



Children grow from good beginnings

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CENTRE FOR
Community
Child Health

NEWSLETTER

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PORT PHILLIP

Since March 2003, Maureen Imeson has been working in Port Phillip as The Early Years Project Facilitator. She is employed by *Good Beginnings Australia*, through the Centre for Community Child Health. Her role has been to identify what is currently working well for families and those who work with them in Port Phillip; to build on those strengths and improve networks and establish practical projects; and to attract other skills and resources where they are needed in the community.

Maureen has found that one of the recurring themes during conversations with parents has been about the opportunities for families to socialise in venues where they feel comfortable and at times that are convenient for them. This especially applies to those who are new to the municipality or are not confident in social situations. Parents who have attended the First Parent sessions led by the Maternal and Child Health Nurse often may not continue to meet as a mutual support group due perhaps to lack of leadership or a place to meet. These parents and those with second or subsequent children may experience a lack of opportunity to share experiences in various aspects of their parenting.

Maureen has led a working party of parents and professionals in hosting a workshop for Playgroups Leaders. She has also conducted a survey of playgroup participants throughout the municipality to gather data on local socio-demographics, playgroup involvement and the expectation of participants.

This activity also gathered information on playgroup families' perceived needs for information sessions. A Playgroup Training Day for potential playgroup leaders was later conducted with the assistance of Playgroup Victoria. Maureen has also sought free or low-cost venues that are appropriate for playgroups, approached relevant Council staff to provide additional resources and then provided information to Maternal and Child Health Nurses

and groups of parents who have been seeking locations for playgroups within their neighbourhood.

Recommendations have been made to Council for support in the establishment of playgroups, the provision of access to playgroups for all families and those with additional needs, a focus on fathers in their parenting role and a public acknowledgment of the many hours of voluntary work undertaken by playgroup leaders. These recommendations have resulted in the City of Port Phillip Council identifying a need for professional support to take a lead in these areas.

Examples of Small Practical Local Initiatives that have come out of the Project:

- Some parents with young children in the City of Port Phillip use the many cafes situated around the municipality as informal meeting places. The Facilitator and a father with a young child have devised a plan for families to identify their most 'Family Friendly' café and an award for the successful café will provide information for families about the various locations.
- 'Sips 'n' Snacks, a pilot programme for families and service providers in South Melbourne and St Kilda Road will focus on healthy drinks and snacks and is part of Port Phillip's Food Security Project.
- Maureen and a group of community workers are planning forums for service providers and fathers in order to recognise the importance of the fathering role and provide opportunities for fathers to meet to share experiences with each other.
- Maureen is included in a working party with City of Melbourne and Port Phillip staff to assist families in the St Kilda Road neighbourhood to access services.

TRAINING MODULES - UPDATE

As part of Phase Two of the Early Years Project, the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) is developing a series of CD ROM-based training modules. The key staff involved are Tim Moore and Sharon Foster.

The modules are designed to provide communities with the knowledge and skills that will help them refocus existing services so as to emphasise prevention, early detection and early intervention. They can be used in training any professionals or service providers who work with young children and their families.

The first two CD ROM modules have now been produced and will be launched at the second of the CCCH / Ross Trust seminars on 21st May. The modules are:

- **Understanding the Underlying Factors Affecting Child Health and Development and Family Functioning**

This module focuses on the core knowledge about child development and family functioning needed by those all those who work with young children and their families. The module is designed to

- provide an overview of what recent research has taught us about factors that influence young children's health, development and well-being
- provide an overview of key factors that influence family functioning and the ability of families to raise their children effectively
- consider the practical implications of this knowledge for early childhood and family support service providers, agencies and systems

- **Introduction to Family-Centred Practice**

This module is an introduction to family-centred practice, designed to heighten service providers' awareness about issues in working with families and start them thinking about what they need to do to become more family-centred in their work. The module is designed to give participants opportunities

- to discuss issues they face in working with families of young children
- to learn about the principles and rationale for family-centred practice

- to consider the implications for practice
 - what are the challenges and what might participants do differently

Each of the modules contains all the information, activities and resources needed to run a 3-hour interactive workshop for 15-25 participants. CCCH will be providing training in the use of the modules for those interested in using them.

There are four other modules currently in production. These will be launched at the third and fourth of the CCCH / Ross Trust seminars:

Note: Change of Dates

Seminar 3: *Meeting the needs of families and communities*

Monday 30th August, 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Launch of training modules:

- 1B: Identifying and responding to child and family needs
- 2A: Community centred practice

Seminar 4: *Communities for Children; Development of an Australian Early Developmental Index*

**Guest Speaker:
Professor Clyde Hertzman**

Friday 22nd October, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Launch of training modules:

- 3A: What works: Principles of effective service delivery and collaboration
- 3B: Diversity and inclusive practices

Accessing the training modules

Those interested in using the modules for training purposes can access them in two ways:

1. Completing the expression of interest form requesting to purchase the product/s
2. Completing the expression of interest form requesting to attend training in delivering the module. Those attending the training will receive a copy of the CD ROM as part of the training.