

Building Social Capital through Community Engagement and Integrated Service Centres



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

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Children's Programs

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FROM VISION TO ACTION

BSL is committed to the elimination of poverty in Australia.

Working in highly vulnerable communities throughout Australia.

Addressing issues of poverty from many angles throughout the lifespan.

In 2018 there were just over
3 million people (13.2%) living below
the poverty line, including
739,000 children (17.3%).



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**We focus on
overcoming
poverty by
building:**



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Building social capital

✓ establishing trust-based networks

Not just establishing strong connections, but reinforcing the quality of those relationships among families, communities and organisations.



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Working with families in the early years

Poverty during the first years of life has greater impact on all domains of development than it does later in childhood or adolescence.

Children in low income families are already at a considerable developmental disadvantage by the time they reach their 2nd birthdays.



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Prevention and long-term change

To change the life course of children who are most marginalised or disadvantage, we need to work with both parents and children at the same time, in an intentional **multi-generational** approach.

The focus is on improving family functioning, wellbeing and social capital.



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Breaking the cycle

Recent research into intergenerational cycles of disadvantage indicates that improvements in the abilities and situation of one generation have a profound positive affect on the outcomes of the other when they are conducted simultaneously.

Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014



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The intervention is...

- Place based
- Holistic and family-centred
- Multi-generational
- Incorporates a community engagement approach





The Brotherhoods Community Engagement approach 2018



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Community Engagement

- Talk with families and community about their aspirations
- We meet with families 1:1 or in small groups
- We will work with them to build capacities that support their involvement in co-design, decision making, program delivery and leadership



Connie Benn Centre – A Family and Children's Hub in inner city Melbourne



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The community

- Refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Local public housing estates
- Second stage of their settlement journey
- Ongoing impacts of trauma
- Ongoing challenges of settlement in a new country



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The approach in action



- Ease of access to services →
Increased engagement
Children and families receive the services needed
- Expanded community networks →
Improved economic and civic capacity



A closer look – *Growing Learners* program

- Work with parents/carers to build capacity and capabilities in the critical areas of work readiness (leading to employment) and parenting.
- This in turn supports improved developmental outcomes for children, ensuring a strong foundation for learning and life success.



Integrated components

- Learning groups for parents and young children together (PeepLTP)
- Peer support groups
- Tailored workshops/courses focusing on areas such as parenting, facilitating children's learning and family wellbeing
- Work readiness programs/workshops for parents to build their employability and job readiness skills
- Career pathways support including links to study, training and volunteering
- One-to-one support and referrals to relevant support services for individual families and children



Growing Learners

Two key staffing positions:

- Early Years Coordinator
- Economic Pathways Coordinator

Work together with families in providing the various program elements:

- Meet with families to discuss their aspirations, set goals and establish a partnership agreement.
- Provide groups, 1:1 support, facilitate peer support and appropriate referrals

Frameworks

1. Early Intervention
2. Attachment Theory
3. Parent as child's first teacher
4. Social Ecological model of development
5. Community Engagement



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Peep Learning Together Program

An adult learning program, delivered through a playgroup model, that supports parents to:

- improve the Home Learning Environment (HLE) by valuing and extending everyday learning opportunities
- develop secure attachment relationships with their babies and young children
- gain formal recognition of their learning



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I don't feel crazy any more for spending my days talking to a 2 year old. I now know I'm actually doing something good by always talking to my daughter.



I didn't know my 2 year old could do craft activities. I thought she was too young. But since being in Growing Learners we have started doing lots of activities and crafts at home now, 'cause now I know she can do these things.



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Economic Pathways

❖ Workshops

- Getting Ready for Work
- Digital literacy
- English language classes

❖ 1:1 support – career pathways

- Support to undertake study and training
- Support to undertake volunteer work
- Support to gain employment

❖ Financial literacy



Economic Pathways

Over the past 12 months:

Parents working towards employment goals ...24

Parents attending Career Pathways
Workshops ...15

Parents undertaking training courses ... 8

Parents gaining employment ... 4



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The communication for us has been really good about the things that are happening in our local area. It has opened up a bigger environment and bigger community for our family.

Since we started Growing Learners I don't feel alone anymore. I can talk to other mums about my week and know that they are going through the same things as I am. I have people I can share my stories with.



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A participant's journey

Goals to work towards over the past 12 months for herself and her child were:

Parenting/child development...

- Committed to attending GL Play Group to extend her son's language skills, due to speech delays.
- Secure a place in the CBC Early Learning Centre to support his development and social interactions.

Economic Pathways ...

- To attend the Career Pathways Course.
- To apply for and commit to study PSA Certificate III.
- To be successful in obtaining part time employment.

Social connections ...

- To make new friends



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Outcomes – a participant's journey

Today she has achieved all these goals and has become a wonderful role model to her peers.



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Outcomes – a participant's journey

Parenting/child development

- Has continued to be committed to attending GL Play Group along with study and now work commitments.
- Her son has a place in the CBC ELC and his language and social interactions have improved.

Economic Pathways

- She attended the full 9 week Career Pathways Course in term 4 of 2018.
- With the support of the GL coordinator she applied for and was accepted to study PSA Certificate III. She will complete the course by the end of 2019.
- She has been successful in obtaining part time employment in a bilingual facilitator position.

Other referrals made and programs accessed

- Her son attends speech therapy and is registered with NDIS.

Social Connections

- She has made new friends and feels more connected in her community.



Community Engagement

Breakfast Club mothers ... identified their aspiration of having a closer relationship with their children that will enable them to teach their children about their cultural heritage and their children to teach them about growing up in Australia

Be Safe, Stay Safe Fitzroy Project ... A safe community has been identified as a key aspiration for children, youth and parents ... developing community led projects

Voice of the Child Project ... enabling children's right to have a say in decisions that impact them



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Communities have great power to drive the solutions that will give everyone the chance to connect, fulfil their potential, and share the benefits of social and economic growth.

(Communities Taking Power, VCOSS 2016)



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Thank you



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