

annual report

for Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative



2013/14

EARLY INTERVENTION & PLACEMENT PREVENTION: CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY SUPPORT (CYFS)

NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services

The Child, Youth & Family Support (CYFS) programme helps families to identify & overcome stumbling blocks to being safe, happy & cohesive.

As an Early Intervention and Placement Prevention service, MDSI's CFYS programme implements a range of services including individual plans including advice and support and parenting programs helping families to address these stumbling blocks early and effectively.

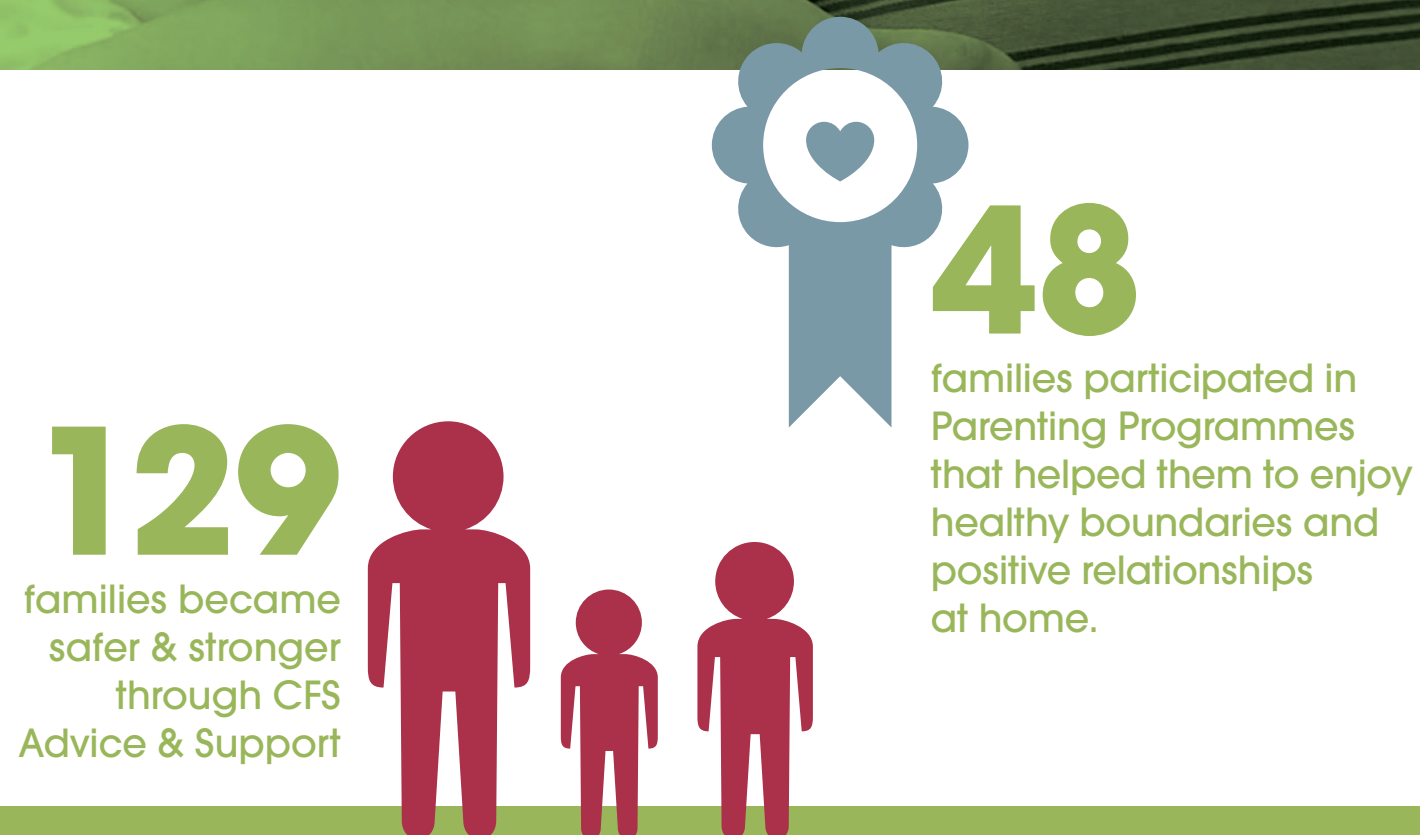
Within the CYFS service model are two service streams, which MDSI delivers to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Families across Macarthur:

1 Child & Family Support (CFS), supporting families with children 0-12 years, and

2 Youth and Family Support (YFS), supporting young people 12-17yrs and their families.

Using evidenced and strength based practices, MDSI works alongside families to get goals specific to their needs to achieve positive changes and lasting stability.



CASE STUDY

Sally (pseudonym), mother of three, was referred to a CFS Triple P course by a friend. Sally was having a hard time at home, and had lost confidence in her ability to manage the increasingly difficult behaviours of her three children.

Through the Triple P Course, Sally was able to relate to other parents experiencing similar difficulties and as a result, connected with a CFS worker for further advice and support.

Sally disclosed that she was subject to domestic violence, had significant financial concerns that leading towards losing the family home, and had legal issues due to an acquired debt. In addition, she worked part time at night and without family support was at a loss as to how she could start dealing with the many issues she faced.

The CFS worker worked alongside Sally to create a plan of action that first included addressing the risk of harm to herself and her children. Sally was referred to external services who supported her in proactively and safely addressing the immediate risks, which resulted in Sally separating from her abusive partner. The CFS worker then

looked at what could be done to help Sally and her children remain in the family home. A referral was made to a financial counsellor who helped Sally develop a budget and advocate with the mortgage company a payment plan that was affordable for Sally. The next goal on Sally's plan of action was to find employment that would better suit Sally's needs to provide the adequate support and supervision for her children.

Sally had been studying to become a teacher but had to postpone it as the hours that she was working did not allow her to participate in the placements that were required. The CFS worker advocated for Sally, and supported her in overcoming her significant stumbling blocks to employment.

Sally now has a teaching number, is employed as a teacher's aide and is able to complete the placement for her studies within her school. Sally enjoys stable accommodation, with the family able to remain in their home and her debt completely paid off. As a result of participation in the Child and Family Support Early Intervention and Placement Prevention Programme, Sally grew in the skills and confidence to parent effectively and stabilise her family environment.

HOME INTERACTION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS & YOUNGSTERS (HIPPY)

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Education through the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters. The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) is licensed to operate HIPPY in Australia.

HIPPY is a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program that works with parents of young children.

Parents are empowered and supported to guide their preschoolage children's early learning experiences and help their children realise success by beginning school ready to learn.

The two year program targets families who need support to increase confidence in their own skills and ability to have a positive effect on their child's learning. Parents participating in HIPPY with their child have the opportunity to be employed and trained as HIPPY home tutors. Home tutors visit parents on a regular basis, providing support, advice, activities and educational resources. With the Brotherhood's encouragement, they often take up a leadership role in their own communities. Children are enrolled in the

program the year before they begin school. The first year (HIPPY Age 4) aims to provide children with exposure to fun, stimulating and varied learning experiences, and the opportunity to learn new concepts and consolidate emerging skills. It also encourages parents to generalise the activities and skills learnt in everyday settings.

The second year (HIPPY Age 5) builds on the HIPPY Age 4 materials by introducing more information about children's learning and development for the parent. The HIPPY Age 5 materials also build on and extend the generalisation activities that HIPPY families have been doing together throughout the first year of the program.

The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters aims to support children and their families during the crucial early years. HIPPY's attention to the interactions between children and their parents and its

emphasis on supporting early literacy development is consistent with key policy initiatives across Australia and reflects contemporary understanding of the crucial role of parents in their child's learning. HIPPY seeks to build a sense of belonging for families and children and actively equip parents to support their children and other parents.

MDSI currently delivers two HIPPY cohorts (2013-14 and 2014-15) to families in Claymore, with the support of dedicated tutors from the local community.



families are equipped to provide a stimulating home learning environment, with parents thriving in their roles as their child's first teacher.

NICHOL'S STORY

"I started with HIPPY this year with my very shy 3 year old as an outlet for both myself and my daughter, as our everyday consisted of just the two of us at home. Since attending HIPPY group meetings I have meet some ladies I would now consider friends and my little girl now enters the room ahead of me to greet everybody, tends to now try and lead activities the children are playing and does not have to be sitting on my lap or holding my hand all day.

I found the HIPPY program to be such a positive and exciting program that I am now a HIPPY home tutor." *Nichol, HIPPY Tutor*





JULIE & BENTLEY'S STORY

(Not pictured here) "When I first heard about HIPPY. It was like "ok I will give it a go and see how it will help my child". From the first class we went to I have seen a change in the way my child looks at things. When we do activities at home I work it into my daily routine. If we go out I take the booklets with us. We do the activities when we are out and about.

Bentley enjoys doing his work. He tries to do the work all by himself too. HIPPY has shown me different ways of teaching my son, and that makes it fun for him. Bentley can tell me his colours: I try to trick him - I would say the item is blue and he would say it's red! He likes to read books now, if he can't read it by himself, he looks at the pictures and makes a story up. Bentley has started his own garden with the help of his older sister, he knows that the plants need water and sunlight to grow. He learnt that from HIPPY in one of the activities. The HIPPY program is helping me get my son ready for starting school." - Julie, HIPPY Parent



ONE MINTO

Urban Growth, NSW

The Minto Community Development Project is a collaboration between MDSI and Urban Growth NSW.

The project is carried out by a Community Development Facilitator engaged by MDSI. The project aims to support the development of both environmentally and socially sustainable services, events, groups and activities that are appropriate, useful and enjoyable for the diverse community of Minto.

The One Minto Community Development Projects aim is to support Minto residents in establishing and maintaining groups, activities and events that are appropriate and useful and that reflect the diversity,

creativity and passion of all residents of Minto.

The project seeks to be inclusive of all residents from those who have been a part of Minto for many years to those who are very new to the area. The 'One Minto Community' name refers not only to the newly built estate but also to the concept, the ideal for which we strive, of One Minto that works together towards common goals and celebrates the individuality of its members.

STORIES FROM RESIDENTS

"I am from Egypt, and have been living in Australia for 4 years - in Minto the whole time. I am a single mum with twin daughters, and run care in my home. One Minto has given me practical support, like to know how to advertise my childcare business. Jennifer, the coordinator, even helped me to find volunteer work in Minto. I like to do this because I can meet other people in Minto and I can practise my English language conversational skills.

Being able to go to community events near my home makes a big difference, my girls love the family fun days and want to join the dance for fitness class soon. This is good because it will help them to get healthy and have fun but is not too expensive." - *Nadia*



"My husband and I bought our new home in Minto 2 years ago. I came into contact with One Minto and learned about the Community Development Program through joining the parents group. I now have a close group of friends nearby who all have children around the same age as my son. They are a great support network and we often meet up outside of the group.

After chatting with Jen about my life she discovered that my husband and I both previously taught English to Japanese students in Japan. As a result of these conversations, in term 4 this year we will be working with the Minto Community Development Project to run English and Mathematics tutoring for primary and high school students. I love the idea of teaching and sharing with my neighbours and being a part of this great community." - *Samantha*

"My favourite thing that the Minto Community Program does is the Facebook page. I like being able to see what events are coming up and find out if playgroup is on.

I found good information there about council clean ups and other things happening at the shopping centre too. I really like that Jen does art at the mall for kids in the holidays. My kids liked making things with her out of recycled materials. They have been making things out of boxes and bottles at home since she showed them the ideas. One of them even told her teacher about it and they have done it with their class at school as well. My daughter says now all the time 'Don't throw that out! I can make stuff from it!' I like that they have learned about recycling. It is good for them to help the environment and not to waste things." - *Lui*

"Joining the Minto seniors group has been a pretty good experience. I was a bit nervous about going but decided to give it a chance. I'd been feeling a bit bored and lonely after my friends moved away from Minto. I thought it was about time to make a few new friends. The group is pretty small right now because it just started but the people there are really nice.

I'm looking forward to going on some outings and meeting new people as they join up. Jen has told me about some other things that MDSI does and I'm thinking of giving the Men's Shed a look too. I'm pretty handy around mechanical things, so I might be able to help out there." - *Byron*



SETTLEMENT GRANTS PROGRAMME (SGP)

Australian Government Department of Social Services

The Settlement Grants Programme (SGP) project supports new arrivals (who have lived in Australia for less than five years) to settle effectively in Australia, with priority to Humanitarian Entrants.

SGP delivers this assistance through casework, referrals and information sessions on life skills, education and training, health and financial management, accommodation, family relationships and law; development of social support groups, and facilitating and supporting target group involvement in mainstream activities such as sporting, schooling and volunteering.

SUPPORTING AMIRA

Reflections from an SGP Worker

Amira (pseudonym) came to Australia from Malaysia four years ago, to live with her two daughters and son in law. Sixty years old, and speaking very little English, Amira struggled with isolation when she first came to see me.

She was referred to MDSI Multicultural Art Group by a mental health nurse who spoke her language. The nurse wanted Amira to meet other women and to get involved in social activities given that she was very depressed and had no friends.

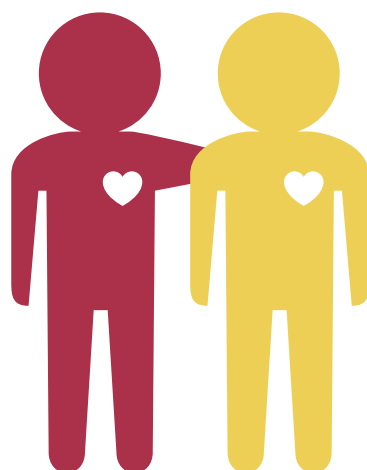
Amira was unable to use public transport, having regular panic

attacks. She was very stressed, depressed and afraid of doing things for herself. Her children were all working and had little time to support her.

It took time, but Amira began to feel at home with the Multicultural Art Group. She was very shy at first, having no self-confidence, nevertheless she participated in some of the Art projects that the group was involved in. She started making friends and was talking to one of the women who spoke her language. She was always worried that she would be criticised and made fun of because she did not speak English and for not being a good artist.

With time and support from workers and peers she gained confidence that was reflected in her work and in her relationship with the other women. She participated in group activities such as outings and information sessions, and slowly she came out of her shell and started talking to everyone and not just to the one person who spoke her language.

I referred her to MDSI conversational English classes, where she grew in her conversational capacity. Not long ago, at the end of one of the Art classes she told me that she was going to take the bus home and does not need help from the mental health nurse any more as she can speak English and will tell the bus driver where she needed to go.



The rapport built and support provided to Amira through the Art Group, meant that Amira trusted us to help her with other serious issues impeding her safety and settlement including Domestic Violence. Though she was very upset and afraid, through assisted referrals to relevant agencies including the Police, she was able to make positive life choices that put her in control of the situation. Today, Amira is safe, happier and regularly participates in MDSI programs and community activities.

CINTA'S STORY

Cinta (pseudonym) was only 13 year old when she arrived in Australia last year from Indonesia. Having a very limited grasp of English language, Cinta struggled with her schooling and joined the Homework Help club for tutoring. By joining the Homework Help Club, she was able to practice and dramatically improve her English language skills. As Cinta's SGP youth worker, it always makes me smile to remember the day she ran up to tell me, she had gotten the 2nd highest mark out of the class in her Maths test.

In addition to the support in completing assignments with the help from our volunteer tutors, she made friends and built a peer support network that supported her to feel connected and welcome in her new community.

98



orientation workshops to help new arrivals understand & participate in Australian culture & better participate in the local community.



269

new arrivals received the targeted support they needed to settle effectively.



conversational English classes.

153



social support group sessions helping new arrivals to build social support networks & reduce isolation.



22

education & awareness activities to help our local community be informed on issues regarding Australia's humanitarian processes & the strength of diversity.

“When I’m painting,
I feel so relaxed and
I forget everything
bad around me”

- Amira, member of the Women’s Art group



YOUTH AND FAMILY SUPPORT SYSTEM (YFS)

CASE STUDY

Amy (pseudonym) was referred to the Youth and Family Support programme through her school. She was struggling with her father’s absence, in regular conflict with her peers, and was subject to ongoing verbal abuse from her sibling at home.

Amy was experiencing low self esteem and demonstrating limited resilience to her situation.

The Youth and Family Support (YFS) worker utilised strengths based practices to help Amy grow in confidence and resilience, and respond proactively to stressors at home. Amy’s self awareness increased through her participation in self esteem and communication workshops, reaching goals she had identified and worked together with the YFS worker to meet.

Additional support was provided by school counsellor and external family mediation.

Within three months, Amy became aware of her personal strengths and capacity to cope with difficult situations.



young people
became safer,
more resilient &
better equipped
to respond to &
overcome issues
at home