

Growing Connection Through Multicultural Storytime

Multicultural Storytime Partnership Impact Report 2025-2026

Prepared for the City of Ballarat Community Hubs Team

Prepared by the BRMC, Manager of Settlement Services



Launch of Multicultural Storytime at Djila-tjarriu Community Hub, September 2025.

Purpose of this report

To share how BRMC's partnership with the City of Ballarat Community Hubs has strengthened access, participation, early learning, cultural connection and pathways to local services for multicultural families with children under five.

1. Partnership at a Glance

A place-based early years partnership connecting stories, culture, health information and community participation.

BRMC Multicultural Storytime combines bilingual and multicultural storytelling with songs, movement, play-based learning and practical child health information. **The Community Hubs partnership has helped move the program beyond a single central venue and into local community settings where multicultural families can participate, connect and learn about other services.**

4 Storytime programs	99 sessions	807 attendances*	4 language streams
---	------------------------------	-----------------------------------	---

*807 represents total attendances across sessions, not unique individuals.

What families experience • Stories and books in home languages and English • Songs, movement, craft and play • Child health and wellbeing information • Parent-child interaction and shared learning • A welcoming setting to meet other families	Partnership network • City of Ballarat Community Hubs and early-years teams • Maternal and Child Health, Best Start and CALD Outreach • Ballarat Libraries and Get Ready for Kinder • Supported Playgroup, Ballarat Toy Library and Ballarat Community Health • Playgroup Victoria professional development
--	--

The 2025-26 program was delivered through multicultural English, Mandarin, Hindi and Thok Naath/Nuer streams. Sessions addressed topics including healthy eating, hydration, dental health, hygiene, sleep, emotional wellbeing, physical activity, vaccination, body safety, sun safety, vision, hearing, lung health, healthy relationships, play and transition to kindergarten.

2. Improving Access: From Central Delivery to Local Participation

BRMC has progressively adapted where and how Storytime is delivered to reduce barriers and increase reach.

Why local delivery matters

Transport was identified as a material access barrier. Three participating families reported using taxis to attend Storytime because they did not have access to a car. For newly arrived families, local venues can reduce cost, travel complexity and the practical burden of attending with young children.

This makes hub-based delivery more than a venue choice: it is an equity and participation strategy.



A Storytime session bringing children, carers and facilitators together in a community setting.

Evidence of increased reach through the Hub-and-Spokes model

Program	Before: central venue	Hub-based delivery
Multicultural Storytime	Ballarat Welcome Centre Average participants: 26-30	Djila-tjarriu Community Hub: 14-16 Vickers Street Community Hub: 22-26 Combined average: 36-42
Multicultural Playgroup	Ballarat Welcome Centre Average participants: 14-18	Vickers Street Community Hub Average participants: 22-26

Source: BRMC internal Hub-and-Spokes participation data, 1 February-30 June 2026. Figures include children and are reported as average participant ranges.

Program evolution in Term 4 2026: integrating Storytime within Playgroup

To make Storytime easier to access and more visible to families, BRMC further refined the delivery model by embedding Storytime activities within the Monday and Thursday Multicultural Playgroups. This is a deliberate program access strategy: stories, songs, language, movement and health learning remain central, but families can encounter them within a relaxed playgroup format that also offers free play, social connection and informal access to information. BRMC has observed stronger participation since introducing the integrated approach and will continue to monitor term-by-term participation.

The available participation data already demonstrates the value of moving activity closer to communities. The integrated playgroup model is the next step in that same direction: making the program easier to find, easier to join and easier to sustain as part of family routines.

3. What the Partnership Enables for Children and Families

Program records and case examples show how local, bilingual and play-based delivery creates practical pathways into early learning, health information, culture and community.



Thok Naath/Nuer Storytime: supporting home language, shared reading and family connection.

Culturally responsive early learning

Storytime is delivered through multicultural English, Mandarin, Hindi and Thok Naath/Nuer streams. Stories, songs, movement and play provide age-appropriate ways for children to engage with language, culture and child health and wellbeing topics.

- Bilingual storytelling supports home-language continuity while children also engage with English in a group-learning environment.
- Parents and grandparents can share cultural memories, songs and stories alongside their children.
- Play-based activities give children opportunities to learn through movement, interaction, choice and participation.
- The integrated Playgroup + Storytime model creates a relaxed setting where early learning and family connection can happen together.

Practical pathways created through the partnership

Health information	Early-years and service connection	Culture, language and belonging
Sessions have covered healthy eating, dental health, hygiene, sleep, emotional wellbeing, physical activity, vaccination, body safety, sun safety, vision, hearing, lung health and healthy relationships. Professional input helps families ask questions and understand where to seek further support.	Collaboration with Maternal and Child Health, Best Start, CALD Outreach, Libraries, Get Ready for Kinder and other family services brings information and service pathways into the same community settings where families already participate.	Regular bilingual and multicultural sessions create space for children to hear community languages and for families to share cultural knowledge. Case examples also show how facilitator development can extend into wider community language leadership.

A family-Centred delivery model

The value of the partnership is not limited to a single activity. Community Hub settings enable Storytime, play, health information, cultural connection and informal service navigation to sit alongside one another. For newly arrived and multicultural families, this creates a more approachable pathway into Ballarat's early-years and community service system.

4. Quality, Capability and Wider Community Impact

The partnership has supported not only family participation, but also stronger facilitator practice and community leadership.

Building a stronger Storytime team

BRMC prioritised regular planning days, peer reflection and professional development with Playgroup Victoria. Storytellers strengthened child-led, play-based and interactive facilitation, including the use of tone, pacing, movement, choice and flexible responses to children's needs.

- more intentional session planning around child health and wellbeing objectives
- greater confidence adapting activities for different ages, attention spans and family needs
- stronger collaboration and reflective practice across language groups
- increased capacity to create safe, inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments



Storytime planning and reflective practice with the facilitator team.

A community leadership multiplier

Case example: from bilingual storyteller to community language leader

Mary Deng brought early-childhood experience to Storytime and developed greater confidence delivering bilingual sessions in English and Thok Naath. In 2026, with Victorian Government approval, she established a South Sudanese community language school providing Thok Naath education for children and adults. The progression illustrates a wider multiplier effect: investment in a bilingual facilitator can strengthen family learning, intergenerational language connection and community-led education beyond individual Storytime sessions.



Bilingual Storytime facilitators and shared resources.



Team learning supports consistent, child-centred practice.

5. Partnership Value and Opportunities for 2027

The strongest next step is to consolidate a stable, accessible, place-based model while continuing to strengthen quality and service connections.

What the partnership makes possible

Community Hubs	BRMC	Together
Accessible local spaces; trusted neighbourhood presence; links to families, schools and Council early-years services.	Multicultural relationships; bilingual facilitation; settlement knowledge; culturally responsive engagement.	A welcoming early-years pathway combining play, language, health information, belonging and service connection.

Recommended partnership priorities

- 1 Maintain accessible local delivery**
Continue a place-based model so families can participate closer to where they live, with stable and familiar venues wherever possible.
- 2 Consolidate the Monday and Thursday Playgroup + Storytime model**
Retain Storytime as a core component of the broader playgroup format, while tracking participation and family feedback each term.
- 3 Explore continued Thursday hub-based delivery**
Subject to Community Hubs Team availability and agreement, explore continued use of Vickers Street Community Hub as an accessible and familiar setting for Thursday Playgroup.
- 4 Strengthen service pathways**
Continue joint links with Maternal and Child Health, libraries, Best Start, early-years and family services so information and referrals are easy to access during programs.
- 5 Build multilingual resources and facilitator capability**
Develop a stronger bilingual resource bank and continue professional development in child-led, inclusive and trauma-aware practice.
- 6 Respond to family preferences**
The small participant survey showed strong interest in more play-based activities and family events/excursions; these can inform future co-planning with partners.

Closing message

BRMC values the Community Hubs partnership as an important part of making multicultural early-years programs visible, local and accessible. The participation data, family feedback and program development over the past year show that the partnership is supporting more than Storytime delivery: it is creating pathways into community life, early learning and local services.

Photo note: Images are drawn from BRMC program records supplied with the reporting materials. Confirm image permissions before any distribution beyond the intended partner audience.