

# Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Kindergarten Participation Update

Insights and resources for councils supporting CALD children and their families to engage in kindergarten.

July 2025

## In this edition

Welcome to the latest edition of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Kindergarten Participation Project Update.

This update is designed to support and inspire councils, communities and services to support CALD children and families to access Victoria's world class early childhood education and care system.

In this edition, we cover:

- **updates on the CALD Outreach Initiative** - latest news and insights
- **items of interest** - significant sector updates related to CALD children & families
- **resources** - the latest resources available to support CALD children to participate in kinder
- **CALD Outreach Initiative case study collection**- learn about how councils are supporting CALD kindergarten participation with practical insights.

Ghulam 'G' Hussain  
MAV's CALD Outreach Policy Adviser



*Photo: Brimbank City Council*

## Community of Practice: Responding to Child Abuse – Supporting CALD Families in Early Childhood Settings

MAV held a timely and important session in response to the recent child abuse allegations in childcare settings. Given the sensitive nature of the issue and the distress it has caused in our communities, we felt it crucial to facilitate a session to provide accurate information and practical support to CALD Outreach Workers.

We were fortunate to be joined by Eva Hussain, Founder and Director of Polaron, who spoke about the definition of child abuse, the importance of culturally responsive communication, and how to engage CALD families with empathy and sensitivity on such a complex topic. We also welcomed Alyssa Petit from TELUS Health, who shared valuable insights on recognising and responding to trauma, and outlined the support services available to CALD Outreach Workers and the families they work with.

To continue supporting your work, the following resources are available

**TELUS Health:** a range of services and tools to support the total health and well-being of your employees.

**Child Safety:** Designed to support safe, inclusive, and empowering environments for all children, particularly those from diverse backgrounds

**Report child abuse in early childhood | vic.gov.au**: This Victorian Government page provides clear guidance for early childhood professionals on how to identify, respond to, and report child abuse

**Sexual Assault Services Australia:** This page outlines the role and purpose of Sexual Assault Services Victoria (SASVic), the peak body for specialist sexual assault and harmful sexual behavior services in Victoria

**Child Abuse Support Teams | Victoria Police:** This page provides information about Victoria Police's specialised teams and centres that investigate sexual offences and child abuse, offering coordinated, victim-centred support across the state.

**Reporting Child Abuse | Department of Families, Fairness and Housing:** This page guides how to detect and report child abuse in Victoria, including legal obligations and contact details for Child Protection services

## CALD Kindergarten Participation - Highlights

### **Hoa Lee from Brimbank wins Vision Super Local Heroes Award**

Hoa Le, Brimbank Outreach CALD Engagement Officer, was recognised as the winner of the Vision Super Local Heroes Award in the Families, Health, and Community Development – Metropolitan category!

With 28 nominations across four categories, we are absolutely thrilled that Hoa's exceptional work has been acknowledged.

Hoa joined Brimbank City Council in 2021, when the council first received funding from the Department of Education to deliver the CALD Outreach Initiative. Initially, eight councils received funding to deliver the Initiative, with Brimbank proudly being one of them

*Congratulations Hoa*





## MAV visiting CALD Outreach Workers

To support councils implementing the CALD Outreach Initiative MAV visited Brimbank City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Moonee Valley City Council and Melton City Council.

The CALD Outreach Workers talked through the range of activities they've been implementing to support CALD families in their communities. Melton City showed us around their impressive new community centre, a welcoming and vibrant space that truly reflects the needs of the local community.

G's role involves providing direct support to all 26 councils involved in the Initiative. As part of this support G has arranged in-person meetings with the councils listed above. The meetings were held between March and June 2025. G will be arranging meetings with the other councils throughout the year to support implementation.



## CALD Kinder Participation Updates

### Promoting the CALD Outreach Initiative at Statewide MCH Conference

MAV hosted a stall at the 2025 Maternal and Child Health Conference, which was attended by over 500 nurses. During the conference MAV engaged with hundreds of nurses to raise awareness of the CALD Outreach Initiative, discuss referral pathways and distribute additional information

If you're an MCH Nurse, community worker, or work at a local early childhood education service and would like to connect with support to engage CALD families check out the MAV website to access more information.

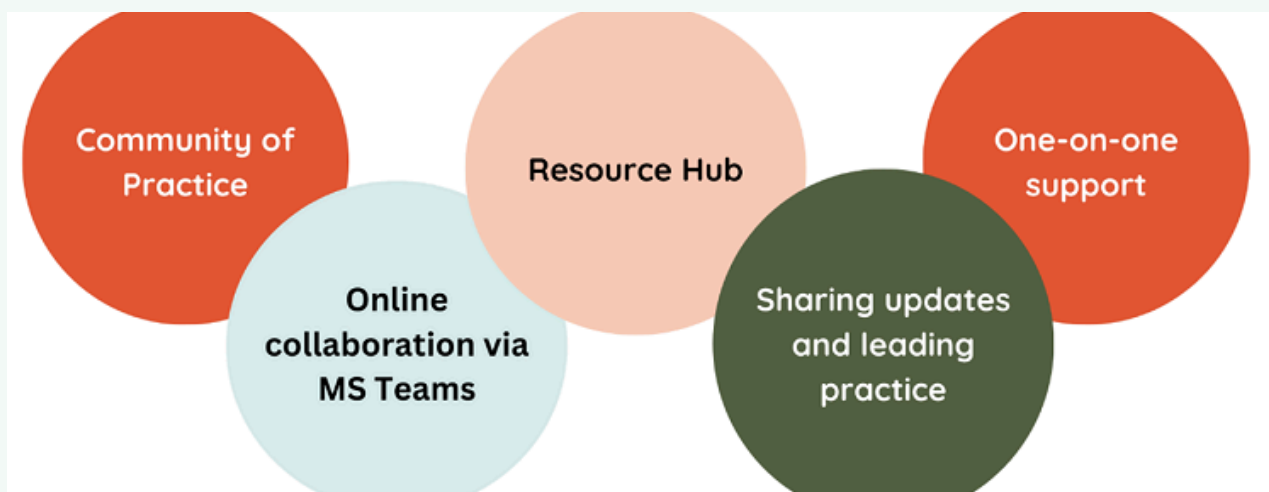


[Click here to find out more.](#)

### MAV's New CALD Kindergarten Participation Webpage

We're excited to share that the CALD Kindergarten Participation Webpage is now live. This dedicated page brings together key information, tools, and updates to support CALD Outreach Workers and council staff working to increase kindergarten participation among children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*Overview of supports accessible to councils through the CALD Kindergarten Participation Program.*



[You can visit the page by clicking here.](#)

## Welcoming Australia Symposium

MAV attended the Welcoming Australia Symposium 2025 in Brisbane. The symposium's theme of 'Where everyone can belong' strongly resonates with the CALD Kindergarten Participation Projects' aim of increasing access to kindergarten for CALD families.

The symposium was a vital opportunity to connect with policy and program design experts and share the successes of the CALD Outreach Initiative.

*Photo: From left to right - Bishal Kunwar (CALD Outreach Worker, Shepparton City Council), Ghulam Hussain (Policy Adviser, MAV), and Melanie Payen (CALD Outreach Worker, Mildura Rural City Council)*



## New Resources

### **Starting out Safely: multilingual resources for educators and families**

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) has developed resources to help parents and carers keep children safe in cars. They have developed videos in 13 languages and flyers in 22 languages to guide parents and carers through buying, fitting and using child restraints and booster seats in cars.

### **Delivering Pre-Prep to children from priority cohorts | [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au)**

The department has released a new resource to help services deliver Pre-Prep to children from priority cohorts from 2026.

**Know your rights as an NDIS participant - SSI:** Here are new translated resources about NDIS that might be of your interest, developed by Settlement Services International (SSI).

**Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) Quick Guide:** a practical, easy-to-follow resource designed to support professionals who work with children and families, especially those who are new to information sharing, such as early years educators and new staff.

### **Information about kindergarten in your language | [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au)**

The department has developed new translated webpages on 'How Kinder Works' and 'About Free Kinder'. The translated webpages are available in 30 languages

**The Voice of the Child animation:** This animation highlights how the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) supports children's wellbeing by enabling early identification of need, stronger service coordination, and more timely, responsive care



## Updates from the Department

### Update on Pre-Prep

In 2026, Pre-Prep becomes available statewide to children from a refugee or asylum seeker background.

Key points to note:

- Pre-Prep is like Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, with more hours: Pre-Prep is a play-based learning program led by qualified teachers. The process for enrolling in Pre-Prep is the same as Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.
- Benefits: Pre-Prep gives more time for children of all backgrounds and abilities to deepen their learning and development, and for services to deepen their relationships with families. Children who need extra support benefit the most from spending more time at kindergarten. For more information, see: [The evidence behind 2 years and more time in kindergarten](https://www.vic.gov.au/the-evidence-behind-2-years-and-more-time-in-kindergarten) | [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au)
- Hours: In 2026, services can deliver between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep to eligible children. The hours that are offered, and the way they are delivered will differ by service. Talk to your local services for more information about their Pre-Prep program in 2026.
- Pre-Prep is free: Pre-Prep, like Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, is free at participating sessional services. Families enrolled in long day care centres will receive a fee offset.

If families are experiencing difficulty enrolling their child in Pre-Prep in 2026, please contact your [local Early Childhood Improvement Branch](#).

### Changes to ESK process

Recent changes to the process for enrolling in ESK mean that children (and children with a parent, carer or legal guardian) who previously held a refugee or asylum seeker visa are eligible for ESK and no longer need to seek an exemption from the department. This includes Palestinian families who arrived since the Israel-Gaza conflict began in October 2023. These changes will also apply to Pre-Prep from 2026.

Families or professionals can provide this information to the service in writing or verbally. If you have any questions regarding eligibility, please contact your [local Early Childhood Improvement Branch](#).



# CALD Outreach Initiative Case Study and Best Practice Collection

July 2025



# Get inspired by these examples of innovative practice from Victorian councils.

## CALD Outreach Initiative - Good Practice Examples

### Engaging Families at Glenroy Festival: Merri-bek City Council

The Kindergarten Outreach team at Merri-bek City Council attended the Glenroy Festival on the 4th of May

The Glenroy Festival was a vibrant celebration of community spirit, and the Children's Services Team was part of it, with a dedicated stall and the playgroup space open to families. The team created a welcoming environment for children and caregivers to connect, explore, and play.

Children's voices were at the heart of the day, with their thoughts, drawings, and expressions captured throughout the event, highlighting the importance of listening to and valuing our youngest community members.

The Outreach team shared valuable information about a range of local services, including the Kindergarten Outreach Program, Kindergarten enrolments, local childcare centres, school holiday programs, playgroups, and family daycare.



# CALD Outreach Initiative Case Studies

*Supporting successful registration and enrolment of CALD children starting in three and four-year-old kindergarten*



## Pop-up stall at community hub - Merri-bek Council

CALD Outreach Workers at Merri-bek Council ran a pop up play event at the Glenroy Hub space and had a great turnout of CALD families attending. The success of this event, highlights that these types of activities are valued by the community!

## Kindergarten Readiness Month - Brimbank City Council

During March, nine information sessions were delivered by the CALD Outreach Worker Hoa and Nicole Early Years Engagement Officer across libraries, leisure centres, and community hubs in Brimbank to raise awareness about free sessional kindergarten programs. The sessions supported 175 families, with 165 receiving direct assistance with kindergarten and early years enquiries. Families received guidance on the enrolment process, required documents, and choosing a placement, while also being encouraged to attend Brimbank's Kindergarten Open Days held across all 36 sessional services from 18–26 March 2025. It was great to see many dads and male caregivers attend, with feedback highlighting increased confidence and readiness to support their child's transition to kindergarten. The program was promoted through local newspapers as well.



# CALD Outreach Initiative Case Studies

*Supporting successful registration and enrolment of CALD children starting in three and four-year-old kindergarten*



## City of Casey - Case Study

The City of Casey is located in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs, and is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. It has a population of 365, 239 (2021 census) from around 150 different cultural backgrounds.

It is home to:

- a high number of residents from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds
- residents who speak over 140 different languages
- residents of more than 120 faiths

According to the 2021 census, 42.1% of people in the City of Casey were born overseas, compared with 35.7% in Greater Melbourne. The top 3 countries for place of birth were nominated as India, Sri Lanka then Afghanistan, with the main languages other than English being Punjabi, Hazaraghi, Sinhalese, Mandarin and Dari. (Census 2021 data).

The City of Casey manages 49 local Kindergartens with over 300 qualified educators. There are also many other kindergarten programs across the LGA delivered by long-day care services

## Objective

To support a CALD family who had recently moved into the City of Casey and were impacted by family violence, to access kindergarten for their youngest child following a referral from a teacher in a neighbouring council

## Challenges

1. The family recently moved into the City of Casey.
2. The child's Mother has experienced family violence, which was placing significant stress on the family.
3. Little knowledge of the Early Years Education system.
4. The child's limited speech
5. The child's Mother had received a large bill from a childcare provider, which was meant to be subsidised 100%

## Actions

The CALD Outreach Worker from City of Casey took the following actions

- Explored kindergarten options with the mother to support continuity and stability for the children.
- Contacted kindergartens near the children's current school and completed initial expression of interest forms online with the mother.
- Submitted a supported referral to central enrolment for a kindergarten service close to the family's new home or along the school commute.
- Received offers of placement from both options.
- Held multiple discussions with the mother to review the benefits of each service.
- Supported the mother in deciding on the service closer to home.
- Contacted the previous childcare provider to discuss an outstanding debt.
- Confirmed the family is eligible for 100% Child Care Subsidy.

## Results



*The child started kindergarten in week 1 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term. Mum is very happy, and is able to complete the school run by picking the child up 15 minutes early. The child has engaged readily with kindergarten. The educators reported that the child is settling in well and has made a few friends already. The CALD Outreach Worker also discussed offering other services to the family from the community hub such as food bank.*



**We want to hear from you - have you got an example of work (big or small) to share?**  
Contact Ghulam Hussain, MAV CALD Outreach Policy Adviser at [ghussain@mav.asn.au](mailto:ghussain@mav.asn.au) to share your case study.