



PROGRESS REPORT 2023

JANUARY - JUNE

BELCONNEN – A VILLAGE FOR EVERY CHILD

Vision

All children in Belconnen are physically healthy, socially, and emotionally strong and ready to engage fully in learning and life.

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Acknowledgement of country

A Village for Every Child (Village) would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work, the Ngunnawal people. Village pays its respects and celebrates the traditional owners' ongoing cultural traditions and contribution to this region. Village also acknowledges elders past and present and the children because they are our future.

Acknowledgement of participating organisations

The collective achievements of Village over the six months from January to June 2023 would not have been possible without the continued commitment and in-kind contributions from all the people and organisations, including our funders who are proud to have been part of creating the conditions for children to thrive in Belconnen.



Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
Best Start	ACT Government's Best Start For Canberra's Children Strategy
CHS	Canberra Health Service
CRSC	Capital Region Community Services
CSD	ACT Community Services Directorate
CYPS	ACT Child and Youth Protection Services
Imagination Library	Dolly Parton Imagination Library Australia
ED	ACT Education Directorate
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
UCK	UnitingCare Kippax
Village	A Village For Every Child
Yerrabi Yurwang	Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation

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1. Executive Summary

This progress report presents the activities facilitated by Village from January to June 2023. In the last six months the evolution of the function and role that Village is playing in place-based change in Belconnen is becoming evident. This reflects the initiative's maturity and the shift to ramp up the implementation of agreed actions. The achievements demonstrate how the work of Village aligns with key ACT and Commonwealth Government Strategies, including the ACT Wellbeing Framework and Future Education strategies.

Increased investment in the Village and Yerabi Yurwang Backbone infrastructure through the Commonwealth Department of Education Connected Beginnings Program has enabled synergies across the collective impact work of Village.

The capacity for Village to create and maintain the momentum and action in the last six months is due to the:

- ✓ Strength of the relationships and the structures and processes that are now embedded in the ways of working across the initiative.
- ✓ Strength of the systems developed and embedded by the Backbone team to support and progress the work with the Village partners.
- ✓ Continued and increased commitment and investment in time and expertise by partner organisations.
- ✓ Expansion of the depth and breadth of networks that has brought in new people to work on specific actions.

Activity highlights for the reporting period include:

- ✔ The evolution and expansion of The Collective to adapt using what was learned from the implementation of The Collective at Evatt and progress to trial in new sites.
- ✔ The evolution of Imagination Library Kippax, from idea to attracting resources for two pilot sites and establishing an implementation group that will leverage assets across Belconnen to impact over 146 families.
- ✔ Standing up new groups to address systems issues such as the ADHD Action Group.
- ✔ Meeting practical needs to address systems barriers through the launch of the Belconnen Child and Family Service Directory.
- ✔ Seeing the ongoing impact of previous activities such as the AEDC data workshops on the achievement of the community profile milestones.
- ✔ Commencement of the family journey mapping project to develop a resource that clearly defines the pathways for families into the support services.
- ✔ The development and roll out of the Transitions Information Campaign, specifically the school enrolment phase.
- ✔ Establishment of the Early Year Community of Practice community and government partnership

Village has embedded monitoring tools and processes to capture learning through intentional reflection processes. We have been working with an external consultant to measure the outcomes of the collective impact way of working, specifically the effectiveness of how Village has been embedding the enabling conditions for collective impact. The Measurement of Evaluation and Learning (MEL) section of this report provides background to and reflection on the recommendations from the draft external evaluation report.

2. Linking the strategic direction to outcomes to action

The guiding premise of Village is that children in Belconnen are physically healthy, socially, and emotionally strong and ready to engage fully in learning and life and this will be realised if we work collectively to strengthen the conditions for collective action and co-develop actions targeted to achieve specific outcomes. These actions will create changes in the eco-system that support children and families and that translate into positive outcomes for children, families, and the sector.

Village facilitates various activities and projects designed to create change for parents, families, community, and the sector. These were referred to as inter-sectoral projects in the ED Deed Agreement.

The process to collaboratively design and implement projects strengthens the conditions for collective impact and broader systems. Work in these project areas is underpinned by the role of the Backbone team and its supporting structures to host, hold and generate activity.



Diagram 1: A Village for Every Child Outcomes.

The working relationships between Village and relevant ACT Government Directorates enables the practical collective actions that come from the place-based way of working to connect with the implementation of strategies, including the Future of Education Strategy, the Best Start Strategy, the ACT Wellbeing Framework, and the proposed actions in the Draft Preventative Health Action Plan. Village is uniquely positioned to align cross-Government objectives and create synergies between on-the-ground actions that meet the goals of relevant Directorates, and has demonstrated this in this reporting period.

Initially there were five intersectoral projects in the original Deed (2019). In 2020 these were reshaped to create the three current project areas¹. Each area had a working group assigned to develop and implement actions. These revised areas of focus continue to be relevant as a way of framing Village's work. As the initiative has matured, activities aligning to these have emerged from other areas outside of the working groups. However, the three focus areas continue to reflect community needs and goals and, recently released Government strategies.

The three areas are:

- ① Improved service and school connection with families,
- ② Improved transition to schools,
- ③ Better data collection.

The Village Backbone team and its partners also target effort towards continuing to strengthen collective ways of working². This fourth focus area, enabling the conditions for collective impact and systems change includes:

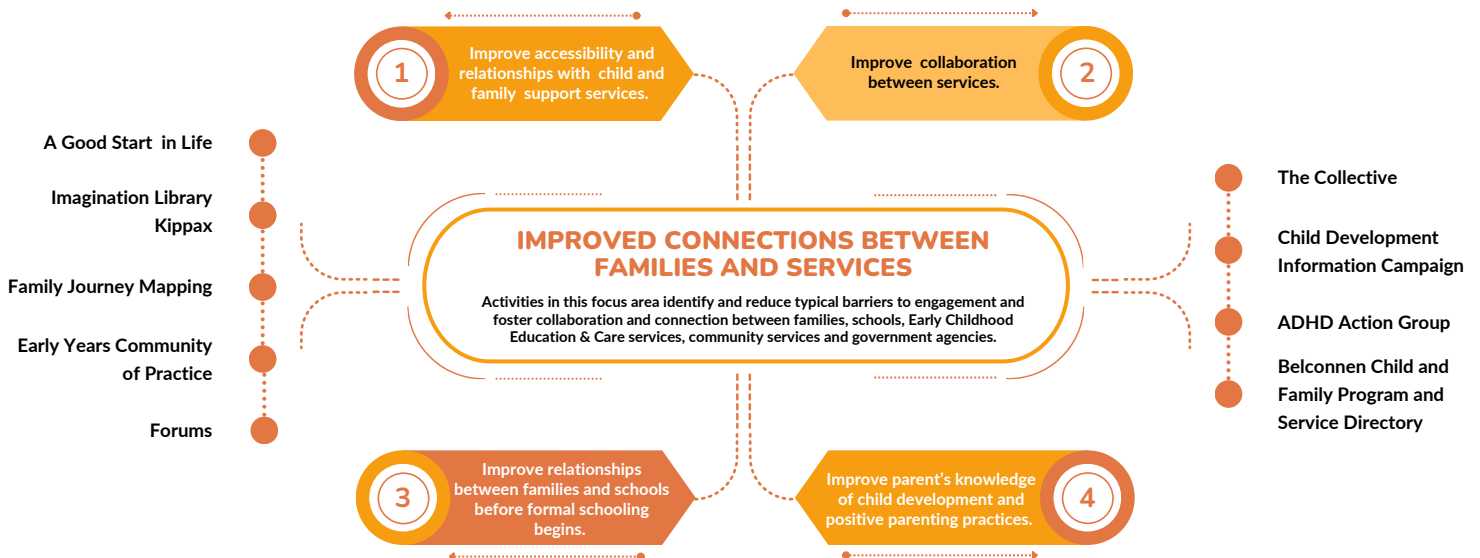
- ✓ Continuous communication,
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement and participation,
- ✓ Expanding relationships and networks.

The diagrams and accompanying narrative in section three show the focus area, objectives and current Village activities that have been co-developed with a growing network of stakeholders. The outcomes of some activities will map to more than one focus area. This shows the complexity of the issues that are being targeted. The activity reports are included in the focus area that most aligns with the activity's primary objectives.

¹ See Jan 2021 Progress Report to ED. Further detail about the rationale for the merging of these projects is in 2022 Progress Reports

3. Activity reports

Focus Area One



Project updates

The Collective Case Study

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ The implementation of The Collective at Evatt.
- ✓ The decision to expand the delivery of The Collective into other schools and ECECs in Belconnen to broaden engagement across the Belconnen community.
- ✓ The decision to shift the focus of support to the 0-5 years age group by engaging more directly and widely with the ECEC sector.

The Collective at Evatt is a holistic place-based initiative to support the education, health, and development of children in the local community. Led by the Connections Working Group, services co-locate at Evatt Primary School on a weekly basis to connect, collaborate and support the delivery of targeted and coordinated services, supporting the School as a Community concept. It is aligned to the Future of Education Strategy³ and its accompanying Implementation Plan⁴. The initiative has focused on enhancing partnerships with the school and its community to improve wellbeing outcomes for children and families connected with the school.

It aims to:

- ✓ Improve accessibility and relationships with child and family support services.
- ✓ Support families to access and receive services in a coordinated, efficient, and effective way.
- ✓ Improve collaboration between services and organisations.
- ✓ Enhance community connections and opportunities.
- ✓ Overcome barriers to working collaboratively across organisations by challenging existing beliefs, funding and operational systems and processes.

The Collective operated at Evatt from 2 November of term 4, 2022 to the end of term 1 2023, delivering 11 sessions at the school with an average of 5 services attending per session. It increased connections between the school and services and between services, which resulted in:

- ✓ An expanded understanding of what services and programs are available, how they operate and how to support families to access them.
- ✓ Increased partnerships, for example, a partnership with Libraries ACT to deliver Giggle and Wiggle and UnitingCare Kippax to deliver Tuning into Kids onsite.
- ✓ The Smith Family enrolling 42 children into the Learning for Life program.
- ✓ The school and participating services facilitated referrals for parents into appropriate wrap around services including NDIS and UnitingCare Kippax support services.

Members of The Collective completed two surveys as part of the monitoring and evaluation for the initiative. Whilst it is too soon to make claims against the outcomes, the survey responses reported that The Collective provided ways for services to collaborate with the school and each other, so accessibility to services improved. The project began to facilitate relationships between families and services before school enrolment. Members of the Working Group identified the following positive outcomes:

- ✓ The project is an example of multiple services, organisations and individuals coming together and having the support to work collaboratively.
- ✓ Strong commitment and involvement of partners with a focus on the shared goal of supporting a family centred and strengths-based approach.

Feedback from the Collective at Evatt has supported the ongoing co-design and planning for replication of a collective model at other sites. This learning includes:

✔ Relationships between partners are critical, including clarity about expectations, roles and what organisations need to deliver on-site wrap-around services. For example, the importance of ongoing communication between services delivering on the ground to ensure smooth timetabling of service offerings and ensuring the space is appropriate.

✔ The need to understand and be able to talk about the power dynamics between partners and the impact of differing agendas on the shared goal. These differences became more obvious as the project moved on to implementation.

✔ The need to broaden the people involved in the project, including involving local families as part of the co-design and strengthening contact with ECEC services and playgroups.

✔ The future benefit of embedding a formal reflection on action MEL process that can underpin the model as it evolves and expands.

The initial focus of The Collective was on the school community where established relationships already existed. The project will now expand and shift its focus to children and families before they start school, which aligns with the broader objective of the project and Village as a whole. The Working Group agreed that The Collective's aims will continue to guide its next stage of expanding The Collective approach. Considering the achievements and the learnings from Evatt, The Collective is expanding its reach to offer schools and ECECs rotating access to The Collective. Building on existing relationships, schools and ECECs will be invited to host The Collective, with plans to start at these sites in term three. With the shift to focus on children and families before they start school, the Working Group has also committed to working more closely with the ECEC services in Belconnen in other ways.

This Working Group has come a long way and what it has achieved to date has been really exemplary. The members are genuinely involved and keen on improving outcomes for children through meeting the broader goals of Village.

Collective at Evatt Survey respondent

Due to its involvement in The Collective, Evatt Primary School continues to evolve its Family Connect program. It will remain in the Village Connections Working Group and will contribute to the ongoing learning from its approach.

The function and role of the Village Backbone team continues to include:

- ✔ Convening, connecting, facilitating, and supporting trusting relationships within and beyond the Working Group.
- ✔ Creating structures and processes to support meetings, co-design, project management and monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to the tangible outcomes for families and the service system, this project contributed to change in the collective impact ways of working demonstrated by:

- ✔ Strong engagement of Working Group members who contributed leadership and action towards the shared goal.
- ✔ Effectively navigating the power dynamics and relationship challenges that arise in complex collaborations to agree on positive ways to address issues.

Imagination Library Kippax Case Study

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✔ Success in bringing Imagination Library to the ACT for the first time and securing funding to deliver the program (Imagination Library Kippax and Imagination Library Evatt Primary School).
- ✔ Over 250 vulnerable families (children aged 0-3 years) able to participate in the program across 6 Belconnen suburbs for a minimum of 2 years.

In March this year, a member of the Connections Working Group identified the opportunity offered by being involved with Village to leverage the collaboration that existed within the Working Group to support the delivery of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in the ACT. What resulted from this was a decision to pilot two programs. One delivered by Evatt Primary School for the Evatt and McKellar communities, and one coordinated by a collaboration of interested stakeholders, for the suburbs of Holt, MacGregor, Higgins and Latham. These suburbs feed into Kippax which is a central hub for services including Kippax Library, the West Belconnen Child & Family Centre and UnitingCare Kippax. Through the inspiration and advocacy of the Collective Implementation Group, they were able to secure funding to deliver the program.

Imagination Library⁵ is a free book gifting program with the goal to inspire a love of reading in children. Each month, enrolled children receive a high-quality, age-appropriate book in the mail, free of charge. Children receive books from birth to age five. This opportunity aligns with the Early Childhood Strategy and Best Start for Canberra's Children⁶. It directly responds to improving the school readiness of children in Belconnen through increasing exposure to literacy in the home.

The funding secured for Imagination Library Kippax will enable 146 children (0-3 years) to access the program for two years. The roll-out, commencing in July, will involve programs or services that have existing connections with vulnerable families, including HIPPY, The Smith Family, EACH, CYPS and CRCS. Libraries ACT will be the local affiliate and will manage administration. The Kippax project will run alongside the Evatt Primary School's Imagination Library project, which will target families in Evatt and McKellar. The Evatt Primary School project recently received three years of funding through philanthropic partners.

The process to get Imagination Library from idea to implementation in less than six months demonstrates the strong engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders in the Village network and the degree of confidence and trust that they have in Village to commit to the initiative. Village brought together practitioners and policy people from across government Directorates and non-government organisations with philanthropists to develop a proposal and access resources. An implementation group has developed a delivery plan that will see organisations coordinate activities and resources that will wrap around and link services and programs with the families engaged in the program. The project will have shared monitoring and reporting.

The function and role of the Village Backbone team to make this project possible involved:

- ✔ Providing secretariat services and holding responsibility through the Memorandum of Agreement with United Way.
- ✔ Hosting the website and managing communications.
- ✔ Connecting and facilitating involvement across diverse stakeholders.

The Backbone team will continue to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project and will facilitate ongoing conversations with future partners to connect the program into other literacy efforts in the ACT, for example the Look Who's Talking community of practice.

ADHD Action Group

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Rapid response to an identified need, resulting in the standing up of the 15 member ADHD Action Group.
- ✓ Development of a shared Action Plan.

In May, a member of the Leadership Group from Yerrabi Yurwang raised the issue of families not being able to access support for children with ADHD. In response, the first meeting of the ADHD Action Group was held in June with 15 people representing nine organisations (invited by members of the Leadership Group and most who were new to Village), including the ACT Directorates of Education, ACT Health, Canberra Health Services and Community Services.

The Action Group's goals align with the Government's Best Start for Canberra's Children strategy. The group is also aware of the Australian Government's Inquiry into ADHD support services which is due to report in September this year.

The group, after its first meeting has agreed that its focus will be to identify opportunities in the system where members and other stakeholders could collectively co-design a program or service that provides further support for families of children with ADHD. The group is focused on action and will spend no more than six meetings to determine these opportunities. It will then reassess what is needed to move into co-design with families and implementation of any identified opportunities.

Members have been tasked with a range of actions that they will report back on at the next meeting in July, including to:

- ✓ Gather qualitative information about what families are seeking from a support program.
- ✓ Undertake analysis of current research relating to support for families.
- ✓ Define available resources and assets.

The capacity to respond quickly and gather this number of stakeholders impacted by the systems issues affecting families with ADHD, demonstrates the trust and commitment of Village partners and the strength of the systems and processes that have been created through the work of the Backbone team. It also shows the appetite for and readiness to contribute to local action that addresses complex systems issues.

The Belconnen Child and Family Service and Program Directory

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Design and delivery of Belconnen Child and Family Service and Program Directory.
- ✓ Distribution to over 400 stakeholders and 400 visits to the website page.
- ✓ Positive feedback from users.

The Directory² was developed by the Village Backbone team in response to feedback from schools, ECEC's and service providers who spoke about the challenge of finding information to enable them to refer families to local services and programs. Families and services, including Government services, commonly express that there is a lack of information and central place to go to know where and how to access support. The Directory is a resource for schools, ECECs, services and families in the Belconnen community, providing information about services and programs that operate in Belconnen or across the ACT to support children and families, with a focus on, but not limited to, pregnancy to five years. It includes ACT Government programs.

The Directory was launched in April as a downloadable PDF copy on the Village website and was released via CD-Net and across the Village networks. We are working towards creating a user-friendly directory on the website that allows users to search for services online. In the reporting period, approximately 400 users, accounting for 13.47% of the total website user base, visited the directory page.



Since the launch, several local child and family services have expressed interest in being listed in the directory.

The Backbone team and its communication infrastructure enabled the creation of this resource and its continued evolution, including keeping the directory up to date as more services in the network come forward to be included. The team have received feedback from service providers who extensively use the directory when referring parents to other supports. CYPS partners have shared the link with 200 staff. The Directory is an example of how the Village Backbone team responded to a systems barrier with a practical solution that is highly valued.

Family Journey Mapping

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Commencement of the family pathways map in response to an identified gap in clarity of entry points into the health, development, and disability services.
- ✓ Engagement from CHS, Education and CSD.

Understanding the journey of a family to access and move through the various parts of the systems that support them and their children to thrive underpins systems change work. Mapping the entry points into the system and the journey through the system will assist those in the system to communicate better with families about how to navigate and find support when and where they need it. Mapping also helps to identify where the pathways are smooth and where there are barriers.

The Backbone team and Village partners began work in June to create two maps – the family pathways map and the family journey map. Although this activity is just beginning, it shows the growing capacity for Village to work at and across the systems levels and to respond to an identified need. The Backbone team has led the conversations and is gathering and coordinating stakeholders. This work will, in the first instance, complement existing ACT Government resources and provide a practical and visual pathways map for families and services to see what services are available and the entry points into these services. It will focus on services that support child development, disability, and health concerns. The second map will provide information about where in the system things need to change and what could be the leverage points to create the greatest change. Canberra Health Services, Community Services Directorate and the Education Directorate have been invited to contribute to the broader service system conversation on completion of the draft journey map.

University of Canberra's Good Start Project

The Backbone team has been working with the University of Canberra (UC) to develop a proposal that will enable the allied health placements in ECECs to continue beyond the current funding for the Good Start research project. This will meet several needs across the early years system:

- ✓ Provide allied health support to a sector that is increasingly carrying the burden of expectation that they are the 'answer' to improving child outcomes.
- ✓ Build capacity of educators in ECECs in relation to child development/disability.

- ✔ Provide a 'service' and support that helps to identify child development or disability in the ECECs, by observing children.
- ✔ Filling placement gaps provide exposure for students to work outside a clinical setting and in the 'real world,' supporting career pathway choices by exposing students to the needs in early childhood.

The research project involves a team of researchers evaluating multi-sector, multi-component, and integrated services/interventions for improving the health and wellbeing of children who are at risk of development vulnerability. The Village Coordinator is on the advisory group for the UC's Good Start Project. The project links to the Best Start strategy. The project aims to:

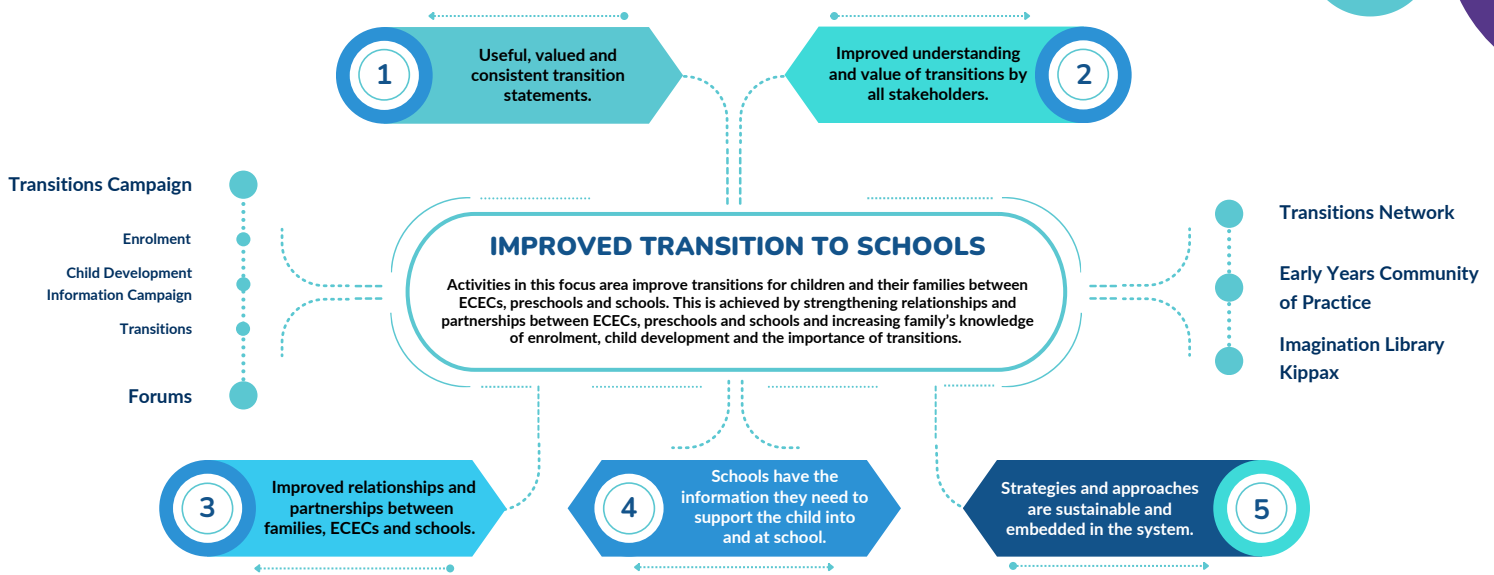
- ✔ Guide public health policy efforts in promoting health and wellbeing for early childhood.
- ✔ Inform local support efforts focused on creating change in the community and broader systems.

A significant contribution of the project has been to facilitate work experience placement opportunities for allied health students in ECEC settings in the Belconnen region. The outcomes for students and ECEC sites have been positive, providing a link between two key sectors of the early years system. Funding for the project ceases in December 2023.

Village's involvement in the project has directly enabled:

- ✔ Connecting the UC team with Yerrabi Yurwang to consider how the placement model could support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services and families.
- ✔ Strengthening relationship with UC to show the value of the role of academic institutions in place-based systems change.
- ✔ Reporting back to the Connections Working Group and Leadership Group about the project, increasing the profile of the project and raising awareness of its potential.
- ✔ Connecting the UC team and elevating the project to a broader audience to explore ways of securing ongoing funding and seeking ways to partner.

Focus Area Two



Project updates

The Improved Transitions Campaign Case Study

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

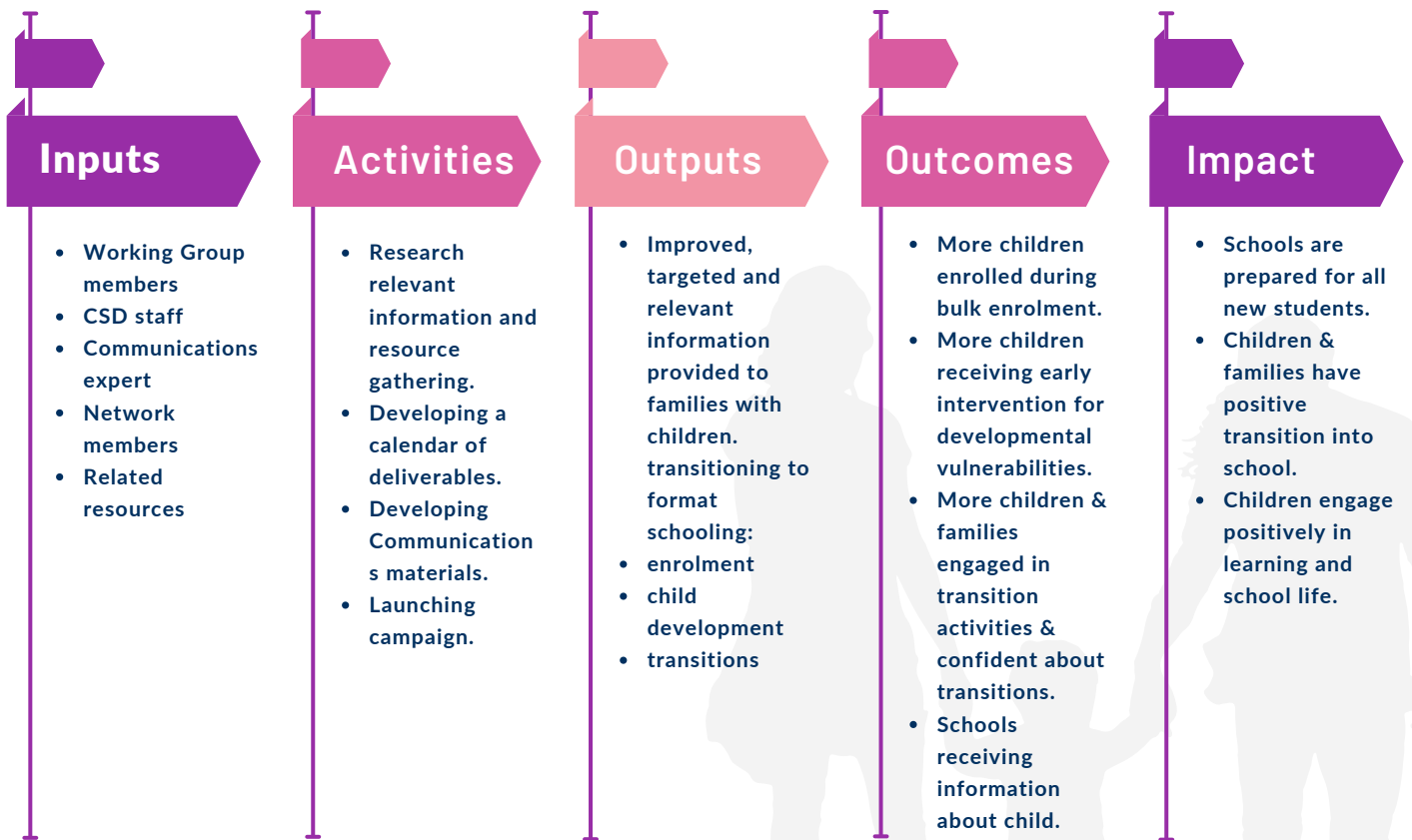
- ✓ Development and implementation of the first phase of the Improved Transitions Campaign
- ✓ The campaign resources, videos, and posters were shared with Belconnen families via the 6 partner ECECs and via email and social media. Since its launch in mid-April, the website has had 1,000 hits.
- ✓ Creation of information pages for each public school in Belconnen
- ✓ Standing up a Critical Friends Group
- ✓ Content developed for the child development phase of the Improved Transitions Campaign
- ✓ Child Health and Development checks (Blue Book) poster created and signed off by ACT Health and Canberra Health Services

The aim of the Improved Transitions Campaign² is to improve transitions for children and families into formal schooling. The campaign directly addresses the four goals of the Best Start Strategy¹⁰. The campaign was developed in response to insights from partner ECECs and schools about the experience of families and knowledge gaps. Emerging from these conversations were three clear themes which were developed into three phases, each having a video and accompanying resources which, as they are developed will be available on the Village website¹¹. Products for each phase will address Focus Area Two objectives and may also align to objectives from Focus Area One, for example the child development phase. For ease of reporting, the project will be assigned to Focus Area Two.

The three phases are:

- ✓ Enrolment
- ✓ Child development
- ✓ Transitions

Improved Transitions Campaign Theory of Change



Led by the Transitions Working Group, over the last six months, the campaign has involved external stakeholders as critical friends to contribute to the design of communication products. This includes practice and policy experts from more than twenty organisations that are part of the ecosystem that supports children to be ready to transition to school. For example, for the enrolment phase, the Director of Enrolment, ED was involved and for the child development phase members of the AEDC and Best Start strategy teams contributed alongside service experts.

A poster for parents about developmental milestones and development checks referring to the Blue Book was finalised at the end of June. It was developed with UC, AEDC and CHS and formally approved by CHS and ACT Health. This poster will be used by UC Good Start project in partner ECECs, included as part of the child development phase of the Transitions campaign, provided to all ECECs in Belconnen and has been widely circulated across Village's networks. Village is printing copies to distribute across its networks. There has been significant interest in the poster from partners and stakeholders.

The Backbone team's role as facilitator and coordinator underpins the development and implementation of the campaign. It has supported the Transitions Working Group and has brought together decision makers and content experts to create the content and resources. The Backbone team has drawn on the internal design and communication expertise in the team to take the ideas and create and promote the end products.

Early signs of impact from enrolment campaign include positive feedback from ECEC Directors, sharing resources between school staff and enrolment officers, and families using the resources.



This is terrific, well done indeed! I really love it, and no probs with any of the messaging. I will send to our comms people, maybe we can link to it somewhere?

ED Director of Enrolment



The enrolment video was very helpful for enrolment. I sent it to several friends who were struggling with enrolment.

Parent ECEC

Improved Transitions Network

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Hosted two Transitions Network meetings (one per term).
- ✓ Strengthened connections and understanding between schools and ECECs.

The Improved Transitions Network was formed at the end of 2022 as a deliverable from the Improved Transitions to School Working Group. It was established to create a forum for connecting ECECs and schools. The first meeting had eighteen members from 12 schools and ECECs attend. The purpose of the group is to:

- ✓ Build connections between ECECs and schools, including sharing system and transitions knowledge, resources, and processes with the aim of forming partnerships between the ECECs and schools.
- ✓ Grow understanding of what is happening and influencing practice in each area.
- ✓ Collectively support families by being better able to help transition from ECECs to school.

The initial meeting demonstrated the importance of bringing these two early years sectors together as there was a clear shift in understanding of the two systems and the work that was being carried out particularly in the ECECs, to support children and families. The March meeting gave members an opportunity to contribute to the design and implementation of the products associated with the Transitions Campaign. The group reflected on how transitions pathways worked on the ground for 2023. Challenges raised include the increase in children's level of need for language and social skill support, barriers for families on visas accessing information about transitioning to schools and a lack of school specific enrolment and transition information.

The group has enabled ECEC members to feel more valued and connected to local schools. It has prompted ECECs to reach out to other local schools and encourage other ECECs to do the same, has been a forum to share and discuss information relevant to both schools and ECECs and enabled shared conversations with families and schools about transitions. With the reforms in early years education that will affect ECECs, the network will be a valuable mechanism for sharing information and quick feedback on the impact of change in the Belconnen community.

Early Years Community of Practice (CoP)

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

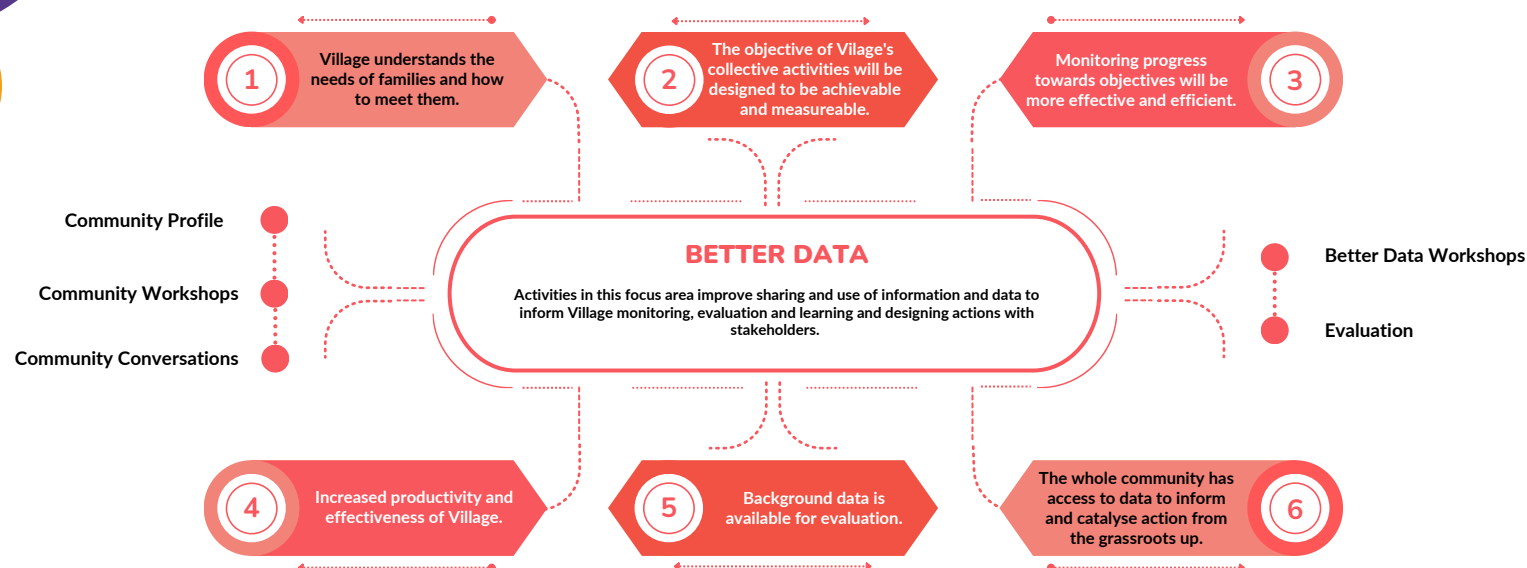
- ✓ The coming together of Village partners to develop the concept, including scoping and planning.
- ✓ Agreed first Early Years CoP for delivery in week 4, term 3.

The Early Years CoP idea emerged as a practical response to the recognised need for a more collaborative and connected family support service system that is easier to navigate, access and be responsive to family needs. The need for a CoP is also highlighted in the Best Start Interim Action Plan – First 1,000 Days¹². The CoP has been informed by this strategy and is partnering with a representative from the Best Start Strategy team in its delivery.

Village has facilitated the formation of a partnership between Village, CSD and the Network Coordinator for Belconnen, CRCS to plan the first CoP gathering. The Early Years Community of Practice will be delivered bi-monthly and aim to create a space for community and health services, schools and early childhood services, working with children, to connect, share practice and learn from each other. The meetings will be organised so that people walk out of the room with practical tips that they can take into their everyday practice. Topics will be identified by participants so that the CoP addresses what is relevant and topical for ECECs, primary schools, services and health providers who work with children and families.

The first meeting, scheduled for week four of term three, will focus on how to have conversations with families about child development and disability and how to support them to find appropriate services. The role of the Backbone team has been to bring the partners together, explore and guide decisions around the choice of topical presenters and ensure the projects align, complement, and build on each other. As momentum builds, the organising role will be shared between the founding partners and over time beyond the members of the network.

Focus Area Three




Project updates

Community profile

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ The adaption of the ARACY Nest Framework¹³ to frame the data.
- ✓ A series of workshops and review of indicators to inform data indicators:
 - ✓ A series of 'Better Data' workshops with the Leadership Group, partners, service providers and community residents were held to identify demographic and other indicators that are important to local stakeholders.
 - ✓ A review of existing indicators including the Children and Young People Lens of the ACT Wellbeing Framework, Closing the Gap, Kindergarten Check, AIHW, Tasmanian Child & Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the ABS Census, Child Friendly Alice Community Profile¹⁴, ACT health statistics.
- ✓ Identifying data parameters, data availability and data custodians.
- ✓ Draft development of the SEER platform ARACY Nest domain templates



The Village program requires high quality data to inform its choices about where to act for system change and to be able to track those changes over time. The Village community profile project is identifying existing data including data sources, data availability, data definitions, concept definitions and performance indicators to assist in this process. It is also incorporating the voice of the Belconnen community as a critical data source that supports a place-based response. This project aligns with national policy and strategy for sharing of data, particularly Government administration data so that communities can make shared decisions about what needs to change to improve outcomes for children and families in their local context and inform co-design of actions¹⁵. When finalised, the community profile will be used to inform Village priority action areas and be a resource for others working in Belconnen to align and target their policies, programs, and services to the local needs. It could also inform Government policy developments for the early years and service provision for the Belconnen community.

Working with SEER Data & Analytics and guided by the Better Data Working Group, work has progressed on the design and development of the profile. Members of the Working Group and the Village Backbone team are learning to use and ingest data into SEER platform. Work continues to draft the format for the community profile pages that will be hosted on the SEER Data & Analytics platform and linked to the Village website. The Working Group is developing a narrative to compliment the data that will tell the story of child development and wellbeing in Belconnen, including the risk and protective factors and what is significant for local families.

The process of developing the draft profile is highlighting data access issues. Village will be seeking to work with data custodians, including the Education Directorate, for access to relevant data that is currently not available at the regional level to inform a place-based response. The project has revealed possible strategic opportunities to work closely with ACT Government stakeholders to align indicators and data as it continues to implement strategies such as Closing the Gap and Best Start strategies.

A note about the ongoing impact of AEDC workshops

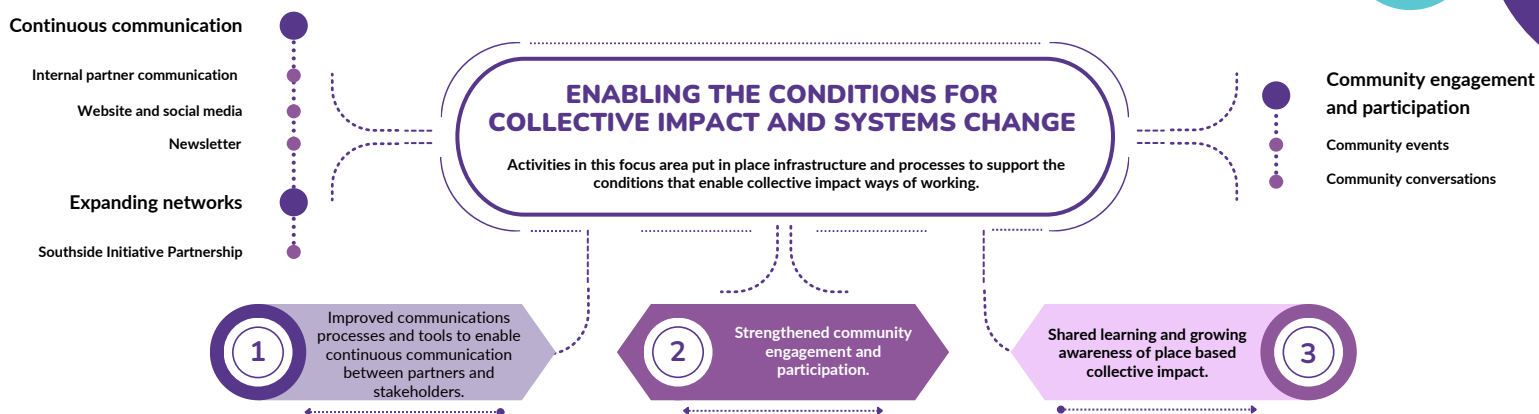
The impact of place-based collective impact activities builds upon each other to create momentum and enhance the conditions for future work. The activities become mutually re-enforcing. It is important to recognise that the AEDC workshops held in 2022 were catalysts for the milestones that have been achieved in this reporting period, particularly for the community profiles. The workshops were Village's first community front facing event and they were significant because they:

- ✔ Introduced the community to Village and the role of data in creating change.
- ✔ Introduced the AEDC data set to the community and other sectors, including ECECs who traditionally are not as well engaged.
- ✔ Brought people together to understand, discuss and share thoughts and strategies around addressing developmental vulnerability.
- ✔ Intentionally brought the ECEC services and schools into the same room to learn and discuss the implications of the AEDC data together, which became the catalyst for providing further opportunities to support these connections across Village projects.

The workshops strengthened Village's relationship with the ACT AEDC Coordinator and, as the workshops provided opportunities for schools and ECECS to further engage with the AEDC data, this partnership has contributed to raising the awareness of the importance of the AEDC data collection. The workshops also inspired the formation of the Southside Collective, a group of service providers and other stakeholders progressing collaborative actions to improve the way the early years system works on the ground in South Canberra.

This is an example of the growing strength of Village's capacity to build the enabling condition for collective impact, mutually reinforcing activities.

Focus Area Four



Project updates

Continuous Communication

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Centralising communication across many of the projects via the website, with front facing pages describing the work open to the public and hidden pages that partners have access to that manage information and resource sharing and organizing of the work.
- ✓ Development of videos, posters, and resources for the recently launched Transitions Campaign¹⁶ and a pop up to direct users to the enrolment information during the bulk enrolment period.
- ✓ Publication of The Belconnen Child and Family Program and Service Directory¹⁷.
- ✓ Construction of web pages for Connected Beginnings Program¹⁸ and Southside Initiative School Forum.
- ✓ Construction of other functionality including resources and information on child and family services in the web footer for easy access to information, and a new chat function.
- ✓ Redesign of Village newsletter

Quality design and use of communication platforms such as websites, social media and newsletters underpin the collective impact condition of continuous communication. In this reporting period, Village has been able to invest additional skilled resources to refresh our communications, with quick signs of impact. Having these resources in-house means that team members bring these skills into their daily work and are involved with the stakeholders and understand the goals of the various activities that rely on communications platforms. Of note are the specialised design skill set of the Communication Officer who has contributed significantly to the development of the Transitions Campaign. Without this skill set, the campaign design would have to be outsourced at significant cost.

The website has been updated to include up-to-date information about the various projects and highlighting the work-in-progress. The website serves as the primary source of information, and our goal is to make the navigation simple and intuitive. To achieve this, the navigation menus, web pages and categorised posts have been revamped, streamlining the process for the users to quickly find the information they need.

The website receives an average of 250 unique visitors per month, generates around 900 page views per month. We have an average of 400 sessions per month, with users spending an average of 1.5 minutes per session. The website receives 60% of its traffic from direct search, 27% from organic search, 5% from social media and 7% from referrals. This information will inform the use of the website to support the Service Directory and the Child Development Campaign.

The Village newsletters are produced every quarter and feature updates on our projects, partnerships, and Working Groups. The most recent editions have also highlighted other organisations, services and programs relating to early childhood, for example, a new program, or even a new app. The recent inclusion of a "spotlight" on a partner organisation captures the impact their involvement in Village has had. The April 2023 newsletter was distributed to 191 Village partners and 'friends of' Village. Members of the Leadership Group forward the newsletter to their networks, raising the profile of Village throughout relevant Directorates. The newsletter is also used as briefing materials for relevant Ministers with an interest in cross systems collaborative work.

The Village continues to use Facebook, with a solid number of followers. Facebook is being used strategically, linking posts to community education, sharing information about what is happening in Belconnen with partner services. It is used to launch Village activities and outputs, for example the Directory and the Transitions Campaign. All posts link back to website changes to create a consistency of messaging and information flow.

With the additional skills in the team, we can track website and newsletter data to show effectiveness and impact for the collective impact condition continuous communication.

Community engagement and participation

Milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Delivery of Neighbour Day
- ✓ Development of key engagement strategy – Community Conversations

A goal of place-based collective impact is to create the conditions for those who live in the community to become part of creating change. The vision is beyond community engagement, to community participation and community-led decision making and action. Participation begins with engagement.

Village seeks to engage community at two levels, people who live in the Belconnen area and people who represent services that support the residents of Belconnen. As Village matures, we are intentionally trialing ways to meet residents of Belconnen where they are at. The community data workshops, reported as part of the Community Profile project, are an example of this. More community data conversations are being planned.

In March, the Village Backbone team hosted a Neighbour Day event to connect with families. The theme was 'Create Belonging.' The purpose was to:

- ✓ Promote social connection amongst families of young children.
- ✓ Provide children with an opportunity to engage in healthy learning and play.
- ✓ Provide information for families about services and programs for children and families in the region and an opportunity for families to meet representatives from these organisations.

The event was supported by Village partners Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, The Y Holt Early Learning Centre, Libraries ACT, Capital Region Community Services, Mosaic Baptist Church, UnitingCare Kippax, A Goodstart In life, HIPPY and ACT Education Directorate. Fifteen families attended with close to 20 children, several who will be commencing preschool in the next two years and connected with the pathways to preschool resources.

In this reporting period the Backbone team, with input from relevant stakeholders, developed the approach to Community conversations which will commence in the second half of the year. The first phase of this will be the roll out of a survey to ask people living in Belconnen about hopes and dreams for children, barriers, and opportunities for change to improve the wellbeing of children in Belconnen.

The Village Backbone team was also part of the organising committee for Yerrabi Yurwang's Yuma Day. Yuma Day, held in January, was the inaugural event hosted by Yerrabi Yurwang (Yerrabi) to bring together the Aboriginal community and to introduce the organisation and the Connected Beginnings staff. Over 400 people attended.

Expanding Networks

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Adoption and delivery of the first in a series of quarterly Forums
- ✓ Establishment of regular meetings with Southside Initiative

The Forums are a recent activity initiated by the Southside Initiative and replicated by Village in the north. Village has partnered with the Belconnen Community Coordinator to deliver quarterly forums for people working in the sector to share insights, information, and real-life examples of transformative work. Seventeen people attended the first, held in June at Kingsford Smith Primary School. The agenda included presentations from two schools about how they are supporting children and families in their school communities, exploration of the latest AEDC data, an introduction to the Kinnections app and information about the ACT Education Directorates 3-year-old initiative. The next Forum will focus on the ECEC sector and will be held in term 3.

The connection with Southside has allowed ideas to flow between both initiatives and provides a potential conduit for ACT wide expansion in the future.

Connected Beginnings

Key milestones in the last 6 months include:

- ✓ Increased resourcing for the Village and Yerrabi Yurwang Backbone teams providing opportunity to create new roles and bring on skilled staff, including community development officers who are members of Yerrabi Yurwang staff and bring many years of experience working with the Aboriginal community in education and child development services.
- ✓ The Deputy CEO of Yerrabi Yurwang became co-chair of the Village Leadership Group.
- ✓ Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings staff initiated and lead regular Aboriginal cultural awareness component at Village Leadership Group meetings to increase understanding and knowledge of cultural issues, keeping Aboriginal children and their families at the forefront.
- ✓ Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings staff led and participated in a range of community engagement opportunities including:



Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings staff led and participated in a range of community engagement opportunities including:



The Reconciliation Day community event at the Arboretum on 29 May where they ran creative activities for the kids and completed nineteen surveys for the Community Conversations project.



The West Belconnen Tracks to Reconciliation community event on 1 June. This was another opportunity to engage with the community and continue community conversations with families.

Village's partnership with Yerrabi Yurwang to implement the Commonwealth Department of Education's Connected Beginnings aligns with the Commonwealth and the ACT Government's commitment to Closing the Gap. Whilst not directly related to the Deed Agreement with ED, the two programs provide the opportunity to leverage shared infrastructure, skills, resources, and actions to create synergies that will lead to creating the systems change needed to for all families to thrive, while applying a culturally appropriate focus for the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The Yerrabi's Women's Circle has commenced with three sessions to date, groups are held on alternate Wednesday's and Sunday's during school terms. The groups were well attended with eight ladies attending the two Wednesday groups and ten ladies on the Sunday. These sessions focused on connecting while doing a weaving activity and moved on to dancing as requested. This group will be central to Connected Beginnings community engagement.

The Connected Beginnings team have been meeting with stakeholders across sectors to look at ways of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, including with members of the First Nations Liaison team in Community Policing to discuss future opportunities to collaborate for upcoming programs.



Village - Guiding Documents

The core documents that guide the work of Village include:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2021-2031

[Click here to read.](#)

THEORY OF CHANGE

[Click here to read.](#)

PROGRAM LOGIC

[Click here to read.](#)

STATEMENT OF SHARED VALUES

[Click here to read.](#)

COLLECTIVE IMPACT FRAMEWORK

[Click here to read.](#)

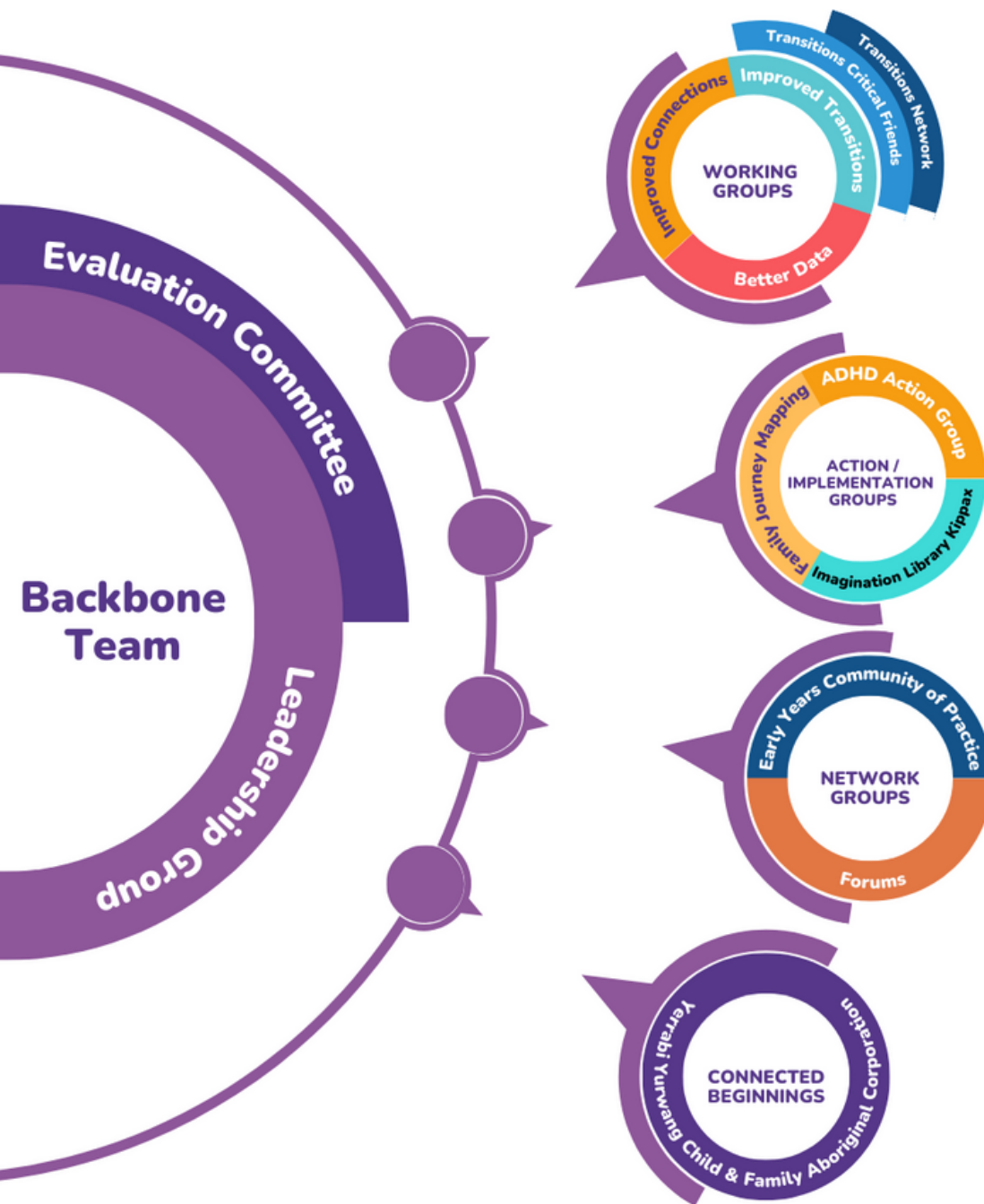
These documents have been developed and are now embedded across the work. They are reference points for decisions about how Village and its partners respond to emerging needs, co-designing actions and planning and overseeing implementation. These documents will be reviewed as part of the reflection on action cycle that contributes to the overarching learning and evaluation process.

In June, the Leadership Group began work to develop principles for how Village intends to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Belconnen. As part of this process, the Leadership Group are identifying what the principles look like in practice. The principles will underpin ongoing relationship building with Yerrabi Yurwang as we implement Connected Beginnings together.

Village Structure

The structure of Village provides a container for leadership for the groups that contribute to the work. The structures to support the relationships between the various groups need to be flexible to respond to emerging needs while also providing clarity of roles and accountability pathways.

The diagram below shows the various groups that create the structure for activity.



Leadership Group and Working Groups

The Leadership Group remains a solid core of committed people representing different Directorates, services, and other stakeholders. Where members have left, they have ensured a replacement from their organisation and found ways to continue being involved in their new roles. This demonstrates the value of Village to its partners.

In the last six months, new sub-groups have been created and the Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings Team has become more embedded in the Leadership and Working Groups. For example, the Yerrabi Yurwang representative has recently stepped into the Leadership co-chair role.

Yerrabi Yurwang brought the issue of families experiencing difficulties accessing support for children who have been diagnosed or referred for diagnoses of ADHD to the Leadership Group. Within two weeks, the leadership group had recommended key stakeholders from their networks to begin the ADHD Action Group.

An Evaluation Committee, involving partners with an interest and practical experience in monitoring and evaluation, was formed to support the finalisation of the external evaluation. This group will continue to provide the Backbone Team with advice about the recommendations from the final report and how to approach engaging an external evaluator for 2023-24.

New networks and critical friends

The growing networks have enabled Village to bring together critical friends to provide expert advice, for example to guide the development of products for the Child Development Communications Campaign.

In this reporting period two new coordination/organisation groups have been formed:

- ✓ The Early Years Community of Practice organising group. The first Community of Practice will be in term three.
- ✓ The Forum series coordinating group delivered the first forum in term 2.

Village continues to invest in its relationship with the Southside Initiative. The Village Coordinator meets with the group monthly to share learning and collaborate on joint ACT wide opportunities.

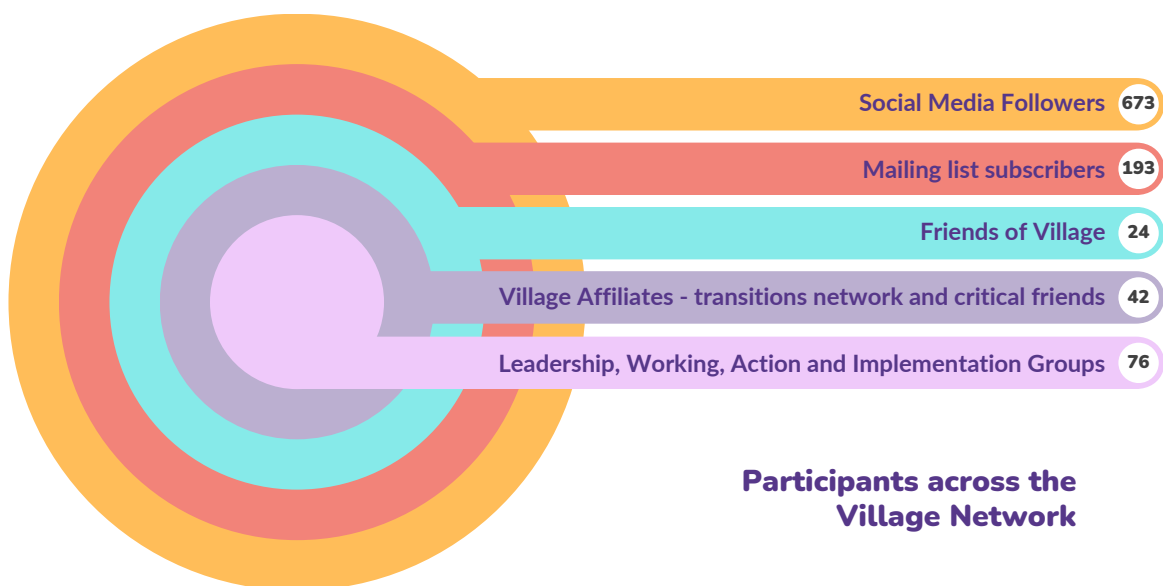
Backbone Team

Both the Village Backbone and the Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings teams have expanded with new people joining to embed new or evolved roles. A new Manager and Graphic Design and Communications Officer have commenced in Village. The Manager brings experience working on the ground in place-based collective impact, in community development, and working with Government. The Graphic Design and Communications Officer brings a mix of skills including working with communities in storytelling, design, and management of communications, including website.

Two community development officers have joined the Yerrabi Yurwang Connected Beginnings team. The nature of the partnership between Village and Yerrabi Yurwang is a unique opportunity to embed ways of working that maximise the synergies between the two place-based approaches. As the two organisations work towards transitioning Connected Beginnings to Yerrabi Yurwang we will learn how to meaningfully contribute to the shared outcome of all children thriving in Belconnen. With these resources on the ground, Yerrabi Yurwang will bring an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective to the work of Village and Village will share infrastructure to support Yerrabi Yurwang as it builds its capacity in what will be a distinctive place-based collective impact approach.

Participation

The growing networks have enabled opportunities to invite more people to participate (Village affiliates) and the events and network meetings have attracted new people to engage with Village (friends of Village). Over 140 people participated in Village in this reporting period. The numbers show the degree of commitment and in-kind resources that partners are willing to invest in the work. The output in the last six months would not have been possible without this ongoing personal and organisational involvement.



Participants across the Village Network

Measurement evaluation and learning (MEL)

Approach

Village contracted Clear Horizon to support it to embed a MEL framework, assist to develop data collection tools and bring together six-monthly evaluation reports, over two years from July 2021 – June 2023.

The external evaluation focuses on the process of building the enabling conditions for collective impact. It does not evaluate activity level outcomes. The work with Clear Horizon has enabled Village to develop and embed tools, particularly focused on reflective practice and identifying early signs of impact that reveal the value of the collective impact approach.

The draft report indicates that Village continues to build momentum through community and stakeholder engagement. The increased momentum and activities being led by the Workshop Groups are evidence that the initiative is moving beyond building readiness and foundations and is creating a shared agenda and scaling up.

The draft report draws on examples of activities that are highlighted in this progress report, including the Collective at Evatt, the Transitions Campaign, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. It highlights that without the work of Village, specifically the role of the Backbone Team, it is unlikely that activities would have happened.

The key learnings outlined in the draft report echo those of many collective impact initiatives that are at a similar level of maturity, the value of building strong relational and process foundations to mobilise shared action.

Clear Horizon recommends three priorities for Village to continue its progress to scaling up:

- ① Deepen community inclusion, participation, and leadership.
- ② Ramp up the mutually reinforcing activities.
- ③ Update the MEL framework with evolving goals, to prioritise outcome level evaluation for the high impact activities and streamline data collection tools to continue reflective learning and monitoring.

Conclusion

Funded by ED as a place-based collective impact initiative, Village's activities, and way of engaging with the service systems are demonstrating how it supports the implementation of several ACT Government strategies, including the outcomes in Best Start, Set Up For Success, and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The activity and milestones achieved in the last six months continue to demonstrate the value of Village in bringing a growing number of people and organisations together to act for children and families in Belconnen. This progress is possible because of the strength of trusted relationships and the continued investment in partnerships across all sectors involved in supporting families.

The outputs and activities in this report are examples of how Village has brought together shared agendas to inform the design and implementation of mutually re-enforcing activities. They show the role of Village's structure, particularly the function of the Backbone team to hold the processes and ways of working to enable the groups to respond and move to action as new opportunities arise.

As the initiative is maturing, the Leadership and Working Groups are embarking on ways to understand the systems issues and create local actions based on the experience of families combined with demographic and service administration data.

Village has delivered tangible and practical products and actions, such as network opportunities, transition campaign communication products and the centralised information source, the Directory. This has attracted new people and organisations have been attracted to the work and are participating.





BELCONNEN – A VILLAGE FOR EVERY CHILD

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