

Best Start Newsletter

Term 1 2021 | Issue 4



Mildura Best Start Partnership update

Attendance and engagement in the Best Start Partnership meetings this year has shown strong support for continued collaboration. We currently have 13 partner members all working together towards the goal of 'giving every child the best start in life'.

A huge thank you to the Department of Education and Training, Catholic Care, Little People Big Futures, MASP, MDAS, Mildura Rural City Council, Zoe Support, YMCA, The Orange Door, Hands Up Mallee, Mallee Family Care, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) and Sunraysia Community Health Service.

Maternal and Child Health

Sustained work from 2019: Increasing awareness and attendance at the 3.5 year key age and stage visit.

During 2020 the Maternal and Child health service had to adapt to a rapidly-evolving COVID-19 situation. Due to reduced ability to meet clients face-to-face and increased cleaning times advice from the Department of Health was to prioritise appointments with babies and younger children. Work to increase attendance at the 3.5 KAS visits was put on hold.

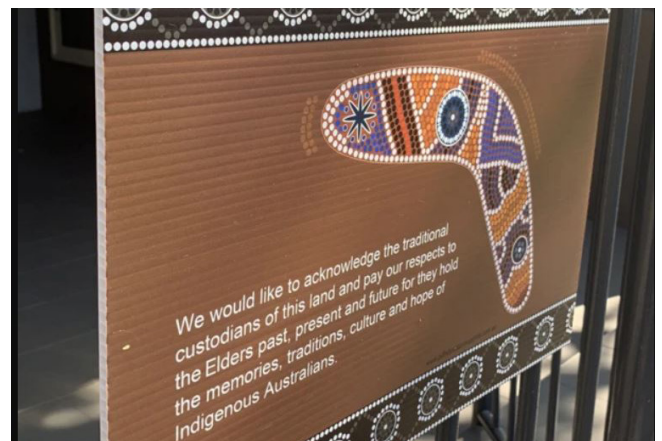
We are now back to our new normal, and you will hopefully see the 3.5 KAS awareness posts

cropping back into your facebook feed over the next nine weeks. Please share these posts to ensure as many children as possible attend their appointments, which are vital to picking up any developmental issues before children start their official schooling through kindergarten and school.

Sustained work from 2020: Make our MCH centres more culturally inclusive

Work has continued on implementing the cultural audit action plan and Acknowledgement of Country signs will be going up at all Mildura Rural City Council-operated MCH venues in the next few weeks.

Working starting soon: Developing a process around fail to attends and exploring ways to reduce these occurrences.



Mildura Rural City Council

Kindergarten

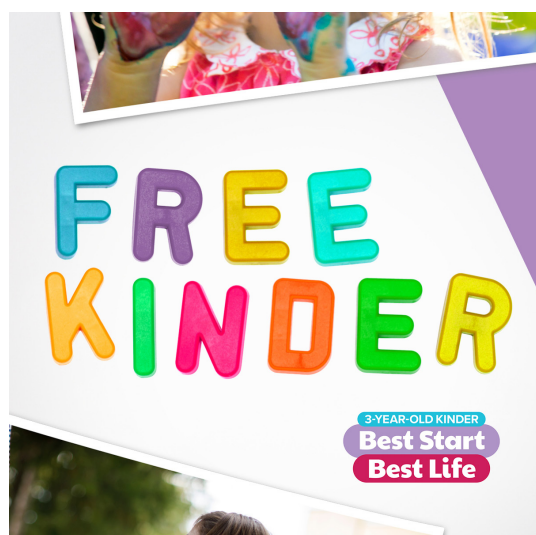
It has been a pivotal year for Early Childhood Education with COVID-19 highlighting just how important our early educators are. Victoria has made kindergarten free for all families in sessional kinders and reduced fees by \$2000 per child for kindergarten programs in Long Day Care centres. This has meant that kindergarten attendance is high this year, with many of our centres full.

The roll-out of funded three-year-old kindergarten is also helping to raise awareness of the benefits of kindergarten. This starts for the Mallee region next year, with centres required to offer a minimum of five hours of funded kindergarten for eligible families. This will increase to 15 hours by 2029.

Worked sustained from 2020: Presentations are continuing to be offered at team meetings to a range of organisations to increase knowledge for services who work directly with families about the benefits of kindergarten, and options available (sessional kinder versus long day care).

If you would like the improvement team working on this PDSA to come and talk to your organisation please email Sam.

Current work: A long-awaited piece of work, the 'Kindergarten Consent Form', has now been implemented. This allows organisations working with families who they feel may not have the capacity to enrol in kindergarten without support to ask the family to sign a consent form. When Kindergarten Central Enrolment opens in May/June, a member of the Kindergarten Central Enrolment team at Mildura Rural City Council will proactively reach out to that family to support them. If you would like more information on this please email Sam.



Supported Playgroup Network and Advisory Group

Supported Playgroups from all services are now back face-to-face after doing a fantastic job adapting to providing services virtually.

Work sustained from 2019: The combined Supported Playgroup Flyer continues to be an important piece of work as shown by the amount of emails I get asking when it is coming out each term! The type of playgroups continue to grow, so families have a wide range of choice that best suits their and child's needs.

There are cooking groups, bush playgroups, multicultural groups, groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, mums groups, parenting program groups and literacy-based groups. We are so lucky to have such a diverse range of programs. Check out the Best Start Facebook page for the Term 2 flyer coming out soon.

Early Years Literacy Advisory Group and Working Groups

In collaboration with the Best Start Partnership, the 2021 Best Start Logic Model addresses the Best Start Literacy outcome: "Children acquire literacy (and numeracy) skills through active participation in their education."

Maaik Johnston's employment in November 2020 as Early Years Literacy Project Officer in the Best Start team is to focus on supporting and encouraging families/caregivers in their role as the child's first teacher.

These broader goals resulted in specific outcomes in the Mildura Best Start Logic Model 2021:

- Increase participation of families and early years services to library and library events by 10%
- Increase lending of early years library resources (MRCC and other lending libraries) by 10%
- Creation of literacy advisory group to share and promote current services and programs.

The Partnership nominated stakeholders to participate in monthly Early Years Literacy Advisory group meetings. This group aims to reflect and build upon existing strategies/initiatives/services and programs and identify priorities, targets and responses. It explores short-term, medium term and long-term goals.

Most working groups established connections with Debra Orsini from Mildura Rural City Council Libraries.

Storytime with Aboriginal people co-facilitating

Nikita Hart from Little People, Big Futures and Debra are collaborating on a project to remove barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to visit the library. Nikita has offered to co-host a Storytime at the library with Debra for the Cuppa and Yarn families of LPBF.

Creation of multilingual children's library

Debra has been receiving some great suggestions of multilingual children's books from Claire Kelly and Deb Dodderidge from Mildura English Language Centre (MELC). In addition, they are working on a project to remove barriers for the MELC families to visit the library and become a member. They are planning an ongoing program in which the families with MELC visit the library twice a semester, once for a tour and sign up visit and once for a multilingual storytime.

Increase lending from Kindergarten lending library

To increase lending, a project with the Red Cliffs Kindergarten and SCHS (Emily Smith, speech pathologist) an information evening for families is planned in which the kindergarten will launch the SRF-funded book gifting program, introduce the children's lending library and promote the family lending library, in addition to providing information about emergent literacy. Maaike will measure with a Survey Monkey survey if families lending at both the MRCC and Kindergarten libraries will increase after this information evening in addition of parents emergent literacy skills in the home.

Information flyer for educators (Early Years literacy resources)

On a grand scale, two surveys have been created to measure current awareness and use of our communities Early Years literacy resources and

knowledge of emergent literacy. One survey is focused on Early Years services, their educators, teachers, facilitators etc. The other is aimed at families.

This surveys have been distributed to many services to be completed and forwarded to their families to complete.

The intent is to provide these services and families with information (possibly in the form of a flyer) about emergent literacy and the resources available, to increase the data measured from the surveys.

Diversity book kits

The Sunraysia Gender Equity group is developing a book project with the library to purchase book kits for services and the library. Watch this space for more information.

Please follow the Mildura Best Start Facebook page for more updates, and to find out when the next Advisory and Partnership meetings are. Visit www.facebook.com/MilduraBestStart

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