

# SNAP Program Review

July 2013



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## Background

In 2009, through community consultation with local workers and families, Camcare's Family Violence Research Project identified that there were limited services supporting women and children who are affected by family violence in the Ashburton Neighbourhood Renewal area. While there were some local family outreach services in Ashburton which assist women and children affected by family violence, the women's groups were located in Kew and Mount Waverly which are difficult locations for clients to access.

At the time, there were several local playgroups which had been established by Maternal Child and Health nurses, The Craig Family Centre and Ashburton Baptist Church. There was also one other supported playgroup for women and children affected by family violence located in Bayswater which was accessed by families across the Eastern region. However, it was identified that women and children affected by family violence residing in the Ashburton Neighbourhood Renewal area would benefit from access to a localised supported playgroup.

Therefore, in early 2010, Camcare developed an Ashburton Supported Playgroup Project proposal. The playgroup would be facilitated by a paid family worker and children's worker and would target women and pre school children affected by family violence who weren't engaged in a community playgroup. It was also proposed that the playgroup would operate at no cost to families.

Camcare approached two key partners, Ashburton Baptist Church and Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS), to develop what would later be named the Social, Nurture and Play (SNAP) playgroup. Both services were very interested in the model and a Partnership agreement for Camcare and EDVOS which articulated the roles of each organisation. Camcare also developed and implemented a communication strategy, along with policies and documents including as referral register, intake form, consent form, program flyer and attendance sheet.

The playgroup began operating in mid 2010, run in partnership between Camcare and EDVOS meeting weekly at the Ashburton Baptist Church. Operating successfully for a number of years, the partnership between Camcare and EDVOS was dissolved in 2012 and Connections came on as the new partners in mid 2012.

## Program Aim

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Engage women and children affected by family violence residing in the Ashburton, Ashwood and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal area through an accessible, non-stigmatised, safe playgroup providing interaction, play and learning opportunities for both mothers and children.



## Aim of Program Review

The SNAP playgroup first started in 2010 and has been running for 3 years. This review aimed to explore the effectiveness of the program and whether it was meeting the programs aim and goals. The review also aimed to investigate whether the current format of the group was achieving what was initially intended.

## Methodology

The review of the SNAP program utilized a mixed method approach to gain both quantitative and qualitative data.

- Participants were given feedback surveys at the end of each year (Appendix 1)
- Data analysis:
  - Camcare inputs basic program data into a software packaged (IRIS) that enables a number of reports; data fields include: demographics, number of group sessions attended, length of service, presenting issues.
- Focus Group(Appendix 2):
  - Current and past participants were invited to attend a focus group to discuss their experiences of participating in the SNAP program (Appendix 3).
  - Current workers were invited to attend the first part of the focus group to contribute information about their experience of facilitating SNAP.

## Program Goals



### Strengthen Attachment:

A safe and friendly environment for mothers and children to strengthen their relationship through play and quality time together.

### Peer Relationships:

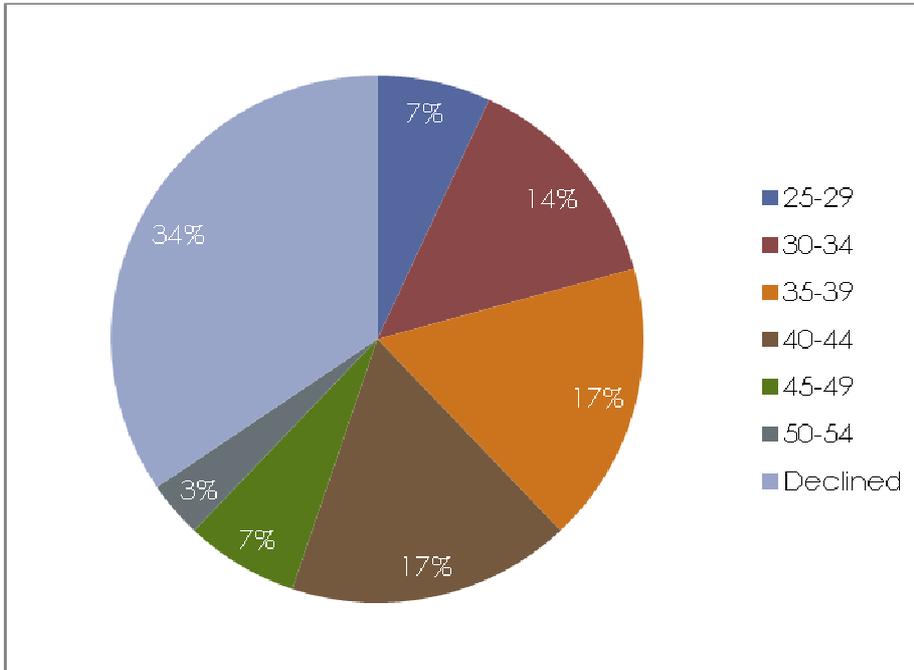
Build friendships and support networks with others.

### Building Confidence:

An environment that supports the healthy development of children and building confidence in mothers.

## Results and Discussion

Figure 1: Age Range of Program Participants 2010-2013



As Figure 1 illustrates, 58% of program participants were over the age of thirty, with 27% of participants being over forty years of age. It should also be noted that 34% of the participants are listed as age being declined. This may be due to either the participants not indicating their age or the workers not recording all details. These figures indicate that the participants referred to the program are older mothers and that there are lower percentages of young mothers participating in the program.



Table 1: Referral Sources 2010-2013

Source	Number
Self	2
Maternal & Child Health Nurse (MCHN)	4
Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)	9
Peek-a-Boo Club	1
Camcare Integrated Family Services (IFS)	9
Camcare Parenting Support Program	2
Camcare Emergency Relief (ER)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 1 shows that over the lifetime of the program most mothers were referred by EDVOS & Camcare IFS, both of whom were involved in the establishment of the program. In the initial stages, EDVOS accounted for the majority of referrals. When the partnership with EDVOS dissolved, the majority of referrals were made by Camcare IFS.

Table 2 (below) shows that referrals to the program have centred around the local area of Ashburton and other neighbouring suburbs. Table 3 (below) confirms this with the majority of clients living in the local government areas of Monash and Boroondara. Incomplete records make it hard to ascertain whether this has changed throughout the time the program has been run and when different partnerships were in place.

Table 2: Referrals by Postcode 2010-2013

Main Suburb Name	Postcode	Number of Participants
Ashburton	3147	8
Blackburn	3130	1
Box Hill	3128	2
Camberwell	3124	1
Chadstone	3148	2
Donvale	3111	1
Nunawading	3131	1
Glen Iris	3146	1
Glen Waverley	3150	1
Hawthorn East	3123	1
Hawthorn	3122	1
Kew East	3102	1

Kew	3101	1
Mount Waverley	3149	2
Mulgrave	3170	1
Oakleigh South	3167	1
Preston	3072	1
Surrey Hills	3127	2

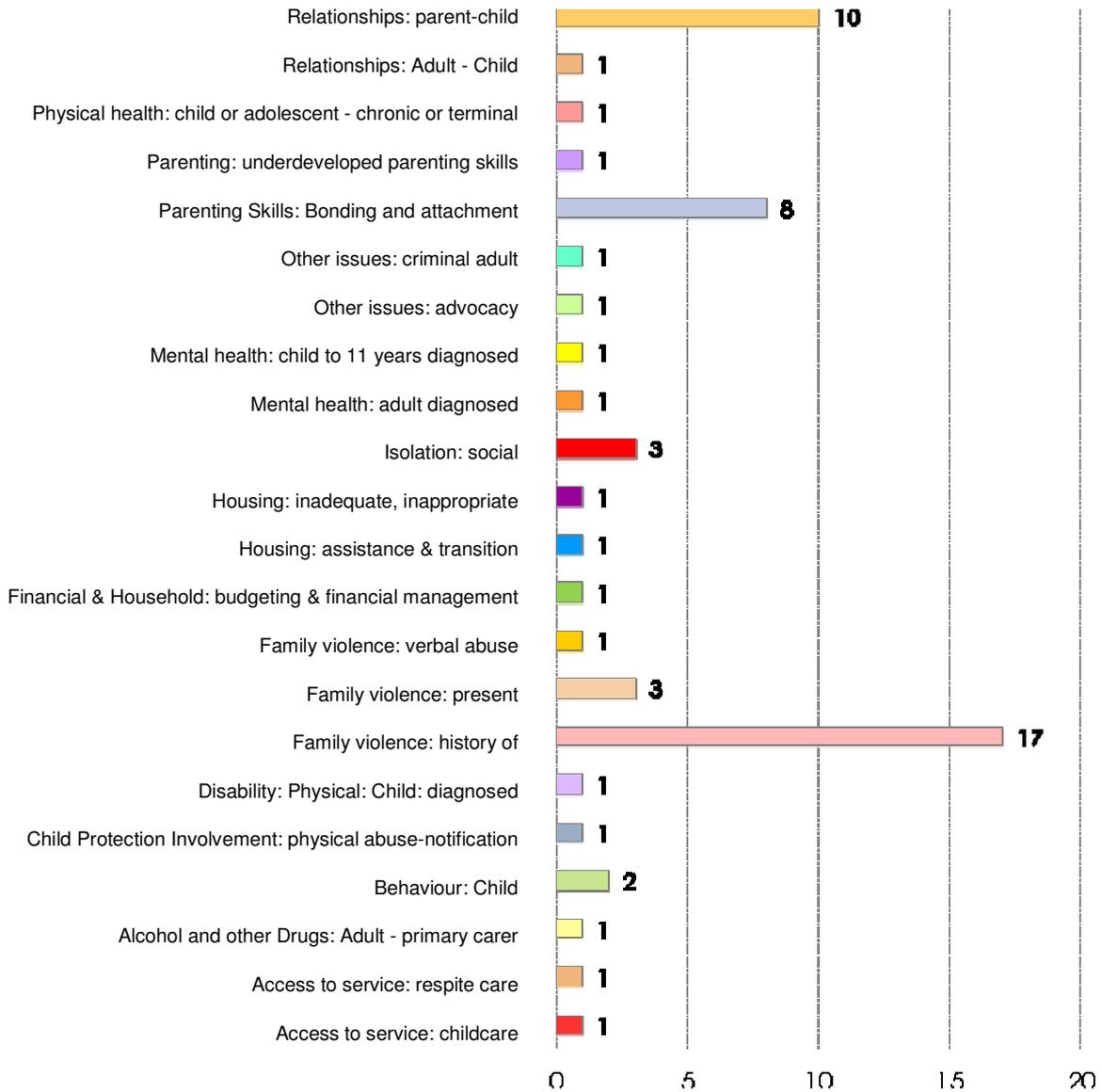
*Table 3: Referrals by LGA 2010-2013*

Main Suburb Name	Number of Participants
Boroondara	8
Darebin	1
Manningham	1

Monash	15
Whitehorse	4



Figure 2: Client Characteristics and Issues 2010-2013



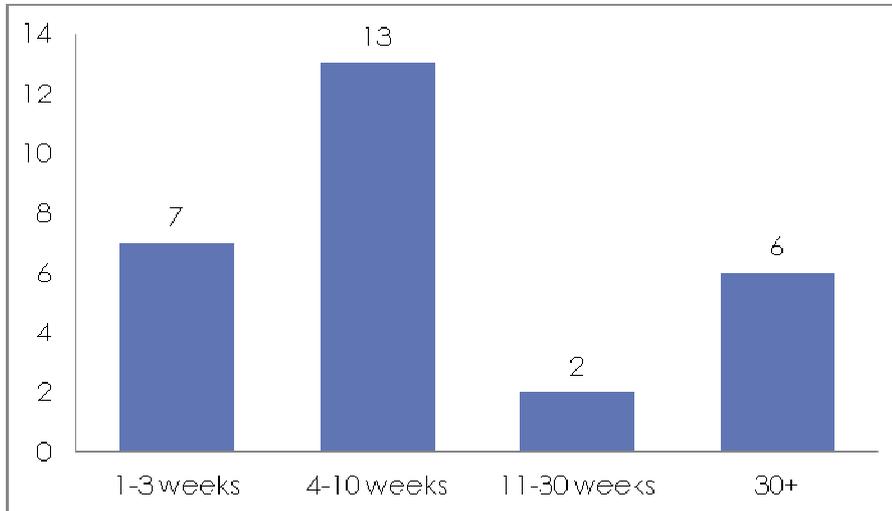
The playgroup was established to support women who have experienced family violence and 72% of participants identified that they were experiencing or have experienced family violence, with 10% of participants acknowledging present family violence at intake.

The two other consistent issues for participants included 34.5% of participants identifying issues in the relationship between them and their child, while 27.5% of participants presenting issues with bonding and attachment between them and their child.



Some other issues identified by participants included social isolation (10%) and child behaviour (7%).

*Figure 3: Client attendance (number of sessions)*



When reviewing attendance of playgroup and the length of stay of participants, the most popular number of weeks attended by participants was 4-10 weeks with 46% of participants engaging for this length of time. The attendance records also indicate that 1 in 4 women (25%) attend only 1-3 sessions. A similar number of women have attended the group for long periods of time, with 21% attending for 30+ weeks. Over the current life of the group, the average weeks attended by participants is 18 weeks.



### Summary of Client Feedback 2011-2012

Participants were given a feedback questionnaire (Appendix 1) at the end of each year, with 31% of all participants completing these forms (2011: 4 & 2012: 5). This appears to be a low rate of completion; however this is most likely due to the feedback being given at the end of year and the inconsistent attendance of participants. Client comments quoted in this report are direct quotes from the returned questionnaires.

All respondents indicated that they have noticed a change in their child since coming to playgroup, with most mothers noting examples of positive changes especially around an increase in their child's confidence and social skills.

The majority of respondents (78%) also recognized positive changes in their relationship with their child, while 22% stated that they weren't sure if there were any changes.

When asked to identify what participants like most about playgroup, there were some common themes centred on the group activities and time spent away from home to socialise with other parents and their children. Also identified was the support they receive from other participants and the workers.

All respondents reported that they have used the activities from playgroup at home with their children. With majority (78%) of respondents stating that their children talk about playgroup at home and that their children look forward to playgroup each week.

When asked about what it was like to meet other mums who had experienced domestic violence 44% of respondents indicated that they didn't really discuss their circumstances with other participants. Even with this being the case, 22% of respondents stated that the group helped them to realise that they weren't alone in their circumstances.

“Yes improvement in behaviour due to more one-on-one time together”



“More outgoing”



“He is happy”



“He is not as shy with new children”



“He leaves my side to play with other children more easily”



“Definitely, she seems to be bonding with me, she seems happier in a supporting environment”



“Made me realise I'm not the only one who has been through it”



“I find we didn't discuss our circumstances greatly. Not that I mind that because I would rather focus on the lovely activities and make it more about a fun time for the kids”



Table 4: Summary of Client Feedback 2011-2012

	Always	Mostly	Some-times	Not at all	No Response
My hopes/expectations for play group have been met	44%	22%	11%	-	23%
I felt welcomed by the other mothers	67%	22%	11%	-	11%
I felt welcomed by the facilitators	78%	22%	-	-	-
How did you find the venue (public transport, comfortable, safe and child friendly)?	67%	33%	-	-	-

I found the Facilitators/Staff	2011-2012
Helpful	90%
Supportive	100%
Intrusive	10%
Too many	12.5%
Friendly	87.5%
Disrespectful	-
Bossy	-
Professional	32.5%
Unreliable	-
Approachable	65%
Controlling	25%
Trustworthy	20%
Respectful	65%
Inconsistent	-
Untrustworthy	-

Respondents were asked to identify words that described the facilitators of the group.

100% of respondents reported that the facilitators were supportive and 90% described them as helpful. Other words majority of respondents selected were friendly, approachable and respectful.



### *Summary of Feedback from focus group:*

A focus group was held and all past participants were contacted to be invited to attend the group. Several phone numbers were either disconnected or there was no answer after a number of attempts. Some past participants declined the offer to participate, stating they felt they didn't have anything to contribute as their attendance at the group was so long ago. Others did not want to participate in the focus group, but were forthcoming with providing feedback over the phone. Feedback from the phone conversations has also been summarised below.

### *Reasons for participants returning to SNAP:*

- The participants see friendships as a key aspect that keeps them coming back to the group. Friendships have developed between both children and with the other mums who attend and these have extended to them meeting outside of the regular group.
- Acceptance of everyone, without judgment is valued by all of the participants. Some of the mums stated that the group was the only space they felt comfortable to be themselves.

### *Differences group has made in participants lives:*

- Participants enjoyed the regular time and space to have a break.
- Participants valued the fact that everyone has something in common and that they have all come from stressful backgrounds so they are able to understand the stress.
- The participants enjoy the routine of playgroup each week and have noticed their children's confidence has increased.
- Participants have value the support from the facilitator and have identified the benefit of being able to talk to someone about their experience.

### *Differences group has made to parenting:*

- Participants identified they had improved their coping skills.
- Improved connections with other parents that they feel comfortable talking about things that their kids are going through that they wouldn't normally talk to other parents about.

### *Suggested changes:*

- The participants identified that the activities have been similar over the past three years and new activities would be welcomed. Especially age appropriate activities as their kids are older than when they first started attending the group.
- More discussion around attachment with their child, as participants noted that feedback wasn't often given.

### *Support networks*

- Some of the participants highlighted that they feel comfortable calling on each other for support when needed.
- The participants spoke of the support they have received from facilitators, especially when they were in a stressed state and that the facilitators helped to calm them down.
- One participant spoke of the benefits of having the facilitator as her support worker as the facilitator was able to have a more holistic view of the child and assist her with parenting.



## Summary of Feedback from phone calls

### Phone conversation #1:

- Felt she didn't get the support she wanted
- Felt that decisions were made for her
- Services have destroyed me
- Felt that she can't recommend or trust services
- Not followed up by worker when stopped attending

### Phone conversation #2:

- Workers were nice and setting was ok
- Didn't like some of the women and felt they spoke inappropriately in front of her child
- Didn't want to expose her child to adult conversation
- Workers were great at trying to contain conversations.

## Conclusion

### The playgroup has provided:

- Playgroup for women in the local area who had experienced family violence
- Space for socialising with other mums and children
  - Acceptance, Commonality, Friendships
- Positive experience of support workers
  - Welcoming and needs met
- Improved coping skills of mums and reduced isolation
- Positive changes in children and relationship between mum and child
- Mums used activities outside of group

### Improvements moving forward:

- New processes around intake, such as face to face interviews and assessments, to ensure that the playgroup model and purpose of the group is adequately explained to participants.
- Identified need for assessments to be made at different stages of the program (commencement, mid-review and at closure) to capture comparative data to measure improvements in each participant in areas such as parenting skills, confidence and attachment with their child.
- Feedback on the running of the program should be carried out more regularly (each term) to accurately capture feedback and increase the completion rate of feedback forms. (This could be carried out as part of the assessments??).
- Weekly observation records kept by workers to review the progress of participants and provide them with regular feedback on how they observe their skills developing. The feedback could be communicated to participants via phone and/or email. This will help keep the group focussed on the program goals.
- Time limited group:
  - Aim to prevent dependency on the worker/group and encourage a transition to mainstream services.
  - Reduce repetition of activities.
  - Tailored plan made for each individual participant at end of group.
- New processes around participant "drop off" to follow up on mums who stop attending the group to assess their ongoing safety and support needs.