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CENTRE FOR
MULTICULTURAL YOUTH

STATE OF THE SECTOR

OUT-OF-SCHOOL-HOURS

LEARNING SUPPORT 2018

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

CMY	Centre for Multicultural Youth
DET	Department of Education and Training Victoria
EAL	English as an Additional Language
HCPF	Homework Club Partnership Fund
LBB	Learning Beyond the Bell
LBOTE	Language Background Other than English
OSHLSP	Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Programs
RESP	Refugee Education Support Program

"

"[Homework club] helps me finish all the work that's due. It's given me experience to help other people who need it. It's a great opportunity. We eat lots of yummy food! If we don't have homework, we can get the teachers to get extra help." **Year 10 student, Bendigo**

"

Introduction

Evidence shows high quality Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Programs (OSHLSP) can be instrumental in supporting students at risk of disengaging from education. The additional support students' receive can increase their academic success, foster social connections and improve wellbeing. This is particularly true for students from refugee and migrant backgrounds and those who are from other disadvantaged groups.

This publication aims to outline the impact the Victorian OSHLSP sector has on students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. The sector has many different agencies, schools and community groups involved, most of which have their own reporting and evaluation mechanisms in place. This is the first time an attempt has been made to measure the overall impact of the OSHLSP sector. We have also attempted to document emerging issues and challenges. Examples of good practice that can be replicated across different programs have also been captured in case studies throughout this report.

It is evident through this research that the learning support sector in Victoria has a positive impact on students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Students' academic outcomes and their social wellbeing are enhanced by participation in quality clubs. Families also benefit from increased connection to their schools and communities.

While there are still challenges to be met and more students to be reached, we are continuing from a place of strength and can certainly achieve more.

"

It gives me courage for putting my hand up in class.

Year 6 student, Thomastown West

It helps with learning. It helps with friends and not being shy.

Year 5 student, Thomastown West

"

Research methodology

In the first half of 2018, CMY project officers conducted a range of quantitative and qualitative research. An online survey targeting coordinators was circulated, focus group discussions were held with students, and semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and coordinators were conducted. The CMY Education team also continually update a database of around 350 clubs and programs throughout Victoria, which we used to estimate the size of the sector overall.

It is important to note that all methods utilised existing networks and mailing lists and were dependent on the interest and availability of those who responded. Overall, we achieved a response rate of just over 20 per cent of the known sector, which we believe establishes a representative sample. In any conclusions drawn about trends and issues being faced within the sector, it must be noted that we have not heard from the sector as a whole.

In addition to research specifically for this report, we drew on the Interim report for Homework Club Program Fund (HCPF) grant recipients and the evaluation of the 2017 Refugee Education Support Program (RESP) project component.

Scope of the report

The State of the Sector report has been kept fairly broad in terms of scope as it is the first time CMY has produced a document of this nature focused on the OSHLSP sector. Clubs throughout Victoria were approached for feedback, but our networks are predominantly with programs that target (or at least explicitly include) students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. However, this was not grounds for excluding respondents whose programs may be focused on other student cohorts.

The geographic spread of respondents was strong across regional Victoria, with interviews, focus groups and survey responses recorded from Geelong, Shepparton, Echuca, Colac, Warrnambool, Wimmera and Ballarat. Others received were from both metropolitan Melbourne and growth corridor areas.

CHAPTER 1:
SETTING THE SCENE

What is the OSHLSP sector?

Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Programs, or OSHLSP, provide high quality learning support to children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. They also assist families to better support their children's learning at home. They provide opportunities for small group or one-to-one support tailored to students' needs.

OSHLSP can be managed by schools, community organisations, religious groups, and local governments. They are often, but not exclusively, delivered through a partnership between organisations and schools. They can be located in community centres, schools, or at public libraries. The OSHLSP sector in Victoria is made up of a diverse group of paid and volunteer professionals who work across these different organisations to provide learning support for school students.

OSHLSP may target particular students or be open to all who are interested. The majority of those reflected in this report target students considered most vulnerable to disengagement from education. Risk of disengagement can be caused by frustrations over performance, social and emotional issues, or the individual circumstances of the student outside school. Students who are most at risk of these factors are those who are from low socio-economic areas, indigenous students and students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. While not all students in these categories will experience disengagement from education, some need additional support to have positive experiences at school.

The majority of clubs represented in research for this report focus on refugee background and English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. EAL students have the additional challenge of learning English, within an unfamiliar education system.

Some of the key challenges for these young people and their families in remaining engaged in education may include:

- A limited understanding of the Australian education and training system

- Limited access to intensive English language support

- Difficulty finding space and time to study – in the context of often crowded living environments, supporting family in the resettlement process, and pressure to earn an income

- Limited opportunities to use and develop interpersonal skills with peers until sufficient English language is learned

- Students who have missed out on schooling in their first language may have additional difficulty gaining literacy in English

- Lack of support for learning at home due to family members having limited English skills.

Many clubs employ a range of approaches in order to best support a variety of students.

OSHLSP models

Many clubs emphasise social connections and development of language abilities in their program aims and objectives. All clubs have an overall focus on increasing academic support to students and encouraging their positive engagement in school.

Learning Support Clubs

Learning Support Clubs support primary and secondary school students and their families, through individual and group tutoring, as well as play-based and interactive learning approaches. Learning Support Clubs increase opportunities for learning outside the classroom, and are normally held at lunchtime, before or after school. Clubs occur at least once per week throughout the school term and run for approximately one to two hours.
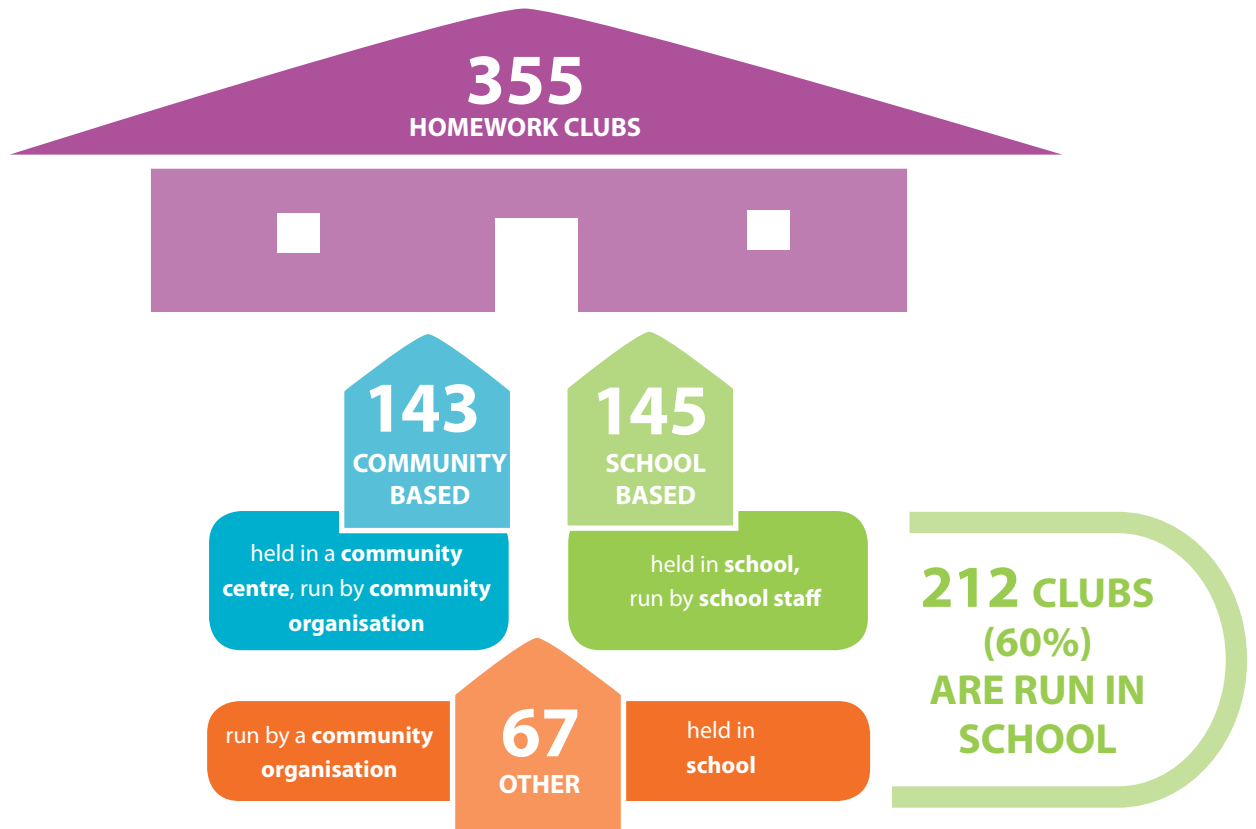
Family Engagement Clubs

Family engagement clubs work directly with parents and carers to increase the connection between families and schools. Family engagement projects facilitate two-way learning and engagement between schools and families, to improve students' learning and wellbeing outcomes. Projects can include ongoing groups, or a series of short-term interactive workshops, and can be held before, during or after school.

Projects Responding to Specific Needs

These projects can be diverse and innovative, and respond to a range of specific needs including student disengagement, and barriers for specific genders or cultural groups. Projects are normally held at lunchtime or before or after school, and can include ongoing groups and short-term programs.

The sector in numbers

CMY has been working with organisations, community groups and schools that run OSHLSP for 10 years. As such we have compiled a database of clubs within Victoria that provides an indication of the size of the sector. The following data is based on CMY's database and is predominantly focused on clubs that target students from refugee and migrant backgrounds, but includes clubs open to students in a specific geographic area, or that target specific factors of disadvantage. Our database does not include clubs catering to students who are in accelerated learning programs or that involve paid tutors.

355
HOMEWORK CLUBS

143
COMMUNITY BASED

held in a **community centre**, run by **community organisation**

145
SCHOOL BASED

held in **school,** run by **school staff**

67
OTHER

run by a **community organisation**

held in **school**

212 CLUBS (60%) ARE RUN IN SCHOOL

This is 6% of students who have LBOTE Language Background Other than English (includes those who also speak English at home), and almost 10% of LBOTE who do not speak English at home
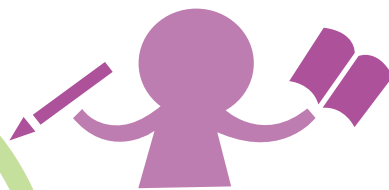
11,430
STUDENTS REACHED

3,147
VOLUNTEERS WORKING

Student and volunteer numbers are an estimate based on records kept by programs and shared with CMY. These are estimates only as numbers fluctuate significantly throughout the year and from session to session.

Programs by Region

East	49
North	114
North East Rural	10
North West Rural	16
South	76
South East Rural	3
South West Rural	15
West	72
Total	**355**

CHAPTER 2: IMPACT

Impact of OSHLSP

OSHLSP can have positive effects on children's academic, social and emotional lives. By helping students develop social, communication and academic skills in an informal setting, they contribute to students' wellbeing and confidence. This can lead to greater participation in the classroom and in education in general. Programs also support students to build meaningful social connections through the interactions they promote between students, tutors, staff, teachers and parents.

A 2011 CMY evaluation, which involved students and tutors in 10 OSHLSP across Victoria, found learning support resulted in positive changes in school engagement and wellbeing; with 60 per cent of tutors identifying positive changes in students' attitudes to school, and 90 per cent of students stating they felt happier at school as a result of attending their OSHLSP.

Studies from around the world have shown that participation in learning support programs can also reduce drop-out rates, decrease absenteeism and prevent declining performance in at risk youth[1]. Those programs which include family engagement also equip families with additional skills and confidence to support children at home. This has a positive impact on children's learning as well as families' engagement in school. There is increasing evidence that family involvement in education is one of the key indicators for children's success at school[2]. This is particularly true for children from low in-come families and whose parents have low levels of education.

Therefore, programs that provide learning support to students in addition to targeting barriers to family engagement, can have a profound impact on students' educational outcomes. A common approach to defining outcomes and articulating impact is an important step to ensuring consistent quality across the sector. As such, the research for this report included asking respondents to indicate the outcomes their clubs are achieving. This information has been used, together with an evaluation on outcomes of the 2017 Refugee Education Support Program's OSHLSP and monitoring reports from 2017 Homework Club Partnership Fund grant recipients, to define common outcomes shared across the sector.

Outcomes identified in Victorian OSHLSP

The outcomes identified by respondents for this report fell into one of two main categories, academic and social. Within each of those there are two points of focus:

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1 Bond, Sarah. Learning Support Programs: Education Reform Beyond the School. Brotherhood of St Laurence. 2009:4
2 Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student learning Austin, TX: Southwest Education Development Laboratory

Academic

Academic confidence

When a student participates more in classroom or club activities, contributes to class discussions and is able to ask for help, it indicates an increase in academic confidence.

Academic progress

There is an evident improvement in a student's work, aptitude in a subject or skill area or an increase in work completion and attendance.

Social

Social confidence

When students are better able to interact with their peers and are more confident in group activities.

Social connections

Students' interactions with peers, teachers and tutors develop into relationships of greater trust and support.

1.   Academic outcomes

a. *Academic confidence*

"Academic confidence more closely resembles a perceived ability to accomplish a set of tasks."[3] Research shows that confidence can have a significant impact on student success. John Hattie's Factors Influencing Student Achievement include self efficacy, which Hattie defines as "the confidence or strength of belief that we have in ourselves that we can make our learning happen."[4] According to Hattie, self efficacy is the 11th most influential factor of success, out of his 2017 list of 254 factors of influence. An increase in students' academic confidence frequently appeared, unprompted, in the qualitative responses for this report. It was also noted within evaluations of OSHLSP in the 2017 Refugee Education Support Program as well as in the 2018 monitoring processes for the HCPF funded projects.

CMY's evidence suggests OSHLSP increase confidence levels, enabling students to better engage in learning. Respondents to this research project noted that students attending OSHLSP developed greater confidence in class and were more likely to ask for assistance. Developing the confidence to communicate their learning needs allows students a greater chance of building the skills they need to complete work independently.

Another key finding linked to academic confidence suggests that students involved in OSHLSP often begin to take greater responsibility for their own learning. In addition to this, they develop an understanding about the importance of homework. Through the one-on-one support offered at learning clubs, students are encouraged to ask for help when needed. Respondents noted that this results not only in increased confidence in completing homework, but also in ensuring it is understood. One respondent stated that students are:

"…proud and look forward to showing the volunteers (tutors) their homework achievements over the week." (State of the Sector survey 2018)

Increased capacity of students to communicate about academic tasks also indicates growth in academic confidence. Respondents identified students became more talkative in English when attending OSHLSP, resulting in better engagement with their studies. Coordinators also noted the importance of having passionate and committed tutors who can role model persistence in studying.

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3   Briggs, Saga. Why Self-Esteem Hurts Learning But Self-Confidence Does The Opposite. July 5th, 2014
           https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/self-efficacy-and-learning/

4   DeWitt, Peter. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2016/11/does_self-efficacy_really_matter.html?print=1

b. *Academic progress*

Academic progress refers to tangible educational outcomes that are evident (in part) due to OSHLSP. School teachers and parents have noted positive academic improvements that have correlated with OSHLSP attendance. One teacher suggested that students will: "…*always return with significant improvements, which increase the ability to have ongoing academic success."* (State of the Sector survey 2018) Other respondent data identified improvements in reading, writing and spelling. Students are also aware of their improvements, and have acknowledged their ability to do well at school due to the support they receive from OSHLSP. Of course there is an ongoing issue with attribution of academic success. Many OSHLSP deliberately avoid any kind of testing in order to ensure the learning environment is different from that of school classrooms. Therefore much of the evidence for increasing academic success is qualitative in nature in that it relies on observation of changes by students themselves, club tutors, coordinators and teaching staff. The impact of improvements, even if perceived, should not be overlooked. As the quotes below help to illustrate, perceived improvements can impact a student's confidence and raise their teachers' and tutors' expectations of their abilities as well.

> *Giving students opportunities for, and then celebrating successes, builds confidence and willingness to take risks with their learning.*
>
> **Staff Member, OSHLSP, Tarneit**
>
> *Their teachers have said the students have developed the confidence to 'have a go', which has then impacted positively on academic results.*
>
> **OSHLSP coordinator, The Basin**
>
> *Homework is now being completed that wasn't in the past. This leads on to academic achievement. The quality and amount of work is increased.*
>
> **Teacher/OSHLSP coordinator, South Yarra**

2.   Social Outcomes

a.   *Social confidence*

Few OSHLSP list academic related outcomes in isolation, generally, program goals and outcomes are much broader. Survey responses highlighted social confidence of students as a key area. OSHLSP can provide a fun and relaxed environment, where students can participate and contribute within a group setting. This social interaction can improve self-esteem and confidence. One respondent suggested that *"changes in student behaviour and attitude have been very noticeable."* (State of the Sector survey 2018). For some students, school can be stressful and social interactions challenging. OSHLSP can provide a comfortable space for young people to establish social connections and interact with peers and adults. In this way OSHLSP provide an environment for students to increase their social confidence and gain skills to transfer into the classroom and playground.

The relationships students form with tutors and OSHLSP staff play an important role in the development of social confidence. Building trust between students, program coordinators and tutors creates a sense of social-connectedness. Having trusted adults or peers to model appropriate behaviour and conversations can play a big part in students gaining confidence to expand their social connections. The relationship building component of OSHLSP are very important, and ongoing support by tutors can provide students with a sense of social stability.

CASE STUDY

Comfortable in his own skin

The St Francis of Assisi Primary School learning support program balances academic and social capacity building to encourage the children's passion for learning and developing oneself. Isaac* has been one of the most regular attendees and as a result has demonstrated the most significant growth.

When joining the program, Isaac presented as quite a shy and introverted student who communicated little with mentors and program coordinators. Over time, Isaac became more confident as his self-esteem and resilience developed. When asked to complete a task, Isaac was initially reserved and did not engage with mentors or ask for help. Now, Isaac does not only ask for help, but greets mentors and program coordinators with a smile each week, actively participates in group activities and conversations and appears to be more comfortable in his own skin.

Isaac attended every session of the after school program, demonstrating his dedication and willingness to improve his literacy and numeracy. Isaac never says no to anything asked of him or to tasks he is required to complete. Without having developed the courage and confidence to "give it a go" and contribute to group discussions, Isaac would not have made the gains he has.

The positive growth in Isaac's social engagement has transferred into the classroom; he has more confidence to learn and a greater willingness to answer questions out loud. Isaac is now more likely to participate in classroom conversations and group discussions and work he may not have attempted at the beginning of the year can now be completed with support of peers, mentors and program coordinators.

Name changed to protect privacy

b. *Social connections*

In this context the term social connections refers to social networks that have originated or developed through attending OSHLSP. These are bonds that otherwise may not have formed, but have had a positive impact on the students. OSHLSP develop positive connections and strong friendships between peers. They also provide opportunities for students to connect across age groups, with tutors and teachers. This can result in beneficial social networks both in their own schools and in the broader community.

Positive peer networks have been identified as one of the key indicators of successful settlement by the MYAN Youth Settlement Framework. Peer relationships are also recognised as a protective factor for young people facing adversity, as explained later in this report. Positive interactions with adult tutors and OSHLSP staff are also beneficial for students and their families.

Ager and Strang's social capital research provides a strong case for clubs to take an active role in fostering connections within the program.[5] Ager and Strang were commissioned by the United Kingdom's Home Office as part of the Indicators of Integration (IoI) project to understand the experience of integration at a local level. Ager and Strang found relationships played a central role, so they in turn became a central element of the broader IoI project.

Although academics and policy makers are not in total agreement regarding what successful integration or settlement looks like, there is some agreement about the "key importance of…the role of social interaction."[6]

5   Ager, Alistair; Strang, Alison. Understanding Integration: A conceptual framework. Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 21, No. 2 . Oxford University Press.2008:pp166-191

6   Cheung, Dr Sin Yi, Phillimore, Dr Jenny; Social networks, social capital and refugee integration. Research Report for Nuffield Foundation. 2013:2

Ager and Strang identified three relationship domains:

- **Bonding relationships** - Bonds within a person's own community

- **Bridging relationships** - Relationships that form a bridge between communities

- **Linking relationships** - Links to institutions of power and influence.

Placing an OHSLSP within this conceptual framework, it is evident that they are well positioned to foster bridging relationships for students and their families. The connection to community through volunteer tutors and the involvement of school staff in a more relaxed environment, can lead to networks not otherwise available to students from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Bonding relationships
Bonds within a person's own community

Bridging relationships
Relationships that form a bridge between communities

Linking relationships
Links to institutions of power and influence
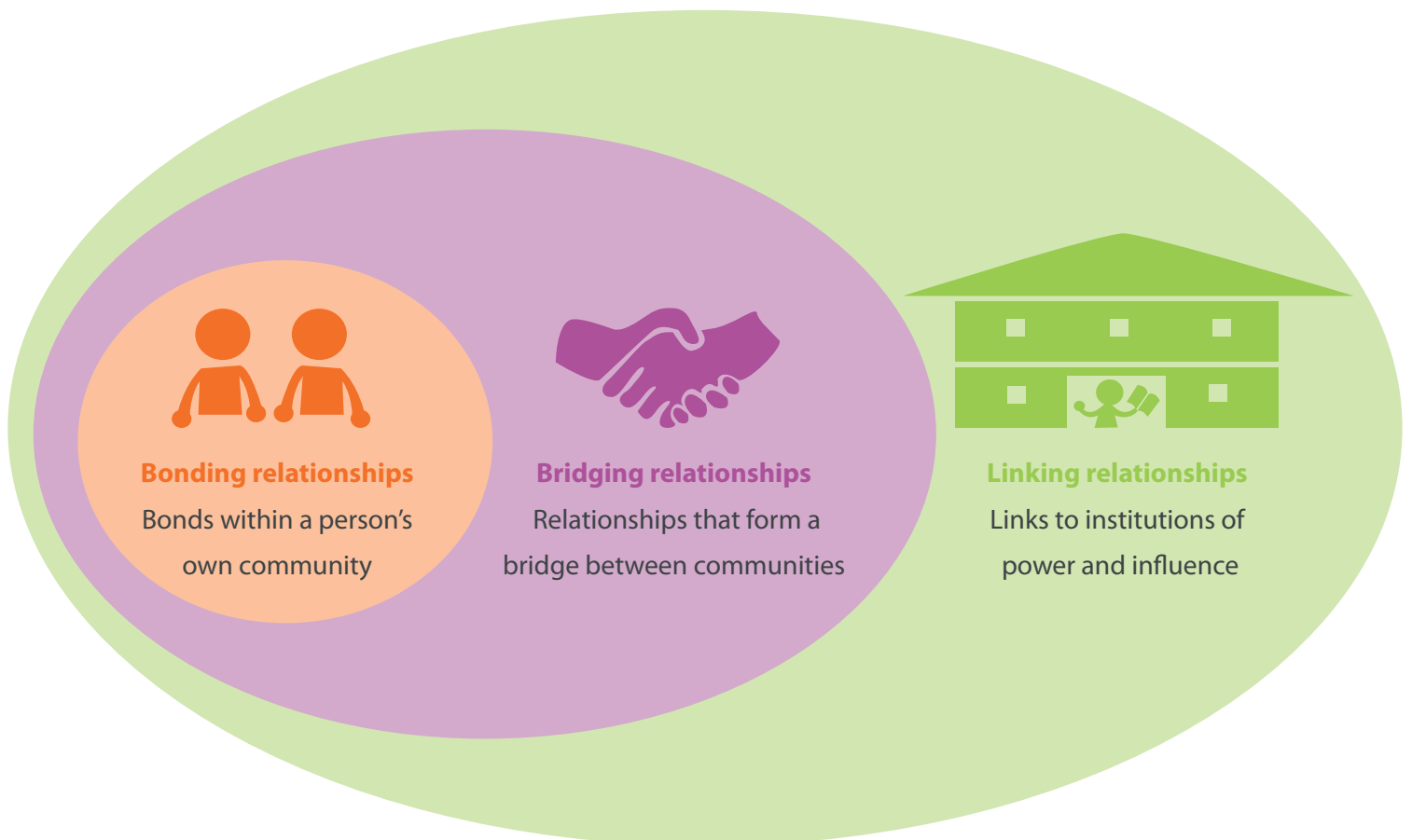
In addition to the results of the research for this report, mid-term monitoring reports for the 2017 HCPF recipient clubs increase the evidence of the OSHLSP sector in Victoria supporting social connections of students. Students involved in these clubs reported feeling more connected to each other and more broadly within the community. Many students developed new friendships across different year levels and cultural groups, and built positive relationships with homework club staff, including volunteer tutors. This resulted in increased student self esteem and engagement in school.

Some schools have noted that their homework club has supported an increased level of social cohesion within the school community and that students engaged in homework club are in turn more engaged in the school community.

> *I like that it feels welcome and I meet new people and see friends.*
> **Student at Njernda Koorie Homework Club**

Several clubs have also noted family engagement is crucial in supporting consistent student participation and student learning at home. Engagement in OSHLSP that focus on families can lead to an increase in social capital for students as well as their families. Students whose families are more comfortable connecting to the school community, are in turn more connected and comfortable themselves.

CASE STUDY

Family power

As part of the Refugee Education Support Program, Lalor North Primary School run a family learning club in partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC). The club targets refugee and asylum seeker students and their families from Iranian, Arabic-speaking and Somali backgrounds.

The program aims to empower parents with skills in English so they will become more engaged and confident in assisting their children with their learning at home. It also supports parents to feel like they are connected and belong to the school community. Families are involved in the learning club as active participants and have become more engaged with the school as a whole. There has been an increase in parents supporting their children to attend school excursions and camps, calling the office to explain student absences, initiating communication with teachers regarding their child's learning, approaching the school for financial assistance and for assistance with filling out forms.

Students who attend the program have grown in their confidence, engagement and abilities. They have developed friendships and feel a stronger sense of belonging at school. Positive relationships have developed with volunteer tutors and students now feel comfortable working with volunteer tutors to complete their homework.

"My Grade 4 student is excited for Tuesday afternoons and is proud to show me his homework; he has matured and is more focused in class." - Teacher

Many students have 'come out of their shells' and are communicating a lot more with teachers. According to their classroom teachers, students are more confident to attend school, which has had a big impact on their learning.

"A student, who was very shy and lacked confidence to read out loud, is now able to read out loud in front of peers. Students also have the confidence to speak up now when there are issues or things they don't agree with."
- Club Coordinator.

CHAPTER 3: EMERGING ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

As with any sector, there are key challenges and issues that are common across the OSHLSP sector. A key aim of this report was to capture some of those challenges that multiple clubs are experiencing in order to highlight potential gaps or innovative solutions. The following themes were identified by the majority of respondents as being challenges which they and their students are grappling with. Alongside each challenge is a solution that was also identified as a key factor in the success of some clubs. These are not the only solution for each challenge, but may assist other clubs in finding approaches that meet the needs of the students at their club.

Variation in student academic levels

It is common for students who attend OSHLSP to have broken education pathways, meaning different students will be at different academic levels – irrespective of their age. This can lead to a large variation between students' academic knowledge, and a disparity between the level an individual student has reached versus the expected level at their age.

Some clubs identified that this leads to difficulty in providing appropriate learning tasks and materials for all students. A lack of modified work makes it difficult to account for different learning needs. Some coordinators have reported that if students do not bring in set homework or learning tasks, it can be difficult for tutors to provide activities.

Some respondents mention that having strong links with schools minimises many barriers for the OSHLSP in providing relevant work. Conversely, OSHLSP without connections to schools point out that a lack of communication with teachers/multicultural education aides contributes to a lack of understanding about student academic capacity.

Community-based organisation and school partnerships

OSHLSP benefit enormously when schools and community organisations work together. Community organisations stated that close links to schools can encourage students to attend an OSHLSP. Programs and their students benefit from the additional support from school staff and feedback on academic and social progress as well as assistance in targeting individual students' learning needs. Open communication between schools and an OSHLSP can also enable tutors to hone in on areas that teachers have identified as needing more focus.

Schools gain valuable resources and knowledge, assistance in volunteer logistics and potential for cross-promotion of other programs that can in turn increase student engagement. Often schools find it difficult to recruit and manage volunteer tutors, but agencies have existing infrastructure in order to do this.

Respondents also suggested that local organisations facilitate strong links with the community, which can increase OSHLSP capacity. There is an increased resource pool that can be shared amongst different programs, which will improve the sustainability of an OSHLSP. Local organisations can also increase networks for OSHLSP staff and participants. Community hub organisations often have strong links with families and community members, which can foster a sense of belonging.

These connections also place schools and community organisations in an ideal position to leverage the support that Ager and Strang identified as so crucial to settlement, as outlined earlier.

CASE STUDY

Partnership for belonging

As part of the Refugee Education Support Program 2017, Truganina South Primary School partnered with the Refugee Migrant Children Centre (RMCC). Together they delivered a program for students and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The program aimed to create a space for families to have positive educational experiences, in order to support wellbeing and a sense of belonging to the school community.

Activities were creative and hands-on. Students and families made musical instruments out of recycled materials, built and painted model volcanoes and participated in dance and movement workshops. This approach aimed to be more inclusive of parents from an EAL background when compared to more traditional literacy and numeracy activities.

RMCC provided direct facilitation of activities, support and guidance to the school, and volunteers at each session. Truganina South PS staff also coordinated the program, promoted it to the school community and helped with facilitation. The partnership was a great success; regular communication and collaboration ensured the needs of students and families were met. Organisation and planning led to strong attendance at each session.

In the first year, Truganina South PS and RMCC focused on making the program inclusive, friendly and responsive. This has led to an improvement in social skills and behaviour of students who are more confident communicating with peers, other parents and with staff.

Students involved in the program attended regularly, which gave them a strong sense of belonging. Parents gained confidence engaging with the school and learning about ways to support their child's learning at home. The school learned more about the needs of families from EAL, refugee and migrant backgrounds, and is committed to continuing the program into the future.

School staff provided high praise for the work of RMCC. One teacher described the partnership as "a perfect match for our vision of families interacting in a fun environment". School staff also said that communication was excellent within the RESP project team, and RMCC were always receptive to feedback and suggestions.

RMCC similarly gave highly positive feedback, and attributed the success of program to the strong partnership with the school. Regular communication assisted RMCC staff and volunteers to know more about how students were tracking at school, and tailor activities to particular learning needs. The consistent and reliable presence of school staff in every session greatly assisted RMCC to communicate and connect with parents or carers.

Sustainable funding

A lack of funding has been identified as a key challenge for the sustainability of OSHLSP, preventing maintenance and growth of programs. The capacity for OSHLSP to source and maintain funding is an ongoing challenge. Respondent data found there were four major streams of OSHLSP funding across the sector. Philanthropic grants from community based organisations, funding organisations and individuals was a major component in OSHLSP financial stability. Funding and grants from government (council, local and federal) and schools also significantly contributed to the OSHLSP sector. The business and corporate sector made contributions, albeit at a smaller scale.

The majority of funding sources are annual, which means clubs frequently need to reapply for funding to support their operations. Many club coordinators are part time or are only allocated a few hours per week to focus on learning support programs. Applying for funding is a time consuming process, so keeping up with annual funding cycles can be a challenge for clubs. The insecure nature of OSHLSP funding also prevents some OSHLSP from planning for the future, as there is ongoing uncertainty about their economic ability to continue operating. Some solutions for this have been found through partnership; larger organisations with more stable funding sources can partner with smaller community based organisations and schools. Other partnerships involve in-kind support such as venue provision, snacks or equipment.

Grants and funding initiatives

An initiative from the Department of Education and Training Victoria has enabled some government schools to fund programs through the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Wellbeing Supplement.

"The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Wellbeing Supplement recognises that the wellbeing needs of students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are complex and varied, and that schools require additional support to cater for these needs. This funding is to support the improvement of wellbeing services to this high needs cohort of students so they remain engaged and supported during their school years.

The initiative will contribute to the Education State targets of breaking the link between disadvantage and outcomes, and support the development of happy, healthy and resilient kids. The Government has committed $17 million over four years for this initiative."[7]

Schools do not need to apply for this funding, it is allocated according to enrolment records that show the number of students at a school who are asylum seeker or likely refugee background. Funding is allocated on a per-student basis. Guidelines around how this money can be spent include the suggestion of setting up learning support programs but can be used for other initiatives as well.

CASE STUDY

Homework Club Partnership Fund

Homework clubs rely on highly insecure, short term funding from a diverse range of sources, including government, philanthropy, corporates, and local businesses. Funding received by individual programs is rarely sufficient to operate at a good practice level.

Philanthropic organisations and individuals have played an important role in financially supporting homework clubs over many years. However, this is generally provided in response to individual applications, is often one-off and is not necessarily linked to accepted standards of a high quality homework program. The Australian Community Foundation, Stan Willis Trust and CMY partnered in 2015 to create a fund that began with a single amount that is then used to match additional philanthropic contributions.

The Fund is underpinned with the understanding that more can be achieved if a more coordinated approach to funding was developed, which is tied to the attainment of a consistent set of best practice standards for homework programs.

Since then 35 clubs throughout Victoria have received HCPF funding grants of one year. The Partnership is keen to develop the fund to enable longer-term grants to be awarded to increase funding predictability for clubs.

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7   https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/finance/RefugeeAndAsylumSeekerWellbeingSupplement_SchoolFactScheet.pdf

Volunteer recruitment and retention

Volunteer management is a crucial component of a successful OSHLSP yet many clubs identified that this is a significant challenge. Attracting enough volunteers as well as retaining them for long periods is a significant part of a coordinator's role. Low numbers of volunteers can result in improper volunteer to student ratios, potentially leading to lower levels of support.

Training and partnerships

The MY Education team at CMY provides a wide range of resources all aimed at providing support for OSHLSP. The tutor/coordinator training and professional development sessions that CMY offer were consistently identified as supports for OSHLSP in the survey responses. In the online survey, 65 per cent of participants responded that they had attended CMY training (with 97 per cent ranking either good or very good). It was also suggested that online modules and written resources played an important role, as did the one-on-one support offered to Coordinators by CMY MY Education project officers. In this way, CMY can support clubs to hone in on specific challenges they are facing, such as retention of volunteers. It is common for OSHLSP to source volunteers from universities, especially those students undertaking teaching degrees. This can pose challenges during university exam periods but provides clubs with tutors who have recent relevant experience to share with the school students.

Understanding, Knowing and Learning: Melbourne University CMY partnership

Melbourne University offers an innovative breadth subject for first year undergraduates called Understanding, Knowing and Learning. Under the leadership of Associate Professor John Quay of the Graduate School of Education, the subject provides an introduction to learning and teaching for students who are not studying teaching as their major.

Through exploration of a range of theoretical perspectives, students increase their understanding of how to support their own learning and that of others. The theory is combined with practical application by requiring students to volunteer at a learning support program.

CMY's Education team supports the course by delivering two of the course lectures. During these, students are introduced to the role and the responsibilities of volunteer tutors, including child safety; typical experiences of students of refugee and migrant background who begin school in Victoria; some tips and strategies to increase cultural competency as well as strategies for effective tutoring of students with an English as Additional Language background. The course lecturers then expand on these sessions within their tutorials.

Using CMY's network, Associate Professor John Quay liaises with OSHLSP who are willing to offer placements for these students for a semester. Many find it so rewarding their commitment to tutoring lasts beyond the course. The program provides students with valuable experience in teaching and learning, but also exposes them to the experiences of school students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Some may choose to complete teaching qualifications, others are able to add the volunteering experience to their resumes, and some students choose to continue tutoring after the conclusion of their practical placement.

The benefits to the school students being tutored are also significant. Connecting them with undergraduate students enables them to learn about being at university, get study tips from people who only recently left secondary school and exposes them to possible tertiary pathways.

Material support to students

Research identified that OSHLSP are often asked to support students in areas beyond standard learning support. In cases where families do not have the capacity to purchase uniforms, books and other resources, OSHLSP tutors and coordinators can be asked to provide such materials. This economic disadvantage can result in elevated stress levels for students and has drastic impacts on the ability of the student to engage. Whilst many OSHLSP can provide learning resources within a session, some do not have this capacity and very few, if any, have the means to provide access to this, or other material support, outside of the session hours.

OSHLSP Referral processes

OSHLSP are not always well placed to be supporting students' material needs. When an OSHLSP is requested to do so by a student or their family, there needs to be communication with that student's school, which will have procedures in place or have a range of referral options.

The Department of Education and Training Victoria has a range of services and advice for families experiencing financial difficulty.

There are also many agencies that have programs and services to provide material support for those in need. The Smith Family, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Brotherhood of St Laurence are just a few examples. CMY recommends that OSHLSP maintain a list of local agencies that provide this kind of support.

Racism

Respondents to our research stated that students experience racial discrimination in the wider community, and this impacts student confidence, wellbeing and learning. Many coordinators praised how this challenge was negotiated by volunteers, but noted it as a significant challenge for their students.

Developmentally, by the time children reach school age they are aware of racial difference and begin to ascribe characteristics to those who are different from their own families. Racial prejudice can develop as early as 3-6 years old[8]. Children as young as three can reject playmates based on colour, and children of colour can begin to have negative interactions with adults and peers and internalise negative attitudes being displayed towards them[9]. It is estimated that one in five students experience racism at school every day, and 26 per cent more primary school children report racism than high school children[10].

Constructive dialogue

Often adults do not talk about race with young children, so any negative biases are left unchallenged. It is important to have constructive conversations about difference and diversity, and support students to explore without judgement. These conversations can be difficult to facilitate, so a list of resources is provided below. CMY also offers training in this area, so can be contacted for support.

Kids Together Now Anti-Racism App for primary school children: http://alltogethernow.org.au/app-for-children/

Australian Human Rights Commission Building Belonging (early childhood) and Rights Education (years 9 and 10) https://www.humanrights.gov.au/building-belonging-toolkit-early-childhood-educators-cultural-diversity-and-responding-prejudice

Australian Human Rights Commission's Racism, it stops with me education resources:

https://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/education-resources

Racism no way: Anti racism education for Australian schools: http://www.racismnoway.com.au/

Refugee Experience App:

https://www.redcross.org.au/get-involved/learn/school-resources/refugee-experience-app

Picture books for promoting intercultural understanding:

https://www.fremmedspraksenteret.no/neted/services/file/?hash=b08a3b009fe1260634d99b75dfe0d6c0\

https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/oct/13/50-best-culturally-diverse-childrens-books

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8   Derman-Sparks, Louise. Stages in children's development of racial, cultural, identity & attitudes. Sophia Lyon Fahs Lecture, UUA General Assembly 2012
9   Ibid
10   All Together Now https://alltogethernow.org.au/schools/

Intergenerational issues

Intergenerational issues were also identified as a challenge for students. In some cases, the families of students also have limited English skills. This makes it difficult to support families to support their children. Cultural differences also exist in educational and vocational expectations, with one respondent suggesting a challenge exists in promoting the value of the "student voice" within the family hierarchy.

The MYAN Settlement Framework identifies intergenerational issues as being part of the particular and distinct settlement experience of young people. The 2016 MYAN report identified intergenerational conflict often results from differing expectations surrounding education and career pathways.

Shepparton English Language Centre Family Engagement Workshops

CASE STUDY

As part of the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP), the Shepparton English Language Centre (SELC) identified key needs newly arrived Syrian and Afghani refugee families had while attending their school.

These were:

- to increase their capacity to support their child's learning at home,
- to improve their understanding of educational systems and processes, and
- to increase family engagement with the school.

To address these issues, five family engagement sessions took place. Topics included information about school expectations and rules, transition to secondary school and ways to support their children's learning at home.

The Syrian families were particularly keen to understand the school rules, with parents commenting;

"We feel that both our children and ourselves do not fully know and understand the full range of school rules (both inside and outside the classroom) and the specific consequences for breaking these rules."

Following the session the parents reported having a better understanding of the school rules. As several of the children were involved in a community support program for children who had experienced significant change or loss in their lives, the workshops were used as an opportunity to fully explain the importance of the program.

"Thank you for selecting our son for this program. Our son really needs help. He is very scared of adults and has not spoken to adults and teachers in Australia for over a year now. In Afghanistan he became terrified of the constant sound of bombs exploding and would stay under his bed for long periods of time." - Parent comment

The workshops were well attended by refugee background families and enabled SELC to build positive relationships with the newly arrived families.

Some factors that contributed to parent participation included:

- The Multicultural Education Aides worked with parents to understand the purpose of the session and invited them to attend

- The MEAs supported the Arabic and Dari speaking parents to attend the sessions with phone calls and text reminders, and assistance at the sessions to understand the content

- The consistency of the workshop format enabled families to feel comfortable

- The use of the same interpreters at each session developed trust with the families and enabled them to ask more detailed questions

- Trust developed between the parents and the SELC staff.

Face-to-face communication with parents was open, frank, informative, and assisted by trusted interpreters. This provided an ideal platform to build parental engagement both with the school and within the home learning environment. The 5 SELC Workshops were successful in promoting increased family engagement with the school and also gave confidence and motivation to parents to support and be responsible for their children's learning at home.

Mental health and resilience

A challenge exists for OSHLSP in engaging with student mental health. Many respondents suggested mental health is not considered enough within the learning support sector, and there is a lack of understanding about how OSHLSP should engage. Similarly, students who have trauma from past experiences will need specific assistance. It is important that OSHLSP procedures reflect best practice in this area, by linking with specialist providers, ideally through the relevant school.

It is important to acknowledge the key role learning support and social connections play in fostering resilience, which in turn supports mental health. OSHLSP foster the key protective factors that support resilience. Daniel and Wassell[11] identified six factors that protect a child's resilience, which are depicted in the graphic below.

Six factors that protect a child's resilience

POSITIVE VALUES

EDUCATION

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

SECURE BASE

FRIENDSHIPS

TALENTS & INTERESTS

OSHLSP Supports

OSHLSP already part of the picture

OSHLSP are well placed to promote engagement in education, social connections and friendships, and a development of talents and interests. By explicitly emphasising these aspects of a learning support program, coordinators are playing a part in the psychosocial support for students who may have experienced adversity or be experiencing stress in their settlement.

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11   Sally Wassell, Brigid Daniel. Adolescence: Assessing and Supporting Resilience in Vulnerable Children. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 15 Jul. 2002:14

> *Resilience can be nurtured and cultivated when the proper systems and protective factors are in place. Protective elements have been found to have similarities across cultures and experiences of refugees. As this is the case, the protective elements should be cultivated and developed to increase resiliency and healing for refugee youth.*[12]

CASE STUDY

Case study: Peer-tutoring helps me fight my battles

Many clubs choose peer-tutoring as an effective model to increase social connections between primary school students and the students from the secondary school they are likely to go to. This has enormous benefits for the primary students' transition to high school, but also supports the secondary students in various ways.
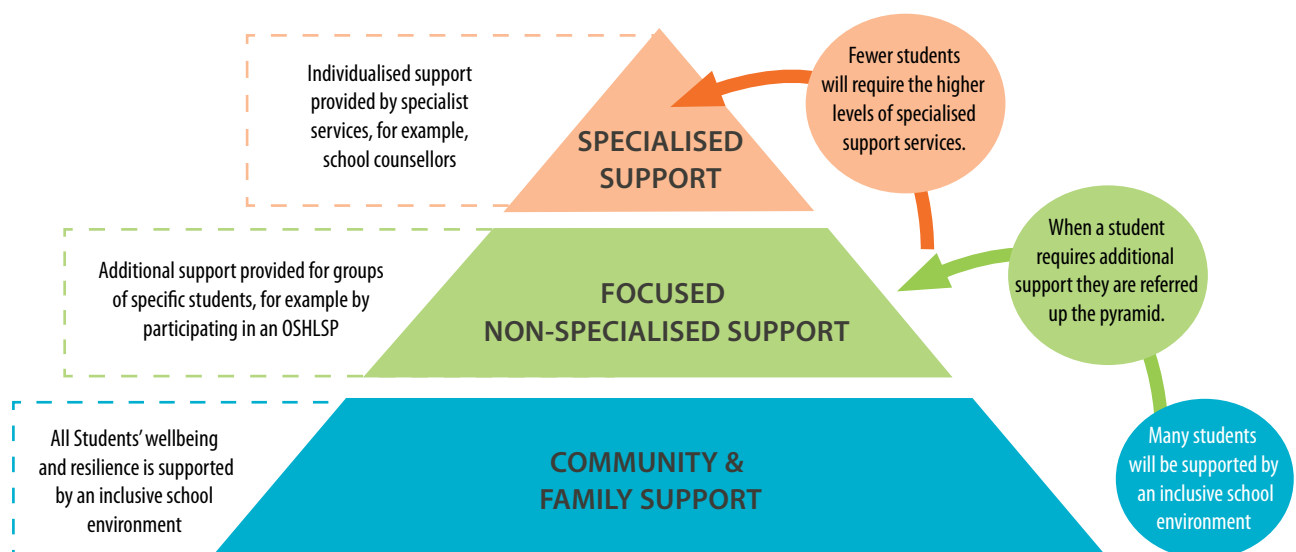
One peer tutor, Mae*, expressed the joy she felt in going to homework club when she tutored in year 11. Her confidence levels in speaking English increased, her feelings of self-worth improved and her stress was relieved. Mae said she looked forward to the weekly sessions as much as the primary students did. She then outlined how it supported her mental health:

"I am going through mental issues, such as depression and anxiety, and I could have just said 'I don't want to do this, I just want to lock myself in a room.' But I chose to fight my battles and just come [to homework club]. It has changed me and it has helped me fight this mental issue. That's a big impact for me."

* Name changed for privacy

Resilience is often overlooked but should be recognised and supported wherever possible. However, there will be some students who may require specialised support. Therefore it is necessary for OSHLSP coordinators to ensure they are able to identify students who require a tailored approach and have referral mechanisms in place so that they are able to access this. Due to the purpose and focus of OSHLSP, staff and volunteers within them are not well placed to offer specialised support themselves, so should work through existing systems where required.

This is where partnership between OSHLSP and schools is vital. Schools have numerous programs to support students' mental health and are easily accessible to students, who spend 25 hours of their week at school. There are also specialised organisations that offer mental health support to people from multicultural and/or refugee backgrounds. Some of these offer programs that can be run in an OSHLSP setting, or are more tailored for individuals.[13]

Individualised support provided by specialist services, for example, school counsellors

SPECIALISED SUPPORT

Fewer students will require the higher levels of specialised support services.

Additional support provided for groups of specific students, for example by participating in an OSHLSP

FOCUSED NON-SPECIALISED SUPPORT

When a student requires additional support they are referred up the pyramid.

All Students' wellbeing and resilience is supported by an inclusive school environment

COMMUNITY & FAMILY SUPPORT

Many students will be supported by an inclusive school environment

13   van der Veer, G. (1998). Counselling and therapy with refugees and victims of trauma:Psychological problems of victims of war, torture and repression (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ, US: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

13   This pyramid is adapted from the intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies found in the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, WHO, 2007:14.

Students

One aspect of OSHLSP that can have an enormous impact on programs is the students themselves. Often positioned as beneficiaries of programs it is important to recognise that they have capacity to shape and improve the program themselves.

Some clubs build this into their programming by including students in planning meetings, surveys regarding the direction of the club, evaluation processes and assigning key roles to older students. This ensures the club not only focuses on the priorities of the students themselves but also increases student confidence and engagement as students feel valued and heard.

CASE STUDY

Araf – a key to success

Araf was born in Afghanistan and arrived in Australia as a refugee. He had a difficult journey here but was eager to begin a new life in Australia with his family. He enrolled at the Noble Park English Language School then attended Dandenong Primary School.

When Araf first attended the OSHLSP program he had very little English. He lacked confidence with school related work and socially was very shy. From the beginning, Araf took great responsibility for his learning and in just over 12 months, he completed the EAL transition program with an excellence award.

Araf's presence in the learning support program is a positive one. He has encouraged other, more reluctant students to join the OSHLSP program and to make an effort with their learning. He is always ready to assist volunteers when they are unsure of what students' homework requires. If volunteers are busy with others, Araf will step in and help other students. He gently, and without judgement, reminds anyone who is not following the rules or who gets 'off track', how they should be behaving. He is a key contributor to the success of this program.

Conclusion

The extensive research conducted for this report provides data that concludes OSHLSP across Victoria have a positive effect on students from migrant and refugee backgrounds. They can play a crucial role in helping students to experience success in their learning and increase their wellbeing at school. The primary outcomes for students engaged in OSHLP include an increase in social confidence and the opportunity to build social connections, and growth in academic confidence as well as tangible academic progress.

CMY's research revealed that there are a number of challenges confronting the OSHLSP sector that are shared by various programs across the state. These challenges can be widely grouped into the following themes:

- Variation in student academic levels and tutor capacity to cater for a broad range of learning needs

- Lack of sustainable funding

- Volunteer recruitment and retention

- Material support for students

- Racism

- Intergenerational Issues

- Mental Health.

While the specific needs of each OSHLSP and the individual students who attend those OSHLSP are unique, CMY has developed a set of broad recommendations to support clubs to address some of the common challenges facing the sector. These recommendations will also assist in ensuring best practice is met.

1. Work in partnership

Partnerships between community organisations, universities and schools may help with:

- Funding issues for both school-run and community run programs, which could be addressed through partnerships. This could include financial and in-kind resources being provided.

- Schools can access specialised support from community organisations, including social workers and community connections, or help with recruitment of volunteers.

- Organisations can utilise the professional knowledge of teachers and schools staff around how children learn and tap into school-based referral mechanisms for other specialised support.

2. Use a student-centred approach

Many of the challenges outlined by respondents to this research centred on how students experience the communities and context in which they are engaging. Supporting social connections, and responding to intergenerational conflict and experiences of racism requires OSHLSP to create environments in which students feel safe and are empowered to influence the design and implementation of a project. Good practice requires clubs to:

- Learn from their students

- Enable them to find solutions to challenges

- Empower them to lead change in their club, school and wider community.

Working in this way ensures clubs are fulfilling their obligation to focus on the students' best interest while at the same time significantly improves the quality of the programs.

> *"The program has helped me to start believing in myself, that I can do stuff, that I'm capable of doing things."*
> **Ayan, OSHLSP student**

Building on the already significant impact we know the Victorian OSHLSP sector, these two deceptively simple recommendations will form a strong foundation for any program. It is hoped this report will contribute to the overall quality of the whole sector by providing both a strong evidence base for the current impact as well showcasing good practice and innovation.

> *"Our job as teachers, leaders, and parents is not to prepare kids for something; our job is to help kids prepare themselves for anything."*
> **AJ Juliani**