

RED CLIFFS CONNECTED



COMMUNITY CONNECTION EVENTS PILOT 2022 LEARNING SUMMARY

WHAT ARE RED CLIFFS CONNECTED EVENTS?

In 2021 Hands Up Mallee began a prototyping phase which involved working with families of children under 8 years, to understand what is needed to create a rich environment of learning in the home and in the community, supporting children's development and help them be ready for school.

One of the key ideas emerging from this co-design process was to hold a series of free, fun events where children could play with peers, and families could connect with others in their community. In 2022 Hands Up Mallee partnered with families who developed the idea for this piloting phase of Red Cliffs Connected and held a series of four events in public spaces in Red Cliffs.

This summary highlights the ways of working that were critical in this phase of collaborative work. It shares learnings about co-design, the role of a backbone in supporting community-led pilots, elements of a successful event and challenges, community response to the pilot, signs of impact, and where to next in growing a connected community where families matter and children thrive.

PILOT GOALS

Pilot goals were formed based on the earlier co-design work which brought family expertise and aspirations with local data and relevant research to understand what supports families and children to thrive in their readiness for school.



The overarching work that the pilot has developed from aligns with the ARACY Nest area Learning.

There were two key goals specific to the Events pilot, the first was in relation to the events and community connection, the second to the value of the HUM Backbone Team can bring to fostering community-led work and strengthen connections with community groups and service providers.



Key goals both aligns with the ARACY Nest area Participating.

KEY GOAL 1 Increasing access to social and recreational activities for children and families.

KEY GOAL 2 Empowering families to co-design and engage with the community in different ways to strengthen community connections.



WAYS OF WORKING

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles of taking an Equity focused, Culturally Inclusive and Strengths-based approach, were developed in the earlier prototyping as part of the overarching Theory of Change for Red Cliffs Project

The Guiding Principles support how people brought together to plan, deliver and participate in the events. They ensure that decision making stays true to the collaborative design developed by families in the prototyping phase. They are held by both the families and the HUM team supporting them, as common principles for the group and the pilot.

COLLABORATIVE DELIVERY

RELATIONAL

A core function of Backbone teams in Collective Impact work is in connecting and supporting relationships to embed community voices into ways of working for services, community organisations and government. With a view to sustainably creating systems change.

For the pilot this began, building on the relationships developed with families during the prototyping phase. Working with TACSI's Co-design Principles the HUM team and families developed a participatory evaluation and learning approach. Working together in this planning phase ensured that feedback and planning sessions were part of each event cycle, and supported the development of strong and supporting relationships between families.

During the pilot the HUM Backbone played connecting and supporting role to enable local families to build relationships with local community groups, including the Toy Library and Red Cliffs Guides. Relationships were also built with organisations who contributed valuable resources and volunteering, including the Red Cliffs Rotary Club who coordinated the free Barbecue at events.

In line with **Key Goal 2:**

Some families have developed new skills and increased confidence. They have connected with new friends and built relationships with others in their community – e.g. community groups, services etc.

Post pilot some have drawn on their work with us to advocate and communicate the needs of families in their community.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS EXCHANGE

For place-based change to be effective, they must be community-led. Hands Up Mallee recognises that in our work with families our team brings knowledge and skills that families may not have, but that the knowledge and skills that families bring enriches the work of collective equally.

In addition to bring our support to build relationships Hands Up Mallee brought our knowledge to build an evidence base. Monitoring the success of the pilot, and gathering learnings for future work building from the pilot. This took the form of facilitated surveys and reflection sessions and developed the evaluation report.

Families knowledge of what works for families was critical in the effective design and distribution of event invitations and information. Their strong organising skills meant that the event workload was evenly distributed and events were efficiently run.

Their awareness of existing community resources, and community connections ensured access to equipment such as tables and chairs and to engage providers of activities such as the Fire Brigade. The ability to connect to and draw from existing community resources ensures that these events are more sustainable, both environmentally and financially.

In line with **Key Goal 2:**

The families skills and focus on building and maintaining strong relationships beyond the pilot are vital to the work of collective impact.

Working in partnership provided families with increased trust in their earlier work in the design phase as they are now have evidence to support this work, having played a partnering role in the pilot from design through to delivery.

WHAT CONNECTED COMMUNITY

EVENT DESIGN AND DELIVERY

SELECTING EVENT ACTIVITIES

Event activities were selected based on learning from earlier phases of work, the HUM Team brought their existing understandings about the impact of rich informal learning environments on readiness for school and improved life outcomes, along with knowledge from extensive systems mapping, and local data to the prototyping phase of work. Families build on this with their community specific understandings. Activities were designed to align with a wide range of developmental benefits and to be no or low cost activities which families would be able to replicate outside of events. This included consideration from families that there should be a mix of active and engaged activities and passive activities, which were then trialled over the four events.

Active play included: art and sensory play, egg & spoon races, a range of sporting equipment to try, using toys provided by the toy library, Girl Guides activities, learning about and engaging with native animals with EnviroEdu and music with Sunraysia Arts and Learning.

EVENT PROMOTION

The events were promoted using guidelines for communicating with families that had been developed with families in the prototype phase.

Materials used to promote the pilot events included flyers that were delivered to local letterboxes, posters displayed in the local kindergarten, schools and shops. The families also promoted the events on the Red Cliffs Families Facebook Group.

EVENT RESOURCES

Along with the aim of activities being low or no cost to ensure sustainability the events drew heavily on existing resources, aiming for events to continue post the pilot.

Tables and chairs were supplied by the Farmers Market, Red Cliffs Rotary supplied the BBQ and volunteers to manage it. Hands Up Mallee outdoor mats and the Red Cliffs connect banner and t-shirts were used.

Fruit and water were supplied by HUM, and team members worked alongside families to deliver the events, and carry out evaluation surveys.

EVENT LOCATION AND DESIGN

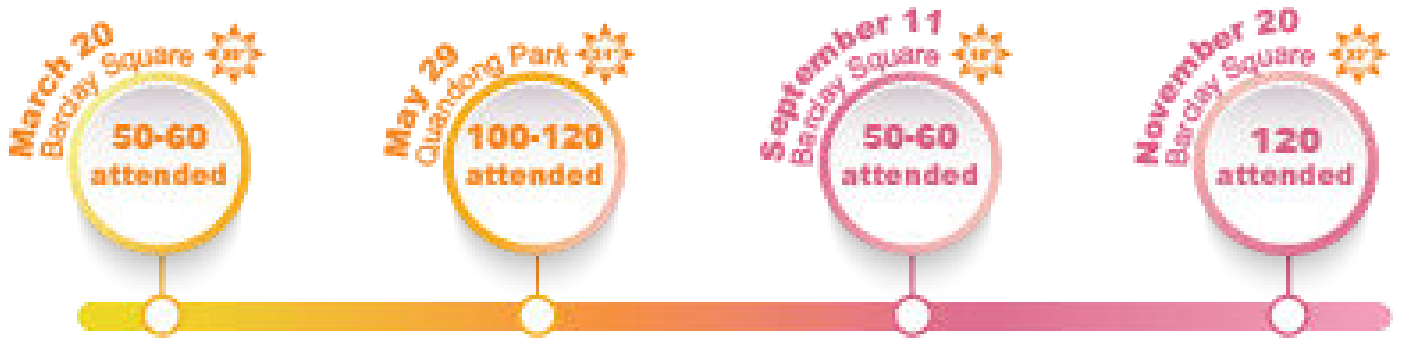
Event locations were selected to ensure they were held in central accessible locations. The first event was held in Barclay Square for this reason and also for ease of access to resources supplied by the Farmer's Market. Families opted to test the second event at Quandong Park with the aim of the Football Club partnering to run a sporting activity, unfortunately while the Football club were able to supply the venue they did not have capacity to run activities as part of the pilot.

Families chose to return to Barclay Square for the remaining events due to its more convenient location, ability to be accessed by foot and shade for sun safety.

The families opted to run events on Sundays to fit the relaxed mood they envisioned and to avoid clashes with other commitments that local families might have, such as organised sports. They chose the time between 11am and 1pm to ensure families didn't feel their morning was rushed, and provided a free barbecue so that families didn't have to leave to have lunch and were able to have a generous amount of time to connect with other families.



EVENT ATTENDANCE



At the final event twenty families responded to the survey. Families foremost reason to attend was for their child to experience new things and meet other children. They saw the events were something fun and free to do as a family, and for some of them it as a good way to meet other families.

While the majority of families attending were from Red Cliffs, a third of the survey respondents were from Mildura or Irymple. The majority of families found out about the event through Facebook and/or by being told about it by a family member or a friend. For some families the flyer was the only way they knew about the event. Two thirds of the November survey respondents were first time attendees to the planned events.

The feedback about all the activities was extremely positive, and the reptiles and fire truck demonstration were a great hit. Two of the survey respondents indicated that they would like to help in future events.



PILOT LEARNINGS

LEARNING FOR WAYS OF WORKING

- Project planning, contacts & communications.
- Reflecting and debriefing helps with further planning.
- Prototyping keeps the focus on the original design and goals.
- Having Catherine & Fiona staying involved helped Ada to grow relationships as a new facilitator to the group.

LEARNING FOR CO-DESIGN

- Families gave their time and ideas, and were prepared to be vulnerable and honest.
- Meetings need to start on time so that families can manage complex family demands.
- Communication via Facebook helps to keep people in the loop.
- Building relationships and using their own relationships with community helps to connect people to an event.

LEARNING FOR EVENTS

- Having a Team t-shirt and banner helped to brand the event and identify the organisers.
- It is good to have local community groups involved.
- People volunteering and helping on the day.
- Creating a Facebook event serves as good reminders for busy families.

CHALLENGES

Group Visibility

The community became aware of project but were not aware of who were members of the group. The t-shirts worked at the event, but there is a need to promote the group membership more widely in community outside of events.

Community Voice

The organising families felt there was a risk that they would be seen and utilised as a token 'families group' beyond their co-design and piloting scope, and be cast to be responsible for organising reactive work on community issues.

Community Connection

There are lots of different things happening in Red Cliffs, but no overall common awareness across this.



SIGNS OF CHANGE

HUM selected the Journey Mapping tool to ensure pilot evaluation was participatory, and have successfully engaged families in evaluation with this tool in the co-design and prototyping phase. It ensures that participating families voice is effectively captured. To bring the perspectives of event attendees into the evaluation data gathered from surveys, observations and attendance counts was included.

The evaluation process identified the following pilot outcomes:

FOR FAMILIES CO-DESIGNING AND DELIVERING THE PILOT

- Increased feeling of being connected and seeing others out and about in their community.
- Increased self esteem and sense of belonging to their community.
- Increased pride and sense of ownership of their community
- Realising that Red Cliffs has a special sense of community.
- Increased knowledge about what's going on in community and its quirks.
- As they have invested more (two years) in the design and piloting of these events they want this to keep going.

FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN THE COMMUNITY

- Survey responses indicated families and carers saw a wide range of benefits for children including meeting other children, having somewhere to go as a family for free, having fun, and trying new things.
- Social media patterns of the Red Cliffs Connect Facebook page showed an increasing reach to Red Cliffs Families and more are using this site to connect and share interests.

SYSTEM SHIFTS



Change of Mindset

Family members agendas changed from focusing on their own family's outcomes to those of all families in their community:

- 'Originally my involvement was about my own child, and now as my child is growing up it is about all children in the community.'
- This is not just talk – we are making it happen
- A visitor to event said 'this is a place I wouldn't mind living in'.



Relationships and Connections

'Being involved I feel part of community, feel known and know more about my community, people say hello when I walk around town'
People in the group are now my friends and we respect each other.

WHAT NEXT?

For this to become sustainable a committee to drive this forward needs to be formed and other people need to be recruited to assist as the focus of participating families will continue to shift as their children grow up.

There is appetite to run an event in the winter school holidays and to try one in the summer school holidays at the pool.

Reach out to those who indicated that they want to help, and to others through social media, noting that dad and Grand-dads are welcome too.



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