

What are community hubs?

Community hubs build social cohesion in Australia. They are welcoming places where families from diverse backgrounds, particularly mothers with preschool children, come to connect, share and learn.

The community hub model is a proven place-based and people-centred way of building connections and social and economic capital within culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Hubs are embedded in primary schools and help bridge the gap between families and the wider community. They connect families with each other, with their school, and with local services and support.

Families take part in a variety of activities in the hubs, ranging from playgroups and social 'coffee and chat' sessions to learning conversational English and vocational skills. Attending a local hub helps improve participants' confidence, social connection, educational outcomes and employment potential.

The National Community Hubs Program

The program is funded through a partnership between philanthropy (Scanlon Foundation), all tiers of government, and the education and community sectors.

Locating hubs in primary schools makes them safe and easily accessible places for women to visit with their young children.

The primary goal of the program is to improve the social and economic outcomes of migrant families and individuals.

The hubs focus on:

- **Engagement** – helping families connect and engage with their community.
- **Early childhood** – running playgroups and connecting families to local early years activities, to support the learning and development of preschool children, improve children's social skills, build relationships between families and prepare children for school.
- **English** – providing migrants with opportunities to learn and practise English through both formal and informal programs.
- **Vocational pathways** – building pathways to employment by encouraging volunteering and providing adults with access to formal and informal training opportunities.

Each hub is managed by the school in which it is based. Decisions about the way the hub operates and the programs it offers are made at the local level. This flexibility enables each hub leader to develop the space and the program offering to address the needs of their host school and the local community.

Hubs are clustered within local government areas (LGAs). Within each LGA, a local organisation serves as the support agency, providing coordination and connection.

Community Hubs Australia, a non-profit organisation committed to helping improve social cohesion in Australia, is responsible for overseeing the delivery, reporting and continual improvement of the program at the national level.

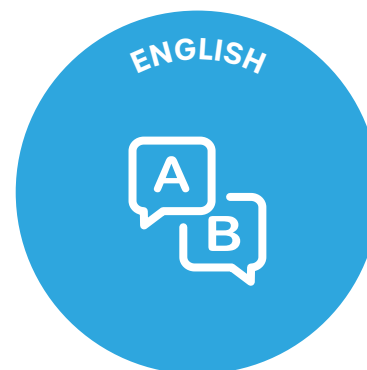
Summary of hub activity in 2021



- **9,741 families** engaged with hubs
- **7,880 referrals** were made to external support services (e.g. family support, emergency aid, education and training, preschool and community health services)
- In response to continual lockdowns, **88% of hubs** ran online or offsite programs
- Hubs partnered with **297 local organisations**



- **88 hubs** delivered English programs, either face-to-face or online
- **5,278 formal and informal English classes** were attended **43,083** times
- **1,300+ participants** attended English classes and activities
- **55 hubs** referred participants to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)
- **91% of English program participants** reported improved English competency



- **92 hubs** delivered early years programs, either online or face-to-face
- **5,570 early years programs and activities** were attended **94,497** times (by children and adults)
- **660 referrals** were made to early childhood services, such as preschools
- **40+ hubs** ran targeted school-readiness programs



- **248 jobs** were secured by hub participants
- **724 people** volunteered on **17,351 occasions**
- **943 referrals** were made to training and educational services
- **1,584 formal and informal training sessions** were delivered

Our social impact

In early 2021, Deloitte Access Economics undertook a comprehensive social return on investment (SROI) evaluation of the community hubs network, concluding that it generated almost \$34 million in social benefits to Australian society in 2019. This represents an SROI of 2.2 – a return of \$2.20 for every dollar invested.



The study demonstrates the significant benefits and positive long-term impacts that hubs provide for children, families, schools and communities across all four pillars of the program: engagement, early childhood, English and vocational pathways.

A major finding was the hubs' contribution to improved quality of life of hub participants, which was assessed as returning more than \$20 million in social value. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the overall monetised impact.

Deloitte described the SROI finding as a conservative estimate of the hubs' impact, as it reflects only those benefits that could be reliably monetised at the time of the analysis.

CHA is looking at ways to improve data collection across the network so other benefits, such as providing families with better access to health and support services, can also be measured.

The full report is available on our website: communityhubs.org.au/impact-evidence.

“One of the most remarkable findings for us was how universal the benefits of the hubs were – it didn’t matter how long a hub had been running, or where it was located.”

Luke Condon, Partner,
Deloitte Access Economics

What the network tells us about the program

“Our purpose is geared around supporting families and building the community. Community Hubs Australia enables us more fire power to embed this strategy into everything we do.

We see this flourishing of engagement. [Families] know they will come, with no judgement, and they will be loved. Parents light up when they get here. They have a willingness to share their stories because they know they will be listened to and empathised with.”

Paul Sedunary, Principal, Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School, Hume, Victoria

“Over the years playgroup has provided a soft entry into school where families can practice English, share their stories (including their hopes and fears), gather information about the wider community, and learn with and from the friendships, which are ignited through parenting, lived experience and similarities of cultural practices.

Building a strong sense of belonging and connection to place makes a difference to living well in Australia.”

Carole Smith, community hub/preschool room coordinator, St Augustine’s Parish School, Salisbury, South Australia

“My life would have been a lot harder as I was not aware of any other local help before joining playgroup. We have accessed lots of services through the group. Having support at the right time has been very good for me.”

Hub parent

Photo: Learning to climb during an outdoor playgroup activity at St Brigid’s hub in Port Adelaide Enfield, South Australia.



Program funding

The National Community Hubs Program is funded, supported and delivered by one of Australia's most effective partnerships between philanthropy, all tiers of government and the community and corporate sectors. For the first two years of operation, the government provides the full funding required for each community hub. From the third year onwards, this amount is reduced slightly, and schools contribute financially to the program each year. This is detailed in the funding schedule of the school's agreement with CHA.

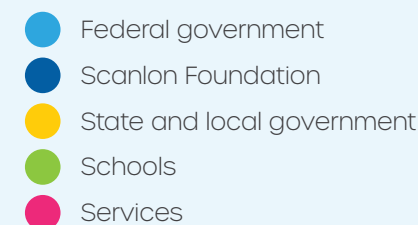
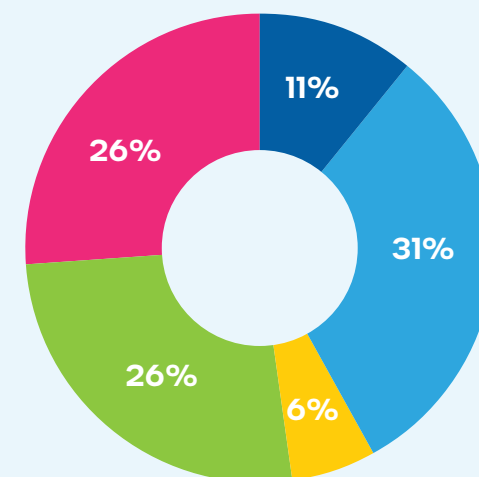
It is a requirement of the funding agreement that the school will allocate at least 90% of the funds to salaries and associated costs of people employed to work in the hub.

Please note: Adhoc and one-off funding opportunities will be available through government grants e.g. conversational English programs and childminding.

Program governance

The program is guided by advisory groups at three levels:

- **At the local level** - school principals and key partner agencies.
- **At the state level** - government and stakeholder organisations.
- **At the national level** - an advisory committee of experts from a range of disciplines.



We wish to acknowledge the ongoing support and contributions of our major program funders:



Australian Government



Supported by
**Government
of South Australia**



human
services



**Queensland
Government**



03 8614 3430
info@communityhubs.org.au
www.communityhubs.org.au