

Early Years Parenting Program



BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

OVERVIEW

The Early Years Parenting Program (earlier known as Growing Learners) has been operating at Connie Benn Centre since 2018. Each year, the program works with up to 25 multicultural families and their children who have recently migrated and live in and around Fitzroy, Melbourne.

The program takes an intergenerational approach and has three fundamental features:

- **Connection** for parents and children through facilitated play group.
- **Learning** for parents using Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) Learning Together Program through play group and parent only sessions.
- **Growing** through one-on-one sessions to develop confidence as child's first teacher.

PARTNERS

Connie Benn Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Flora and Frank Leith Charitable Trust, Goodman Foundation, City of Yarra

"I learnt how to support behaviour in children, it is important to listen to our kids which is different to my culture. Before when my son was unsettled he would cry and was grumpy. Now when I sit and read a book, play with him, (I have learnt what he likes to play with such as Lego), he is happier. I play with him for 10 minutes and now he plays by himself for 45 minutes."

QUOTE FROM A PARENT



2018

Started in

11

Families enrolled this year

2

Staff

THE CHALLENGE

Research into the first 1000 days shows that this is a crucial time for connection and brain development in the child that has lifelong impacts. The program was set up to support diverse families who have few connections as they have recently arrived. The program addresses community engagement, parenting confidence, and understanding the concept and importance of their role as their child's first teacher.

OUTCOMES

- Parents' confidence has increased.
- They use parenting with positive, thoughtful connection and knowing they are their child's first teacher.
- This has improved the parent-child relationship.

“Before the program, our child did not have a routine and now he always has a routine. This is helpful as he knows what is happening next and does not get confused. I now see change in behaviour, sometimes he wants to watch TV and if not on routine he will turn off the TV.”

QUOTE FROM A PARENT

KEY LESSONS

What works?

The biggest element for multicultural families is **connection** to the community. Many families are of refugee background with limited social connections.

As one mum reflected, ***“When I arrived in Melbourne, I knew no one, now I have four friends.”***

Relationships developed during the program continue, enabling peer-to-peer support and stronger connection to community.

Facilitated group sessions support parents with their parenting skills and mental health wellbeing in a positive and culturally-safe environment.

What does not work?

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, online support was a challenge. Many families did not have the resources (computer, internet and WIFI). Parents were very busy supporting older children with their learning and consequently, there was less time available for younger children. It had a huge impact on their mental wellbeing.