

AEDC workshops

Workshops report

April 2023



Introduction

A Village for Every Child partnered with the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) team in the ACT Community Services Directorate to deliver a series of workshops to its partners and other stakeholders in Belconnen. The purpose of the workshops was to inform the community about the outcomes of the 2021 AEDC data with a specific focus on Belconnen, to discuss why the outcomes were trending as they were and identify where opportunities were to respond to what the data was saying. It also provided a networking opportunity, bringing together services (government and non-government), schools and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. The Workshops were delivered in June and July 2022 in response to the 1 April 2022 release of the 2021 AEDC data.

In 2009, Australia became the first country in the world to collect national data on the developmental health and wellbeing of all children during their first year of full-time school (ACT Government, 2022), now known as the AEDC. The success of the 2009 AEDC collection laid the foundation for the Australian Government's commitment to ongoing AEDC data collection cycles in 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021. The AEDC highlights what is working well and what needs to be improved or developed to support children and their families, and helps communities know how their children are progressing (ACT Government, 2022). As a population-based measure, the AEDC is not designed to be an individual diagnostic tool and is instead reported publicly at a community level (ACT Government, 2022).

The AEDC data is reported as the number or percentage of children developmentally on track, developmentally at risk or developmentally vulnerable across 5 developmental domains: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills (school-based); and communication skills and general knowledge. The AEDC domains have been shown to predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success. To complement the domains there are 3 AEDC summary indicators that provide a high-level picture of how children are faring in their development, these are children: developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain(s) (Vuln1); developmentally vulnerable on two or more domain(s) (Vuln2); and developmentally on track on 5 domains.

A Village saw the AEDC as a first step in sharing regional level data with their community. It was also Village's first exposure to the broader community, so was an opportunity for Village to gain wider exposure and begin engaging the community in conversations about Belconnen.



Workshop 2 : Village partners & other community & government organisations

Workshop process

A Village for Every Child and Ms Tracy Power from the ACT AEDC Team held three stakeholder workshops. Each workshop was targeted to a specific audience, with a set of questions tailored to guide the discussion for that audience.

Table 1: Workshop Participants and Dates

Workshop	Participants	Date
Stakeholder workshop 1	Village Partners	2 nd June 2022
Stakeholder workshop 2	Representatives of relevant stakeholder organisations working in Belconnen	6 th June 2022
Stakeholder workshop 3	Representatives from Belconnen primary schools, ECECs and Playschool	25 th July 2022

Participants

A total of 77 participants attended across the three workshops:

Stakeholder workshop 1: Village Partners

Workshop 1 invited Village partners who are made up of members of the Leadership Group and three Working Groups. Of these members, there were 15 participants from Education Directorate, UnitingCare Kippax, Ginninderry, University of Canberra, CRCS, ARACY, Community resident, Yerrabi Yurwang, Community Services Directorate, ACT Health and YMCA.

Stakeholder workshop 2

Workshop 2 invited Village partners and expanded to include other service providers and Directorates from across Canberra. Of these, there were 34 participants from UnitingCare Kippax, Ginninderry, Woden Community Service, CRCS, YWCA, Community services #1, The Smith Family, Ginninderry, Community Services Directorate, Karinya House, Canberra Health Services, Barnardos, Education Directorate, EACH, Uniting, YMCA, Catholic Care, Libraries ACT, ACT Playgroups and University of Canberra.

Stakeholder workshop 3

Workshop 3 invited Early Childhood Education and Care services (ECECs) and schools, with a particular focus on those operating in the Belconnen region but was not limited to this. Of these, there were 28 participants from Evatt primary school, Latham primary school, Kingsford-Smith school, Southern Cross Early Childhood school, Melba preschool, Koala playschool, Franklin Early Childhood School, Bruce ECEC (CRCS), Bruce Ridge ECEC (CRCS), Anglicare ECEC at Southern Cross Early Childhood school, Sage Early Learning and Care, YMCA Early learning Belconnen and Community Services Directorate.

Workshop activities

All the workshops followed the same format, with a slight tweak to the small group questions for each audience. Questions for the third workshop were adapted to suit the participant group representing ECEC services and schools. A copy of the workshop agendas can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 of this report.

Stakeholder workshops (workshops 1 and 2)

Stakeholder workshops started with a presentation from Village about the purpose of the Village initiative, and of the workshop. Ms Power from the ACT AEDC team then presented on the AEDC, outlined what it was, how the census is undertaken and explained the data from the Belconnen

community profile. Ms Power spoke about the importance of considering populations where there were trends of increasing or high levels of developmental vulnerability over time; but also highlighted the need to be aware of small populations when comparing data at a local community (suburb) level.

Attendees were asked to reflect on the information and break up into small groups with people from other services or organisations to ensure there was a diversity of perspectives. This also provided an opportunity to connect with others, in line with a secondary purpose of the workshops being to build and foster stakeholder relationships. In these groups the attendees were asked to reflect on these questions:

1. *Why are children in Belconnen more developmentally vulnerable than other children in Canberra (and Australia)? What is going on for them and their families?*
2. *How can the Leadership Group/Working Groups/other services use this data to drive change in this community?*
3. *What will you take back to the Leadership Group/Working Groups?*

ECEC and School workshop (workshop 3)

Workshop 3 was tailored specifically for Belconnen primary schools and ECEC services. The purpose of this workshop was the same as for the other workshops, but with the additional outcome of bringing together schools and ECEC services to facilitate fostering connections between the two sectors. The groups were asked to reflect on these questions:

1. *What are you already doing to support children with developmental needs?*
2. *What could we do as a community to improve outcomes for children before they start formal schooling?*
3. *What could you or others do to improve outcomes for the children in your care, what would that be?*
4. *What are the barriers to improving outcomes?*



Workshop 3: ECEC's and schools

Key findings

The key findings are the themed responses to each of the questions across the three workshops.

Why are children in Belconnen more developmentally vulnerable than other children in Canberra? (workshops 1 & 2)

- **financial/social resources:** high cost of living; ECEC affordability; housing stability; socioeconomic history of Belconnen.
- **service access:** cost and availability; lack services (including specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services); lack of interpreter availability and resources in variety of languages; service funding; limited individual funding to access private early intervention services and lack of free or low cost early intervention services; waiting lists; transport (time & cost).
- **family capacity:** language barriers; education, literacy or English language comprehension; mental health; domestic or family violence; trauma (including intergenerational); isolation (transient city); NDIS requirements; time pressures and competing priorities.

How can you use this data to drive change in the Belconnen community? (workshops 1 & 2)

- **communicate data:** consciousness raising within community (people don't expect our children to not be developing well); promote protective factors for child development.
- **sector support:** support ECECs to be equipped with knowledge; ECEC services to be available as a first port of call for families; advocate for improved quality and access to early childhood services.
- **educate and inform families:** build awareness and support programs for parents; promote child development information to support parent/carer confidence and empowerment.
- **use data to inform service delivery:** advocate using data of known high vulnerability locations to attract funding; develop pilot programs; use data for community planning i.e outreach & services to where needed.
- **deeper research with ACT data:** advocate for deeper research through an ACT data linkage (to aid in identifying ACT specific barriers/protective factors – may be different from national research); deeper understanding with existing data including Census and AIHW data.

What are you already doing to support children with developmental needs? (workshop 3)

- **programs for children:** small group programs; language; sports; mental health; anxiety & wellbeing programs.
- **services for children:** breakfast clubs; early education opportunities - 3YO, Koori Preschool, Early entry; referrals to school psychologist; access to Paediatrician (outside standard office hours); funding additional allied health assessments; inclusion support
- **supports for families:** playgroups (school and ACT Playgroups); parenting groups; multigenerational learning; nutrition sessions; building parent capacity - knowledge of services; advocacy; community navigation supports in schools; community library with coffee machines (the Nest); parent advisory group; partnerships with families.
- **community:** allied health professionals available for teachers/educators; improved transition processes; support from preschool pathway team; school community coordinator.

What could we do as a community to improve outcomes for children before they start formal schooling? (workshop 3)

- **services for children:** seek out children who don't access services; increase pre-school hours; expand 3YO preschool.
- **expand/develop new service offerings for families:** expand support services e.g., Karralika; increase community programs for parents e.g., reducing anxiety workshops (general not specific to diagnosed anxiety); reading programs; reading nights; more playgroups (school based and ACT playgroups); drop-in parenting sessions.
- **early childhood education and care:** improve knowledge/skill of educators; offering developmental training for educators; within ECEC run separate curriculum/programs for 3-4yrs and 4-5yrs even if in same room.
- **service changes:** increase allied health offerings; advertise services better so families can be directed to the right place; offer information in multiple languages; have CYPs liaison officers available; local library link; better connections to support transitions.
- **service system:** reform ECEC system - focus on accessibility for families; more financial investment in early years; schools/ECECs as multi-disciplinary hubs for community – offering occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychology, nutrition, NDIS support – (wrap around services) from site (not current service centres).

What are the barriers to improving outcomes? (workshop 3)

- Covid
- **children:** fatigue
- **families:** capacity, knowledge, skills and resources; education, literacy or English language comprehension, including lack of translation availability; time; wellbeing; financial pressures; social constructs (addiction, substance abuse); isolation (less family support).
- **early childhood education and care:** community lack trust in educators; educator wellbeing; staffing (high staff turnover).
- **service system:** funding; red tape; transport/access; lack of services/wait list for services; disconnect between service systems; disconnected transition processes; communication between ECEC, pre-school and school; development misconceptions both in community and professional messaging (i.e., not ready for diagnosis, wait and see, boys being boys).



Workshop 3: ECEC's and schools

Action and current responses to AEDC

The key findings from the AEDC workshops combine into 3 high level themes: **utilising data; programs, services and supports for children and families;** and **systems**. There are already numerous responses from ECECs, schools, services and government across the ACT. Some of the key activities, supporting the Belconnen region, are mapped below.

Utilising data:

- Increased awareness of AEDC results to sector - AEDC workshops were a catalyst for driving the desire in the Belconnen community to respond to the data
- Increased awareness of AEDC results to ACT stakeholders - several community organisations and schools have already sought consultation with AEDC team to prepare 2021 AEDC data to support initiatives and funding applications
- Increased awareness of AEDC results to ACT community - AEDC team continues to be available to support data awareness and utilisation e.g., AEDC data for tailoring regional responses, to support grant applications
- Provided action learning for Village with [Belconnen Child and Family Community Profile workshops](#), conducted between June and August 2022
- Increased awareness of AEDC results - Village [Better Data Working Group](#) is developing a Belconnen Community profile containing AEDC data and other local data, this will be used in a variety of ways including advocacy for local initiatives
- Consciousness raising within community - Village, in 2023, is planning an engagement series to use the Belconnen Community Profile to talk to local families about data and the story behind the data and to identify community priority areas of focus/need
- Used AEDC data to identify needs in the development of *The Collective at Evatt* as a pilot for co-locating and coordinating services and programs in schools and ECECs
- Using AEDC to help determine the information that needs to be provided in the child development and schools transitions education campaign being rolled out through the Village [Improved Transitions to School](#) Working Group (Transitions) in 2023
- ACT AEDC team are sharing AEDC data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the ACT to establish partnerships to publish the 2021 ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Story
- ACT AEDC team are developing several data modules for release in 2023 to complement the ACT AEDC 2021 report, to share the deeper story of ACT's data for specific topics such as ACT regions, ACT trends over time, early childhood education and special needs
- ACT Government are utilising AEDC data as an indicator for local frameworks: the ACT Wellbeing Framework, including the Children and Young Persons Lens and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement and associated dashboard of data.

Programs, services and supports for children and families:

- Improving access to service and program information for families and services - Village is creating an online [Directory](#) of ACT services that support children and their families
- Increasing parental and educator understanding of child development - in 2023, Village [Improved Transitions to School](#) Working Group (Transitions) is rolling out a child development and school transitions education campaign across partner ECECs to provide families and educators with information in supporting the development of their children
- Increasing school transition support to families through the Village *Transitions Network* which was developed from the Village Transitions Working Group. It is aimed at building relationships between ECEC services and schools so that transitions ideas, resources and

processes can be shared, and solid partnerships formed to improve the transition of children and families into school

- Improving access and support to families through schools and ECECs – schools and ECECs are already engaging with Village through the [Improved Service and School Connections with Families Working Group](#) (Connections) which is collaborating with Evatt primary school to deliver the *Collective at Evatt*
- Increased access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services - Connected Beginnings site in the ACT through a partnership between The Village and [Yerrabi Yerwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation](#)
- Providing improved access to services for children and families who don't seek or access services - Partnership and collaboration of services through *The Collective at Evatt*
- Increasing allied health access through the Child Development Service expansion offering early intervention for 2–3-year-old children from February 2023.
- Supporting 3-year-olds initiative, a key part of Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT. Promoting the initiative to new warm referrers and supporting Early Childhood Community Coordinators with AEDC resources.

Systems:

- Provide report to Village Working Groups and Leadership Group (Village for Every Child, 2022) to incorporate workshop learnings into Village strategic direction and initiatives, by supporting change at both the implementation and policy levels.
- Publish report on Village website.
- [A Good Start to Life for Young Children](#) is a research project in Belconnen focused on improving the delivery of local early childhood services to address the needs of the community and aims to reduce the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable in the Belconnen district through multi-sectoral service integration. This research project is based on AEDC data and seeking to improve the developmental trajectory for ACTs children.
- Connections that are being developed through Village are breaking down barriers to trust across services, sectors and with families
- ACT Government are utilising the AEDC strategically across early years strategies and action plans including Maternity in Focus, Health Canberra: ACT Preventative Health Plan, Best Start for Canberra's Children: the First 1000 Days Strategy, Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT, Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy and the development of ACT's Disability Strategy.

Opportunities not yet explored

Key findings from all three AEDC workshops highlighted these additional opportunities, most of which are being explored now:

- Community parent programs e.g., reducing anxiety; building better relationships
- Further advocacy for access to local disaggregated Belconnen data. The Belconnen Community profile will showcase a range of both local and ACT data and provide a platform from which usefulness of local data can be proved and advocacy for further disaggregated can be driven.
- Consolidate information and training opportunities in child development for ACT stakeholders, educators, service providers and parents.
- Develop opportunities to bring cross sector services together, alongside families, to further explore responses to child development in the ACT, specifically the Belconnen region where there is a trend of high levels of developmental vulnerability.
- Continued promotion of A Village, encouraging stakeholders and residents to join a Village Working Group or discuss other opportunities with Village members.

Workshop Feedback

77 people attended across the 3 workshops, confirming the success of the intended opportunity for Village to gain wider exposure and begin engaging the community in conversations about Belconnen.

An average of 43% (Table 2) of attendees completing feedback. The authors acknowledge that this section is based upon the responses received and not reflective of the entire audience who attended the 3 workshops.

The workshops were successful in obtaining the targeted audience with participant results aligned with the intended targeted audience of each different workshop (Table 2).

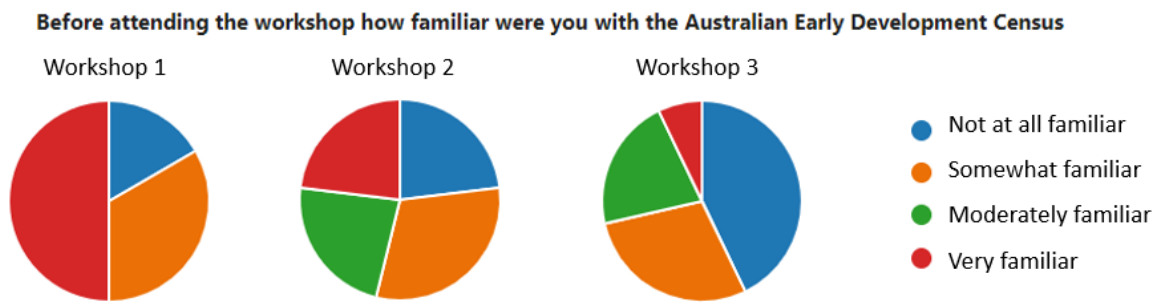
Table 2: Workshop Response Rate and Participants

Workshop	Workshop 1: Village Partners	Workshop 2: Belconnen Community and Service stakeholders	Workshop 3: Belconnen ECEC and School stakeholders
Response rate	6 (40%)	13 (38%)	14 (50%)
Participants sector	Community Organisations, Government Strategy/Policy/Data officers, researchers.	Community Organisations/ Development, Government officers	School Principals and ECEC Directors, Executive Teachers and Managers, Teachers and Educators, Community Organisations and Private Service Providers

The workshops varied in familiarity which successfully aligned with targeted participants. Workshop 3 participants were mostly unfamiliar with A Village for Every Child, with less than a third of the audience moderate-very familiar with A Village. This demonstrates great reach through the workshops in promoting A Village to a broader stakeholder group within Belconnen.

Familiarity with the AEDC followed the expected trend with those attending workshop 1 most familiar, workshop 2 participants equally spread in their familiarity with AEDC and only 14% of workshop 3 participants very familiar with the AEDC (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Workshop attendees' familiarity with the AEDC



Usefulness of the AEDC presentation was highly reported across all 3 workshops, with attendees stating the forums were 100% very useful in workshops 1 and 3 and 85% in workshop 2, with only 8% noting workshop 2 as somewhat useful. This demonstrated accomplishment of the intended aim of sharing outcomes of the data and what the data was saying. Participants commented:

- *alarming and surprising about the data*
- *incredibly informative*
- *visual traffic lights*
- *data broken down*

The group activity was well received. With 100% of respondents in workshops 1 and 2 finding the group activity very useful and only 8% of workshop 3 respondents noting the group activity as somewhat useful. Results confirm achievement of intended goal of workshops for participants to identify why results were trending poorly and identify opportunities. Participants commented:

- *networking and group discussion very useful*
- *validating, our struggles were shared*
- *building understanding and gaining insight*
- *collaboration and colab with others*
- *different perspectives and different backgrounds/sectors*

Networking was embraced by workshop participants, a very positive result as this was an intended goal of the workshops. Across all workshops, the majority of respondents found networking moderately or very useful. Participants commented:

- *great mix, different backgrounds*
- *becoming aware other services*
- *connecting, share ideas and experiences*
- *link ECEC to schools*
- *hopeful and excited, possibilities*

Across workshops 1 and 2, 16 respondents opted for more information from Village, demonstrating the intended purpose of reaching out to begin engaging with community in Belconnen.

Workshop 3 evaluation had additional questions to determine future needs of this audience. 100% of respondents agreed that the workshop met their expectations. Respondents provided the following suggestions for future supports they would find valuable:

- *workshops focussing on education for families and educators*
- *online sessions for educators*
- *ways to trigger resources and funding to support need*
- *connection with ECEC services in school area, support to establish relationships, create information sharing and forward planning opportunities*
- *support for students with speech difficulties*

Conclusion

The Village and AEDC partnership workshops provided Village members and partners; Belconnen stakeholders, and residents with the opportunity to learn about the AEDC and what the latest 2021 data is telling us about the Belconnen region. In line with a collective impact approach, the Village backbone and AEDC teams have built collaborative partnerships with each other, and this has extended further to workshop attendees. Nurturing these partnerships and developing a focused action plan to support the delivery of workshop finding outcomes will continue the collective impact actions for a Village and the AEDC. This work together strives to support Belconnen to be a place for children and families to thrive through building a stronger, more connected community.

Invitation to further engage and next steps

Village and AEDC will continue to work with its partners to facilitate action in response to the key themes identified in the workshops. These include:

- A commitment to continue the work that AEDC and Village are already doing to support driving change for children and families in Belconnen
- Providing this report to key stakeholders and encouraging further action
- A commitment to actioning the 'opportunities not yet explored'
- Village will be launching its largest community engagement campaign in 2023, with a particular focus on residents and understanding the needs of children and families in Belconnen
- Advocating for access to and utilisation of regional data to help inform regional responses
- AEDC will be releasing further 2021 data modules in 2023 to complement the ACT AEDC 2021 report, to share the deeper story of ACT's data
- Village will be implementing an Early Years Community of Practice for people working with children and families, including ECECs, preschools and child & family programs and services, to better connect, learn from, share information about and support each other
- Village will be developing a Child and Family Service and Program Directory for Belconnen and the ACT to provide information about what services and programs are available for families, from pregnancy
- AEDC welcomes conversations about data. Please contact Tracy Power, ACT AEDC Coordinator at aedc@act.gov.au
- Village welcomes conversations about partnering or helping facilitate future child and family initiatives in Belconnen
- Village operates three Working Groups that focus around specific areas of improvement. Information on these can be found on the [Village website](#). If you are interested in becoming involved in these Working Groups, please contact us on village@kippax.org.au.



References

ACT Government. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census 2021 Results for the ACT*. Canberra: Community Services Directorate.

ARACY. (2022). *The Common Approach*. Retrieved from Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY): <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/the-common-approach>

Village for Every Child. (2022). *Projects*. Retrieved from Belconnen - A Village For Every Child: <https://belconnenvillage.com.au/projects/>



Appendix 1 –Workshop 1 Agenda

Welcome, Acknowledgement, introductions, context setting	9.30am
<i>Acknowledgement of country Welcome and Introduction to Village Objectives of workshop, run through agenda & housekeeping</i>	
AEDC Presentation and Q & A	9.40am
Morning tea	10.35am
AEDC Discussion - small group activity	11.15am
<i>Discuss questions: 4. Why are children in Belconnen more developmentally vulnerable than other children in Canberra (and Australia)? What is going on for them and their families? 5. How can the Leadership Group/Working Groups use this data to drive change in this community? 6. What will you take back to the Leadership Group/Working Groups? What further data or information do you need to progress your work in the LG/WG?</i>	
Wrap up/Where to from here	11.20am
Next steps, time frame, re-engagement opportunities, supporting promotion of future workshops with their networks, ask participants to complete the feedback form	Close 11.30am

Appendix 2 –Workshop 2 Agenda

Welcome, Acknowledgement, introductions, context setting	9.30am
<i>Acknowledgement of country Welcome and Introduction to Village Objectives of workshop, run through agenda & housekeeping</i>	
AEDC Presentation and Q & A	9.40am
Morning tea	10.35am
AEDC Discussion - small group activity	11.15am
<i>Discuss questions: 1. Why are children in Belconnen more developmentally vulnerable than other children in Canberra (and Australia)? What is going on for them and their families? 2. How can you use this data to drive change in this community?</i>	
Wrap up/Where to from here	11.20am
Next steps, time frame, re-engagement opportunities, supporting promotion of future workshops with their networks, ask participants to complete the feedback form	Close 11.30am

Appendix 3 –Workshop 3 Agenda (ECEC’s and Schools)

Welcome, Acknowledgement, introductions, context setting	3.30pm
<i>Acknowledgement of country Welcome and Introduction to Village Objectives of workshop & run through agenda Objectives of workshop, run through agenda & housekeeping</i>	
AEDC Presentation and Q & A	3.40pm
Afternoon tea	4.35pm
AEDC Discussion - small group activity	5.15pm
<i>Discuss questions: 5. What are you already doing to support children with developmental needs? E.g., Internally, transition processes, playgroups, breakfast clubs, EALD and cultural activities, health services, parenting workshops, OOHC 6. What could we do as a community to improve outcomes for children before they start formal schooling? a) What could you or others do to improve outcomes for the children in your care, what would that be? 7. What are the barriers to improving outcomes?</i>	
Wrap up/Where to from here	5.20pm
Next steps, time frame, re-engagement opportunities, supporting promotion of future workshops with their networks, ask participants to complete the feedback form	
Workshop close & opportunity to network	5.30pm

Appendix 4 –Workshop Slide Summary

Available on [Village Website events page](#):

