language and communication

Most EYPs (63/73) strongly agreed or agreed that their confidence to act on concerns had increased as a result of their involvement with LHL. (One EYP did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.)

### EYPs report an awareness of the importance of their role as key educators of children

Most EYPs surveyed (70/73) strongly agreed or agreed that their awareness of the importance of their role as key educators had increased as a result of their involvement with LHL.

In addition, most EYPs (66/73) strongly agreed or agreed that LHL has led to increased awareness in parents that they are key educators of their children. (One EYP did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.)

### Number of new members (with children aged 0-5) enrolled in library services

Two hundred and sixty-four new members enrolled in the reporting period.

EYPs reported that as a result of attending LHL activities they had increased knowledge of children's literacy, language and communication needs, increased confidence to act on concerns and awareness of their role as key educators of children. This, along with the 264 new members enrolled, indicates progress towards Outcome Two that children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills as indicated by the following data.

## Outcome Three: There is networking, coordination and linking between early childhood environments and local family services.

LHL worked towards promoting networking, coordination and linking between early childhood environments and local family services by facilitating a number of training sessions and making a presentation to a network meeting.

### Numbers of EYPs attending professional networks and training

Sixty-three EYPs attended professional development sessions and a presentation:

- Making Books, Making Readers – a community bookmaking program: A collaboration with the State Library Victoria's Young Reader Program and LHL resulted in the opportunity to explore some models of community self publishing. Eleven EYPs attended a one day workshop began to unpack the ingredients required to cook up successful self publishing projects at little cost. One worker who took those skills back to her centre and the parents of children with developmental delay said that they had an 'enjoyable and therapeutic session sharing recipes and creating a cookbook to share'.
- Baby Bounce Program – an early literacy capacity-building workshop attended by 25 EYPs.
- Read Like a Demon – a reading program for EYPs and parents delivered in partnership with the Melbourne Football Club with forty five parents and 20 EYPs attending.
- Child Care Staff Meeting: Presentation of library resources and recommended books to seven EYPs.

In addition, most of the EYPs surveyed (66/73) said they were more knowledgeable about Cranbourne library and the services available to Cranbourne families as a result of LHL.

## Enriched Communication

**Outcome One: Parents and Early Childhood professionals (EYPs) have an understanding of the importance of children's developmental needs.**

### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

The Enriched Communication (EC) activity worked towards this outcome by delivering the following programs:

- Four sessions of Saturday Storytime for Special Needs at Cranbourne Library were attended by 22 children and 21 adults.
- Four Makaton Workshops were delivered to 44 parents and EYPs.
- Fifteen sessions of a new program called Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme were delivered to Prep students aged 4 to 7 years at Cranbourne Park Primary School over 21 weeks. Two adults and 40 students attended. A detailed account is included below under Outcome Two.

### Parents/EYPs report increased knowledge of children's developmental needs

Thirty-seven parents and EYPs responded to EC surveys. Most (34/37) agreed that they had above average to excellent understanding of how speech and language develops as a result of attending the EC activity. This indicates that EC is making progress towards Outcome One that parents and EYPs have an understanding of the importance of children's developmental needs.

**Outcome Two: Children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills.**

### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

EC worked towards Outcome Two by offering Saturday Storytime for Special Needs, running Makaton Workshops for parents and EYPs and developing and delivering a new program for Preps at CPPS called Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme. Attendance figures are detailed in Outcome One above.

### Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme

EC demonstrated flexibility and innovation by developing and delivering a new program to expand its work towards the outcome of children in Cranbourne having the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills. The CfC School as a Hub worker became aware that Cranbourne Park Primary School (CPPS) had identified in Term One 2010 that some of the children in the Prep grades had communication difficulties. EC liaised with CPPS through the Hub worker and Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme was developed and introduced on 9 March 2010 to two classes of Prep students aged 4–7 years. They had little exposure to traditional songs and rhymes. EC responded to the need within a few weeks of its being raised by the CfC Hub worker.

The program uses rhythm and rhyme to teach children to listen and attend. Children learn through modelling from adults and their peers. The songs and rhymes teach imitation. Imitation of actions to songs and rhymes teaches rhythm and motor planning skills and children also learn imitation of sounds for the beginning of speech.

Visual song and rhymes cards were introduced to the Prep grades to help enhance language and literature awareness and song recognition. The songs and rhymes were modelled to the teachers and students in the classroom. The teachers were given the cards to use during the school week. Within a short period of time after starting the program some of the children with ESL and communication difficulties were joining in with actions and starting to sing the songs.

The Prep grades performed some of the songs and rhymes they had been taught to the rest of the school community at a school assembly morning.

The Prep teachers commented that they have seen a significant improvement in the overall language and literacy skills in the children in the 15 sessions of the program delivered over 21 weeks.

### Parents/EYPs report increased knowledge of children's literacy, language and communication needs

Most parents and EYPs responding to EC surveys (36/37) agreed that after attending the EC activity they had above average to excellent understanding of how to provide enriched communication opportunities, using Makaton or other visual aids for the children they work with.

### Parents/EYPs report an awareness of the importance of their role as key educators of children

Most parents and EYPs surveyed (35/37) agreed that after attending the EC activity they had above average to excellent awareness of their role as key educators of their children or the children that they worked with.

Parents and EYPs' feedback that most had increased understanding of how to provide enriched communication opportunities, as well as increased awareness of their role as key educators a result of attending an EC activity, indicates progress towards Outcome Two that children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills.

EC's new Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme program has made progress towards Outcome Two by increasing opportunity for Prep students at CPPS to develop literacy, language and communication skills. CfC Cranbourne hopes to continue and expand the program in 2011 and the final report will include data about its progress.



Storytime at Centro shopping centre

## Linking Early Years

**Outcome One: Parents and Early Childhood professionals have an understanding of the importance of children's developmental needs.**

### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

Linking Early Years (LEY) worked towards this outcome by facilitating six Professional Development (PD) sessions attended by 118 EYPs (see Outcome Three below for more detail).

### Early Years Professionals (EYPs) report increased knowledge of children's developmental needs

Forty-eight EYPs attending PD workshops on the sensory needs of young children responded to LEY surveys. All (48/48) agreed that they had increased knowledge of children's developmental needs as a result of attending the sessions.

### Early Years Professionals (EYPs) report increased access to material on early years development

Forty-one EYPs attending PD workshops on the sensory needs of young children responded to LEY surveys. Most (40/41) agreed that they had increased access to material on early years development as a result of attending the sessions. (One participant did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.)

#### Quotes

*'Parents have loved the resources. They have definitely changed their ideas around what the resource area provides.'*

*'I read all the resources so that I am able to inform families when they ask me.'*

*'The newsletters have been good to keep staff informed and up to date.'*

The increased knowledge of children's development needs and increased access to material on early years development reported by EYPs who attended LEY PD sessions indicate progress towards Outcome One.

**Outcome Two: Children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills.**

### Attendance at parent/child activities/sessions

LEY attracted the following attendances to events and activities delivered in partnership with other local organisations and PD sessions:

- 179 children, 60 adults, 5 Cranbourne Child Care Centres, and 27 EYPs volunteering from 9 Cranbourne agencies participated in the Woodlands Walk 2010.
- 110 children, 67 adults and 4 EYPs attended Storytimes and other sessions (see Outcome 3 below for more detail).

- 37 EYPs attended PD sessions on using and making puppets for working with young children.

**EYPs report increased knowledge of children's literacy, language and communication needs**

Thirty EYPs attending PD workshops on using and making puppets for working with young children responded to LEY surveys. All (30/30) agreed that they had increased knowledge of children's literacy, language and communication needs as a result of attending the sessions. This indicates progress towards Outcome Two that children in Cranbourne have the opportunity to develop literacy, language and communication skills.

**Outcome Three: There is networking, coordination and linking between early childhood environments and local family services.**

LEY worked in the following ways to promote networking, coordination and linking between early childhood environments and local family services.

### Numbers of EYPs attending professional networks and training

118 EYPs attended 6 Professional Development training sessions:

- Challenging Behaviours – sensory/nervous systems: 2 workshops aimed to give participants a better understanding of the sensory needs of young children.
- Using Puppets with Confidence: aimed to give participants a greater understanding of the benefits of using puppets and some hands-on strategies.
- Puppet Making: gave participants ideas for making puppets from recycled materials.
- Victorian Early Years Framework: participants considered how the document will fit within EYPs practice and program models.
- Developing a Toolbox of Transition Document Statements: participants developed a number of strength-based support statements to use when writing transition statements.
- 39 EYPs attended Cranbourne Child Care Interest Group (CCIG) network meetings facilitated by the LEY worker.

Three EYPs commented on the networking opportunities provided by the CCIG:

#### Quotes

*'It has been good to have regular meetings which allow a variety of services to get together and support each other with the interest of children and their welfare.'*

*'It is a valuable service where different services have been able to share their experiences in their field and allow other services to contribute.'*

*'It has strengthened the links that I had made previously and helped [me] link in with services I had not attended before.'*

50 EYPs from Cranbourne attended the City of Casey Early Learning Conference. The LEY worker was a member of the working party.

- The Woodlands Walk attended by 179 children and 60 adults brought together:
  - 12 EYPs from eight agencies that formed the Woodlands Walk Working Group and held five meetings.
  - 27 volunteers from 9 Cranbourne agencies to work at the event.

In addition three parents commented on the Woodlands Walk:

#### Quotes

*'Fantastic! Very well planned and set out, loved the hand out. Please do again.'*

*'Very nice outing, great surroundings, great educational activities for the children, lots of fun.'*

*'Great morning out. Haven't been to the gardens before, will be coming back. I hope there are more events like this. Love the animals...'*

When asked what he thought was the best bit of the Woodlands Walk, a three-and-a-half year old boy said:

#### Quotes

*'All the bits were the best bits!'*

In addition the LEY worker worked towards Outcome Three in the following ways:

#### Delivering Resources

- The LEY worker distributed 2,925 resources including booklets, brochures, newsletters, fliers, posters and event/program invitations.
- 62 loans of Literacy Kits LEY developed with Enriched Communication and Library has Legs were made to EYPs in the report period.

Three EYPs commented on the literacy kits:

#### Quotes

*'We use the literacy kits all the time.'*

*'They are great. [Our worker] uses them all the time. She loves the bug kit.'*

*'I had a carer who had issues with providing appropriate programming but when I went for a visit I observed her using the puppets from the literacy kit with the children.'*

#### Facilitating network meetings and consultations

The LEY worker conducted 18 consultation meetings with child care centre directors, the City of Casey Pre School Field Officer and with Casey RACE:

- Made 123 visits to child care centres to deliver resources and check if centres require any other support or assistance with making links with other services; and
- Worked with City of Casey Early Years Support Officer to assist with community consultation process for planning Universal Access for services within Casey.

#### Working in partnership with other local services

- The LEY worker collaborated with the Library Has Legs (LHL) worker to deliver Storytime at Cranbourne Library to 12 children and two EYPs from a Cranbourne child care centre;
- Linked a playgroup leader to the Cranbourne Library by delivering a Playgroup Storytime with the LHL worker, including an introduction to Literacy Kits, to 12 children and six mothers;
- Facilitated a link between LEY, LHL and Dads Matter (DM) workers by delivering Storytime at Cranbourne Centro Shopping Centre to six children and six parents to promote DM's Dig it With Dad program;
- Facilitated the partnership between LHL and the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne to deliver Storytime with a frog theme at Centro attended by six children and four parents, and organised the play-space to extend the literacy experience;
- Facilitated the partnership between LHL and the Salvation Army Cranbourne for Storytime with a Christmas theme at Centro attended by six parents and eight children;
- Facilitated link between Casey RACE and the playgroup community with playgroup open morning, tour of facility and free swim session attended by 26 children and 23 adults;
- Worked with LHL worker to deliver Storytime/Rhymetime and collage activity with 15 children, two EYPs, five Family Day Care Providers for art display at Cranbourne Library based on Woodlands Walk; and
- Worked with LHL worker and Cranbourne Library staff to mount and launch a Bush Art Show and Woodlands Walk Gallery at Cranbourne Library involving 25 children and 15 parents.

An EYP commented on the LEY worker's importance to her:

#### Quotes

*'If I don't know an answer for families I now know who I can ask.'*

## Strategy Three

### Findings

Activity	Outcome 1	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
Cranbourne Info Link	✓		
Healthy Volunteering		✓	✓
In this reporting period School as a Hub worked towards evaluation outcomes that were separate to the other activities in Strategy Three			
School as a Hub	✓	✓	

### Cranbourne Info Link

#### Outcome One: Families are better informed about family and children's services.

##### Number of families using new and existing information outlets

Cranbourne Info Link (CIL) Outreach Workers went to the places where families go, such as Centro Cranbourne Shopping Centre and two Cranbourne primary schools, to help families be better informed about family and children's services. Four hundred and three adults with 114 children aged 0–12 years accessed information through CIL. Enquiry issues included crisis intervention, family counselling, housing, volunteering, health, employment, education and training and the No Interest Loan Scheme.

##### ADHD Support Group

CIL facilitated a new support group for families with children suffering from ADHD. The group is held monthly at a Cranbourne community house and admission is by gold coin donation. Three meetings were held in the report period with 17 attendances by parents and one attendance by a worker.

Information Packs containing CISS and CfC brochures, crayons and a CfC balloon were made available to families through 26 Kindergartens and Childcare Centres in Cranbourne. A pack of resources containing 12 brochures, guides and booklets from a range of relevant organisations was provided to each of these pre-schools/childcare centres.

## Healthy Volunteering

### Outcome Three: Volunteers in Cranbourne are confident in their role and feel recognised and validated.

#### Training delivered

Healthy Volunteering (HV) worked towards this Outcome by offering the following training opportunities in the report period 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010:

- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Assess and Deliver Services to Clients with Complex Needs
- Emergency Relief
- First Aid Level 2 Senior
- Food Safety Levels 1 & 2
- Managing Aggressive Behaviours
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Reception & Communication

#### Volunteers report increased confidence

Most volunteers (96/103) who responded to surveys strongly agreed or agreed that they had increased confidence as a result of attending HV training, indicating progress towards Outcome Three.

Three participants made the following comments:

#### Quotes

*'[I] gained more confidence; [I am] able to express myself better.'*

*'I will have the confidence to step in and help if necessary.'*

*'I feel more confident to approach someone who is looking very down.'*

In addition, most volunteers (18/19) responding to a survey reported that in relation to their job, the information provided in the program would be valuable. (One participant did not respond to this question. The reason for this is not known.)



Children's Week 2010 Volunteers

In addition three service providers made the following comments on their volunteers' increased skills, knowledge and confidence as a result of attending HV training:

**Quotes**

*'Our volunteers have increased skills, knowledge and confidence in the delivery of our service to our community because of this training.'*

*'This [HV training] has been especially good... as many of our volunteers come to us with few skills and very low self-esteem. Training has heightened their skills, confidence and knowledge thus enabling them to carry out their roles more effectively.'*

*'The difference in volunteers who have participated in training is very noticeable. Not only have they gained a great deal of knowledge but their confidence has also improved, better preparing them for their role at our organisation.'*

Service providers are constantly challenged by the task of recruiting sufficient volunteers, training them to assist clients with complex needs and then retaining those volunteers in the face of the high demands the work can place on them. One service provider commented on how HV training has assisted them:

**Quotes**

*'It [training] has enabled us to offer volunteering opportunities to a wider range of people as we know that they can receive training to develop a lot more confidence and understanding regarding emergency relief service delivery and issues related to it.'*

**Volunteers report increased awareness of support systems in place for volunteers**

Most of the volunteers (98/103) who responded to surveys strongly agreed or agreed that they had increased awareness of support systems in place for volunteers as a result of attending HV training.

Feedback from volunteers that they had increased confidence and increased awareness of support systems as a result of attending HV training progress towards Outcome Three that volunteers in Cranbourne are confident in their role and feel recognised and validated. Additional feedback from volunteers indicates that they felt the training would be valuable to them on the job and that their skills and knowledge had increased after training. Additional feedback from service providers also indicates that volunteers' skills, knowledge and confidence increased as a result of attending HV training.

**Outcome Four: Agencies recognise volunteers as an integral part of the service system.**

**Service providers report recognition of volunteers as an integral part of the service system**

In the period 1 July 2009 to 31 December 2009 five agencies were surveyed and all responded. All the agencies (5/5) strongly agreed that as a result of HV training service providers recognised volunteers as an integral part of the service system.

In the period 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2010 three service providers made the following comments that indicate recognition of volunteers as an integral part of the service system:

Survey responses and comments from service providers indicate that HV has made progress towards Outcome Four that agencies recognise volunteers as an integral part of the service system.

**Quotes**

*'Training is not only beneficial for our volunteers but also to our organization as it ensures we are delivering the best possible service to our clients.'*

*'The courses run at Cranbourne Salvation Army, offered free, are an immense help in skilling up our volunteers so we can provide a much more professional service.'*

*'[Training] ensures that the most vulnerable members of our community – our clients – receive a holistic, effective, useful service from the volunteers who assist them.'*

## School as a Hub

Due to redevelopment of School as a Hub (SAH) in 2009, all of the data the activity for is for 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2010.

### **Outcome One: Child and family services are provided in the hubs.**

#### **Number of child and family services provided in the hub**

#### **SAH worked toward Outcome One by delivering five activities in the hub located at Cranbourne Park Primary School (CPPS):**

- Read Like a Demon partnership between Library has Legs and the Melbourne Football Club – encouraged reluctant readers aged 10 to 12 years
- Girls in Charge personal development program delivered by Windermere – addressed healthy eating, body image, healthy mind and peer pressure
- Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme delivered by Enriched Communication – taught language and literacy skills to children aged 4 to 7 years through traditional songs and rhymes
- Breakfast Club – aimed to provide nutritious food, improve student engagement and encourage students to attend school regularly and on time
- Vegetable Garden – established as a collaboration between SAH worker, CPPS and the Office of Corrections community work team; and
- Mother Goose for All – focused on the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs and stories for parents and their babies and young children.

### **Outcome Three: Families with children (aged 0–5 years) in Cranbourne are connected to the hub**

#### **Number of families using services in the hub**

SAH made progress towards Outcome Three through the following participation of parents and children in hub-based activities. From 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2010 103 children and adults participated in Prep Time Rhythm and Rhyme, Breakfast Club and the Vegetable Garden. Mother Goose for All had 296 child attendances and 195 adult attendances.



*Baby Forum 2010, participant catching a nap*