



Village News

We believe that by improving collaboration and committing to community engagement, all children in Belconnen can be physically healthy, socially and emotionally strong, and ready to engage fully in learning and life.

THIS ISSUE

- Understanding our community - what is important and necessary for the wellbeing of Belconnen's children

In pursuit of improving wellbeing outcomes for children in Belconnen, Village has spent the last 5 months surveying the Belconnen community to deepen our understanding of what aspirations and concerns families hold for their children.

- Developing a Family Centred Approach to support Families Living with ADHD

The ADHD action group finished the year with an enormously rich collection of data gathered via survey from over 100 families, and has commenced planning how it will engage community members in the design phase.

- Engaging the ECECs in Belconnen

Village is actively building stronger connections with government and non-government services, ECECs, schools, playgroups, parents, and carers—essentially, all parts of the Early Years system.

- Improving Early years Literacy and Fostering Family Connections in Belconnen

The early introduction to books and being read to at home prior to school deeply resonates with the fundamental role that Early Years literacy plays in shaping a child's learning journey.

- Connecting Early Years Educators and Teachers for Improved Transitions

This year has seen a significant increase in interest and participation in the Transitions network events with some great impacts reported. In the final two events of the year, we attracted 60 staff from schools and ECECs in Belconnen.

A Year in Review

As the year hurtles towards its end, the Village team and Working Groups have been reflecting on the highlights and where we have seen impact. If there was one word for 2023 that describes the year it is 'momentum'. Movement in every area of Village's work. Ripples, and in some cases waves of impact that reveal where the shifts are happening and how the commitment of many is making changes to the way families and children in Belconnen and across the ACT are supported to thrive.

Some ideas came to fruition in 2023, such as the launch and roll out of Imagination Library, and the establishment of the Early Years Community of Practice. Some of the actions from the previous two years were ready to be developed and disseminated, such as the range of community-informed child development products.



A year in review

The community conversations process has culminated in over 100 responses from people across Belconnen and beyond who wanted to share what they want to see happen that will make the most change for children. Over 100 people have contributed to informing the next steps of the work of the ADHD working group, which will seek to bring families into the process of understanding the support system, where the barriers are and where might be the best actions to take together to make it better able to meet their needs.

Some things are still being built, with persistence and commitment from people who are willingly giving their time and expertise, such as the Village Community Profile, and the child development campaign which will both be launched in the first quarter of next year. This newsletter gives the stories behind each of these activities and more.

It's worth slowing the pace a little as we reflect on what has contributed to the year's achievements to look a little deeper. The numbers and statistics that show that Village's work is having an impact and show the reach and value of the actions. Village's work has also been acknowledged across the ACT and nationally.

However, as we know, data and recognition don't fully paint the picture of what has gone before to create this environment where there is a readiness to come together and act. They don't show the pre-conditions for this momentum. Momentum isn't an ingredient we can add off the shelf, it's something that is generated as everyone who is committed to a way to make the systems that support children and families work better keeps showing up and investing. Momentum sparks when we realise that every part of the ecosystem holds something that is needed to create the change we want to see.



It's been a three-year journey. It's involved relationship building and network weaving. It's been made possible because of Government and philanthropic funding partners. It's taken organisations, Government, and nongovernment, to commit to supporting their people to be involved – over the long term. Services, Early Childhood Education Centres, and schools have been open to be not just involved, but engaged as part of the initiatives, from being part of conversations to disseminating the Transitions Campaign resources to showing up and doing the work behind the scenes for the events.

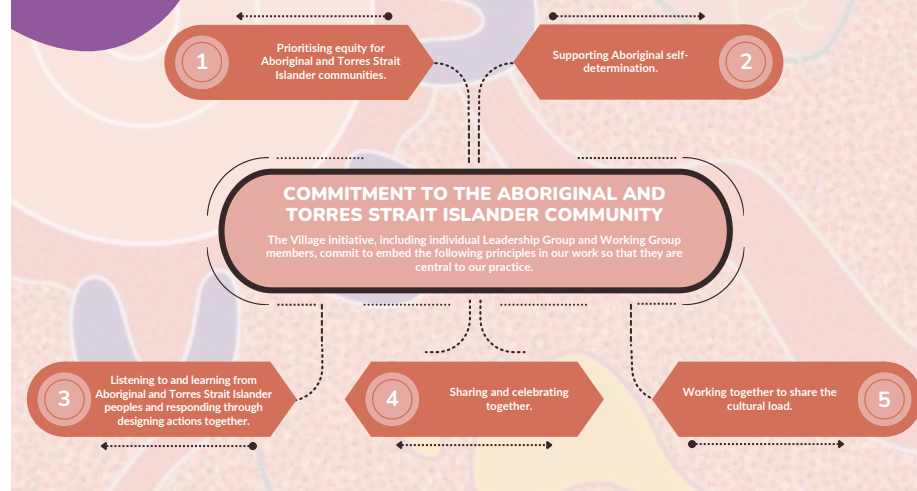
Thank you to the hundreds of people from tens of organisations and across the community who have brought your magic ingredients to the work of Village to help create this 'momentum-ous' year. The Village team wishes you all a rest-filled, fun, and peaceful break. See you in 2024 for the next season as we continue to be part of the momentum that is community change.



Commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community

In 2023, Village introduced a cultural reflection at the Leadership Group meetings, fostering deeper understanding and appreciation for our traditional custodians. Additionally, co-developing the Village commitment statement showcasing our commitment to shared values.

Village will support the implementation of the commitments in the Working Groups, ensuring that our actions align with our shared values. Our focus remains on creating synergies between mainstream systems change work and ensuring actions meet the cultural needs of the Aboriginal families. These opportunities propel us forward, promising a year of continued growth, collaboration, and positive impact.



Understanding our community: what is important and necessary for the wellbeing of Belconnen's children

In pursuit of improving wellbeing outcomes for children in Belconnen, Village has spent the last 5 months surveying the Belconnen community to deepen our understanding of what aspirations and concerns families hold for their children. These insights will allow Village to represent the community voice and incorporate community-led decision making into our future plans.

Village's Community Conversations survey captured over 100 voices, opinions and concerns relating to the wellbeing of Belconnen's children. 95% of the survey responses were from community members living within Belconnen and 73% were parents of a child 5 years old or younger. Additionally, 45% of survey respondents were from a diverse cultural background other than 'Australian'.

The team is currently reviewing the data, pulling out common key themes, quotes and statistics which will be used in the **community profile**.

We would like to thank all community members who took the time to submit their answers and all the organisations that assisted in spreading this engagement piece across Belconnen.



Bailey, Village's Community Development Officer, congratulated Clare, one of the three winners of the \$100 Woolworths Vouchers for her participation in the Community Conversations Survey.



Developing a family Centred approach to support families living with ADHD

The ADHD action group finished the year with an enormously rich collection of data gathered via survey from over 100 families, and has commenced planning how it will engage community members in the design phase. Thank you to the families who shared their raw, and at times, heart wrenching stories about the experiences of their children and family living with and navigating their ADHD journey.

What we have heard indicates a very real need and gap in support structures for families who are living with ADHD. Families told us:

“

We need more support and information about parenting a child with ADHD and how each child has different needs and support on their individual type of ADHD.

We need a clearer, documented pathway for families to know where to go and how to go through the diagnosis.

”

“

There are very little resources in the ACT to support parents of children, especially young adults with ADHD.

Education for educators, teachers and admin on the different presentations of ADHD is vital for continued support.

”

“

Children with ADHD need better support to understand how they are different and how they learn best.

It would be great if there was a support group for families that are not yet diagnosed, in the process and have a diagnosis.

”

We are really pleased to have been able to engage ARACY to bring this important information together in a report which links the experience of those in the ACT with the national conversations currently being held in relation to ADHD. This report will help with the community co-design response which will commence in the new year.





Engaging the ECECs in Belconnen



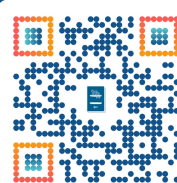
Early Childhood Education Centres (ECECs) play a central role in laying the foundation for a child's educational journey, fostering essential skills and knowledge in a structured and nurturing environment. ECEC educators contribute significantly to this process by creating a supportive atmosphere, guiding learning activities, understanding the unique needs of each child and fostering social, emotional, and cognitive development. In essence, ECECs and their educators serve as key contributors to a child's holistic growth, shaping a strong foundation for learning and well-being.

Village is actively building stronger connections with government and non-government services, ECECs, schools, playgroups, parents, and carers—essentially, all parts of the Early Years system. This commitment involves listening to the needs of educators, children and families and collaborating to improve the overall system.

In the second half of 2023, Village initiated consultations with the 33 ECECs across Belconnen, establishing connections with 22 ECECs by end of November. Through these consultations, Village aimed to understand the pressing needs of the educators, child, and families, share the transitions and child development resources, and enhance connections among the players in the Early Years system.

30+ ENROLMENT
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
TRANSITIONS
RESOURCES PRODUCED

SCAN ME



ARACY has been engaged to analyse the outcomes of these consultations and a comprehensive [report is available for viewing here.](#)

Village's role is to bring together the integral parts of the Early Years system and facilitate actions to the community needs and support the delivery of the ACT and Commonwealth governments' strategies that relate to supporting every child in having the best possible start to life.

Moving forward, Village hopes that this report facilitates the design of informed responses to the needs of the children experiencing higher levels of developmental vulnerability. Additionally, the aim is to inspire actions addressing the changing needs of the Early Years system, supporting educators, children, and families, ultimately leading to positive outcomes for all children, and families and the Early Years sector.



Improving early years literacy and fostering family connections in Belconnen

Dolly Parton's
**IMAGINATION
LIBRARY™**

The early introduction to books and being read to at home prior to school deeply resonates with the fundamental role that Early Years literacy plays in shaping a child's learning journey. The act of being read to extends far beyond the mere introduction to written words; it deepens connections between the child and reader, stimulates a child's imagination through shared moments immersed in narratives, adventures, and knowledge within the confines of home. It not only introduces a child to language and vocabulary but also cultivates cognitive and emotional skills. Furthermore, early encounters with books foster a positive association with learning, instilling a curiosity that sets the stage for a lifelong love for learning.

In view of the above, Village and its partner organisations brought together practitioners and policy makers from across ACT Government Directorates and non-government organisations, and philanthropists to support the launch and implementation of the **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** in the ACT in late October 2023. 📖



Thanks to the inspiration and advocacy of the Collective Implementation Group, the secured funding for Imagination Library Kippax Pilot will enable 169 children (0-3 years) to access the program for two years. Enrolled children receive a carefully selected age-appropriate book in the mail every month at no cost.

A heartfelt thank you to Lyone Foundation and Canberra Mothercraft Society for their seed funding. Their funds combined with Village's contribution has allowed us to turn this dream into reality. Village and its partners are actively seeking additional funding to support more children to expand the program to other suburbs across the ACT.

2.6 M

CHILDREN
REGISTERED
WORLD WIDE

05

COUNTRIES

218 M

BOOKS
GIFTED
WORLD WIDE

10

YEARS
IN
AUSTRALIA

146

CHILDREN
REGISTERED
IN KIPPAX

14

IMPLEMENTING
PARTNER
ORGANISATIONS

4

SUBURBS
IN BELCONNEN

10

ENROLLING
PARTNERS



Connecting early years educators and teachers for improved transitions

This year has seen a significant increase in interest and participation in the Transitions network events with some great impacts reported. In the final two events of the year, we attracted 60 staff from schools and ECECs in Belconnen. We are grateful to our education partners who have willingly and enthusiastically supported and hosted these events and to everyone working in the ECECs and schools who demonstrate such a strong commitment to improving transitions for children in the ACT.

Some of the impacts and highlights we have heard include:

- ✓ an increase in schools and ECECs reaching out to each other,
- ✓ hearing the perspectives from, and understanding the challenges that schools are facing and what their requirements are for transitioning children,
- ✓ the opportunity for networking and sharing transition ideas from other ECECs,
- ✓ collaborating with other staff and making connections,
- ✓ the resources,
- ✓ presentations from schools and ECECs about practices they have introduced to support transitions,
- ✓ connecting with ECECs, conversations about approaches to transitions and general conversations and brainstorming, and
- ✓ increased understanding and connection with the Preschool Pathway Partners.

The Transitions Network events occur once a term and bring ECEC and primary school staff together to connect and share approaches to supporting transition. The intention is to strengthen these relationships and partnerships so that together ECECs and schools are better supporting children and families.

In 2024 the events will expand on this year's format to include presentations that share ideas and different approaches to transitions and transitions resources from across the network. All schools and ECECs in Belconnen are welcome to join. Please [check our website](#) for more information on these events in 2024.

86 **TRANSITIONS NETWORK**
16 ECECs **10** SCHOOLS **4** ORGS
ATTENDED

77 **WORKSHOP & FORUM**
6 ECECs **6** SCHOOLS **12** ORGS
ATTENDED



Understanding Complex Behaviour Series

The Early Years Community of Practice

In early term 1, 2024, Village and partners will be kicking off the Early Years Community of Practice (CoP) series again. In response to feedback across the sector, the CoP will do a deep dive over two sessions into understanding the causes and experience of children with complex behaviours, as well as learn about strategies and approaches to effectively support children experiencing these behaviours. These sessions will be led by a Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, an Occupational Therapist, both from the University of Canberra, and an early years Educator.

Session 1: Multiple causes & child lens

Understanding the multiple causes of diverse behaviours - neurodiversity, trauma, developmental delays, disability, family environment factors, sensory differences etc. and understanding what a child might be feeling/what's going on for the child.

Date: Tuesday, 13th February 2024

Time: 3:30 - 5.30 PM

Presenters:

Cate Hilly

Lecturer in Occupational Therapy
University of Canberra

Jonathan Ramke

Occupational Therapist
University of Canberra

Session 2: Support strategies & consistency

Strategies for supporting children with complex behaviours and consistency of approach across home and education settings (partnership between parents/therapists and educators).

Date: Tuesday, 26th March 2024

Time: 3:30 - 5.30 PM

Presenters:

Cate Hilly

Lecturer in Occupational Therapy
University of Canberra

Jonathan Ramke

Occupational Therapist
University of Canberra

Livia Pitz

Educator at CRCS Bruce

Anyone working in education, health, community or the early years who is interested in learning more about this topic is welcome. For more information and to find out how to register, please visit our Community of Practice page.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS | HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2023

40 **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**
8 ECECs **3** SCHOOLS **12** ORGS
ATTENDED



IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Yarra is goodbye in Nganawal
Empowering Generations of
Culturally Strong, Thriving,
Aboriginal Children
Families and Communities

2023 YARRA DAY

GIVEAWAYS EVENT ACTIVITIES

When: Saturday 16 December 2023
Where: Yarramundi Cultural Centre
Acton ACT
Time: 10:00am – 1:00pm
Cost: Free

Come and join us as we bid farewell (Yarra) to 2023
with food, music, kid's activities and more!!!

We will also be conducting a whole community consultation
during the event on the needs of the ACT Aboriginal Community.

Can't make the event but still want to have your say into the Community
consultation? Not a problem, we want as many voices as we can!!!

To complete the survey online and include your valuable input, just click
on this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UJ7TBDJ>

Look forward to seeing you there!! ☺

MUSIC, ENTERTAINMENT,
BASKET WEAVING &
MORE!!!



Yarra Day 2023

Yerrabi Yurwang is organising Yarra Day 2023, a farewell event for 2023 at the Yarramundi Cultural Centre. All families are invited to join for a day filled with music, activities for kids, food, and much more.

Yerrabi will also conduct a community consultation during the event to understand the needs of the ACT Aboriginal Community. Your say matters. If you can't attend the event, please **share your thoughts here**. We want to hear as many voices as possible!

SCAN ME



Child Development Poster

Check the Blue Book | ACT Early | Seek Support

A poster for parents about developmental milestones and development checks, referring to the Blue Book. This poster contains valuable health information that you and your child will need throughout life. Keep track of your child's development!

[Click here to download](#)

SCAN ME



Family Pathways Map

Pathways to support you and your child

This map helps you understand the journey of a family as they access and move through the various parts of the system that support children and families to thrive. It offers a visual guide, mapping the entry points into the system and the journey through it. This helps you and those in the system to communicate better about how to navigate and find support when and where it's needed.

[Click here to download](#)

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Belconnen Child and Family Program & Service Directory

A comprehensive list of available services and program

The Directory is a resource for schools, ECECs, services and families in the Belconnen community, providing information about services and programs that operate in Belconnen or across the ACT to support children and families, with a focus on, but not limited to, pregnancy to five years. It includes ACT Government programs.

[Click here to download](#)



OUR PARTNERS

Acknowledgement of country

A Village for Every Child (Village) would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work, the Ngunnawal people. Village pays its respects and celebrates the traditional owners' ongoing cultural traditions and contribution to this region. Village also acknowledges elders past and present and the children because they are our future.

Acknowledgement of participating organisations

The collective achievements of Village would not have been possible without the continued commitment and in-kind contributions from all the people and organisations, including our funders who are proud to have been part of creating the conditions for children to thrive in Belconnen.

