



Realising the next wave

Reflections & lessons from the Hume Middle Years Working Group

June 2014



"The middle years provide an important opportunity to identify and respond to any early warning signs. However the middle years have been virtually ignored as a significant stage of development and, as a result, there is a yawning gap in the services available to young people in that age group. "

Acknowledgements

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Introduction from the Hume Middle Years Working Group

On behalf of the Hume Middle Years Working Group it gives me pleasure to present Realising the next wave.

The middle years, understood in Hume City to be grades 4 to year 8, is an exciting space in our community. Since 2011, government, community service providers and schools have been working together to build our collective understanding of the middle years, and our capacity to respond to the needs and potential of young people in the space between early childhood and youth. We have made significant progress, and are proud of our achievements to date.

Our work has grown from the following foundations.

Building on strong connections

The Hume Middle Years Working Group brings together key agencies and individuals to support educational attainment and student retention. The group does this through a shared vision and partnership approach. Strengths of our group are its foundations in two established local service partnerships, and its diversity in membership which reflects a cross-sectoral and cross-organisational approach.

Knowing our community

Hume City is a large and rapidly developing municipality with a rich cultural and social fabric. Hume City is more disadvantaged than State and national average, with lower than State average levels of education and employment. Disengagement from education is higher than State average, and local research suggests absenteeism and disengagement patterns are starting in primary school.

Valuing education as a path to social inclusion

Our members come together with a shared commitment to social inclusion, recognising the importance of education in building social capital and preventing and breaking cycles of inequality. The link between inclusion, educational attainment and economic wellbeing engages and connects the work of the Hume Middle Years Working Group.

Our work recognises that parent engagement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and

behavior, and that engagement in learning is a key predictor of students succeeding and staying in school.

The need to create inclusive and welcoming places where parents and young people want to be underpins our work with school communities. The Hume Middle Years Working Group has supported schools to begin a shift in thinking and practice in the way they engage students and families, and is advocating to government to raise awareness of the role schools can play in building social capital and enhancing community wellbeing.

Trialing responses to disadvantage

The needs of vulnerable students and families is core to our efforts. We believe that social and economic challenges will continue to impact individual and community wellbeing in Hume City if we do not work together to introduce, showcase and embed models for positive change.

We understand that prevention is the most effective way to address absenteeism and disengagement, and value early intervention approaches that seek to mitigate the impact of disadvantage on our students, families and communities. We adopt a definition of early intervention that notes intervention can come at any point in a person's life, and that 'early' means to halt the further development of problems.

Our work reflects key policy directions of Federal, State and local government, and has also informed policy through testing what works -and what doesn't- at a local level.

Recognising the need for targeted planning and programs that address the needs of this age group in a developmentally appropriate way.

There is currently a profound gap in policy, service provision and supports for the middle years, which sits between program frameworks of early childhood and youth services. By design, or lack of, children in the middle years are less likely to receive relevant supports and services than they were as a child, or will as a youth.

We have come together to advocate for a life-course approach to policy and program development. We do this to help prevent young people from falling between the gaps that currently exist between early years and youth services. We strongly believe that access to age appropriate services should be available for all community members.

An 'all of Hume' municipal approach

A municipal approach to middle years planning provides an opportunity to ensure relevant infrastructure, community and education services are in place for residents of all ages. Effective municipal planning can provide a mechanism for integrating or connecting many plans that local government currently develop such as Community Plans, Municipal Early Years Plans, Youth Plans and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plans. As such, local government is increasingly taking a lead role in municipal middle years planning.

Whilst our work has been community led to date, we have drawn on the good practice of municipalities where Councils have led middle years planning. Examples of good practice that we hope to further explore include: the Middle Development Instrument (MDI) which has enabled the City of Whittlesea to quantify middle years issues and drivers using an established survey administered to more than 900 students; the innovative consultation techniques including mobile phone applications used by the City of Port Phillip, and the Middle Years Strategy and Action Plan 2014-17 developed by the City of Yarra to ensure corporate and strategic planning for the middle years as a discrete developmental stage.

From these foundations, the Hume Middle Years Working Group has undertaken a journey that is leading government, community services and schools toward 'the next wave' of service reorientation in Hume City.

We are confident that there is an exciting future for this work. We are coming together for sound reasons, and we have been successful in demonstrating real gains in a relatively short period of time. We look forward to playing a continued role to:

- Strengthen middle years service delivery.
- Promote a coherent middle years profile that is recognisable to Government and community stakeholders.
- Promote a deeper appreciation of the role schools can play in building social capital and enhancing community wellbeing.
- Develop a strategic approach to investing in research, including heightened expectations about the potential championing role of tertiary institutions and research bodies.
- Position the Hume Middle Years Working Group for long-term sustainability and as a strong advocacy voice.

This document records our experience to date. The report includes information and insights into what worked-and what didn't- and what has been learned in Hume City. It has been prepared with input from major stakeholders including the Hume Middle Years Working Group and young people.

We look forward to sharing our reflections and learning with you.



Nicky Leitch
Acting Executive Officer
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Part 1: Context



Origins of the Hume Middle Years Working Group

The Hume Middle Years Working Group was formed in November 2011 under a shared commitment from the Hume Early Years Partnership and the Hume Youth Commitment.

The Hume Early Years Partnership and Hume Youth Commitment were, and continue to be, successful and embedded collaborations, with more than one hundred service partners working together to benefit and strengthen families, children and youth in Hume City.

At the time of establishing the Hume Middle Years Working Group, both networks recognised the importance of lifelong learning and were concerned by high rates of school disengagement. The networks understood the importance of supported student transition on student learning outcomes, and that improved student transition would require a re-thinking of existing practice by government, schools and community service agencies.

The partnerships established the Hume Middle Years Working Group to engage government, schools and community organisations, and as a vehicle to respond in a coordinated way to the local gaps, issues and recommendations identified at the 2011 Middle Years Symposium *Flying along or falling through the cracks?*. Formal Terms of Reference between the two partnerships were prepared, and membership was open to all interested agencies and individuals. Members came together to establish a collective advocacy voice and provide better opportunities for young people in Hume.

Leadership of the working group emerged from the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning & Employment Network (Hume Whittlesea LLEN). The Hume Whittlesea LLEN was established in 2001 with core roles to create and further develop sustainable relationships, facilitate collaborative partnerships and broker initiatives between local education providers, industry and community.

In 2010 the Hume Whittlesea LLEN received the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program

contract, jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions¹. The new contract enabled the Hume Whittlesea LLEN to expand its target to 10-19 year olds. With its strong history of capacity building in Hume, the Hume Whittlesea LLEN was well placed to take on the leadership role during foundation stages of the Hume Middle Years Working Group.

The working group officially started to meet in March 2012 to develop a Hume Middle Years Action Plan. The Action Plan aims to ensure: parents and their children receive continuous support from primary to secondary school; young people remain engaged in education, and parental engagement is maintained at the secondary school level. The Action Plan has provided an inclusive and flexible framework to trial responses to local middle years issues and to develop and strengthen the middle years in Hume.

Enablers

The need for place based prevention and early intervention approaches in Hume has been recognised by Government at all levels, by philanthropic organisations and through financial and in-kind contributions of local agencies.

Australian Government investment

The Australian Government's Building Australia's Future Workforce (BAFW) program was established to promote social inclusion through developing skills and training to enable access to employment. Within this program, the City of Hume was one of ten priority Local Government Areas identified for the Better Futures Local Solutions (BFLS) initiative. This initiative provided a range of place based measures and resources, including the Local Solutions Fund, Local Advisory Group and positions of Community Action Leader and Government Action Leader².

The BFLS initiative enabled significant investment to test local activities challenging disadvantage, including \$156,350 for agencies in Hume City to undertake projects targeting the middle years.

¹ Post Note: This document was completed prior to the 2014-15 Federal Budget. In this Budget it was announced the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions will conclude on 31 December 2014.

² Post Note: The 2014-15 Federal Budget announcements included that the Local Solutions Fund, Local Advisory Group and positions of Community Action Leader and Government Action Leader will be ceasing as at 30 June 2014, one year before the expected term of the measure 30 June 2015. Seven of the current Local Solutions Fund projects in Hume City will conclude as at the 30th June 2014 along with the positions of the Government and Community Action Leaders. Three projects will continue through to the end of August 2014 and one will continue through to the end of December 2014.



The City of Hume is also one of 45 disadvantaged sites nationally to receive Communities for Children (CFC) funded by the Australian Government. The aim of this program is to provide prevention and early intervention services to families with children up to the age of 12 who are at risk of disadvantage. This includes meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders families.

The agendas of BAFW, BFLS and CFC and the middle years work are aligned through evidence that school disengagement and unemployment are often intergenerational and require 'all of community' prevention and intervention. Responses across these Australian Government initiatives are interwoven through 'on the ground' action and place based work.

The role of these initiatives in laying the foundations of partnership, community development and early intervention for the middle years space is acknowledged.

Victorian State Government investment

The origins of the Hume Middle Years Working Group are networks originally stemming from Victorian State government investment.

Best Start has been in Hume City since 2004. The initiative aims to support the health, development, learning and wellbeing of children (0-8 years) and parents, and has a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention. In Hume City it operates through the Hume Early Years Partnership with representatives from government, education, health and community services.

The Hume Youth Commitment has been active since 2007. It is a partnership of schools, industry, education and community providers committed to providing diverse education and employment opportunities to young people in Hume. It operates through a community team convened by the Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

Funding for Best Start and the Hume Youth Commitment are also acknowledged as contributing to foundations for effective place based collaboration in Hume City.

Hume City Council

Local government, through Hume City Council, has also been an enabler of local middle years work. Hume City Council has a strong commitment to social inclusion and to lifelong learning as a means to mitigate the impact of disadvantage.

Hume City Council has led this municipal commitment through its *Learning Together* strategies and leadership of innovations such as the Hume Global Learning Village, a collaboration of over 300 agencies and individuals with an interest in lifelong learning in Hume. Hume City Council has a sound appreciation of the link between education and economic outcomes, articulated through high level strategies and plans such as *Hume Horizons 2040*, Council's Community Plan with one of five key themes being 'a well educated and employed community' and *Local Jobs; Local people* which links employers with residents. Hume's *Multiversity Project*, a partnership between Council, Kangan Institute, Victoria University and Deakin University, delivers a range of undergraduate study programs throughout sites in Hume City, providing opportunities for learning that may otherwise not be accessible to Hume residents.

Philanthropic investment

Philanthropic grants have been invested in Hume City with a focus on lifelong learning and workforce participation, most notably for the middle years the Supporting Parents Developing Children initiative with a focus on literacy, language and learning funded through the Scanlon Foundation. This initiative asserts the importance of parents as the child's first teacher, and has supported the development of community hubs in primary schools. The learning from this work in primary schools was extended to secondary schools through BFLS funding.

Other enablers

The leadership role of the Hume Whittlesea LLEN has been essential to the success of the working group so far. The administrative and facilitation support provided has increased collaboration between government, schools and agencies within the City, raised the profile of the middle years in service planning and delivery, and strengthened the collective advocacy voice for the middle years.

Schools and local agencies have contributed significant financial and in-kind funding to enable many activities that would otherwise not be implemented. The allocation of school finances and other resources has enabled traction within individual school communities, and between schools and sectors. Examples of what has been

achieved through school resources include: appointment to community development roles in school settings; enabling staff to participate in relevant middle years networking and professional development opportunities; provision of office space for outreach project workers; additional resources for 'on the ground' projects, and providing transport for parents and students to attend middle years events.

Underpinning all of this effort is the commitment of individuals who have taken this work on with passion and vigor. The need for this work is self evident to many individuals, spurring a great commitment that connects stakeholders in the middle years and ensures continued effort in this space.

Work continues to build on enablers in place.



Why do this work?



The middle years is a critical phase of emotional, social and physical growth and development. It is also a transition period with children moving from primary to secondary school- the time when many start to disengage from learningⁱⁱⁱ.

Getting appropriate support during this phase can help young people stay connected, engaged and participating in education and communities^{iv}.

Education is a human right.

Education has a lasting impact on life chances.

Education is an important step toward reducing disadvantage.

Education helps to create connected, vibrant and inclusive communities.

There is sound evidence that prevention and early intervention strategies are more effective for individuals outcomes and cost less than remedial supports later in life^v.

Early intervention can come at any point in a child's life. Early means to halt the further development of problems^{vi}.

The challenges in Hume... The case for change

- Disadvantage amongst young people is both a predictor and a result of low engagement and achievement at school^{vii}. Hume City is more disadvantaged than the State and national average. It is **the fourth most disadvantaged Local Government Area in Victoria** according to the Socio Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA 2011).
- **Lower educational status** contributes to intergenerational disadvantage. 6.6% of Broadmeadows residents and 11.1 % of Hume residents had completed a bachelor degree compared to 20.8% across Victoria and 23.6% in Greater Melbourne (Census of Population and Housing 2011).
- **Disengagement from education is higher in Hume than across Victoria.** The 2011 Census figures show that 16.4 % of students in Hume had left school in Year 10 or below, which is higher than the Victorian average of 12%.
- **Disengagement is greater in some communities requiring neighbourhood level place based approaches.** In Broadmeadows SLA, 21% of young people have completed less than year 11.
- Local research has been commissioned to support a deeper understanding of disengagement in Hume. This research is a key reference point for planning a municipal approach to the middle years.

The Hume Under 16 Project: Out of School, Out of Sight, 2012^{viii} investigated school disengagement in Hume City in the high school years and found this was linked to school disengagement in primary years. Total enrolment in government secondary schools in Hume for those under 16 years was estimated to be 4,500 young people (2011). The project reported approximately **5.8% (283)** of young people in Hume were **missing school at least an average of one day a week**; a further **112** young people were reported as **not attending school**.

Our Tweenies: Are they flying along or Falling through the cracks?^{ix} 2013, reported a significant number of children aged 8-12 were not attending school regularly. In 2012 there were 16,371 students enrolled in primary school in Hume City. The project found **525** students **missing on average one to two days of school a week** and an additional **123** missing an average of **more than two days a week**.

This translated to an estimated 6.4% of primary students in Hume City missing one day to two days of school a week and an additional 1.5% of students missing more than two days a week of school, or an estimated combined **total of around 8% of children are attending school irregularly across Hume.** Noting a limitation of unmatched data on spatial distribution of disadvantage, this was based on doubling non attendance data received from 50% of primary schools in Hume City.

This same report noted over a quarter of the children with at least one day non attendance per week (n 166) are aged between 6 to 8 years old, indicating **patterns of non attendance start early in primary school.**

Over 60% of children with at least one day of non attendance per week whose language backgrounds were recorded were from non English speaking backgrounds (n313, excluding 149 students whose language background was not identified).

Hume Whittlesea LLEN Environmental Scan Hume City 2013^x - A comprehensive Environmental Scan was commissioned in 2013, with a particular focus on education and transition outcomes of young people aged 10-19. The Scan includes a socio demographic profile of Hume City and explores the challenges impacting on education and transition outcomes and opportunities to improve these outcomes.

Identified challenges include: **that Hume is a large and rapidly developing service area** with a **culturally diverse population** and a significant number of **humanitarian arrivals** settling each year. The municipality has significant and dispersed **socioeconomic disadvantage.** There are high rates of disengagement, with high disengagement rates among **indigenous young people.** A **lack of applied learning options** in Hume City and a need to better **promote and align education and training pathways to current and emerging industries** continue to present structural barriers to young people.

In spite of these challenges, Hume City is recording some **progress toward positive change.** For example, the LLEN Data Disk illustrates a steady increase since 2005 in the number of Hume City students completing VCAL studies, thereby receiving a recognised senior secondary qualification through a 'hands on' option for young people in Year 11 and 12.

Hume City is also a dynamic and diverse community that has a strong and integrated service system to deal with these challenges.



Student reflections on why this work matters.

Primary students participating in the focus groups demonstrated:

- That they clearly understood the benefits of staying engaged in school and valued the opportunities afforded through education.
- That some students see education as giving them a 'better choice' later on, whilst others referred to a 'better chance'.
- That they want their schools to be warm, welcoming and engaging places.
- That they understand that going to high school will be exciting, but not without challenge.
- That some students take comfort in the idea of moving to high school with their peers and friends- a sense of 'we will do it together'- and in having visited high schools and met some secondary school staff.
- That students share concerns about subject knowledge (do I know enough?), making friends, navigating a time table and new facilities.
- That some students understand the community development role that schools play in supporting parents from non English speaking backgrounds and connecting parents to work.
- That they understand that schools are safe places, and that sometimes schools can work with kids and their parents to overcome problems.
- That they have valued and embraced some of the local activities like Imagineering. "If you hadn't have done the trip to LaTrobe would you have thought about these things? NO"

Why would the Hume Middle Years Working Group want to see kids stay at school?

"To get a better education and to get a better job."

"It gives us a better chance later on."

"To have choices by staying in school long enough."

"It (education) goes all over your life..."

"To give us a better chance at life."

Why is it important to be empowered and engaged in school?

"So that we can be better at what we are trying to do and to make our way of learning better."

"You can be good at what you do."

"So it feels like you belong and want to be here."

"It helps keep us in school and gives us options and pathways for when we become adults".

What do schools do well to empower and engage students?

"Making technology in the class room empowers us because it helps us learn and makes it more interesting."

"Teachers can help if a student is struggling with their work. They can work one-on-one."

"We are interested in sport and physical education. This helps us to be healthy and then we can learn better."

"Some of the students can help others get empowered and help them with their work."

"The community gardens help people learn to speak another language...and I like to do gardening too...and cooking."

"They understand about different peoples' religion."

What do schools do well to empower and engage parents?

"Teachers can help others with their language. Sometimes students can help too."

"School helps others with their work. Somebody at school may be able to help with translating to help others with challenges at work."

"Schools are good at communicating."

"The Newsletter goes out in different languages to help parents."

"Schools help to connect our parents with jobs."



What are some of the things you wish you had a better understanding of before you go to high school?

"Algebra."

"The number of students...maybe the teachers won't care about you and it'll be scary."

"Where everything is, like the rooms you have to go to."

Concerns about friendships

"It's exciting- I get to go a school where I know some people...but the bad thing is I don't have the exact same relationship with them as I do with the people here."

"We are lucky to have a school that goes all the way to year 12. If you don't have your friends with you it would affect your learning. If your friendship breaks it affects your focus."

Concerns about acceptance

"It's horrible if you don't know what you are meant to do. Like in P.E.-you think that if you mess it up your team will be down on you..."

What do schools do to get you ready for high school?

"They graduate you."

"When we go on school camp this helps us because we learn how to leave and be away from our parents."

"Every school has a different way of teaching, and all the teachers have a different way of teaching. Having specialist teachers gets you ready for high school cause you usually have different teachers for every subject."

Some ways to make it easier

"Put other subjects in earlier in Primary School so that we can get used to them."

"Let us try other subjects so we know what to choose later."





Ways to support kids that don't attend school could include:

"Give them technology."

"People could visit kids in their homes..."

"They could talk to the kids and find out what is wrong and encourage them to go back to school."

"Send them work."

"Get specialist teachers."

"Take home work to do in the holidays."

Some ways to make it easier *Continued*

"Make it interesting (because) more interesting work helps us understand."

"Be able to choose subjects in primary school."

"Add more subjects" (sport, science, geography, gardening, cooking).

Do they do anything about making new friendships? No.



Part 2: Local response what did we do?



The Hume Middle Years Action Plan

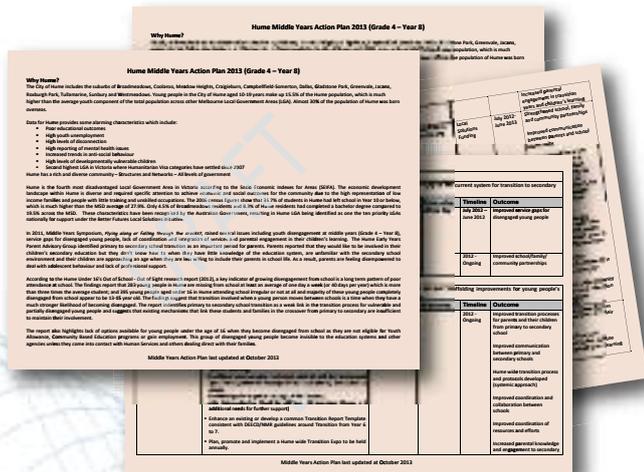
The Hume Middle Years Action Plan was drafted in 2012 and has provided a flexible framework for local effort since its inception. The Plan was established with input from many local agencies, and demonstrates a 'joined up' approach to funding and project opportunities. Monitoring of the overall Plan is through the Hume Whittlesea LLEN to the working group, and by project auspice agencies to relevant funding bodies.

The Plan seeks to ensure:

- Parents and their children receive continuous support from primary to secondary school.
- Young people remain engaged in education, and
- parental engagement is maintained at the secondary school level.

The Plan structures activities across two levels:

1. Micro response actions that seek to increase parental and community engagement from primary to secondary school by creating welcoming hubs with relevant services and supports.
2. Macro response actions that seek to advocate for systemic change.



Recommendation 1: Increasing parental/community engagement via hubs.

Key activities: Transition Expos; Confident Parenting programs and middle years homework/peer support; Children's Voice; Imagineering; School Bag Game; Research about student disengagement; work with hub coordinators; Educational Summits; Lasting Gifts; In Transit DVD and Parent Tip Sheets.



Recommendation 2: Advocacy for systemic change.

Key activities: Research; advocacy for middle years representatives in Council; Transition Network; Partnership activities with Hume Youth Commitment and Hume Early Years Partnership; Professional Development for school reception staff; promoting pathways to flexible learning options; developing a regional process to address truancy, absenteeism and disengagement; professional development; distributing information about programs/services; seeking funding for Transition Coordinators in trial sites.

The Action Plan is broad ranging and comprehensive. The following case studies were prepared between 2012 and 2014, and reflect the journey undertaken to trial, review and evolve middle years activities in Hume. They are presented as a small snapshot of the substantial volume of work undertaken.

Imagineering

"Imagineering is being picked up by schools-agencies are looking for ways to continue it and universities are looking to engage with kids in primary school. It's a foreign concept to them, but they are realising if they invest in primary years those kids are then wanting to go to university."

Excerpt from: Local Advisory Group Hume, Better Futures Local Solutions: Strengthening our Hume community through better connections to education and employment, Local Solutions Fund: First Round Outcomes Approved Projects, 2013. Reproduced with permission under arrangement with the Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

This project was funded by the Australian Government under the Better Futures Local Solutions Fund.

The 'Imagineering'- Raising Aspirations in Hume Project increases aspirations of more than 400 students and parents in Broadmeadows in 2013 by educating them about the pathways to, and benefits of attending university. The project is aligned to the cross sector Hume Middle Years Working Group and directed toward tackling generational disadvantage and addressing an enduring trend in Hume wherein significantly low numbers of community members access tertiary studies.

This project worked with local schools and universities to support people from disadvantaged backgrounds in overcoming barriers preventing them attending and graduating from university.

Two successful excursions were achieved to both LaTrobe and Australian Catholic Universities.

A total of 294 students plus 54 parents from three schools participated in the project. 94% stated that the excursions had improved their understanding of how university works.

Feedback on this project has been presented to other community forums including the Hume Middle Years and Early Years Partnerships, expanding the sharing and learning of the objectives. This collaboration has also established links between the schools communities to the 'Lasting Gifts' program funded by Communities for Children and designed to help parents with the language and concepts required to have conversations with their children about careers and futures.

The project expanded in June 2013 to include other primary schools in Hume, benefitting another 500 families.

Updated project material, including participating schools and Partner Universities, is available at <http://www.imagineeringproject.com.au/>.

"The beauty of Imagineering is not just the impact it has on children- it has such a profound impact on their parents that spills over, so the parent has more confidence to be involved in their children's education and perhaps go back to school themselves. It's just so powerful, but it's hard to capture the impact. How do you measure that stuff?"



Reflections & lessons from the Hume Middle Years Working Group

Lasting Gifts

"Aspirations are the most important things we can give a child, but these conversations also help us to put a framework about what's important around each child."



Edited excerpt from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Primary School families having career conversations: Case Study 1 May 2013, 2013 Reproduced with permission under arrangement with Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

A group of primary school Community Hubs in the City of Hume have been working together with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Regional Career Development Officer (RCDO) in the North Western Victoria Region to deliver workshops to families about how to engage in career conversations. The workshops, based on the Engaging Parents in Career Conversations Framework and the Lasting Gifts resource, have supported families to develop an understanding of what a career is and how they can support the young people in their lives to develop informed aspirations.

The workshops are based around the "high five" Career Development messages. These messages are: change is constant; learning is ongoing; follow your heart; access your allies and focus on the journey.

Parents are the preferred source of information and advice for young people in relation to their careers, so it is important that they feel confident to have conversations about aspirations with their children. The workshops provide a combination of information about the education system and the labour market, as well as practical strategies for having conversations.

The RCDO was glad to have the opportunity to run the workshops with parents of primary aged children. "Traditionally, Career Development has been seen as something for students in secondary school, but students in upper primary school often have questions about careers as they prepare to make the transition to secondary school. Parents also have questions and feel they don't have the skills to support their children. The workshops help them to recognise that their own experiences have given them a lot more skills than they realise. They also guide parents to reliable sources of information about careers, such as the myfuture website and bullseye charts."

The RCDO trained hub coordinators in the Lasting Gifts resource, supplemented with additional activities from the Engaging Parents in Career Conversations Framework. The hub coordinators then worked to customise the presentations to suit their own communities. Material is personalised to suit the individual community resulting in a unique presentation being provided to each school. Each workshop has then been delivered jointly by the RCDO and the hub coordinator. Some workshops have been attended by two or three language groups while others represented the wide diversity of cultural language groups in Hume. Hub coordinators are now more confident when discussing Career Development with the families who use their hubs.

"She (parent) told me this is the first time that anyone had spoken to her about her career. She hadn't had this conversation as a girl, or as a mother. It was the first time anyone had ever spoken to her about how she could, or should, have a working life outside of the home. She had no understanding about what that whole landscape might look like. So it was important to start at that beginning."

Education Summits



Excerpt from Hume Whittlesea LLEN & Roxburgh College, Roxburgh College Extended Hub Development Project, Community Consultation Findings, August 2013. Reproduced with permission under arrangement with Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

The Hume City Education Summits were funded by the Australian Government under the Better Futures Local Solutions fund.

To date, two Education Summits have been held. The summits were held in November 2012 and April 2013, with secondary school principals and/or leadership representatives, local community agencies and Hume Middle Years Working Group members attending.

The education summits not only promoted parent engagement at a continuum from primary to secondary school, ensuring families and young people are supported in their middle years, but also focused on building the awareness of school staff about the benefits of working with their community. This can have a positive impact on schools improving their student outcomes, which can lead to better connection to local community. This can also promote parent empowerment and engagement in the school community and support the skill development and capacity building of parents/community members to access local education and employment opportunities.

The education summits also highlighted the school- community based approach to improve social inclusion, learning outcomes and aspirational thinking for young people and their families. This approach can encourage schools to work collaboratively with community agencies to share resources and expertise to support parents and young people. It can prompt new systemic ways of supporting, resourcing and increasing opportunities for parents and young people, especially those experiencing high levels of intergenerational disadvantage to engage in all aspects of community life, including social and workforce participation.

The first summit inspired and increased interest in the hub model sooner than expected. Based on the evaluation of the summit held in November 2012, it was evident that secondary schools were ready to embrace a new way of working to engage and support their families and young people.

"The great thing about this work has been the growth of ideas to action. We have identified issues and have been able to work together to make things happen. The Education Summit showed us schools were ready to embrace a new way of working, but were not sure where to begin. From that starting point, we were able to develop the Expanding school community hubs into secondary schools project."

Expanding school community hubs into secondary schools



Edited excerpt from: Local Advisory Group Hume, Better Futures Local Solutions: Strengthening our Hume community through better connections to education and employment, Local Solutions Fund: First Round Outcomes Approved Projects, 2013. Reproduced with permission under arrangement with the Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

This project was funded by the Australian Government under Better Futures Local Solutions fund.

Excerpt from Hume Leader, 7 May 2013

"It is going to provide a more coordinated approach for (schools) to build partnerships to meet the needs of their families", Ms Yuksel said. "Students are very nurtured in a primary school setting. They don't feel as welcome in a secondary school. We're trying to change that internal culture."

-Roxburgh College is the first secondary school to adopt this model and the first to employ a community liaison officer to focus on involving parents in their children's learning and enhancing both school and home learning environments.

-Research shows that greater parental involvement in education encourages more positive attitudes toward school, improves homework habits, reduces absenteeism and drop out, and enhances academic achievements.

The projects learnings are (also) attracting strong attention from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Catholic Education (Office) and the Australian Government by informing policy and program development.

"The Hubs work highlights the importance of schools engaging with other services and providers that assist wellbeing needs of school communities and students. We have an opportunity to test hubs in secondary schools and demonstrate value of place based early intervention approaches across the education system-independent, State and Catholic schools. This will demonstrate the benefits of collaboration at community, not just system level. We do this work knowing kids leave schools but continue in communities."

Expanding school community hubs into secondary schools

"As an educator, collaboration is the opportunity to sit in the same space with Catholic, independent and state schools. What formerly was a battle ground is now becoming a community. We have created an environment that has shifted from adversaries to advocates. We understand better where each player is coming from."

Edited excerpt from: Local Advisory Group Hume, Better Futures Local Solutions: Strengthening our Hume community through better connections to education and employment, Local Solutions Fund: First Round Outcomes Approved Projects, 2013. Reproduced with permission under arrangement with the Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

This project was funded by the Australian Government under Better Futures Local Solutions fund.

School community hubs provide practical connections between schools and communities to both improve educational outcomes for students and strengthen families and the community. The notion is that where parents are engaged and involved in the school, they are more empowered to support their children in accessing local education and employment opportunities.

The expanding school community hubs into secondary schools project has been funded to support local secondary schools to establish school community hubs. The project builds on the success of the twelve primary school hubs in Hume.

This project targets students from Year 7-9, totaling more than 3,600 students. It works collaboratively with students, parents and schools to improve education retention and achievement by implementing parent programs, improving communication, and coordinating services to help reduce barriers for young people and their families to access services.

School community hubs provide practical connections between schools and communities to both improve educational outcomes for students and strengthen families and the community. The notion is that where parents are engaged and involved in the school, they are more empowered to support their children in accessing local education and employment opportunities.

The Expanding School Community Hubs into Secondary Schools project has been funded under the Local Solutions Fund Round Two to continue to support local secondary schools to establish school community hubs. The project builds the Initial Round One project and on the success of the twelve primary school community hubs in Hume and the Round One outcomes.

In Round Two, close working relationships have been established between the three participating schools; Penola Catholic College, Ilim College (Islam) and Mount Ridley College. This has been a great achievement when considering the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

The three schools are committed to the long term sustainability of the hub and have allocated dedicated teachers to sustain the hub model. School community consultation plans have been developed for each school to inform future activities and the information sharing that has occurred both within the school (personally with staff), and with parents.

Hume Middle Years Conference: Scaffolding Our Tweenies-What works and What next?

"Funding has enabled us to resource our partners- parents, young people, community, industry- to focus collective efforts and create resources that will continue to influence how we work with parents and students in this community. These resources include timeless information and will be both a legacy of work to date and a resource going forward".

Edited excerpt from: Hume Whittlesea UEN, Hume Early Years Partnership article: Hume Middle Years Conference 2014 Scaffolding our Tweenies-What works and What next?, April 2014. Reproduced with permission.

With more than 200 people attending the Hume Middle Years Conference over the two days, the Hume Middle Years Working Group feel the event was a resounding success.

While the conference aimed to promote, celebrate and reflect on local achievements in supporting parents and young people during their transition from primary to secondary school, advocate for systemic improvements and identify new opportunities for the future direction in the Middle Years spaces, it turned out to be far more than that.

Many conference delegates commented on how exciting it was to see Hume leading the way on Parent Engagement in schools. With more than 17 schools sending along lots of staff (all sectors - Government, Independent, Catholic, Primary & Secondary represented) it will be a very exciting time for Hume in the future as we benefit from all that was shared and learnt during the conference.

Angie Wilcock's "The transition tightrope", Danielle Cronin's critical message about the important role parents play in increasing their child's educational outcomes, and Georgie Ferrari's policy message were key presentations from day one.

Day Two saw Roger Holdsworth fire everyone up about how best to engage students and Bernie Geary gave an emotional account of the importance of catering for our most vulnerable families.

Feedback from delegates was consistently positive. One of many highlights was a comment made by a delegate from a school in Gippsland taking away the importance of engaging with their parent community. S/he stated these presentations "really struck a chord with me and I am going back to my school to completely change the way we do things."



Part 3: Reflections and Learning





"It takes a community to raise a child. The adults that are the stakeholders to this community have the awareness and moral responsibility to get together and make things work for young people."

Methodology

The reflections and learning outlined in this report have been informed through consultation with a range of stakeholders to canvass insights into what worked, what didn't work and what has been learned in the middle years in Hume City. Consultation took place in March and April 2014.

The consultation process included stakeholder interviews (n5) and focus groups with: the Hume Middle Years Working Group (n 9); Hub Coordinators (n9); Middle Years Students from Hume Anglican Grammar in Mickleham and St Dominics Primary School in Broadmeadows (primary students, n20).

The Hume Middle Years Working Group had hoped to have a broader representation of young people in focus groups, both in terms of number of primary schools represented and to access views of secondary students. It was also hoped a focus group with parents could be scheduled. Due to a range of competing priorities at the time of this report, efforts to schedule these groups were not successful. This is a noted limitation of the information herein.

Findings

AREA ONE: Why a partnership approach?

The Hume Middle Years Working Group has been an important mechanism for building capacity in Hume City. It connects a range of sectors and organisations, bringing together diverse skills and resources. The group has committed to a partnership approach that includes shared planning, shared knowledge, and best use of complementary resources. Respect and good will has underpinned local efforts.

The partnership approach in Hume City's middle years agenda has reflected the mantra of key working group members that 'together we do it best'.

What have we learned? The importance of a partnership approach.

Members of the working group value the importance of a partnership approach in this work. It is broadly acknowledged that this work could not otherwise occur in a local context, and that collaboration has enabled schools and services to better understand and respond to the needs of middle years students and their families.

Members of the working group reflect that the importance of a partnership approach is founded on understandings that:

- The wellbeing of young people in our communities is a shared responsibility.
- The needs of young people are diverse and that the work required is multifaceted.
- The expertise required to support young people is cross sectoral and cross organisational.
- There are different philosophical frameworks, ways of working and professional language sets in different sectors, and these can be barriers to cross sector collaboration.
- Collaboration is most effective when stakeholders come together around community need first, and attracting additional resources subsequently.
- Collaboration is good, but coordinated collaboration is better.
- Collaboration fosters debate and new thinking about reducing vulnerability.

Reflections & lessons from the Hume Middle Years Working Group

Importantly, members considered that the partnership approach is a way of working that has added value by:

- Enabling a deeper and collective understanding of the supports and gaps in the middle years in Hume.
- Realising the potential scale of response needed and generated.
- Providing a forum in which stakeholders come together and work toward a coordinated and integrated approach (including collaborative decision making regarding local trends).
- Strengthening advocacy through stronger networks.
- Providing a place based demonstration that prevention and early intervention approaches in the middle years can produce positive outcomes for individuals and communities.
- Providing a platform to join, consolidate and extend current approaches to learning and community partnerships in Hume.

"This work simply couldn't be done without community partnership approach."

"It's the only way this work can be successful- a partnership approach drives service integration and improves coordination, and it provides a decision making body around critical issues or trends and how we respond to needs in the middle years in this community."

"The partnership approach enables all stakeholders within the middle years to come together and get that more integrated and coordinated approach. It means anyone who is interested, or who is working in this space, gets to know who else is in this space- so the networks get stronger, and in turn the advocacy for the middle years gets stronger."

"This collaboration has provided a focus and shared wisdom that recognises the expertise each partner brings to the table and enables us to make a difference to vulnerable families and children. It brings together approaches and improves understanding of the ways that we work together."

"A coordinated response adds a lot of value to the work. The partnership approach allows people who may have worked in isolation to join up and share good practices, but also to support each other."

"The beauty of a partnership approach is we become aware of each other's needs to the point that we can catch up with people and share the language and issues. We can start to



develop a shared concept of what the middle years really represent, and what challenges there are, so that we can be facing same direction and speaking in the same language."

"If we don't have the sharing, a weaving of that net between us as stakeholders, we get young people slipping through the middle. From the education system to available services, Council structures, supports for parents and families."

"A partnership approach helps carry the weight of imperatives around vulnerable children."

"A partnership approach is critical because it reinforces the fact that early intervention around the middle years is the shared agenda of a range of stakeholders. Tackling intergenerational disadvantage and improving education retention and attainment is in the interest of government departments and services, schools, community organisations, council and business. A partnership approach re-enforces the importance of strong families and connection to community, and the importance of options that can support lifelong learning leading to employment outcomes."

"The collaboration and coordination has really meant celebrating, sharing good practice, strategically identifying gaps and identifying who is best placed to fill that gap. For me that has been the real value add from a coordinated partnership approach."

... "We (Schools) work together and our young people make real connections and realisations that, although someone may be wearing a head scarf or might have a cross in their emblem, we are firstly young people that are trying to get an education- it promotes a real sense of understanding of what faith is. That is something very rich for our community as a whole."

What would we keep? Success features

Features of the partnership approach that have supported its success include:

- Strong foundations of the Hume Early Years Partnership and Hume Youth Commitment, providing a history of good relationships built over time.
- Understanding of the reciprocal, and potentially sustainable, nature of relationships.
- Having a funded facilitation role to coordinate effort.
- Developing local leaders to articulate the middle years agenda.
- Enabling access to a greater pool of resources (funding and in-kind contributions).

There is broad agreement that through the Hume Middle Years Working Group and funded projects there has been new relationships forged and connections between partnering agencies have been strengthened.

What would we change?

Working Group members acknowledge there are changes they would make in hindsight and opportunities to strengthen good partnership approaches. These include:

- Clearer messages at the start of efforts about rationale: why the middle years matters, and why this agenda ought to be resourced, supported and strengthened.
- Clearer messages at the start of efforts about 'the change we want to see': age appropriate planning and services, welcoming and engaging practice, improved student attainment and retention rates.
- Highlighting links with planning, advocacy and service delivery roles of government.
- Working to improve the flow of middle years information within between government departments and across tiers of government.
- Ensuring the right agencies and right people are participating in the Working Group.
- Clearer understanding of School Plans and potential to use these Plans as tools to better understand community need, to inform practice and influence policy.

"The work of the facilitator within that middle years partnership is essential."

"We have found that where there have been community champions leading the collaboration it has had a greater impact on the community."

"We found that we could celebrate almost \$200k investment in middle years projects in our communities, whereas if we weren't all sitting around the same table, talking about the same things and committing to the Middle Years Action Plan we probably wouldn't have realized there was that investment.."

"This work has been a really valuable insight into 'who does what' and how they do it- how do children transition into young people, and how are their needs being heard and responded to?" (local government representative)

"I don't see how I would have had the time to pick up the phone and try to get things going together (across faith based schools). Having this vehicle, the shared idea and shared investment of time and modest funds, means that we have made that commitment with each other. We are speaking with each other regularly and we have made some friendships amongst our organisations."

"The process to engage stakeholders will ensure longevity of the project. When we talk about this, we talk about it as a great seeding opportunity for some wonderful community links. Those links will continue and flourish."

"This collaboration has got substance, resilience and longevity built into it because we, as a partnership, are really interested in each other. Whilst the projects may change, the connections are now there between the workers and there are rich links with Council and other schools through a shared focus on middle years."

"The notion of connected up services at the policy making and senior level wasn't communicated at the start...we need this so bosses know why this work is important and their advocacy is available as a given, rather than requiring explanation."

In hindsight..."We need to get the right people understanding the message at the start."

"There are accountability requirements for schools administrators about engagement, but have these become a process? Who looks at these reports, and are they looking at it through a lens of place?"

AREA TWO: Collaboration

What have we achieved? Working together in the middle years space

There is a strong understanding that the Hume Middle Years Working Group has been successful in achieving, embedding and building collaboration within sectors (such as across Catholic, Independent and State primary and secondary schools), and between sectors and agencies. This has been evidenced by:

- Investment to support the middle years agenda that has been allocated or secured for projects in Hume City.
- A successful extension to the scope of local collaboration -Hume has historically been regarded as a connected service community, with work in the early years and youth services providing platforms to extend connections to the middle years.
- Opportunities to share best practice, such as conference and summits, and registering more participants engaging in these opportunities more frequently.
- Effort to expand the roll out of good practice, with schools and agencies looking for ways to continue some projects and activities post funding.

Working group members have observed:

- A cultural shift, especially in secondary schools, about the importance of genuinely embracing their parent communities.
- Local capacity to provide solid examples of practice where policy makers recognise the change they wanted to see.

What would we keep? Success features

The importance of:

- Maintaining a cross sectoral, cross agency approach to the middle years.
- Efforts to continually engage absent stakeholders.
- Efforts to build awareness of the needs and potential of middle years students and to showcase good practice.
- Supporting consistently better engagement of students and families. The proposed establishment of a Hume Student Advisory Group and reconvening of the Parent Advisory Group to ensure child and parent voice in local planning are noted.
- Effective leadership of the Hume Middle Years Working Group.

What will we change?

Working group members have articulated a commitment to continue this work. Moving forward, there are a number of changes working group members would want to see, including:

- Creating an evidence base that underpins the next stages.
- Redoing the Middle Years Action Plan to guide the next stage of collaboration.
- Ensuring ongoing advocacy to fill service gaps between early childhood and youth services streams.

"Has it been successful? Yes, yes, yes! Collaboration is a commitment but anything hard is- it's successful because three four years down the track it's still gaining momentum, it hasn't lost its puff."

"Outstandingly successful. Incredibly. The collaboration is the vehicle that keeps the conversations at the forefront of our minds. It puts in the processes that ensures these conversations continue. Schools will, of course, discuss the middle years, but this approach seeks input from broader horizons and encourages links outside each school- links with other schools, universities, regions, government. We are able to think broader and get that bit closer to the issues."

"Collaboration between agencies has definitely been strengthened and embedded. That is the essence of what the working group is...we have seen through the Action Plan that the agencies are doing stuff at the grass roots level to embed practice around the middle years."

"There has been great value in providing workshop environments to unpack tools around school community engagement, evidenced by feedback provided from conference participants."

"It's been a real awakening around early intervention work."

"The value add of this work is identifying challenges and knowing where to go for support. The linkages are critical."

"This work ignites an awareness and passion so we think who else can we get involved? Through this focus on the middle years it encourages us all to share questions and have middle years at the forefront of our minds."

"We have some exemplarily practice happening in Hume and those schools that are engaging in the middle years space in terms of the Working Group and the Action Plan are very successful, but there are still some gaps."

AREA THREE: Hume Middle Years Working Group membership systems and structures

Context

A consistent theme in reflections of the Hume Middle Years Working Group in Hume is the importance of a lead agency and dedicated facilitator. To date the Hume Whittlesea LLEN has held the leadership role in this space.

The role of the Hume Whittlesea LLEN emerged largely as a 'time and place' response to need- the agency had significant experience in community capacity building in Hume, established links with schools and an active role in parent engagement. The work requirements of the Hume Middle Years Working Group in its early days was clearly aligned to this experience- to motivate change, develop support for change and establish strategies to build a working group and make it work.

At the time of writing the LLENs are under review and the Hume Middle Years Working Group is embarking on a new phase of work, namely to sustain the momentum built to date. This raises consideration within the working group about who is best placed to lead this work into the future.

What have we learned? Reflections on membership

There is consensus in the Hume Middle Years Working Group that broad and inclusive membership is a strength of the work occurring in Hume City. This reflects members understandings that:

- Government, service providers and individuals in Hume City are connected around the needs and potential of vulnerable communities.
- Needs in the middle years in Hume are wide ranging and sometimes complex, requiring cross sectoral responses.
- There is a better chance of these approaches succeeding when there are common links with core business.
- Continuing effort to engage a broad membership base is important. The Hume Middle Years Working Group continues to reach out to stakeholders that are not represented in this work in Hume City.
- Achieving and embedding cross-sectoral membership is not without challenge.



"If we go back to start, the reason the Hume Middle Years Working Group was formed was genuine cross over between Hume Early Years Partnership and Hume Youth Commitment, and a realisation that it makes sense for us to work together- we have common connectors around working with vulnerable families. The Hume Middle Years Working Group was formed before there was any opportunity of funding because of those common connectors."

"The Hume Middle Years Working Group is cleverly put together and it honors the broad and inclusive nature that is required for developing a connected support base for young people."

"One of the real strengths of the Hume Middle Years Working Group, and a number of the youth networks in Hume, is that it does align to core business- there's real benefit to them being involved in collective action."

What would we keep? Success features

Reflections on what makes the Hume Middle Years Working Group a successful group in this community include the following features:

- Having an Action Plan with clear purpose and shared responsibilities that can be monitored.
- Having inclusive and flexible approaches- being prepared to trial, review and make changes along the journey.
- Having a funded facilitator to coordinate collaboration, and funding attached to an Action Plan to build momentum by enabling activities to occur.
- Having regular activity that allows for celebration of achievements and adds value to the work of individual member agencies.
- Having a commitment to sharing the journey- an understanding that this work is laying foundations for strengthening the planning and delivery of middle years services and supports, and that learning by doing is integral to achieving this.

What will we change? Strengthening membership going forward

Working group members recognise there are opportunities to strengthen membership. These include:

- Getting the right stakeholder organisations at the table- from invitation to participation.
- Getting the right people at the table- leaders, decision makers and influencers.
- Getting a suitably qualified and resourced agency to lead the Hume Middle Years Working Group in a new phase of work, namely sustaining the momentum built to date.

"It's been important to have a strategic Action Plan with some project ideas that have been fleshed out, funded, tested and trialled. The resulting Action Research has been valuable and will continue to inform service delivery and planning."

"The general spirit is of inclusiveness and making it work. We all know schools and Councils are busy places. We have not had a defined, rigid approach- we have been informed by a really good process but have a schedule that can be adjusted. We have been able to work closely across all stakeholders to find valuable way forward."

"The strength of the working group has been shared ownership, but I think that you get better value on the actions of the plan when there's some funding attached... It still goes along- there is genuine collaboration and support of the actions in the Plan- but like anything, when you have got some money attached you can actually deliver on things rather than say that's on our wish list."

"Having a coordinator who has a facilitation role is essential- you have to have somebody who mobilises interest and communication and oversees joint action."

"The group needs representatives with a sphere of influence within their own organisation. What capacity do the representatives have to influence the work of their agencies? People on the working group need to have capacity to make decisions, allocate resources and influence own organisations from policy to action."

"We haven't quite hit the nail on the head to get buy-in from large local organisations that already have structures and systems to drive this work. The work needs sustained funding or infrastructure that can support it in longer term- in so far as administrative functions, governance functions, facilitation and project management functions."

"The challenge with the Action Plan is leadership within the middle years group. If you have someone whose core business is to lead a group, that kind of facilitation and capacity building work gets done. That's the beauty of the funding and that's going to be the challenge if funding stops- who genuinely can continue to lead that group? There's some really good legacies left behind and genuine intention that middle years will stay on the agenda, but leadership and facilitation is essential..."

AREA FOUR: Bridging practice and policy

What have we learned?

The Hume Middle Years Working Group members note the importance of consistently maintaining a line of sight to government, and of supporting member agencies to digest and implement policy. They also note the potential for work in Hume to inform policy.

Hume Middle Years Working Group members have noted:

- The Hume Middle Years Working Group has a clear role to support understanding and implementation of government policy directions at a local level.
- Where there is a scarcity of time, this support can make the difference to effective or ineffective local implementation.
- Conversation helps service providers to understand policy, and an Action Plan can provide a framework for implementation.
- There is a need to support closer links between government policy and independent schools in a local context. The working group can support this through regular exchange of information between education providers.
- It is important to keep a line of sight between local action and policy. This can be supported through an effective lead agency and facilitator.
- Good government needs new ideas and debate, and place based work in Hume continues to generate progressive thinking and get new ideas into public domains.

"Collective action when there's a scarcity of time creates confidence rather than confusion. Now that is not rhetoric. Little things are sweet and you have to start somewhere- but at least we are starting somewhere rather than saying it's all too hard. Starting somewhere overcomes death by a thousand motherhood statements- and it means kids who are vulnerable have less chance of falling through the gaps."

"Managing the volume of policy expectations is part of my commitment to the partnership- it's a lens, a way of digesting policy through other conversation and action with other organisations. The partnership has given a sense of

purpose and direction on some of these policy areas, whereas if I had to do it alone I may not have started. By having a partnership and an Action Plan, you can somehow find time to take it up."

"Because of this project, middle years will mean something a little different to what it meant when academics were first talking about it."

What would we keep?

The strengths of efforts to bridge policy and practice include:

- Local knowledge and a quest for deeper understanding of community issues.
- Maintaining a line of sight between policy and local activity.
- Commitment to 'do' through an Action Plan that proposes solutions to policy challenges and trials new ways of working.
- Key messages including 'prevention' not just 'intervention', and 'potential' not just 'need'.

What would we change?

Stronger advocacy for the middle years to ensure:

- Government, services and parents have a clear understanding of the developmental and support needs of young people in the middle years.
- Government and services, including schools, have a commitment to planning and providing age appropriate infrastructure and services.
- Funding bodies and decision makers understand the rationale for investing in the middle years.
- The role of schools in building community and family capacity is valued in the middle years context, particularly in disadvantaged settings.
- That the foundations of successful partnerships in the early years and youth services spaces continue to be recognised and built upon in Hume.
- Stewardship of effort to date is available in a reoriented political and economic environment.



"It's a shared concept of broad and changing needs of young people that makes our responses more sophisticated."

"A partnership approach to the middle years influences policy across the board because you have more stakeholders aware of it, talking about it and making our understanding more sophisticated. We are broadening it out and enriching it with the subtleties of community context, processes and impacts."

"Local work influences government because of its intimate knowledge (of what works and what doesn't work) at a grass roots level."

We need to..."Change the information communicated at the policy level (so it includes)- awareness of vulnerabilities of this group, transition that is occurring at this age, what type of need there is and what type of service provision is required for these families and young people".

"What they don't look at is the amount of support and relationships we have to support families. We need to advocate for those schools, and those families in schools, that school is a lot more than a NAPLAN data set."

"In a place based context it's important to have a line of sight back to local, State and National Government policies..not just for attracting funding, but because the work done at the local level actually informs government."

"We are pulling together the policy context and applying this locally. From a place based practice point of view, Hume is well positioned because of the vulnerability to showcase good practice and inform government policy."

AREA FIVE: Professional development

What has been learned?

Reflections across the working group members acknowledge the importance of professional development as a strategy to support change, manage the transition to new ways of working and sustain momentum generated to date.

Leadership of the working group in the future will be a key determinant in how professional development opportunities continue in the middle years space in Hume. There is some preliminary commitment from the Hume Youth Commitment and Hume Early Years Partnership to continue to explore the middle years as part of their ongoing professional development agenda, and hope that schools continue to ensure the needs of middle years students and their families are included in training and development opportunities. Working group members referred to a new commitment to a life course approach, rather than traditional program boundary approaches, to professional development.

There is also interest in using professional development frameworks to revisit work that has occurred and its impact over time as a way of supporting calls to build a robust local evidence base for early intervention place based approaches in the middle years.

There is a clear need to support hub workers through professional development, both as community development educators for school staff, and as recipients of training around the needs of children in the middle years. Current funding arrangements focus efforts of primary school hub workers to the early years- there may be merit in promoting the role of hub workers to supporting successful transitions from primary to secondary school.

"It's important to continue to have ongoing opportunities to showcase good practices. Regardless of the LLEN's future, between the Hume Youth Commitment and the Hume Early Years Partnership, there will be opportunities. We might not be ticking off our wish list as we could with funding, but as long as it stays on the agenda...."

"We are now inclined to look at people that demonstrate an awareness of the middle years. Our awareness influences thinking through functions of recruitment, professional development, class operations and consultation structures with stakeholders."

Success factors?

- There have been significant opportunities to participate in professional development and training, such as the Education Summits and the Middle Years Conference.
- These opportunities have been provided locally and were of high quality, including nationally recognised key note speakers. The opportunities have been well attended with over 230 participants at the Middle Years Conference.
- The opportunities have provided forums for networking on site, and have provided insights and information to be shared, discussed and explored in workplaces.
- The opportunities have been pitched according to the maturity of stakeholder relationships and projects. Hubs in secondary schools is a relatively new concept and staff have mobilised to provide 'meet and greet' tours of schools and shared invitations to student and staff events to build connections between schools. These simple strategies have established relationships that will support schools and students in the future.
- Having a Hub Coordinator in local government has been effective. This role has facilitated links and peer support between hub workers, and has supported the exchange of information between Council and schools.
- The placement of National Support Centre for Community Hubs in Hume City, through Scanlon Foundation Funding.

"Professional development opportunities are about selling the key middle years messages. It's about people going away and talking, raising awareness and selling the need to address issues."

"Something that is often underestimated in professional development is the opportunity for networking-linking up, opening pathways for workers, students and families. I think the way it's been done in the middle years space has provided for that."

"When you take interested and passionate people, who would otherwise be interested and passionate in their own backyard, and broaden opportunities for the connections they are making, you are making it so you can ignite an effect across a much broader community that you would have otherwise."

"We (secondary schools) are dealing with same human need that is present in all communities- we are now able to inform each other and get each other's perspective about how to support our families. We now have each other as a reference group."

What would we change?

Working group members and hub workers pointed to the need to ensure high quality local professional development opportunities continue, with interest in:

- Better understanding services and resources to address family violence and child abuse, such as referral pathways to child protection services and family law services, and information to support families in crisis.
- Better understanding of community development (general) in schools, possibly facilitated or supported by hub workers.
- Better understanding of the middle years as a developmental stage- developmental changes and support needs- using a 'whole school approach' including hub workers.
- Promoting the importance of professional development (general) for hub workers.
- More regular professional development, on a smaller scale than the conference.
- Stronger articulation of the links between the Hume Middle Years Working Group and the Hume Global Learning Village, its committee and the Learning Together Strategies.



AREA SIX: Impact of activities on local agencies

What have we achieved?

Reflections on the impact of the Hume Middle Years Working Group considered the extent to which actions of the group informed or influenced the work of agencies, and how. Member reflections suggested establishment of the working group and related projects have had definite impact in their respective agencies, including:

- Prompting action on long standing concerns.
- Strengthened capacity to attract funding and project opportunities to trial 'wish list' activities.
- Raising the profile of middle years within schools and agencies and informing the allocation of organisational resources.
- Driving discussion and exploring practice to strengthen services responses.

"The middle years has been talked about in education for quite some time now- it's engrained in educational philosophy. The good thing about having something like this is it shares that wisdom- it entrenches and further develops wisdom. It affirms a different way of working in schools."

"It's worth a project like this because it improves participation and solidarity around a concept."

"We have knocked the paradigm of its the next persons challenge. We are 'doing' not 'talking'. We have built a framework and we are actually engaging in this stuff."

"There's a sense that it is important work and that it is at centre of what we do rather than added on. We have known for years that we should be doing this work, but have felt a bit guilty because we haven't taken any action yet....now we are doing it."

"It's given me purpose and a sense of direction, providing me with a way forward on some of these issues. There's already a platform of work done that I can join up with other schools around. This collaboration is a real benefit in terms of influence of our school and why we are committed to the Middle Years Action Plan."



What would we change: Greater impact

Members note there are opportunities to strengthen impact on local agencies based on the following reflections.

- Robust data is needed to quantify need, demonstrate progress and sustain investment.
- Challenges remain to embed actions in some organisational processes.
- Challenges remain to strengthen consistent engagement with the middle years across sectors and agencies.
- Greater impact could be achieved through a focus on holistic wellbeing of young people and their families- those that are struggling with education may be struggling with a whole lot of other things.
- Empowered communities are advocates- educating and empowering parents about the needs of children in the middle years will help mobilise the middle years agenda.

"There have been challenges in getting consistent use of the products and resources developed. The products have been beneficial for those schools that have used them- but we know not all schools and services are using them."

"Children are not divided into bits, so any approach (to supporting education) needs to use a holistic framework."

"We need to make use of local research to increase understanding in schools and communities that disengagement starts early and that prevention is better than intervention."

AREA SEVEN: Our work in schools

Hub Coordinators and Workers

The City of Hume has a long history of community hubs in schools funded through government and philanthropic investment. There are nine Early Years Hubs in primary schools, with a focus on language, literacy and learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse families, and a further three Hubs funded to support children up to the age of twelve. These local success stories have led to the placement of a National Support Centre role in Hume City Council to provide support to thirty sites nationally. It is intended early years community hubs will continue to develop, expanding to 100 locations nationally with support provided in partnership with Hume City Council. The work of hubs has also been extended to secondary schools in Hume, with two trial projects.

What has been learned through positioning hub coordinators and workers in school sites?

- That community hub models can work effectively in school environments and strengthen the capacity of schools as part of a supporting system for families.
- For a hub worker to be most effective, he or she must be supported by school leaders, administrators and staff.
- A hub worker is a discrete community development role, not an extension of a teaching role.
- Gains can be realised by schools in a relatively short period of time.
- It is important to share clear expectations that funding is provided to 'seed' local approaches, but that 'growing' and sustaining these ideas and projects requires longer term investment by local agencies and schools.

"A big part of the success of this program is that it is based in a primary school. I think having a hub on a school site is the best place to put it. You've got connections with the early years and the middle years, you've got transition on both ends, you've got a sense of community, belonging into the school community as well as the local community. It ticks all the right boxes."

"The position of Hub Coordinator is excellent as it gives someone the responsibility to do that work- the challenge is if you don't have school leadership on side, and it's not seen as core work and purposeful, it'll end up like a 'Backyard Blitz' project...glossy and new on the surface, but cracks appear soon after."

"They are coordinators and connectors- and they need to be part of a community that 'gets it'. For their work to be effective it needs to be seen as core work for a school community, not an add on."

"It's important hub coordinators are understood as community development roles. There is lots of evidence that where schools have embraced someone from community and embedded them as staff, they have been more successful (not extension to current portfolio)."

"Government services work is not just about transactions, but connections to services that support wellbeing. Having connections with school hub coordinators recognises the role schools play in a supportive system for families as part of broader communities."

"What we have found to be very successful is that you need some seed funding to start, but if parameters are established from the start that in the long term you need to think about this from a budget point of view, you are more likely to get sustainable buy in."

"It's the social capital stuff that is so rich- the stuff that community development is seeking to achieve in the longer term that has been achieved in so immediately through small steps and relatively small investment."

"Primary schools have previously had a partnership and opportunities to collaborate. Having gains so early in the secondary space is amazing."

Success factors?

- Established networks and ways of working in place in Hume City to support links and referrals facilitated by hub workers.
- Opportunity to 'expand' what has already been learned locally in primary school hubs to secondary schools.
- Dedicated staff working across schools to trigger conversations, reflections and actions- and to highlight emerging priorities in school communities.
- Hubs have been effective at increasing information on the schools and between schools through the hub coordinators regularly coming together to exchange information.
- The Hub Coordination role located within Council has resourced, supported and linked hub workers, enabling them peer support and learning opportunities.
- Projects have successfully augmented the work of hubs to include links to education and employment.

What would we change?

- A commitment to build rigor in thinking about why this work matters as a way to get commitment and change from other schools.
- A broader and deeper understanding of why we do this work, so that changes are genuine and sustained in engaged schools.
- Current funding for many hub workers is attached to improved early years outcomes- students in the middle years are engaged through sibling status or on a project to project basis. There is a need to extend the target group to ensure senior primary students are consistently supported.
- To ensure hub work is consistently valued, and 'valued enough' that funding is allocated.

"We are lucky because we had great community partnerships, we had fantastic infrastructure and we could do this work without significant investment. There is significant value in that infrastructure that is built up over time."

"It has been fantastic that this work has been extended to secondary schools. Whole ideology around hubs will only make a positive difference."

"How important and valuable it has been to have a (worker) here, not just so we can share information between schools but also means we share more information as a school. He facilitates networks within us, not just with other schools."

"I want to see a deeper understanding of the purpose of changing the way schools works, rather than 'cleaning a room, turning a light on, adding heating and being welcoming with a few playgroups'- because if that's the limit to our understanding as soon as the money runs out it will stop".

"Communities for Children funding needs to be there for a time so things can be embedded, but budget responsibility in the longer term rests with schools, as it is the school community that benefits. Where that thinking has come into being, those schools have been more successful in embedding and sustaining that practice in their own school frameworks, than when they just say we can only do it if we've got that money. That's not true and we have proven that's not true."



Student and parent engagement

A key focus of middle years work in Hume City has been to re-orientate services to better engage and empower students and parents. This has been informed by research that asserts:

- Student engagement is linked with high- quality learning outcomes, and that schools provide a strong foundation for student learning when student engagement and wellbeing are a whole school priority^{xi}. Students that are engaged are more likely to try to learn, understand material to apply learning to their lives, persist despite challenges, take pride in their work and help create a positive school climate.
- "Effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement. This involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behavior"^{xixi}. Parent involvement can lead to improved grades, increased attendance, better skills, completion of homework, more positive attitudes to school and students that are more likely to graduate or go on to higher education, and are more likely to live healthy lives.

Information in this section has been predominantly informed through interviews and a focus group with primary school hub workers.

What have we learnt about parent and student engagement?

Hume Middle Years Working Group and worker reflections affirm understandings that:

- Engagement is about empowerment. By engaging students and parents we build their capacity to advocate for personal and community interests.
- The role of schools is greater than the achievement of academic outcomes.

Reflections on communication

- Engaging parents and students 'looks different' for each school community.
- Communication strategies need to reflect each school community, and family's, needs. A communication strategy should be informed by its audience and service providers should not assume how families want to receive information.

- Communication strategies may need to include a variety of means to ensure accessibility and facilitate understanding by each person (linguistic, literacy and disability needs), including aural, printed and web based information.

Reflections on resources

- Engaging parents and students can be resource intensive. It takes people on the ground who are consistently available and actively reaching out to families and individuals.
- Sufficient resourcing to work with families on a case by case basis is important, as this work may not otherwise be done.
- Some families, for a variety of reasons, will not be engaged despite the best efforts of schools. It is important local support services are available for these families, and that schools work with these providers to provide wrap-around care.
- By working with other agencies in a school setting we can 'dovetail' opportunities to connect with parents and maximize each potential point of contact with parents.

Reflections on our approach

- It is important professionals do not assume parental absence means disinterest. Families who are not regularly on the school site can still be engaged in their child's learning.
- It's difficult to build trust and relationships with some of the most vulnerable families.
- Building trust and relationships needs time and a strength based approach.
- Offering a variety of activities through school hubs improves participation and outcomes. A variety of activities is an effective strategy to reduce stigma.



"What has been learned? It's the capacity building of those that sit within that community that have intimate knowledge of how that community works. It's about empowering them to have a voice that is representative of those around them, not just a personal voice, and seeing that growth from personal interest to community interest."

"What is the core business of a school? ...It's not a simple role of providing an educational outcome, it's that growing of the whole person."

"A communication strategy has to be in the context that it is not charity. It needs to reflect 'this is what you asked for' so this is what we are doing."

"If you have connected families, and schools need to make connections, you have positive conversations about education that occur at home and more confidence in sharing knowledge between school and home. When connections are made differences start to appear for the young person."

"This has enabled a better understanding about the cultural needs of families. Improved awareness of family needs and links with families, and an ability to communicate more effectively and make better connections with those families. It's not that we weren't doing that but this brings together a shared concept about how we do it together."

"This work has improved awareness of needs and of potential links that you can draw into the school community, but it's also stimulated conversations about how to empower parents to engage with education so that outcomes are realised for the young person...It comes back to 'how can this improve the lot of the young person, their progress and sense of wellbeing?'"

"Our job is to unpack what engagement can mean for each family, and to make use of that."

What would we keep?

- Resourcing community development roles in school settings, and getting the right people as hub workers, requiring qualities of good communication, the ability to build bridges and to make someone comfortable, and being flexible.
- Building on foundations of what has been learned in the early years hubs about engaging and empowering school communities, and applying emerging learning from trialing school hubs in secondary schools.
- Offering a variety of programs through school hubs to improve participation and engagement, and ensuring an 'all of school' approach to creating welcoming school communities, including working with school administrators, teaching staff, support staff and reception staff.

What would we change?

Reflections on planning

Members of the working group and hub workers proposed a greater focus is needed on:

- Prioritising assertive outreach to very vulnerable families.
- Strengthening and embedding parent and student engagement in organisations.
- Reviewing the Hume Middle Years Action Plan, ensuring it is realistic, contributes to evidence and reflects student and parent voice.

Reflections on doing

- Ensuring school administrators, teaching and support staff understand rationale for community development roles in schools, and the role of hub workers.
- More focus in primary school hubs on the needs of middle years students.
- Engaging fathers in cultural and familial roles to support school attendance and retention, particularly with daughters (anecdotal).

Some progress has been made toward these priorities, such as the reinstatement of the Parent Advisory Group and development of the Student Advisory Group.

Reflections & lessons from the Hume Middle Years Working Group

"I'd keep that our work is aspiring. That the things we are trying to achieve are difficult not easy, and are positive not negative. They are capacity building."

"Sometimes I think we should do less but do it better- sometimes saying no better than yes, because what you say yes to you have to deliver on. If you don't you will never be able to do it again because people won't trust you."

"Go to parents. In hindsight I would have spent the resources to go and speak with these parents- have more consultation with the very vulnerable families."

"The change I want to see is engaging students in decision making. Not just consulting parents and students, but engaging them in the planning and decision making. There is a lot of speaking on their (parent and students) behalf. We need well-designed consultation but also frameworks, systems and structures to involve them in planning and decision making. This needs to be embedded and reflected right through our work- as the working group and as individual agencies."

"There is a need to rewrite the Middle Years Action Plan so it provides a more strategic response. The previous plan reflected what emerged. It is indicative of getting started, celebrating, showcasing work...The next Plan should include student and parent voice."

"There are still a lot of professionals that are still uncomfortable with the notions of parent engagement and empowerment. (We need to remind them) it's understanding that you don't just give people knowledge, that you have to unpack that from 'the other' perspective. Sometimes you need to bring a parent along a journey with you, and give them options- it's a very valid approach, but it can sometimes be lost."

"We (hub workers) are starting conversations with the middle years. The funding has been around the early years. We use our connections across the community, but that's not the brief."

"It's a challenge- we (hub workers) have these families in the early years then if there's no sibling or a specific project, we lose them in the middle years."

"We have communicated a clear message about the important role a parent has on a child's education.

The Hume Early Years Partnership has agreed to reinstate the Parent Advisory Group and to convene a revised Student Advisory Group. We are seeing genuine effort to strengthen parent and student voice".

Effective support for disengaged and 'at risk' students

An 'at risk' student is a student who, by virtue of their circumstances, is statistically more likely than others to fail academically^{xiii}.

What has been learned?

- There is a need to advocate and support schools to affirm and extend their work in the middle years.
- The operating environment for schools will change, requiring even greater support to ensure decision makers allocate resources toward supporting vulnerable families.
- Service planning and delivery needs to ensure local systems, services and supports are not fragmented across operations of early years, middle years and youth.
- To achieve systemic change the Hume Middle Years Working Group need to better engage the Victorian Government's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Department of Human Services (DHS). These departments have responsibility for policy and program development for schools and for vulnerable young people and their families.
- Approaches need to engage families in ways that are empowering, strength based and student focused. The ways to engage families need to be varied and various.
- Wrap-around support should happen within a school context (all departments in the organisation), as well as with and between agencies.
- There is a need to ensure stakeholder activities links with statutory services (Child Protection).
- Hub workers play an important role in supporting students at risk, including following up with families of students that are absent in a non judgmental and non punitive way.



"Schools know it's important to try different ways of engaging their vulnerable families and I think it's challenging for them. It will be more challenging in the future where there's more autonomy around their budget. Some schools will need to be encouraged to allocate resources to support vulnerable families and not just focus on educational attainment measures such as NAPLAN."

"We need to support transitions through a life course approach. We can better align strategies between early years and youth, and continue to facilitate communication between the Early Years Partnership and Youth Commitment. It's all about the connections."

"The important thing we have learned is 'do not assume'. We have learned that we have to go and ask- so it's not charity. It's not 'we are not doing this for you, it's we are doing it with you for your child'. We are building the capacity of families so we can support their child."

"You may get 100 people sitting in a room, and that's great...but if you get the one family you need in the room that you need to hear that message, it's even better. It's not easy to record that, but it is so important..."

"It takes time to build a relationship, then for that person to say 'I can do it myself' or 'I have a role within this'."

"Our absenteeism is something we need to be constantly be working with and on. We work with messages around: 'How do you support family absenteeism from the community? How you support continued learning while away? Recognising valid reasons to be away, and working with families to see how we could support them in things like translation so a child doesn't have to be away from school ...there's so many different reasons (children are absent)..."

What would we keep?

- The Hume Middle Years Working Group has enabled opportunities to showcase best practice.
- Programmatic responses, such as the re-orientated School Focused Youth Service, will strengthen local supports.

What would we change?

- Concepts of judgment and blame.
- More consultation with vulnerable families and students.
- Greater balance placed on the value of 'student engagement and wellbeing' and 'academic achievement measures' by schools for vulnerable students.
- Stronger engagement with the Hume Middle Years Action Plan by multiple stakeholders will strengthen local supports, particularly better buy-in from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Department of Human Services.
- More focus on creating robust evidence.

"We (schools) need to be courageous with decisions about learning content so we pitch work for each child. This is what you add when you focus on the child not the learning measures."

"We know this work is having a fantastic impact but (we) need to create the evidence base and rigor to back that up. I hope that there will be solid evidence about 'turn around schools': schools that have changed practice and how that has a positive impact on educational outcomes."

"Strategies in the Action Plan are strong and successful- I would like to see them built on. The strength is there in the Action Plan- we now need better engagement with schools, agencies, parents and students."

"We need greater clarity about the exit processes and transition processes for children at risk so they don't fall between gaps. The local research reports have been valuable - issues are documented but there is more work to be done to implement recommendations."

Getting our messages out through schools

What has been learned?

- Schools are gateways to communities- information needs to flow to communities through school structures, systems and cultures.
- Organisational change is not easy. It takes time to educate stakeholders and develop systems to support new ways of thinking and working.
- Developing support for change includes engaging key players in schools to lead, manage and embed middle years thinking and practice, including building a shared understanding of why the middle years matters in each school community.
- This might include targeting effort to support discrete groups within each school community, such as Indigenous families or families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The Hume Middle Years Working Group can support schools by reiterating the importance of inclusive and engaging language in local activity- 'we are doing this with you, not to you'.
- Advocacy is strengthened through a better understanding of the services available and gaps.

"The change in school attitude has been the major thing for me. There are some schools that sent a number of staff to the conference when they were historically a bit cynical of this work. For them to have released staff to attend speaks volumes to me."

"By having a better understanding of what services and supports are available and needed, we can put our heads together and identify potential funding sources. We all know funding is a challenge and part of that shared wisdom is about working together to make it happen."

"The discussions around the middle years projects have directly created possibilities about (community service) groups coming into the schools to work with parents doing it hard and supporting them and their kids."

What would we keep? Success factors

- Tangible Connections has provided up to date accessible information about events, activities and programs and is accessed by professionals across Government services, community services and schools.
- A focus on supporting links with schools and community service agencies that 'bring in' information and parent support programs to school facilities.

What would we change?

- Better understand the drivers for school engagement, and ensure the Middle Year Working Group vision motivates schools to be involved.
- Refine and strengthen key messages to engage schools- better understand how to raise the profile of middle years work so that it becomes a priority for school administrators and staff.
- Better engagement of School Councils.
- Continue to introduce people to the possibilities and value of a partnership approach to middle years issues in Hume.
- Support new members to feel confident to present ideas that are still evolving- provide time, encouragement and a space to share emerging understandings.
- Ensure each point of contact with each family is valued and leaves the door open for ongoing communication.

"The Tangible Connections Portal and having access to current information about courses, events programs and services is invaluable. It's a real testament to the strength of the local community."

"There's a group of parents that we don't engage with. We don't know who they are or why we can't engage them, but we know that they are out there. We need to unpack that more."

Conclusion

The work that has occurred to date has helped the Hume Middle Years Working Group and broader stakeholders better understand the middle years issues in our community, and the scale of work required to realise the required service re-orientation.

There is genuine commitment to this work continuing in Hume City. On the ground, there is continued work to support schools and services to be consistently inclusive and welcoming supports for young people and their families. In the advocacy space, there is continued

work required to support a holistic and coherent middle years framework both at Federal, State and municipal levels, to ensure that age appropriate supports are in place for all young people, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. There is also an outstanding role to play in advocating for a deeper appreciation of the role schools can play in supporting, nurturing and building capacity in individuals, families and communities.

The Hume Middle Years Working Group in Hume welcomes your help to realise and ride the next wave of service reorientation.



*"The Middle Years is an exciting space in our local community.
There's been some great work happening and there's some great work that's coming".*

Acknowledgements

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- Collen Turner, a founding partner of the Hume Middle Years Working Group



Appendix 1

Fast Facts about young people in Hume from 2011 Census^{xiv}



Fast Facts



Hume City has a large number of young people.

In 2011 there were 26,628 people aged 5-14.

Forecasts indicate there will be 35,681 people aged 5-14 in 2031, an increase of 9,053 .

Hume City is a very culturally diverse community, with a multi-faith population representing a range of ethnicities, ancestries, countries of birth and languages.

32.2% of Hume residents were born overseas, and 27.9% were born overseas with a non-English speaking background

Of the 31 Greater Melbourne LGAs, Hume was ranked 9th highest in the number of migrant settlements arriving in 2012.

Hume was ranked 3rd in Greater Melbourne for the highest number of humanitarian migrant settlements arriving in 2012.

Hume was ranked 4th of the 31 metropolitan Victorian LGAs for the highest number of young humanitarian migrant settlements in 2012.

There is a high representation of low income families and people with little training and unskilled occupations.

48.8% of couple families with children have one parent employed and working full time.

There were 4259 couple families with children in Hume where neither parent is employed.

This accounts for 17.7% of couple families with children in the region, and was significantly higher than the Greater Melbourne figure of 10.5%.



Fast Facts



There was a higher proportion of people who had left school at an early level (Year 11 or less) and a lower proportion of people who completed Year 12 or equivalent.

Overall, 34.5% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 43.7% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 26.0% and 54.6% respectively for Greater Melbourne.

There was a lower proportion of people holding the formal qualifications of Bachelor or higher degree, and

Advanced Diploma or Diploma in Hume than Greater Melbourne. There was also a higher proportion of people with no formal qualifications.

More people in Hume however, hold a vocational qualification compared with Greater Melbourne.

Overall, 35.5% of the population aged 15 and over held educational qualifications, and 53.7% had no qualifications, compared with 47.3% and 42.4% respectively for Greater Melbourne.

A large proportion of Hume students are within the 'at risk' categories in regards to youth transitions.

Of the 31 metropolitan LGAs in Victoria, Hume ranked amongst the highest in terms of the proportion of year 10-12 FTE students in these two 'at risk' SFO categories.

This indicates that Hume had a larger proportion of 'at risk' youth in regards to youth transition, in comparison with many other LGAs in Greater Melbourne.



Fast Facts



Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (DEECD) data indicates: The proportion of children at school entry with emotional or behavioral difficulties in 2012 was almost 28% greater in Hume than Victoria.

That the percentage of children who did not report feeling connected to school in years 5 and 6 in 2013 was 18% greater in Hume than Victoria.

That the percentage of children who did not report feeling connected to school in years 7-9 in 2013 was 6.1% greater in Hume than Victoria.

Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (DEECD) data indicates:

The percentage of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 who did not meet or exceed the benchmarks for literacy in 2011 was 63.3% greater in Hume than Victoria.

That the percentage of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 who did not meet or exceed the benchmarks for numeracy in 2011 was 55.5 % greater in Hume than Victoria.

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14 NEWS

FRANKIE BURN

Parents told to help out

Partnership broker Cemile Yuksoz said there were 11 primary school hubs to offer services for families and children. Rowena...

Involvement could lead to reductions in school absences and dropouts, and better academic marks. The summit was organised by the Hume Whittles...



Local Media Articles

Parents invited through school gate

...these treaty...
...including 16...
...and include families and communities...
...through a Community Hub Model...
...Employment Network executives...
...Bill Tyrrell said participants...
...Some with plenty to discuss about how to...
...communication and support for...
...Local communities...
...highly focused in...
...and Human...
...Victoria

...addressed by Catholic...
...education Mary Tobin, called 'Why Par...
...ents Matter'. Earlier this year IP...
...Garrett, federal Minister for School Edu...
...cation, launched a report titled 'Parental...
...engagement in learning and school...
...Levons from 'Towards'. Senator...
...McL was said: "Parents, schools and...
...community working together produce...
...results. It's apparent your community is...
...taking action to make this a reality."



Making the connection: participants...
NEWS 3-19



Parents

...atalie Savino...
...PARENTS are being encour...
...play a bigger role...

Better Futures Local Solutions, Local Solution Fund
Strengthening our Hume Community through better connections to education and employment.

Hume Middle Years Conference.
The Hume Middle Years Conference held on 27 and 28 March was a resounding success with over 200 representatives from local schools across the education sectors, parents, the three levels of government, community organisations, business and academia in attendance. The effective organisation of this major local conference, funded by the Australian Government under the Communities for Children program, was largely due to the commitment of the representative Middle Years Working Group led by the Hume Whittlesea LLEN.

Feedback from participants across the two days was very positive, with comments of "this is the best conference I have been to" not uncommon. The conference aimed promote, celebrate and reflect on local achievements in supporting parents and young people during their transition from primary to secondary school, advocate for systemic improvements and identify new opportunities for the future direction in the Middle Years.

Many conference delegates commented on how positive it was to see Hume leading the way on Parent Engagement in schools it will be a very exciting time for Hume in the future as we benefit from all that was shared and learnt during the conference.

The conference was jam packed with impressive speakers including Victoria's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Mr Bernie Geary and smaller break out groups showcasing different ways that schools with their parent community and students. Several of the featured successful projects in our local schools are funded under the Better Futures Local Solutions and Communities for Children programs, reinforcing the worthy and productive investment in Hume City. Congratulations to the engaging presentations from LSF initiatives, 'Imagining' and Salvation Army Crossroads Indigenous Youth and Families initiative which showcased their impressive DVDs as part of sharing their experience and outcomes.

The Middle Years Working Group is preparing a post conference report including a slide show with key messages about the importance of early intervention and parental engagement to improve school retention, education attainment and future workforce participation. A key recommendation is for Hume Council to develop a Middle Years Plan to complement the Early Years and Youth Servicing Frameworks. The experience of the Cities of Yarra, Port Phillip and Whittlesea in adopting a Middle Years Plan informed this recommendation.

The outcomes of the Conference will complement the consultations and preparation of the Hume Middle Years Best Practice document currently underway.



All conference presentations will be available on the website click on the link.

NORTHERN WEEKLY
INCORPORATING HUME & WHITTLESEA
Tuesday April 01, 2014
Working together' vital for Hume tweekies

by Lexi Cottee
08:08:PM 29/03/2014



Middle Years Conference
Hume leading the way in parent engagement at schools

The importance of engaging parents with their children's school was one of the key messages to emerge from the 2014 Hume Middle Years Conference organised by the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network (HWLLEN). Many of the local schools in Hume are promoting programs to engage parents. Previously, these programs may have stretched as far as asking parents to help fundraise or assist in the canteen. Today, schools are actively working in partnership with parents to help improve learning outcomes and attendance levels. "Schools underestimate the value of a parent's role in their child's education."

Similarly, parents can also underestimate their own role. However, when schools and parents work together, it becomes apparent that children are capable of achieving great things," said Nicky Leitch, HWLLEN's Partnership Broker. According to Nicky, the idea behind this initiative is to bring together the core influential people (the family) in a young person's life and then involve them all in the various aspects of their learning. "Schools are managing to engage parents by asking for their experience and ideas. Even if parents can't be there, technology now allows the relatives to see their child's progress and check up on other important matters, such as their attendance," she said.

One of the next steps in the Hume Middle Years Project is the production of a Hume Model of Practice document.



Schools are working in partnership with parents to help improve students learning outcomes.

FOR MORE INFO
visit hume.com.au

Council of Catholic School Parents executive director D...
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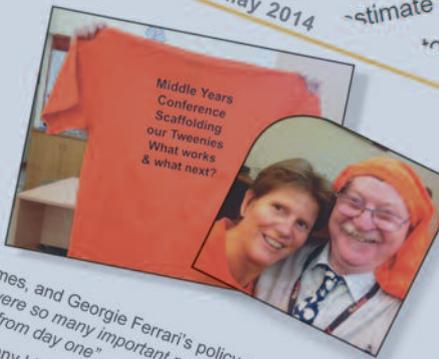
...ea Local Learning and Employment Network and th...
Group's inaugural "Connecting Our Tweenies – Middle Yea...
with experts spoke about the importance of these "

MIDDLE YEARS PARTNERSHIP
HUME MIDDLE YEARS CONFERENCE 2014
Scaffolding our Tweenies: What works and What next?

Nicky Leitch, HWLLEN

With more than 200 people attending the Hume Middle Years Conference over the 2 days, the Hume Middle Years Working Group feel the event was a resounding success. Feedback from participants across the 2 days was very positive, with comments of "this is the best conference I have been to" not uncommon. The conference aimed to promote, celebrate and reflect on local achievements in supporting parents and young people during their transition from primary to secondary school, advocate for systemic improvements and identify new opportunities for the future direction in the Middle Years spaces, it turned out to be more than that.

One of many highlights was a comment made by a person from a school in Gippsland taking away the importance of engaging with their parent community, "there were so many important messages coming through from day one".
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IMAGINE EXPLORE DISCOVER VOLUME 31
A smart approach

ENGAGING NEW LEARNING

Natalie Savino
ENGAGING parents could be the key to children's learning. That was the message by the Hume Middle Years Working Group at a conference last week,...



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Funded by the Australian Government

This report has been prepared and written by Hamden Services on behalf of Lentara Uniting Care and the Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. (HWLLEN)