



Debney Meadows Community Hub

2023 Annual Progress Report



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Introduction

The Debney Meadows Community Hub (the Hub) is a four-year initiative where Debney Meadows Primary School (DMPS) has collaborated with Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) and multiple other community organisations to establish a community hub at the school.

Embedded in the school, the Hub connects families from diverse cultural backgrounds with the wider community. It connects parents and their young children with each other and their school through a variety of activities, with community organisations providing a range of supports.

The Hub strengthens intercultural capability and celebrates diversity by creating opportunities for people to learn, share and celebrate together. It supports settlement outcomes by providing culturally appropriate case work in a safe, trusted environment – connecting school community members with the help they need, including maternal & child health, housing, NDIS and mental health services.

The Hub has been made possible through the William Buckland Foundation's Enabling Education grant providing four years of financial support to this important initiative. 2023 was year 1 of the project delivery. The following report documents the significant progress made towards all key outcomes.

FREYJA DIXON
DEBNEY MEADOWS COMMUNITY HUB
PROJECT MANAGER

Progress on key outcomes

This section demonstrates the progress made on each key grant outcome during 2023.

1 Established space for place-based, clear, accessible learning and programs for the whole family, tailored to the strengths, needs and nuances of the local community

Upgrades & renovations to space

To make the Hub more welcoming and functional for different groups to use, a number of upgrades to the space were undertaken in early 2023

- New floors and carpet laid
- Sound proofing on walls and ceiling installed
- Window frosting installed to increase privacy
- Automatic entry door into school installed
- New furniture, smart TV, printer, wifi and compass sign-in kiosk purchased and installed
- Signage leading to hub installed.
- Feature forest wall painted by Melbourne artist.
- Additional equipment was purchased for the community kitchen.



The upgrades have made to the Hub feel warm, welcoming, functional and inclusive. Programs that have been running in the space for many years have noted a change in student behaviour with the space feeling calmer and more conducive to learning. Likewise, parents – majorly mothers – feel comfortable in the space and regularly use it.

2 An established partnership consortium and governance structure for the Hub

A core objective for this project was to form a governance structure that links in local organisations and government groups to ensure sustainability, shared expertise and a project that's connected with the developments happening around it. This has been achieved through the formation of an active Steering Committee group.

Key achievements:

- Steering Committee Terms of Reference developed and agreed upon
- 4 x Term based meetings conducted
- MOU signed with the school and specific orgs

Steering Committee coordinators:



Steering Committee members:



3 Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for participants for both children and adults

Student learning support

Homework Club provides intensive literacy & numeracy support to prep – 6 students after school three afternoons a week. The program is facilitated by Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services (ERCRS) and funded independently by the Victorian African Communities Action Plan (VACAP) through the Department of Education. There is open communication between homework club and school teachers allowing student needs to be met. Approximately 60 students attend each week.



Early years learning

Supported Playgroup is open to children from birth to school age. Qualified facilitators lead sessions where parents develop their skills and confidence to support their child's wellbeing and development. Home visits are also available through the program. Delivered by Moonee Valley City Council & Kensington Neighbourhood House.



Little Seeds is open to pre-school aged children and their carers. Children explore gardening, cooking and nature-based play activities. Mothers can attend Language for Lunch while their children join the program. Delivered by Cultivating Community.



First Steps pre-prep transition program supports enrolled prep students to learn about being in the school. The program ensure new students feel comfortable and can maximise their learning once they begin prep. Run by DMPS staff.



First steps playgroup is run at the same time for parents and younger siblings to attend.

Adult learning



Learning and employment opportunities are provided for parents, particularly mothers. The Hub runs pre-accredited training on site with childcare provided. Up to 15 women attended the **Language for Lunch** program, a weekly English literacy course delivered by Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre based around reading, writing, cooking and sharing of recipes.



A further 14 mothers attend the **Prepare for Work - Community Canteen** course, a weekly vocational program delivered by KNH and Service Stars focusing on the skills needed to establish and run a school canteen. The course supports women in developing hospitality skills, digital literacy, communication and numeracy skills. Additional accredited training in Food Handling & Safety is provided onsite at the school through the William Angliss Institute. The training and practical experience gained through volunteering in the canteen alongside the career mentoring aims to strengthening employment pathways for the participants.

Both pre-accredited courses are funded through Adult Community & Further Education (ACFE) linking Hub learning into the Learn Local network.

4 Increased digital literacy for parents, particularly in relation to accessing school portals and learning supports

Digital support for parents is provided through both one-on-one support offered by the Community Hub Coordinator (CHC) and School Community Liaison Officer (SCLO) and through adult education courses.

The CHC provided digital support and mentoring around accessing a range of services including Centrelink, housing and NDIS.

The SCLO works with parents to provide training in how to use the school's information portal Compass.



Computer training is embedded into the Prepare for Work course. Key feedback provided through the course evaluation was that more advanced computer and digital training was wanted by parents. This will be incorporated into the 2024 Hub program.



5 A model for assessing learning needs and referral processes for children and adults

With learning data from the school being shared with partner organisations to help guide program planning and the Community Hub Coordinator having developed strong referral pathways, a strong foundation has been laid for achieving this outcome. 2024 will be dedicated to consolidating and formalising the model used to track progress.

6 Improved community cohesion, trust, belonging and social connections formed within the school and in the broader local community

Having an “open door” policy and experienced bi-lingual staff on site means the Hub has become a source of trusted advice and support for the local community. Parents can visit the Hub for one-to-one assistance and case-work. Even community members without children attending the school come for support. So far this year, the Hub Coordinator has assisted families with everything from housing concerns and NDIS applications to community sports grants (60 children were able to join their local sporting groups as a result!)

Case work & form support



Housing

9 families - homelessness, housing transfers & advocacy
3 families successfully housed
25 families were referred to the Inner west legal services, relocations of 120 Racecourse Rd and 12 Holland crt.
Families got legal services
15 families were supported with forms



Health

14 referrals



Legal aid

25 referrals



Maintenance

5 families supported to manage mould, noise and electricity issues



Sport grants

60 applications

Providing this wrap-around service has meant families can experience a one-stop-shop of holistic support. Something increasingly important as front line services diminish and services are digitised.



Greater access to recreational activities for families

Greater access to recreational activities for families has contributed to a more connected and healthy community. In the first six months of this year, **The Venny Inc** ran twice weekly adventure play sessions outside the Hub for children of all ages. The program is set to return for 2024.

Families get moving every Friday afternoon at Active Fridays. Coordinated by **Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services (ERCRC)** the program offers community soccer through **Melbourne Victory Football Club**, free play by **Drummond Street Youth Services** and Mums & Bubs Zumba class (a local mum was hired to run Zumba).



A children's cooking program is offered after school by Moonee Valley City Council and Cultivating Community. Young adults are catered to by The Huddle and Ubuntu Project who are running a movie-making and Somali poetry youth program. All free of charge for families

Volunteering

The Hub has supported more parents and community volunteers to become involved in programs. Ranging from Breakfast Club to classroom helpers to youth volunteers mentoring students at Homework Club, opening the school to diverse volunteer support strengthens community cohesion and local ownership of the school.



7 Increased cross-cultural understanding and respect

The Hub hosts regular information sessions for parents and interested community members. These are a way for CALD participants to learn about various aspects of Australian life while also sharing their own experiences. Sessions have covered NDIS planning, nutrition, health care, employment pathways, community legal services and kindergarten enrolments.

During the winter school holidays a two-day program was run at the school in partnership with Wurundjeri Council offering a range activities alongside Indigenous cultural education for families. Parents also participated in discussions around The Voice referendum.



This learning is not all one-way. During Ramadan, an **Iftar Dinner** was hosted at the Hub for the school community, introducing many school staff, partner organisations and volunteers to the meaning and importance of this significant cultural observance. Over 150 people attended.



A **Community Open Day** was held at the school on the 17th of November showcasing the programs and achievements of the Hub in its first year. The event brought together the community, partner organisations, staff and volunteers. Face painting, henna, East African coffee ceremony and catering from the Community Canteen women were some of the many activities running on the day.



During the event students and families were asked for their feedback on the programs they had attended and how they felt in the Hub. Responses included:

- "Very friendly staff."
- "It has fun staff, people and friends."
- "I love cooking class."
- "The whole program is really good. It builds relationships."
- "Safe & calm feeling."
- "Activities for everyone!"
- "Make it bigger, get more people in!"

Among the event presentations was the awarding of certificates to the women who had completed the Prepare for Work course. A key objective of the Hub project is to boost the parent engagement and ownership of the school - the sense of pride felt as the women collected their certificates felt like a significant step towards this goal.



Financial updates

Income and Expenses as at 7 December 2023:

Grant income: \$ 128,943.00

Expenses	Amount
Capital Improvements	\$ 12,897.84
Event catering	\$ 2,941.91
Food for Programs	\$ 1,140.26
Telephone & Internet	\$ 1,019.12
Photocopier Rental	\$ 408.91
Staff PD	\$ 198.16
Wages	\$ 78,973.00
Superannuation	\$ 8,687.03
Total	\$ 106,266.2
KNH Overheads (15%)	\$ 19,341.45
Funds remaining for 2023	\$ 3,335.32 (wages for final pay period)

Conclusion

The Debney Meadows Community Hub's first year has successfully responded to the need for accessible, place-based, high quality education and wrap-around services for families attending Debney Meadows Primary School.

The school is in the unique position of being located within parkland directly adjacent to the Flemington public housing estate in inner Melbourne. This geographic location, along with patterns of inner-city migration over the past two decades, mean that 98% of the school population is culturally and linguistically diverse with the majority of students speaking languages other than English at home.

DMPS families come from many cultures but the largest cohorts are from Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Eritrea. Nearly all families live in the public housing estates of Flemington or North Melbourne and are spread across the Melbourne and Moonee Valley LGAs. Most families observe the Muslim faith.

The socio-economic profile at Debney Meadows is "low" based on the Student Family Occupation and Education index (SFOE) which takes into account parents' occupation and education.

It would be easy to look at this school community through the lens of disadvantage or deficit. However, DMPS knows that each student and each family has valuable strengths, experiences and enormous resiliency. They understand that to improve a child's chances in life they must work holistically addressing not just the needs of the child but of their whole family and community.

The Debney Meadows Community Hub has allowed for such a holistic response to occur. Both the physical space and the model behind the Hub is grounded in an understanding that working together as organisations, sectors and services will lead to better outcomes.

This has certainly been the case in 2023. With over 200 people attending Hub programs or dropping in for help in a week and multiple programs running in a day we have quickly established trust with the community. Through this trust we have been able to listen to what is needed and make it happen.

This would not have been possible without the support from the William Buckland Foundation's Enabling Education grant. We are thrilled to have another three years ahead of us to continue to strengthen and grow the project.

**KENSINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2023**

Acknowledgements

Majority of the beautiful pictures featured in this report come from Phillip Gao at Phillip Gao Photography. Thank you Phil for capturing the magic of the Hub.

The Hub has opened through the strong support given by the school, in particular from School Principal Koreena Carlton. Koreena and many other dedicated school staff have worked closely with our team during 2023 making the project a success.

A huge thank you to all our partners delivering programs, services or supporting with referrals for the Hub.

A special thank you to Amran Guleid (right) our Community Hub Coordinator and Marwa Zakzouk (left) the School Community Liaison Officer for always keeping the Hub door open.



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