



**Community  
hubs**  
Connect. Share. Learn.



# 2023 IN REVIEW

National Community Hubs Program

Connect. Share. Learn.

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Cover Photo: A mother and child enjoying playgroup at Darling Heights State School, Toowoomba, Queensland.

# FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Reflecting on 2023, if there is one theme that continues to emerge every year, it's that every community in Australia needs a community hub.



Hubs are wonderful places for people to connect with each other, build community and create a real sense of belonging. Across Australia, hubs support diverse communities – from urban and regional areas with long-established migrant communities to areas where new migrant populations are growing.

Hubs deliver programs that people need and are adapted as circumstances and local community needs change over time.

It's this flexible approach that has ensured hubs remain relevant, delivering positive outcomes for participants looking to improve their proficiency in English, learn a new skill, become job ready or simply make a human connection.

In some local areas – including Cumberland and Parramatta in New South Wales, Logan in Queensland, and Brimbank, Dandenong and Hume in Victoria – that support has now been in place for more than a decade. New hubs also opened in Canterbury Bankstown and Coffs Harbour (New South Wales), Brisbane and Toowoomba (Queensland), Playford (South Australia), and Shepparton (Victoria). Regardless of whether hubs have been running for 10 years or 10 months, they all create a sense of belonging and community.

[Watch Peter's video](#)

Of course, so much of what makes a great hub are great hub leaders. They create a welcoming space where people can connect with other families, their school communities, and essential local services. At our national conference it was so exciting to witness the enthusiasm, expertise and growth of our hub leaders and I thank them for their passion and commitment to ensuring every hub participant is welcomed, celebrated, and supported to make the connections they need to build a much-needed sense of community.

This is what makes the work of community hubs so special.

**In a time of uncertainty and conflict around the world, hubs continue to *bring people from different countries and cultures together to connect, share, and learn.***

By offering a safe space for families to learn and connect with one another, hubs are creating social cohesion from the ground up and that's helping to build stronger communities.

**Peter Scanlon AO**

Chairman, Community Hubs Australia

# FROM OUR CEO

The most important word to sum up community hubs is connection. By creating a sense of belonging, hubs give children and families a safe place to connect with each other essential school services, and their schools.



It's at the local level where connections begin. Building community reduces isolation and creates bonds of friendship, empathy and understanding. This is the fabric that nurtures a positive, functioning society and helps form a more socially cohesive Australia.

Community hubs have been around since 2011 yet there's been little change in the way hubs work and support their local communities. While we've grown the number of hubs across the network, and hubs have grown the number of families they support, hubs continue to function as they've always done, flexing and responding to changing needs and priorities.

Hubs are **reliable, cost effective, and accepted** by their communities because they work.

The hubs model is clear, tight and evidence-based. Each hub, with guidance from school leadership, the hub leader and their regional support agency, provides tailored programs and support to suit local needs.

[Watch Sonja's video](#)

To learn more about the people who come to community hubs, we conducted a national census, our first since 2019. What we found was a remarkable consistency in responses, regardless of location or the cultural diversity of participants. People come to hubs to connect with each other, their school or services, to learn or practise their English, or simply to be part of their community, with 92% of respondents reflecting they feel accepted at their local hub.

To determine the social impact of community hubs, Deloitte Access Economics undertook a comprehensive social return on investment (SROI) evaluation, concluding the program generated approximately \$65.7 million in social benefits to Australian society in 2023. This represents an SROI of 3.5, or a return of \$3.50 for every \$1 invested, and is further evidence that the benefits delivered by community hubs go well beyond those that participate in our programs.

This is further reinforcement that hubs are an **incredibly effective way of working** wherever they're placed, delivering outcomes on the ground, and helping build social cohesion.

Photo: Dr Sonja Hood and the CHA team.



Across Australia, there also continues to be high levels of interest in our model. In 2023, we welcomed eight new hubs across New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia with plans for a further eight new schools to join the network in 2024.

Across our network of 100 hubs, significant milestones were reached which are a testament to the flexibility and longevity of our model. In Western Sydney (New South Wales), Logan (Queensland) and Brimbank and Dandenong (Victoria), we celebrated 10 years of working with local schools to meet the needs of their communities. While these hubs are now bigger and more diverse than they were in 2013, they are fundamentally operating in the same way they always have - with care and compassion, offering support and opportunity to those who need it most.

It was also pleasing to see many hubs transition from providing emergency aid referrals for families in previous years to focusing on referring children into preschool, ensuring they start school well. For adults, there's been a focus on referrals to education and training providers, connecting hub participants to vocational pathways.

In June, we hosted our fifth national conference in Melbourne with 152 hub leaders, school leadership and the agencies who support and guide our hubs. This was a wonderful professional development opportunity for the hubs network to connect, share, and learn. My sincere thanks to everyone who attended the conference but also to the volunteers, funders and the Community Hubs Australia (CHA) team who've played their part in keeping our community hubs network thriving over the past year.

Finally, I wish to add my very best wishes to Maureen Leahy, our first hub leader, who retired this year after serving the Hume community in Victoria for 48 years. Maureen embodies what hubs are all about so on behalf of the hubs network and our team, I sincerely thank Maureen for her service, dedication and care.

**Dr Sonja Hood**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Community Hubs Australia

# OUR COMMUNITY HUBS NETWORK

“The community hub provides a *wonderful conduit between home and school* for some of our most vulnerable families and students.”

Tom Frankling, Principal, Aitkenvale State School, Townsville, Queensland.



Photo: Families enjoying playgroup together at St Brendan's Catholic Primary School Moorooka, Brisbane, Queensland.

## OUR COMMUNITY HUBS NETWORK



**100 community hubs**  
including eight new hubs who  
joined the network in 2023



**98 hub leaders**  
supported by 11 locally-based  
support agencies.



**4 states**



**24 local government  
areas (LGAs)**  
17 metro; 7 regional

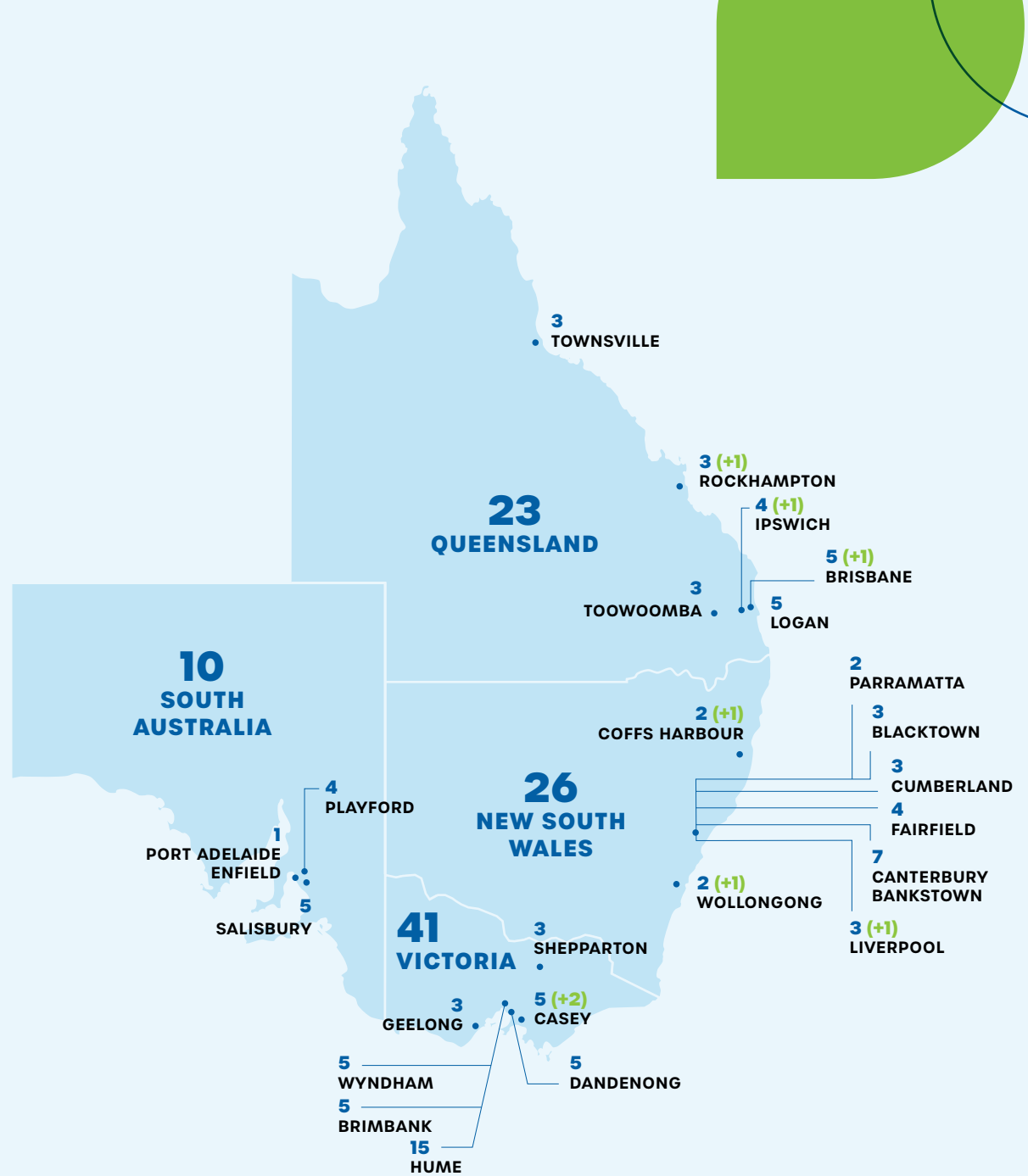
# WHERE TO FIND COMMUNITY HUBS

**100** active community hubs in 2023

**+8** new hubs opening in 2024



Find a community hub in your local region - [communityhubs.org.au/hubs](https://communityhubs.org.au/hubs)



# OUR SUPPORT AGENCIES AND HUB PARTNERS IN 2023

“Community QLD is very pleased to partner with CHA to invest in community hubs that provide human and physical resources to *authentically engage with families, build on their strengths and provide timely holistic family support* so their children can thrive in the school environment.”

Karen Dare, CEO, Community Qld.

“Good360 Australia loves supporting community hubs as they have *direct contact with and understanding of the needs* of their local community.”

Kate Stock, Partnerships Manager SA,  
Good360 Australia, South Australia.

“The Endeavour Hills Men’s Shed have found working with the Dandenong Primary School (DPS) and the Community Hub *very rewarding*. We look forward to working with you in the future and I always wear my DPS scarf in winter.”

Paul Morris, Treasurer, Men’s Shed Greater Dandenong and Endeavour Hills, Victoria.



Photo: (L-R) Kate Stock, Partnerships Manager Good360 SA with hub leader Kerryn Chambers at St Mary Magdalene’s School, Playford, South Australia.

# OUR SUPPORT AGENCIES IN 2023

Community Hubs Australia would like to acknowledge the support and contribution of both Illawarra Multicultural Services and The Smith Family, Victoria who leave the network in 2023.

We are excited to welcome STARTTS NSW who, from 2024, will support our three community hubs in Wollongong, and AMES Australia will support 23 community hubs in Victoria.

Find a list of our **local support agencies** - [communityhubs.org.au/contact-us](https://communityhubs.org.au/contact-us)

## New South Wales

- Illawarra Multicultural Services
- Liverpool City Council
- SSI

## Queensland

- Communitify Qld
- Multicultural Australia
- SSI
- The Smith Family

## South Australia

- Lutheran Care

## Victoria

- Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project
- Hume City Council
- The Smith Family

# HUB PARTNERS

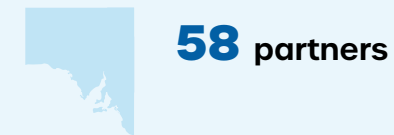
## New South Wales



## Queensland



## South Australia



## Victoria



Find a list of our **hub partners** - [communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Community-hub-partners-in-2023.pdf](https://communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Community-hub-partners-in-2023.pdf)

# CREATING SOCIAL COHESION

Community hubs build social cohesion in Australia. They are welcoming places where families from diverse backgrounds, particularly mothers with preschool children, come to connect, share and learn.



Photo: State Member for Dandenong Gabrielle Williams (right), joined families for morning tea at St Anthony's Catholic Primary School in Dandenong, Victoria.

The goal of a community hub is to improve the social and economic outcomes of local families and individuals, particularly those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Hubs are based on a proven place-based and people-centred model that builds connections and provides a safe environment, especially for women and children, that's uniquely tailored to the needs of local communities. By embedding hubs in local primary schools, we help bridge the gap between families and the wider community, connecting families with each other, their schools, local services and support, and provide a gateway to health, wellbeing and education services.

**“Families have *grown in confidence and advocacy* and can now ask for what they need.”**

Alan Smith, Principal,  
Holy Child Primary School, Hume, Victoria.

## HUBS FOCUS ON FOUR KEY AREAS:

### ENGAGEMENT

Helping families engage with their school and wider community and connect to local services.

### ENGLISH

Providing opportunities to learn and practise English through both formal and informal programs. Childminding is available onsite to enable parents with pre-school aged children to focus on learning a new language.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

Running playgroups and connecting families to early years activities, to support the learning and development of preschool children, improve children's social skills, build relationships between families, and prepare children for school.

### VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS

Building pathways to employment by encouraging volunteering and providing adults with access to informal and formal training opportunities.

## AND FOUR KEY OUTCOMES:



**For children:** hubs increase school readiness through playgroups and early years programs, and by engaging parents in the school.



**For families:** hubs are a point of connection and a soft entry point to learning English or upskilling through informal and formal training activities. This in turn builds confidence in participating more broadly in the community, including parenting and volunteering and builds a participant's confidence to pursue further studies or employment.



**For schools:** hubs play an important role in building school capacity to respond to the needs of culturally diverse families.



**For communities:** hubs help connect parents and children to the services they need, including women and community-centred health and wellbeing services, vocational training providers, paediatric outreach clinics and playgroup facilitators.

# WHY COMMUNITY HUBS WORK

Community hubs are a gateway for connecting people and services. Across the network, hubs partner with organisations to deliver programs in four key areas of engagement, early childhood, English and vocational pathways and measure outcomes for children, families, schools, and communities.



Photo: Our team of support co-ordinators who provide hubs with guidance and support at a local level. They are joined by our Head of Program, Hiranthi Perera (front).

Each hub is managed by the school in which it is based, with operational and program decisions made at the local level. This flexibility enables each hub leader to develop the space and program offering which best addresses the needs of their school and the local community. A variety of activities are offered ranging from playgroups and social 'coffee and chat' sessions to conversational English and vocational skills. Spending time in a community hub lifts people's confidence and empowers them to realise their goals and aspirations - whether that's finding work, making new friends or learning a new skill.

Hubs are clustered within local government areas (LGAs) and where a local support agency provides coordination and connection. Funded by Community Hubs Australia, support agencies play an important role in ensuring hubs meet the needs of their local communities. By sharing local knowledge about services and partnership opportunities, support agencies help shape the

impact of community hubs across Australia. In each region, support coordinators encourage connection, bringing together local schools to share knowledge and learn from each other. In turn, this strengthens our networks impact, ensuring good practice is shared across Australia.

**“Today, I was privileged to see first-hand the community hub based at Para Vista Primary School. The school community hub is *helping to engage families* - especially women and preschool children from non-English speaking backgrounds - *connecting them with each other, their schools, local services and their communities.*”**

Michael Brown MP, Member for Salisbury, South Australia.



Photo: Learning and singing songs together in community hubs in Logan, Queensland.

# WHO COMES TO COMMUNITY HUBS

Community hubs are critical for connection. This year, the hub network completed a national census, providing a picture of the people coming to hubs, the programs they attend and the impact of the hub on individuals and their host school. Over 3,000 responses were received providing a snapshot of who comes to hubs and why.

In 2023:



**92%** hub participants are women



**77%** aged under 45



**79%** speak a language other than English at home



**88%** have at least one dependent child at home, and 40% have pre-school aged children.

The main reason people come to hubs:



# THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF COMMUNITY HUBS: DELOITTE'S EVALUATION

The National Community Hubs Program has continued to generate **significant social benefits**, not only to culturally diverse families, but to their broader communities leading to a range of positive social outcomes.

Luke Condon, Partner,  
Deloitte Access Economics

To determine the social impact of community hubs, Deloitte Access Economics undertook a comprehensive social return on investment (SROI) evaluation, concluding the program generated approximately \$65.7 million in social benefits to Australian society in 2023. This represents an SROI of 3.5, or a return of \$3.50 for every \$1 invested.

Deloitte's evaluation demonstrates the significant benefits and positive long-term impacts for participants across all four pillars of the program – engagement, early childhood, English, and vocational pathways. Major findings of the evaluation included:

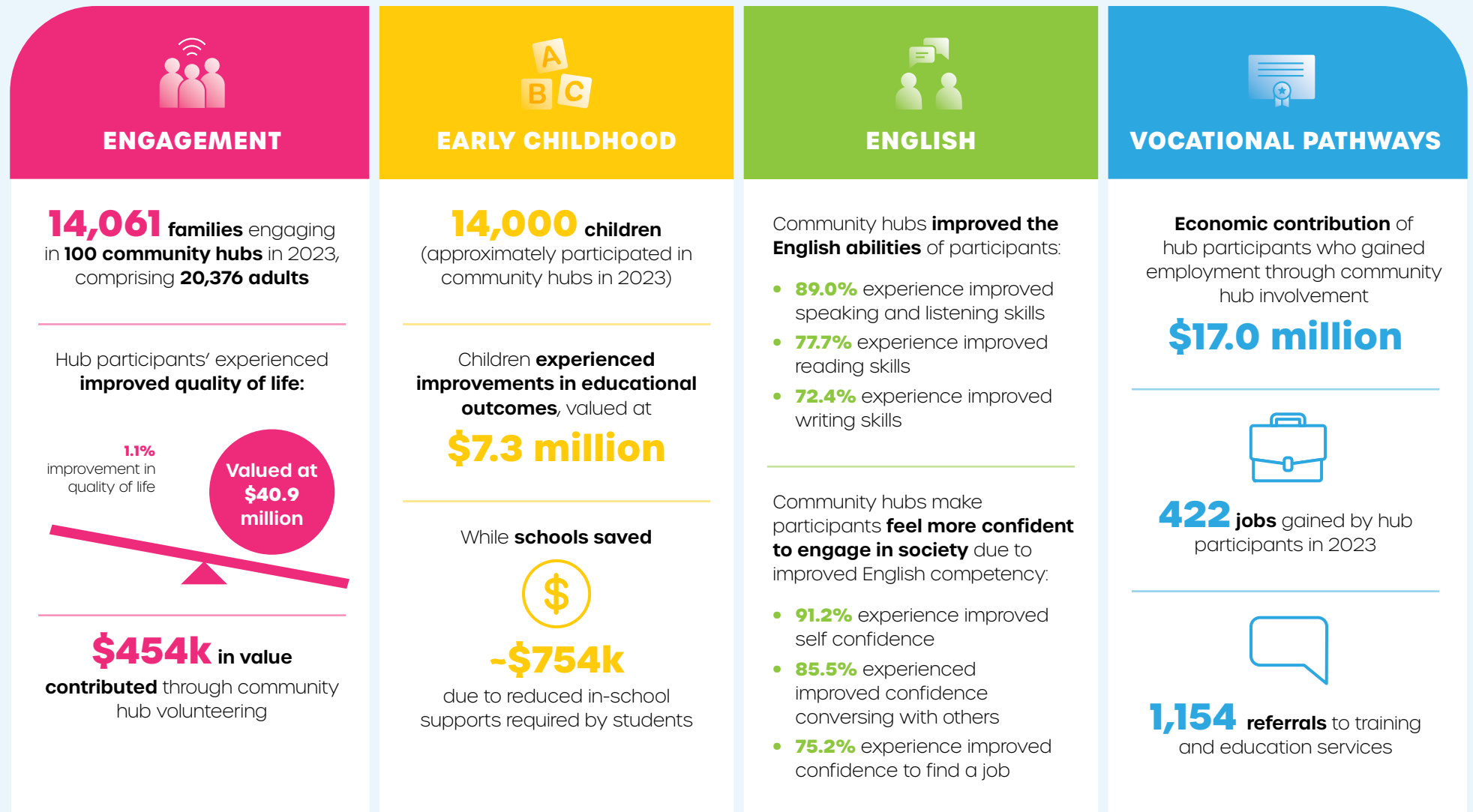
- a 1.1% improvement in participants' quality of life, valued at \$40.9 million
- improved English skills and confidence of participants to engage in society
- improvements in educational outcomes for children, valued at \$7.3 million, and
- economic contribution of hub participants who gained employment (through community hub involvement) of \$17 million.

The evaluation followed the SROI framework developed by Deloitte and CHA in 2021 and was undertaken using quantitative and qualitative evidence to identify the net social benefit of the National Community Hubs Program.

See [page 15](#) for more insights from this evaluation.

# THE SROI OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY HUBS PROGRAM IS 3.5

In 2023, it is estimated that the hubs program produced **social benefits of approximately \$65.7 million**. To read more, visit: [communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Executive-Summary-2023-SROI-National-Community-Hubs-Program.pdf](https://communityhubs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Executive-Summary-2023-SROI-National-Community-Hubs-Program.pdf)



No monetised benefits were calculated for the English domain. This is because English is viewed as an input into the other domains. Therefore, benefits measured in other domains are attributable, in part, to English.

# CELEBRATING OUR NETWORK IN 2023

In June, we welcomed 152 hub leaders, school leadership, support agencies, and special guests to Melbourne for the *Connect. Share. Learn National Conference 2023*. Across three days, attendees had the opportunity to connect and collaborate with one another. Keynote speakers included the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Member for Scullin and Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Daniel Teitelbaum from Playful Thinking, and Lucy Truelson from Melbourne Zoo.

As noted by the Hon Andrew Giles at the event:

“... Hub leaders, school principals, support agency staff – ***all of you, help drive the community hubs program and it is your efforts that make the difference***, the big difference that is at the core of the aspiration of community hubs. This is making a real contribution to great settlement outcomes for so many that call Australia home.”



Photo: The Hon Andrew Giles MP and our Head of Operations, Beca Kotow with the community hubs network in June, 2023.



Photo: (L-R) Ricky Adams, hub leader, Ashley Hams, Deputy Principal at Newtown State School, Jason Calcott, Principal at Darling Heights State School, Mohamed Abdalkareem, support coordinator at Multicultural Australia, and Bec Kotow from Community Hubs Australia.



Photo: Maureen Leahy, retiring hub leader from Meadows Primary School in Hume, Victoria celebrated with an award named in her honour.

The network continues to grow with new hubs opening in:

- **New South Wales** - Chester Hill North Public School, Bankstown and Tyalla Public School, Coffs Harbour
- **Queensland** - St Brendan's Primary School, Moorooka and Darling Heights State School, Harlaxton State School and Newtown State School in Toowoomba

- **South Australia** - Elizabeth Park Schools, Playford
- **Victoria** - Mooroopna Park Primary School, Shepparton.

Nine schools also left the network in 2023, including one school that in 2024, will move from running hubs on two school campuses to one site at Northern Bay College in Geelong, Victoria. Replacement hubs will join the network from 2024.

Maureen Leahy, our very first and longest standing hub leader, retired this year after serving the Hume community in Victoria for 48 years. Maureen was a pioneer of community hubs in Hume and has been acknowledged for her contribution to the local community with Meadows Primary School naming a Community Service Award in her honour.

We extended an invitation to Members of Parliament to visit a hub in their electorate with 15 MPs across four states spending time in their local hubs together with school staff and hub participants.

“Melbourne’s West is *proudly multicultural and home to an extraordinary number of refugees* from all parts of the globe. Community hubs, like this one at Deer Park North Primary School, provide a safe and family-friendly environment for migrant families and individuals to build connections and engage in training and access services. It’s about community and belonging.”

Brendan O’Connor MP, Federal Member for Gorton and Federal Minister for Skills and Training.



Photo: Minister for Communities and Arts, Leanne Enoch MP visiting Principal Michael Lobb and his team at Acacia Ridge State School in Brisbane, Queensland.



Photo: State Member for Tarneit, Dylan Wight (centre) spending time at Davis Creek Primary School in Wyndham, Victoria.



Photo: State Member for Capricornia Michelle Landry (left) visits Lakes Creek State School in Rockhampton, Queensland.



Photo: State Member for Granville Julia Finn (centre), visits Granville Public School in Cumberland, New South Wales.

# CELEBRATING ONE OF OUR NEWEST HUBS

At the launch of three community hubs in Toowoomba, Queensland, Anna, shared her story of how her local community hub transformed her life.

Anna migrated to Australia in 2010, however, after her husband was diagnosed with dementia, she made the difficult decision to place him in full-time care, becoming a single parent overnight to two children. Thankfully, Anna met Ricky, hub leader at Darling Heights State School, who encouraged her to participate in school activities. Anna is a regular participant in many hub activities and is now employed by the school as a teacher's aide.

Anna spoke about what the hub meant to her, writing a poem to share with "the whole of Australia".



Watch and listen to Anna's poem

One fine day, one lovely Ricky, walking in the school  
She saw one lonely me, sitting and looks uncool  
She greeted me hello, her eyes with a glow  
A kind-hearted person, in front of me I saw  
I shared my troubled life, for her to know  
She listened with sincerity, to me it shows.

She acted right away, to assist me with my needs  
Her kindness overflows, and a friendship start to grows  
She is busy as a bee, in her work indeed  
But manage to see, my latest at full speed

With her never-ending support  
She helps improve, my life in short  
From hardship to survivorship  
From friendship to fellowship  
From scholarship to apprenticeship  
From assistantship to wageslip.

To show my deepest gratitude to Ricky  
and the community hub we know  
I am happy to recite, this poem I made  
To share my thoughts, and not be afraid  
The community hub is a right place to go

With kind-hearted people always on the know  
With one genuine goal  
To help and support,  
People of all sorts  
People they helped, like me, is here to stay  
To share our time, and extend our support  
For our hub to succeed, and to attain its goal.  
Thank you and God bless you all.

# CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF COMMUNITY HUBS IN BRIMBANK AND DANDENONG

For a decade, culturally diverse families, particularly mums with young children, have been supported by community hubs in the Brimbank and Greater Dandenong regions of Victoria.

At the Greater Dandenong hub celebrations, attendees were treated to a dazzling parade of traditional Afghan fashion while in Brimbank, hub participants, together with longstanding school leaders and local organisations, engaged in Bollywood dance to honour the celebration. Community hubs in Logan, Queensland and a selection of hubs in Western Sydney, New South Wales also reached this milestone, which was a significant achievement for the schools and everyone involved in the continued success of the community hubs program.

*“... Thank you for sharing your stories of resilience, hardship, family and home. Thank you for sharing food, friendship, laughter, tears and turmoil and tremendous pride in your children’s achievements and aspirations for their future.”*

Debbie Cottier, Principal of Springvale Rise Primary School, Dandenong, Victoria.

Photo: Brimbank hub celebrations.



Photo: Dandenong hub celebrations.

# REMEMBERING TO COUNT THE LITTLE THINGS

For Bonnie Creek, hub leader from St Brigid's School in South Australia, it's the 'little things', often mentioned in a passing conversation with participants that can have the greatest impact.

Throughout the year, individual participants shared reflections with Bonnie how they:

- were scared to use the oven until a program facilitator demonstrated how to use it during an OzHarvest Nutrition Education Skills Training cooking program
- joined playgroup a few months after arriving in Australia, making friends and now catching up with them throughout the week
- realised their child was using the wrong shoulder straps in the car seat after participating in a 'Kids in Cars' workshop, run by the Royal Automobile Association (RAA)
- were so happy and empowered after gaining part-time employment, especially as the interview was conducted entirely in English, highlighting the benefit of spending time in the hub run English class
- learned about sunscreen and being sun smart for the first time, thanks to free sunscreen being distributed to participants through Good360 Australia, a charity connecting schools and community groups with surplus new products.



Photo: Playgroup at St Brigid's School, Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia.



Photo: OzHarvest Nutrition Education Skills Training Program.



Photo: Women attending English and cooking at a community hub.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Across the community hub network, hub leaders, coordinators and partners were recognised and celebrated for their work with local communities.

“Programs at the hub *celebrate individuality and diversity within our community*, supporting children and families to access essentials and build community cohesion. Being part of a hub gives families a sense of belonging, nurturing friendships and creating welcoming support networks.”

Dr Hugh McDermott, Member for Prospect.

At the 2023 Victorian Education Excellence Awards, Mooroopna Park Primary School received an award for their Outstanding Education Support team. The school’s wellbeing team, which includes the community hub leader, works with the wider community to improve outcomes for students and their families. The community hub provided a safe place for families to collect community donations of food, toys, bedding and clothes in response to a major flooding event in the Victorian region of Shepparton.

Bert Oldfield Public School in Blacktown, New South Wales, was recognised by Dr Hugh McDermott, Member for Prospect, in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, for their holistic support of students, parents and the wider Western Sydney community. Dr McDermott noted the hub gave families ‘a sense of belonging, nurturing friendships and creating welcoming support networks’.

At Mission Australia’s Child Friendly Excellence Awards, the four community hubs in Ipswich, Queensland, received a ‘highly commended’ award in the Inclusion and Diversity category. The team of four schools, together with their hub leaders, were thanked for “their contribution towards building a more child friendly community in the Inala to Ipswich region”.

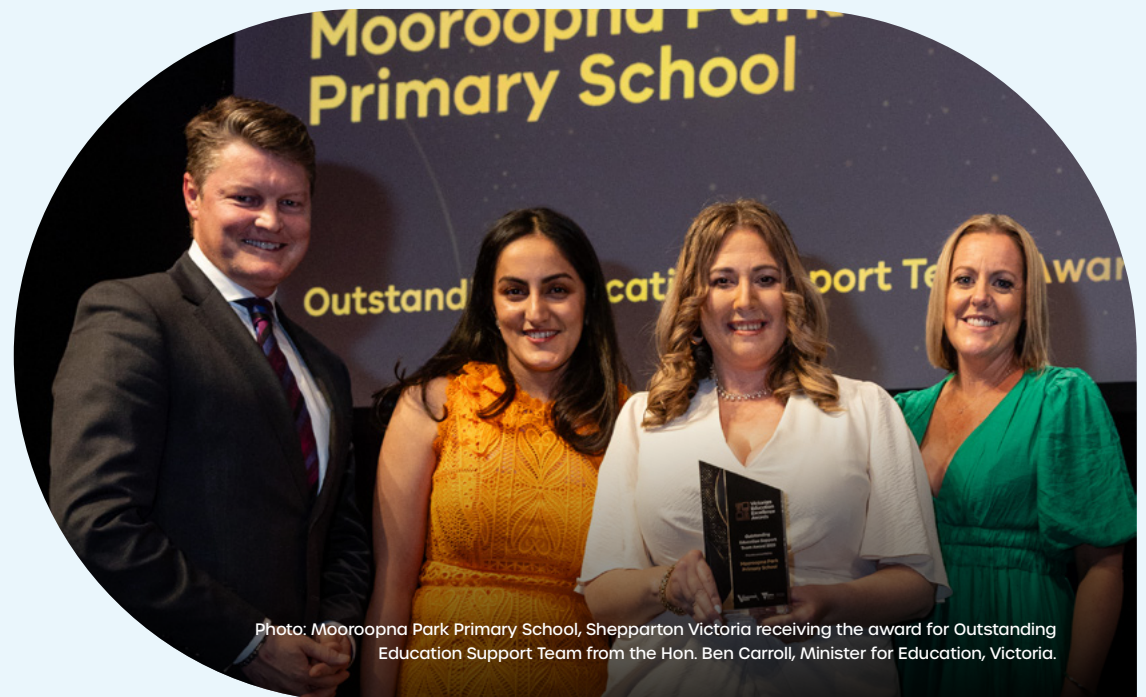


Photo: Mooroopna Park Primary School, Shepparton Victoria receiving the award for Outstanding Education Support Team from the Hon. Ben Carroll, Minister for Education, Victoria.

# PROGRAM AREA HIGHLIGHTS

## ENGAGEMENT

**GOAL:** help families connect and engage with their community.



**14,061**

**families**  
engaged with hubs

**8,952** referrals

made to external support services such as family support, education and training, preschool, community health services, and emergency aid

**489**

**partnerships**  
with local organisations

**83%\***

**of respondents**  
agreed they felt better connected to others

**46%\***

**of respondents**  
were connected to services via the hub

**100%\***

**of volunteers**  
agreed they felt better connected to other people

**100%\***

**of volunteers**  
agreed volunteering had contributed to their sense of purpose

Although hubs are not service providers, they connect people to existing services in the local community. With the support and contributions of 489 organisations across the country – who facilitate programs, offer counselling and clinical support, and donate funding or resources – hubs are places of connection and support. Without these local partnerships, hubs would not exist.

Engagement and connection are at the heart of every community hub. Our hubs seek to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse families, particularly women with young children, and connect them with each other, their host schools, local support services and the wider community.

\* Findings of the Community Neighbourhood Development survey conducted twice yearly by the South Australian government and completed by the 10 funded community hubs. An average is taken from both surveys for participant figures with volunteer figures collected only once during the year.

## Honouring First Nations people in North Queensland

Kelso State School in North Queensland has a beautiful and culturally significant connection to the land and the local First Nations people. The building was painted by women from the hub, adding a personal touch and sense of community involvement.

The painting depicts the Ross River, turtles and fish, symbolising the connection between the people and the natural environment. The two meeting places represent spaces where people gather to share knowledge and experiences – the school and community hub – fostering a sense of unity and collaboration.

“The artwork reflects a deep connection to the land, community and cultural traditions. It’s *wonderful to display such a meaningful representation* that celebrates and honours our First Nations People and their contributions to the school and community on the front of our very own Community Hub.”

Jean Barnett, Hub Leader, Kelso State School, Townsville, Queensland.



# EARLY CHILDHOOD

**GOAL:** run playgroups and connect families to local early childhood activities, support the learning and development of preschool children, improve social skills, build relationships between families and prepare children for school.

**99 hubs delivered**  
7,026 early childhood sessions

**1,997 referrals** made to early childhood services including maternal child health and preschool services

**64 hubs** ran targeted school-readiness programs ensuring children and families start school well

**151 partner organisations** worked with hubs to deliver early childhood activities and programs

Embedding community hubs in primary schools supports school readiness and connects families to their local school communities. When children start school ready to learn, the impact is positive for the children, their families, the school and local community. The census told us that, of those families with preschool aged children, 85% are bringing them to the hub and half of these don't take their children anywhere else.

For the first time this year, community hubs in Ipswich and Logan (Queensland) were asked to complete an Early Childhood survey. This survey, designed in collaboration with the Queensland Department of Education, has been a way of learning more from parents or carers of a child (or children) aged 0 - 5 years attending early years programs in the hub.

Responses from respondents with at least one child aged 5 or under were overwhelmingly positive:

- **99% were happy** with hub activities.
- **96%** agreed they **felt more involved** in their child's care and education.
- **96%** agreed they **were supported** by the hub as a parent.
- **100% agreed their child benefited** from hub activities.



Photo: Mother and children enjoying playgroup at Wyndam Park Primary School, Wyndam, Victoria.





Hubs provide engaging early childhood programs for preschool children and connect families into local services. Hubs also run playgroup – a cornerstone hub program that provides instant connection for children and parents.

### Improving family life

Program provider Anglicare SA has been an ongoing presence during hub playgroup sessions at Elizabeth Vale Primary School in Playford, South Australia. The program provides opportunities for families to access early intervention and support services to help strengthen family life and improve the safety and wellbeing of children. They work with families in their homes, or wherever they are most comfortable, enabling parents to build on their parenting skills and knowledge of childhood development, resolve conflict within the home and provide educational support.

“The sessions are presented in a *relaxed, friendly style* that includes video clips, activities, discussion and a shared lunch. The ‘Being a Dad’ workshop looks at the special role dads and male caregivers play to support their child’s wellbeing and development. A strong connection and good communication help build a relationship of trust, creating a foundation for positive learning.”

Nina Swinkels, hub leader, Elizabeth Vale Primary School, Playford, South Australia.

## Bringing health services to the community

At Wyndam Park Primary School hub in Wyndham, Victoria, a School Paediatric Outreach Clinic, delivered in partnership with Mercy Health, is providing a much-needed service to the school community and delivering better health and educational outcomes for students. The clinic has introduced many new families to the hub and connected them with additional hub activities including English, craft and access to the food pantry. By bringing health services like these to the hub, children are less likely to miss school and families are supported in a familiar environment. This ease of access means children requiring further review and follow-up are more likely to attend appointments.

“This program is *excellent*. When children are sick, it is difficult to explain the situation due to the language barrier, making it hard to follow up with a specialist. We also need to figure out how to seek specialist doctors. “

Ni, hub participant, Wyndham Park Primary School, Wyndham, Victoria.



# ENGLISH

**GOAL:** provide hub participants with opportunities to learn and practise English through informal and formal programs.



Photo: Rahimeh, hub participant in an English class.



**92 hubs** offered English classes

**77 hubs** funded through CHA to provide childminding alongside their English class

**5,691 English classes** attended

**1,540+ participants** attended English classes and activities, an increase of 32% on 2022\*

**59 hubs** referred participants to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

**100 partner organisations** delivered English programs

Developing English language competency is an important area of focus within our community hubs. Time and again, we see the confidence, feeling of empowerment and social connectedness of participants completely transform once language barriers are overcome.

English language skills also enable women to better support their child's education, engage in social activities, gain new qualifications and skills and access opportunities for volunteering and employment.

With many women unable to access formal English language classes, due to the competing demands of life in a new country such as raising a family and work commitments, hubs offer a safe place to learn and practise English. Through less formal conversational programs, women build

confidence and competency. Hubs also provide a pathway to more formal learning opportunities, such as the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which some hubs offer onsite.

***"I dream a lot to learn English, to do things without an interpreter and to get a job. I want to open a sewing business in the future. I want to have a small store to make, mend clothes and sell clothes. I'm really happy to find the Community Hub and come to English classes here."***

Rahimeh, hub participant, Northern Bay College, Geelong, Victoria.

\* "Based on regular attendees in CHA-funded English classes in Term 1 and 2, and new attendees in Term 3 and 4, 2023"

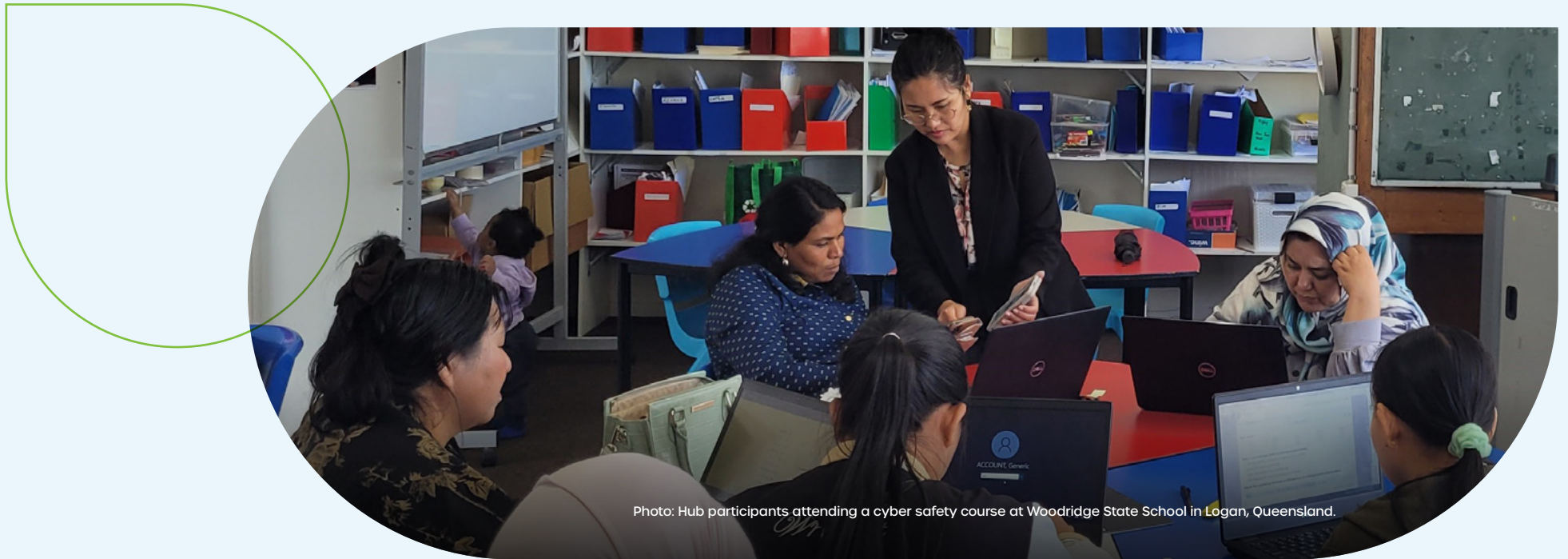


Photo: Hub participants attending a cyber safety course at Woodridge State School in Logan, Queensland.

## Keeping kids and families safe online

At Woodridge State School in Logan, Queensland, a cyber safety course co-designed by TAFE Queensland and hub leaders (with the support of the Department of Home Affairs' AMEP Innovative Funding), has been teaching parents how to monitor their child's online activities and be vigilant for online scams. One of the advantages has been the 'take home' aspect of the course with parents encouraged to introduce family rules related to technology.

The gentle and supportive nature of the program's delivery in the hub created a learning environment for parents to talk openly and ask questions. Parents were shown a variety of strategies, such as how to access location settings on their mobile phones, turn on 'safe' searching in their browsers and how to block callers. Generally, these activities were unfamiliar and the course upskilled parents with the information they needed.

"The majority of the parents [in the course] have emerging skills in English. We have seen *real growth in parents' understanding the risks of the digital world* and beginning to learn strategies to monitor and manage their children's online activities."

Facilitator, TAFE Queensland.

# VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS

**GOAL:** build pathways to employment by encouraging volunteering and providing adults with access to formal and informal training opportunities.



**422 jobs** secured by hub participants as a direct result of their participation in a community hub

**134 partner organisations** worked with hubs to deliver work-ready skills

**1,799 people** volunteered in a community hub

**1,154 referrals** made to education and training services

**2,663 formal and informal training sessions** were delivered

Participants across the community hubs network tell us they want to improve their job readiness and find pathways to employment. Hubs help them to do this by:

- providing English language tuition and practise
- helping with resumes, job applications and preparing for interviews
- providing connections to vocational training and volunteering opportunities
- creating connections to organisations that can help with skills and job readiness and,
- linking participants to job opportunities in the local community.

With many people seeking work, 50 hubs hosted practical accredited and pre-accredited programs to support pathways to employment. Hubs provided training in a variety of life skills such as preparing for citizenship tests, completing beauty certification and participating in TAFE accredited courses.

Hubs provide people with pathways to learn new skills and find work.

The national hub census revealed:

- 37% of those who come to a hub would like to work more.
- Of those who found a job through the hub in the past 12 months:
  - 66% found casual or part-time work
  - 11% found a full-time job



Photo: Hub participants on excursion from Bankstown Public School, Canterbury Bankstown, New South Wales.



Photo: Maria and her daughter at St Brendan's Catholic Primary School Moorooka, Brisbane, Queensland.

## Learning to help others

A teacher's aide course offered through Bankstown Public School in Canterbury Bankstown, New South Wales delivered by Sutherland Community College, is enhancing educational opportunities for hub participants by providing training in working as a School Learning Support Officer (SLSO).

**“In work placement we learned, [got] *practical experience, [and] many tips from experienced SLSOs* which helps us in future work. While doing this course, I got interested in making my career in the Education Department. I want to see myself working as an SLSO in one of the schools.”**

Sumayya, hub participant,  
Bankstown Public School,  
Canterbury Bankstown, New South Wales.

## Making the most of volunteering

Maria attends English at St Brendan's Catholic Primary School Moorooka in Brisbane, Queensland. On learning Maria was a talented Salsa dancer and yoga instructor, her hub leader suggested that as a way of practising her English skills and building her confidence, she should volunteer to teach hub participants to salsa and provide instructions in English. Having built her confidence, Maria also now teaches yoga at Inala State School and has recently gained paid employment in a local factory.

# FUNDING OUR NETWORK AND GOVERNANCE

The National Community Hubs Program is funded thanks to the generosity of the Scanlon Foundation in partnership with the federal government through the Department of Home Affairs, state and local governments and the education and community sectors.

The program operates within a rigorous governance framework:

- **Grassroots community level** – through local leadership groups, decisions are made on how to best respond to the unique circumstances and needs of the local community.
- **High-level strategy and business acumen** – the Community Hubs Australia (CHA) Board of Directors guide the sustainability, direction and evolution of CHA.

Community Hubs Australia is accredited under the Australian Service Excellence Standards, an accreditation that covers all corporate functions and services. This accreditation confirms CHA:

- operates confidently and efficiently
- actively applies sound management principles
- manages risks, and
- meets legislative, industry and government guidelines.





“The whole school model of having a community hub within the school is very effective. There is a *reciprocal relationship of information, participation and collaboration* that occurs from this. This lends nicely to the community being able to support one another and increase each other’s capacity.”

David Jenkins, Principal, Westmead Public School, Cumberland, New South Wales.