

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 community⁴ 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.

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

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.

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.