



## **Introduction**

### **The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)**

The first HIPPY project in Australia began in 1998 within the City of Yarra, auspiced by the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Twenty families were enrolled, with three home tutors employed to work with them in their homes. Growing slowly but steadily, HIPPY currently operates in three states around Australia helping over 400 families per year.

The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program targeting disadvantaged families in our community.

HIPPY empowers parents as their child's first teacher and fosters parent involvement in school and community life to maximise the chances of successful early school experiences. It also offers for some parents, a supported pathway to employment and local level community leadership.

### **Number of Programs**

In 2008 HIPPY is run in:

- Fitzroy-Vic (inner urban, mainly African & Asian-born families)
- Moonee Valley-Vic (inner urban, mainly African & Asian-born families)
- Geelong-Vic (regional city, mainly Anglo families)
- Colac-Vic (rural, mainly Anglo families plus new Sudanese arrivals)
- Winchelsea-Vic (rural, mainly Anglo families)
- La Perouse-Sydney (urban, mainly Aboriginal families)
- Smithton- Tasmania (rural, mainly Anglo families)
- Burnie- Tasmania (rural, mainly Anglo families)

A new site in Fawkner (urban Melbourne), which will work with a range of refugee/migrant

communities, is currently being established, and many other prospective sites are seeking funding.

We have worked with:

- Vietnamese, Hmong, Turkish, Ethiopian, Sudanese, Chinese, Iraqi and Somali "new arrival" communities
  - English speaking, Australian born families
  - Aboriginal families,
- all with diverse economic, cultural, educational and social demographics.

Our storybooks are translated into Somali, Vietnamese and Arabic. They are also available on audio in English and the above mentioned languages, with other languages to be added as funding is secured.

### **Research Findings**

Australian research so far (mostly smaller projects at single sites), has shown that the HIPPY children were more likely than the comparison group to have higher self-esteem and education scores. Research has also found gains for HIPPY children on measures such as classroom behaviour, socialisation, cognitive development and academic performance. A national research project began in 2007 with funding from the Victorian government and philanthropic bodies, aiming to build on earlier smaller projects, to develop a picture which covers multiple sites over a longer time frame.

### **Population Served**

In Australia each site selects their own particular target population, with all focusing on communities and families which are disadvantaged for any combination of reasons, including long term socio-economic disadvantage, or where language, cultural background, comparatively low educational achievement or geographic isolation are relevant factors.

### **Working with Parents**

Parents learn to use the stories and activities through regular, structured visits by Home Tutors who are also parents in the program. Every fortnight, the Home Tutors role-play the activities with parents, in the parents' home. On alternate weeks, parents and Home Tutors meet together as a larger group, discussing issues of common interest, hearing from speakers, and further practicing the HIPPY activities. Over the two years parents are involved, they develop strong, supportive relationships with the Tutors and Coordinators, being encouraged to have more confidence in themselves, in their children, and in their ability to be actively and positively be involved in their child's education.

### **Home Tutors**

The role of Home Tutor is a supported, very structured, family- friendly, part- time position, which is often an entry or re-entry point into the workforce for parents. Most sites now qualify their Home Tutors for a Certificate 3 or 4 in Community Services as part of their training, and we aim to extend this to all sites. The skills, qualifications and experience Home Tutors acquire improve future employment prospects. Home Tutors also build their capacity to undertake community leadership roles. Tutors report that they acquire skills and confidence through their work program and that the HIPPY experience was spurring them to return to education or take on other employment.

### **Community**

The national structure enables local sites to be well supported, ensuring that the model is both sustainable in each community and replicable to other communities.

### **Corporate Support:**

During 2005-07 HIPPY Australia's exclusive corporate partner, AXA supported HIPPY through:

- Providing substantial funding to the Brotherhood of St Laurence for HIPPY Australia's staffing, organizational development, & upgrading of activity materials
- Hosting and funding attendance by site Coordinators and Tutors at training forums, & Advisory Group meetings
- providing some funding, in-kind & volunteer support for sites
- organizing fundraising activities with AXA staff.

AXA will continue to support HIPPY Australia with a newly signed, further 3 year partnership through to 2009. All sites are encouraged to also develop their own local business and community partnerships.

### **Philanthropic Support:**

- The Brotherhood of St Laurence has funded the HIPPY Fitzroy site since 1998, and HIPPY Australia between 2001- 2005, with assistance from the Philanthropic sector
- In 2005-06 support from the Telstra Foundation enabled the production of a new storybook written by two Aboriginal girls from around La Perouse, plus the running of a forum for representatives from Indigenous communities.
- Other support has come from Westpac, Morawetz, MAD, Fouress, Education Heritage and Macquarie Foundations, plus other private donors.
- In 2007 The Sidney Myer Trust agreed to provide \$450,000 over 3 years to provide one-off

start up assistance to each of 9 prospective new HIPPY sites through a partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Further grants will be sought on a continuing basis to ensure continuing value for-money from any public funding, but the imperative for each site is to negotiate with potential funding agencies, including government, the corporate sector and philanthropic agencies.

### **Government Support**

Five existing sites receive part or full funding from the federal government and two sites receive part funding from the Victorian government.

A significantly increased commitment from the newly elected federal government has been pledged and details are currently being negotiated.

### **Challenges**

HIPPY works well when parents are motivated to help their children to succeed in their education and have sufficient housing and emotional stability to remain involved.

Each HIPPY project develops locally appropriate ways of building this motivation and stability in families.

Expansion of the program to new sites requires partnerships with local agencies which have a strong presence in the target communities, and this is one of the crucial factors negotiated with potential new sites. The program works best where HIPPY is able to help link families into broader universal services relevant to families with young children.

### **National Affiliation**

In 2001 the Brotherhood of St Laurence established the national office, HIPPY Australia, after being granted the national license by HIPPY International. All HIPPY project workers receive training and support from HIPPY Australia and participate in biennial training, ongoing mentoring and regular reviews to build local expertise and optimise program quality. HIPPY Australia continues to be auspiced by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

We welcome enquiries from new communities.

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