



# Schools as Community Centres (SaCC)

Annual Report 2023

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# Introduction

Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) programs are hosted by NSW public schools and led by local facilitators responsible for coordinating a variety of community engagement initiatives that support families with young children. In 2023, there are a total of 48 SaCC programs hosted by NSW Public Schools.

In 2023, SaCC activities involved more than 7,000 families, offering a diverse range of programs including:

- supported playgroups
- early literacy activities
- transition to school strategies
- parenting programs
- adult learning
- health and nutrition initiatives.

The SaCC program allows facilitators flexibility to introduce additional initiatives tailored to the specific needs of families and young children within their respective communities.



# Reporting on outcomes for families with young children

SaCC projects are required to report each year on progress against performance measures through the SaCC Annual Results Based Report.

In 2023, 44 SaCC programs provided data for the Annual Results Based Report. This report summarises and celebrates the results and achievements of the SaCC facilities.



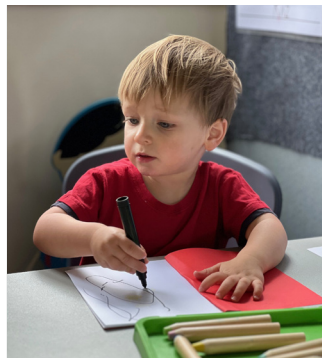
# 2023 results for families with young children



## Children

**6,904** children aged 0-8 years of age regularly participated in SaCC programs.

- **3,605 or 52%** of children were aged less than 3 years of age.
- **3,299 or 47%** of the children were aged from 3 years to school age.
- **1,277 or 18%** of children were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander.
- **2,346 or 33%** of children were identified as having a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- **718 or 10%** of children aged 5 years of age were identified as having additional needs.



## Families

**7,051** families regularly participated in SaCC programs.

- **1,277 or 18%** of these families identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- **2,346 or 33%** of these families identified as having a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- **293 or 4%** of the families are refugees.
- **252 or 3%** of these families had one or more parent aged less than 25 years of age.
- **418 or 5%** of participants were fathers or male carers.
- **295 or 4%** of participants were identified as grandparents.







## Community members/ Partnerships

**513 or 83%** was the total number of SaCC initiatives aimed at fostering community cohesion, delivered in partnerships with local human service agencies.

## Initiatives

**618** initiatives primarily identified for families were delivered in the SaCC programs across NSW.

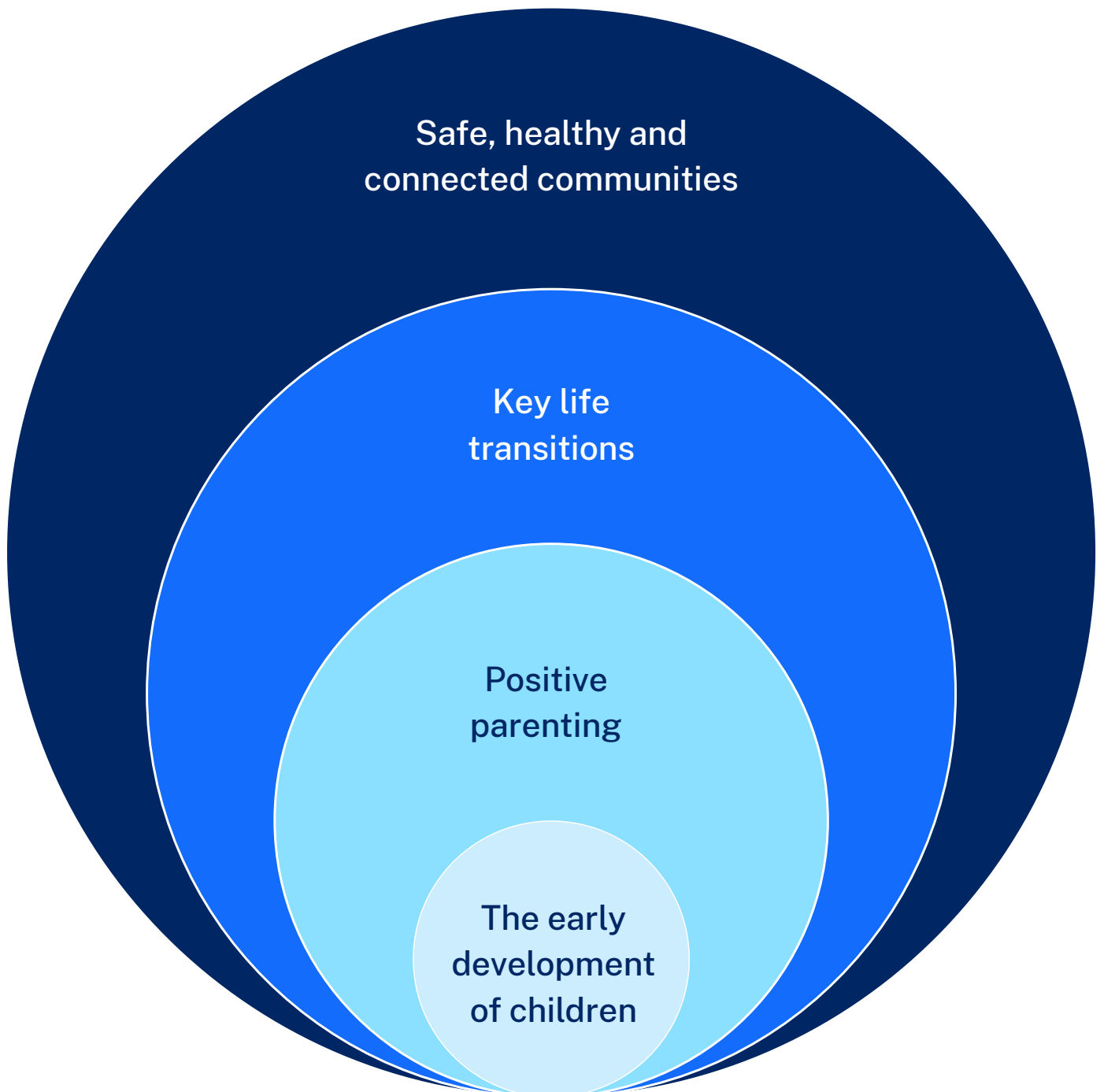






# SaCC Program Framework

The SaCC program offers a holistic approach to early learning and wellbeing with four key interconnected elements of collaborative service delivery: the early development of children; key life transitions; positive parenting; and safe, healthy and connected communities. Within the Framework, each school in consultation with its community identifies key local priorities that enhance early learning and wellbeing outcomes for children birth to 8 years of age. The Framework is outlined in the diagram below.



# Measuring results for the SaCC program

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is used as the state-wide service performance measurement tool. There are three performance measure categories: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off? (Friedman, 2015) Outcomes of local projects are used to inform each school's reporting and planning and feed into state-wide program evaluation. The data in this report provides evidence for the first two RBA questions – 'How much did we do?' and 'How well did we do it?'

Examples are provided below addressing the impact of the program. The information gathered was provided by the SaCC facilitators and relates to the question, 'Is anyone better off?'

## Early development of children:

**Examples:** Supported playgroups, Speech therapy, art and music groups.

**Impact:** positive social interactions with other children, positive social skills, increase in self-confidence, improved speech and communication skills, parents felt supported to assist their children, learning through play and increased interest in books, reading and learning.

## Key Life transitions:

**Examples:** Transition to school playgroups, Kindy Gym, Community health visits.

**Impact:** children supported in different areas of development, speech, fine and gross motor skills, social and emotional development, parents felt supported to assist their child prepare for school, parents and children familiar and comfortable with the school setting and structure and an increase in overall wellbeing for the families and children. Community health visits helped families get connected to Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Community Health Nurses and Emotional resilience programs. This assisted children to have the best start to school.

## Positive parenting:

**Examples:** Baby and child first aid, Thrive by five initiative, baby massage.

**Impact:** parents learnt lifesaving skills, felt more connected to their child, increased bonding, families connected to relevant services, families learnt skills to be their child's first teacher, connection and support with other local families.

## Safe healthy and connected communities:

**Examples:** Parent English and computer classes, women's health groups,

**Impact:** increased confidence with communicating in English, ability to communicate with school staff and members within the community, increased confidence in working with computers and building a resume, increased sense of support with other families, lower feelings of isolation within the community, increased knowledge of local support services and willingness to seek support.

# Case study

## Autism Australia Building Tots initiative collaboration with SaCC

A father came along to playgroup with his 2 year old son. This little person had had no previous interactions with younger children. He has 2 older teenage brothers, both with ASD.

During the first few weeks of coming to playgroup he really struggled to interact with the other children. He would go to them not knowing what to do and would then push them over. He would also become overwhelmed and lay on the floor hitting himself or banging his head. Lots of reassurance was given to dad, talking about what was happening for his son for example conversations on how his son was still learning how to play with others.

In collaboration with Building Tots therapists, we were able to support dad and his child in participating in playgroups and SaCC activities. In 2024 this little person will be starting at a local Aboriginal preschool with transition support provided by Building Tots staff that have already formed a relationship with the family.



# Outcomes for families with young children

Each SaCC project develops its own project outcomes which address the four interconnected elements of the SaCC Framework: the early development of children; key life transitions; positive parenting; and safe, healthy and connected communities. Sample outcomes that cover the four program elements are:

- Children’s early language acquisition, cognitive development, sense of self and security, emotional regulation and ability to form positive peer and other relationships are maximised.
- Children are set up for success in their schooling through effective transitions.
- Parents and carers have the knowledge, skills and support they need to enhance their nurturing behaviours and positive parenting strategies.
- Parent and carers’ confidence and skills are increased as their child’s first teacher.
- Family, school and community efforts are integrated so that children grow up in safe, healthy and connected communities. Schools may also choose to identify additional context-specific outcomes to support the early learning and wellbeing of children identified through the school’s planning and reporting processes and community consultation.

**7,051** families raising children birth to eight years of age regularly participated in initiatives delivered by SaCC projects in 2023.

## SaCC program initiatives

In 2023, SaCC programs delivered a total of **618** initiatives to support families raising children birth to 8 years of age.

In addition to common SaCC initiatives such as supported playgroups, early literacy, parenting programs, transition to school, adult learning and health and nutrition initiatives, SaCC projects also provided a range of other activities which address the needs of local families.



# Feedback from families



## Parents feedbacks: Post Natal Depression group

I really struggled after the birth of my daughter - she was born with severe disabilities. Many of my friends had drifted away and I felt so alone. I had never left her with anyone before. The facilitators were amazing! Dani has had lots of experience with children with disabilities and wasn't afraid of her needs. She encouraged me to leave her for short periods while I had a cuppa, until I felt comfortable. It was the first time I was able to trust someone (other than family) to care for her, which was a huge step for me.

Thankyou Jen & Louise for an incredible year. Before I had a baby, I never would have expected to love a playgroup so much. Tuesdays have been the highlight of our weeks.

## Parent feedbacks: Tiny Tots and Little Boori's Playgroups

"Without Mel and the SaCC centre I don't know how my mental health would be. My 4 children and I have been attending for 8 years and the SaCC has been a stepping stone for my older children that transitioned with Mel into primary school. Definitely without the transition program that Mel runs out of the SaCC we would be lost. Also the last year and a half I had the hardest time due to health issues with my youngest child, Mel in the SaCC was one of the most reassuring and comforting aspects, that helped me navigate a world that I was uneasy in. But knowing that I had the community that Mel has created there helped me so much!! Having a safe space is every mothers dream.

"The SaCC playgroup provides a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where children can happily play and explore, whilst parents get a vital chance to meet with other parents and discuss all aspects of life with children. Without this service I would not feel as connected to the local community and my mental health would be impacted due to isolation and lack of support"

"The SaCC playgroup has greatly benefitted myself and my kids. It provided opportunity when we were new to the area for us both to meet people in the community and foster relationships that have become important part of our local lives. SaCC playgroup and the people we have met because of it, have often been a lifeline through difficult times and a cheer squad through the positive. We are very grateful for Mel for being such a wonderful caring, compassionate and welcoming person. She has quickly become very important in our family"

### **Parent feedback: Bringing up Great Kids first 1000 days**

“Great program, gave me food for thought on raising a child.”

“Amazing to be able to access free training locally to help us develop positive parenting techniques. Positive to see our experience is common and networking with others going through similar things. Lots of opportunity to discuss and problem solve. Thankyou!”

### **Parent feedback: Supporting Kids Who Worry**

“I loved learning that it’s ok to watch your kids be uncomfortable. I’d never thought about it like that, and it’s given me more confidence to help my girls rather than trying to save them at every step.”

“I realised that change in parenting is the key, not trying to change the child.”

### **Parent feedback: Kindy Gym**

“My daughter attended Kindy Gym with coach Dave for almost 2 years. The improvement in her strength and skill during this time was amazing. Sessions were fun, interactive and developmentally appropriate. Daves knowledge and expertise in gymnastics is second to none. His kind and caring personality always encouraged children to have a go”

### **Parent feedback: Queanbeyan SaCC Dads’ group**

“A welcoming and inclusive space for parents/caregivers and their children. Having a Dad’s Playgroup has been valuable for my partner to attend, so he can learn how to engage with his son”.

### **Parent feedback: Play-BA group**

I started attending Play-BA when my baby was 3 weeks old. I found Play-BA to be a warm, welcoming environment which catered to the needs of both the mother and the baby. There were always a variety of toys for the babies and for the mothers we had a variety of guest speakers who came in and presented such as a women’s health physio and a child dentist. I found Play-BA to be a great place to connect with other mums and to find out about relevant services in the community”

### **Parent feedback: Supported Playgroup**

SaCC has been amazing. Words really cannot explain how much the groups have given me. A weekly routine, new friends whom we see outside of playgroup, a reason to get out of the house! Paola and Annette are the heart of SaCC, and you can see just how much time and effort they put into creating such a welcoming, caring and safe place for everyone”.

## Parent feedback: Multicultural Playgroup

Lots of things my baby learned from SaCC and me too. Socializing, communicating, and making new friends. As a parent, I have learned how to involve my child in activities that help my child develop, and she enjoys it a lot. I would like to thank you all for your effort and support to the community highly appreciated”.



## Reference List

Friedman, M. (2015). *Trying hard is not good enough 10th anniversary edition : how to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities* (3rd ed.). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and pay our respect to Country.

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