

# The Hive, United Way Australia

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Report 2024

Reporting Period: 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024

*This report is a collaborative effort of the Together in 2770 Collective*



# Executive Summary

The Hive's MEL collects both population and intervention level data from The Hive and Collective's initiatives and provides key insights for reflection and to inform future strategy

## Improvement from the previous MEL



77% of indicators showed improvement up from 50% in the previous MEL period. Indicators that showed no change decreased from 42% to 19% in the current MEL



The insights from the previous MEL enabled the Hive to strengthen its work and deepen impact and outcomes



The Hive is continuing to find new tools and measurements for a deeper level of analysis.

## Placed based initiatives are increasing access to early intervention



285 families had a consultation at the Paediatrician Clinic. 78% received referrals to Allied Health Support. 301 children received developmental checks through CUBS, 2/3 had not received a check since 4 weeks old, if at all.



Place-Based approaches are effective in reaching the most vulnerable children in 2770 compared to traditional models.



The Hive will advocate for increased place-based health approaches to meet continued demand.

## Community members are feeling less isolated and more empowered



Community members expressed that they felt less isolated, more connected to others, and that they can make a positive difference in their community.



Community members are experiencing positive change in their own lives and feeling empowered to impact their community.



Impact Yarns showed positive outcomes. The Hive will develop new tools to deepen our measurement of trust.

## Increase in quality of Early Childhood and Education Centres (ECECs)



ECECs 'Meeting' or 'Exceeding' the National Quality Standards (NQS) increased by 31% since the Hive's intervention (ACECQA)



89% of Early Childhood Educators identified that the ECE Network made them better equipped to deliver quality ECEC



The Hive will amplify the success of the ECE Network with Department of Education to advocate for increased capacity building supports for ECECs

## Collaboration partners believe the Collective is making a positive impact



100% of Collaboration partners believe that the Collective has made a positive impact in 2770. 66% believe their organisation listens and responds to community voice.



There is a strong sense of support and engagement within the Collective. There is room for improvement in the Collective's community-led approaches.



The Collective will work to strengthen its community led approaches through initiatives such as the Leadership Program.

## Advocacy activities are influencing change



Collective partners scored the level of impact that shared advocacy has had as 9.4/10 for Child Health and 7/10 for access to ECEC. (10 being 'significant impact')



Advocacy priorities that have been the most successful have benefited from trusted and connected relationships with government stakeholders



The Hive will dedicate additional resources to advocacy priorities, focusing on building relationships in areas where there has been less impact.

# About The Hive

The Hive is the backbone for one of Australia's most established and effective place-based collective impact initiatives, Together in 2770.

## Who we are:



The Hive has an overarching goal for all children in Mount Druitt to start school well, with equal opportunity to learn, be healthy and participate in quality community life.

Since 2015, we have been embedded in the Mount Druitt community, helping bring community aspirations to life. Our staff live and work in and around the community and are committed to long-term change. The Hive is part of United Way Australia (UWA).

## What we do:

### Collaboration and partnership building

- Facilitating collaboration between all stakeholders to drive a shared purpose and 'collective impact'
- Capability building with government and non-government partners
- Convening working groups on early education and health

### Planning and innovation

- Management and incubation of on-the-ground delivery projects
- Project and resource planning

### Leadership and advocacy

- Advocating for change at a local, state, federal and sector level
- Leading strategy for collaboration partners and securing further investment in the Mt Druitt community

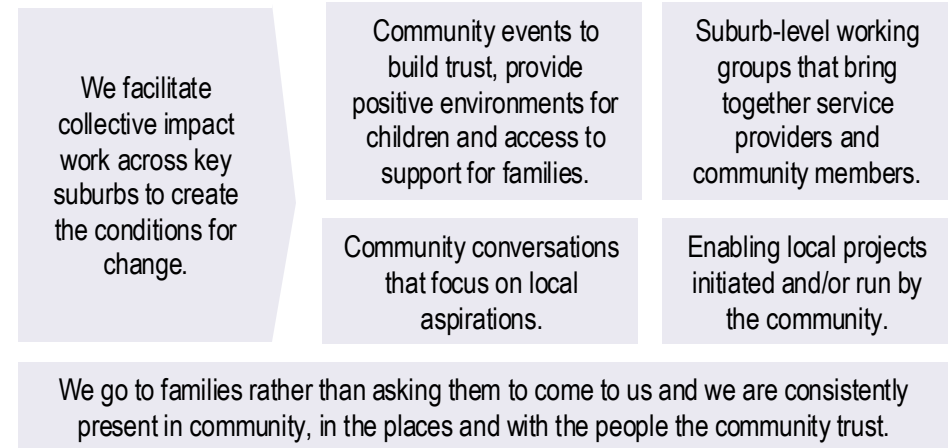
### Learning

- Collecting data, commissioning independent evaluations and leading continuous quality improvement

## Our approach is centred in our connection with community:

Sustained change only happens when communities are empowered, and initiatives are driven by what really matters to people.

Our community development informs and drives all our work:



## Together in 2770:

The Hive is the backbone organisation for the collective impact initiative, Together In 2770 ('the Collective'). The Collective identifies local priorities, collaborates on innovative solutions and advocates for system-wide change. This initiative is a collaboration of local residents and services in Mount Druitt with a leadership group consisting of: The Hive, BaptistCare HopeStreet, Jesuit Social Services, Salvation Army Greater West, Bidwill Uniting, Blacktown City Council, Connect Children and Families, NGR00 Education and Mission Australia. Together in 2770 works in close partnership with a wide range of other stakeholders including local schools, ECECs, residents, service providers and businesses that come together with the goal of seeing all children in Mount Druitt start school well.

# The purpose of this document

The MEL Report presents key insights from data that The Hive collects and shows how these insights inform our work.

## The purpose of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning at The Hive

The MEL Framework and Plan were commissioned by United Way Australia and are intended for The Hive backbone team and our funding and local collaboration partners.

The purpose of The Hive's Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is:

- For United Way Australia (The Hive backbone team) and The Hive collaboration (Together in 2770) partners to have real-time data on what is working well and on track; and what adaptations and improvements are needed to create the intended impact.
- For upward accountability to funders of United Way Australia for The Hive.
- For sideways and downwards accountability to collaboration partners and community about the contribution of The Hive to community outcomes.

## Content of the MEL Framework

The MEL Framework sets out the data that The Hive will collect on a regular basis, specifying both indicators (what is the change being measured) and sources (where does the evidence come from). This data includes both:

- *Population-level data:* Data that is routinely collected from public sources.
- *Primary data:* Data collected by The Hive and collective partners.

These indicators should not be viewed as performance measures for The Hive. In most cases, The Hive is not accountable in its own right but is contributing to a broader set of collaborative efforts in a broader system.

The framework specifies 31 indicators, which relate to 10 high-level outcomes (see Data Dashboard). The indicators also map against 5 Influence Domains.

### Influence Domains

Child and Family (CF)

Community Mobilisation (CM)

Collective Impact Approach / Systems Change (CIA)

Governance and Advocacy (GA)

Measurement and Evaluation (ME)

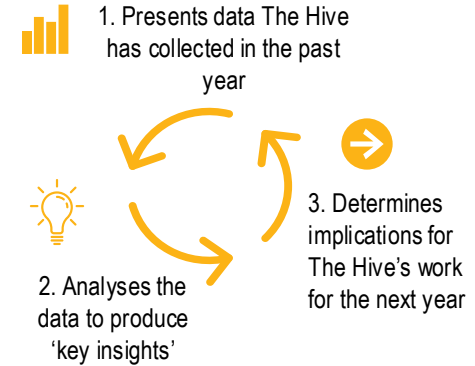
## The purpose of this document

The MEL Report presents key insights from the data that The Hive collects during the year and shows how these insights inform our work going forward.

It is an opportunity to share insights with communities, partners and funders on:

- What is changing in Mount Druitt?
- How is the work of The Hive and our collective partners contributing to that change?
- How can The Hive capture and apply lessons learned from these changes in its future programming?

### The MEL Report is produced as part of an annual cycle:



**Data in the 2024 report is from reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

## MEL Report: Key principles

- *Timeliness:* The Hive seeks to ensure its MEL approach is meaningful and timely, so that partners, funders and communities understand what is changing and why.
- *Accessibility:* The Hive seeks to ensure its MEL approach is culturally inclusive, appropriate, ethical, user-friendly, clear and practical.
- *Mix of quantitative and qualitative data:* The MEL Report draws on a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, seeking to triangulate data wherever possible.
- *Continuous improvement:* We are building up our MEL capacity and capability and refining our approach to data collection and analysis over time. (For example, where it was not possible to collect a particular dataset for this year's report, we will consider new sources for next year's report).

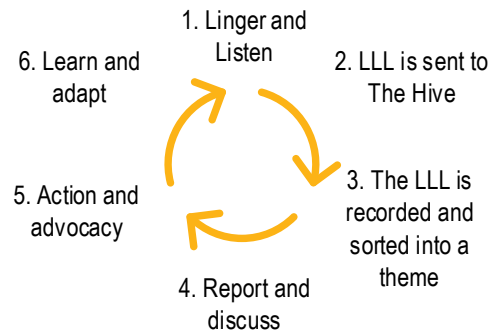
# Methodologies and Key Terms

The MEL Report uses a variety of approaches and tools to measure the impact of The Hive and the Collective's work.

## Linger, Listen, Learn (LLL)

- Linger Listen Learn (LLL's) are qualitative data gathered throughout the year by the Collective capturing key insights from community members about their community. These are then shared with The Hive for collation and analysis of themes
- The Hive has collected nearly 1,000 LLLs
- LLLs are used in this MEL, but also used in other reports, and to provide insights to the Collective about potential areas of focus

### Life Cycle of an LLL



## Working Groups

- There are different working groups for each suburb, including the Together ins, which are monthly meetings for each Suburb's stakeholders
- There are various Subgroups in each suburb that focus on aspirations specific to their suburb
- There are working groups that focus on 2770 including Transport and Safety. These are grouped together as the work focuses on change and aspirations that impact all of 2770

## Impact Yarns

- Impact Yarns were adapted from Most Significant Change (MSC), and is the process of gathering stories to monitor and evaluate complex developmental interventions
- Impact Yarns, for our use, are a 10-question interview done with a community member that is actively engaging with the Collective
- The questions ask about changes that the community member has seen within their community, breaking it down to see what the most significant change was
- The conversation is meant to be free flowing to ensure there is as little bias as possible
- The Hive recognizes that Impact Yarns are a limited tool as they engage with a limited proportion of the 2770

## Governance Group

- The Governance Group is a group of stakeholders that represent the key organisations from the Collective, include Bidwill Uniting, Blacktown City Council, Connect Children & Family Services, HopeStreet BaptistCare, Jesuit Social Service, NGROO, Salvation Army. There are also key community members that are on the Governance Group
- The Governance Group is facilitated by The Hive and meets quarterly. It helps to make decisions that would impact the Collective as a whole

## Reflections

- Advocacy Reflections were held focusing on each of the advocacy strategies, Child Health, ECEC Quality & Advocacy, and Community Development
  - These reflections were held with important stakeholders who have had a role in the relevant work
  - The reflections provided an opportunity to reflect on the work and its impact, while also creating space for future planning
- Suburb Reflections were held in each of the 4 suburbs the Collective works Bidwill, Lethbridge Park, Tregear, and Willmot
  - The reflections were held with the stakeholders in each suburb
  - These reflections provided an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the work, and the workplans overall

## Surveys

- ECEN Survey is shared once a year with the ECE Network to ask about their experience attending the Network and impact on their practice
- Stakeholder Survey is shared with all members of the Collective to ask about their experiences in their organisation and in the Collective
- The Hive has adapted questions in the both surveys to help to provide insights for the MEL
- Surveys are collected annually

## Data dashboard

# Population-level data

The Hive tracks population-level data in Mount Druitt. While The Hive and Collective Partners do not have control over population-level outcomes, this data can provide valuable insights into trends to help inform programming in Mount Druitt.

Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>All children in Mount Druitt start school well</b>	% of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (CF1)	Mount Druitt improved in comparison to NSW during the last reporting period	Australian Early Development Census
<b>Families are thriving</b>	Unemployment rate of families - % of Mount Druitt families not in education or employment compared to state / national average (CF8)	Whether Mount Druitt improved in comparison to NSW on this indicator during last reporting period	Census 2021; 2016
<b>Children have access to high quality early learning in Mount Druitt</b>	% of Mount Druitt ECECs ranked at each level of attainment (CF10)	% of all Mount Druitt ECECs ranked as 'Meeting NQS' or 'Exceeding NQS' increased during last reporting period	ACECQA National Qualification Standards data, 2024; 2023; 2022; 2021
	Number / rate of children attending ECECs within Mount Druitt (CF6)	% of children in Mount Druitt attending preschool improved in comparison to NSW during last reporting period	Census 2021; 2016
<b>Mount Druitt is more inclusive and connected</b>	Transport is accessibility for community (CM1)	Mount Druitt suburbs improve Accessibility Ranking	(Urban Living Observatory Index) [Assigned score 'No change to data in past 12 months because the Index is new']
	Mount Druitt shows positive economic and livability indicators (CM2)	Mount Druitt suburbs improve Overall Ranking	(Urban Living Observatory Index) [Assigned score 'No change to data in past 12 months because the Index is new']

**Key:**  Indicator has improved since data last collected  No change to data since last collected  Indicator has declined since data last collected  Not applicable/data not collected

# Intervention level data (1)

The Hive also tracks progress against indicators relating to The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions. These indicators provide insights into whether The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions are achieving their outcomes (though in many cases, achievement of indicators is not entirely within The Hive's control).





Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>Children and young people are equipped with the opportunities and resources needed to thrive and succeed (health and education)</b>	Number of children receiving their health screenings (CF4)	Number of health checks delivered year on year, number of Aboriginal children receiving health checks, and number of children being linked	Check Ups Before School Program Data, Willmot Paediatrician Clinic Data
	Families have greater access to opportunities and resources for their child's development (CF5)	Hive staff's assessment of qualitative and quantitative feedback for this reporting period	Stakeholder Survey, Impact Yarns, Willmot Paediatrician Clinic Data
	Number of children are enrolled in early learning (Linker program) (CF6)	Number / rate of children attending ECECs within Mount Druitt	Early Learner Linker Dataset
	Children receive a diagnosis and/or support before starting school that would not have otherwise (CF7)	Number of health checks delivered year on-year, number of Aboriginal children receiving a diagnosis, and links	Health Linker Dataset, Check Ups Before School Program Dataset, Willmot Paediatrician Clinic Data
<b>Children have access to high quality early learning in Mount Druitt</b>	% of Mount Druitt ECECs ranked at each level of attainment (subset of ECECs the Hive works with directly) (CF10)	Proportion of Mount Druitt ECECs with ranked at Exceeding or Meeting (subset The Hive works with)	ACECQA National Qualification Standards Data, 2024; 2023; 2022; 2021
	Teachers and educators change their practice (CF11)	Proportion of respondents who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', maintained or increased year-on-year	ECEC Network Survey
	ECEC services improve quantity as a result of skills and knowledge built through Hive ECEC quality program (CF12)	Proportion of respondents who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', maintained or increased year-on-year	ECEC Network Survey
	Teachers and educators are more equipped and connected (CF13)	Proportion of respondents who answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', maintained or increased year-on-year	ECEC Network Survey

**Key:**  Strong evidence of indicator being achieved  Some evidence of indicator being achieved  No evidence of indicator being achieved  Too early to tell (awaiting data)

## Intervention level data (2)

The Hive also tracks progress against indicators relating to The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions. These indicators provide insights into whether The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions are achieving their outcomes (though in many cases, achievement of indicators is not entirely within The Hive's control).





Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>Mount Druitt is more inclusive and connected</b>	Community members within key suburbs say that they have greater trust of services (connected to the Collective) (CM3)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis	Impact Yarns, Linger Listen Learn
<b>Community members are taking up opportunities to contribute to and lead community change</b>	Community members report spending more time with others, experiencing less isolation and having a say in what happens in their community (CM4)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis	Impact Yarns, Linger Listen Learn
	Community members feel as though they have made a positive difference in their community (CM5)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis Proportion of respondents answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree'	Impact Yarns, Linger Listen Learn, Stakeholder Survey
	The proportion of backbone, governance and working group members that are local residents (GA3)	Proportion of attendees who are local residents	Working Group Data, Governance Group Data

**Key:**  Strong evidence of indicator being achieved  Some evidence of indicator being achieved  No evidence of indicator being achieved  Too early to tell (awaiting data)

## Intervention level data (3)

The Hive also tracks progress against indicators relating to The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions. These indicators provide insights into whether The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions are achieving their outcomes (though in many cases, achievement of indicators is not entirely within The Hive's control).

Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>Services are of high quality, accessible and visible to community members and are strategically designed to support them</b>	Community members say that services are more accessible and that services are better meeting their needs (services within the Collective) (CM6)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis Proportion of respondents answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree'	Impact Yarns, Stakeholder Survey, Linger Listen Learn
	Families, community members and stakeholders in Mount Druitt say that they feel included, are connected to each other and supported (CM7)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis Proportion of respondents answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree'	Impact Yarns, Stakeholder Survey, Linger Listen Learn
<b>Suburb work is having an impact across the post code</b>	Community members describe having increased knowledge of services in key suburbs and feel safe to connect with the services (CM8)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis Proportion of respondents answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree'	Impact Yarns, Linger Listen Learn, Stakeholder Survey

Key:  Strong evidence of indicator being achieved  Some evidence of indicator being achieved  No evidence of indicator being achieved  Too early to tell (awaiting data)

## Intervention level data (4)

The Hive also tracks progress against indicators relating to The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions. These indicators provide insights into whether The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions are achieving their outcomes (though in many cases, achievement of indicators is not entirely within The Hive's control).

Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>A data driven approach to social innovation and systems change is embedded and thriving in targeted suburbs</b>	Collective members and other service providers say they are learning and adapting their practice in response to suburb and postcode work (CIA1)	Improvement year-on-year of proportion of 'yes' responses	Stakeholder Survey
	Resources within the Collective are being allocated to priorities defined by the strategic working groups and priorities arising from community conversations (CIA2)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis	Stakeholder Survey
	Services within the Collective are adapting their practice according to shared data and learnings (i.e. Community voice / experience) (CIA3)	Qualitative, determined by The Hive team if met based on qualitative inputs, themes and analysis	Stakeholder Survey
	Number of strategic advocacy activities undertaken by The Hive and collaboration (GA4)	Number of Advocacy Activities and Submissions	Advocacy Activities Tracking
	Child Health advocacy has made a positive impact in 2770 (GA5.1)	Participants ranked impact of advocacy area at or above 5 out of 10	Advocacy reflection with Collective Partners and The Hive Team
	ECEC advocacy has made a positive impact in 2770 on ECEC Access and Quality (GA5.2)	Participants ranked impact of advocacy area at or above 5 out of 10	Advocacy reflection with Collective Partners and The Hive Team
	Community Development advocacy has made a positive impact in 2770 (GA5.3)	Participants ranked impact of advocacy area at or above 5 out of 10	Advocacy Reflection with Collective Partners and The Hive Team
	Suburb work plans are developed and acted upon based on community input (ME1)	Participants ranked impact of suburb work at or above 5 out of 10	Suburb Reflective Sessions with Collective Partners and The Hive Team

Key:



Strong evidence of indicator being achieved



Some evidence of indicator being achieved



No evidence of indicator being achieved



Too early to tell (awaiting data)

# Intervention level data (5)

The Hive also tracks progress against indicators relating to The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions. These indicators provide insights into whether The Hive and Collective Partners programs / interventions are achieving their outcomes (though in many cases, achievement of indicators is not entirely within The Hive’s control).

Outcomes	Indicators	How the indicator was assigned	Data source(s)
<b>Services are accessible and visible to community members and are strategically designed to support them</b>	Stakeholders say that services within the Collective are accessible, well integrated, and effective (CIA4)	Proportion of respondents answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree', maintained or increased year on year	Stakeholder Survey
<b>Together in 2770 has First Nations led governance</b>	First Nations Collective members say that they feel heard, respected, included and can meaningfully contribute to change (GA1)	Proportion of First Nations respondents answered 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree', maintained or increased year on year	Stakeholder Survey
	The percentage of backbone, governance and working group members who are First Nations (GA2)	Meeting attendance overall and at suburb level	Working Group Data, Governance Group Data

Deep dives

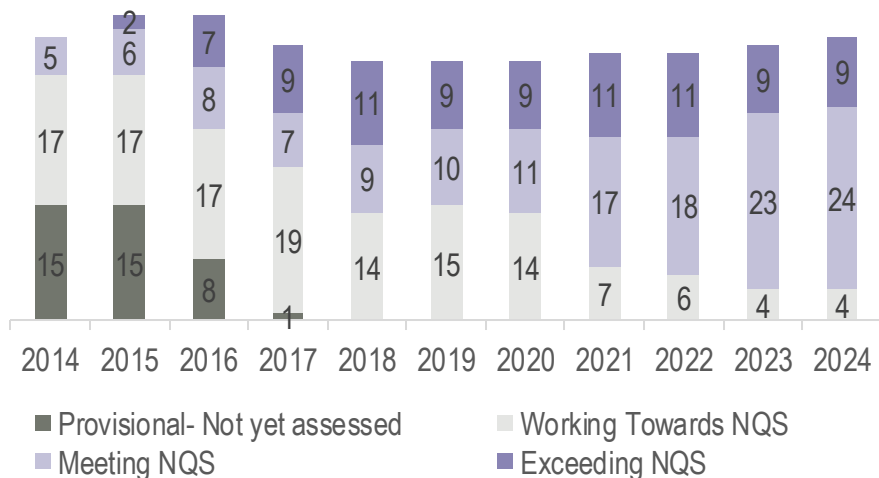
# ECEC quality

Indicators: CF10, CF11, CF12, CF13

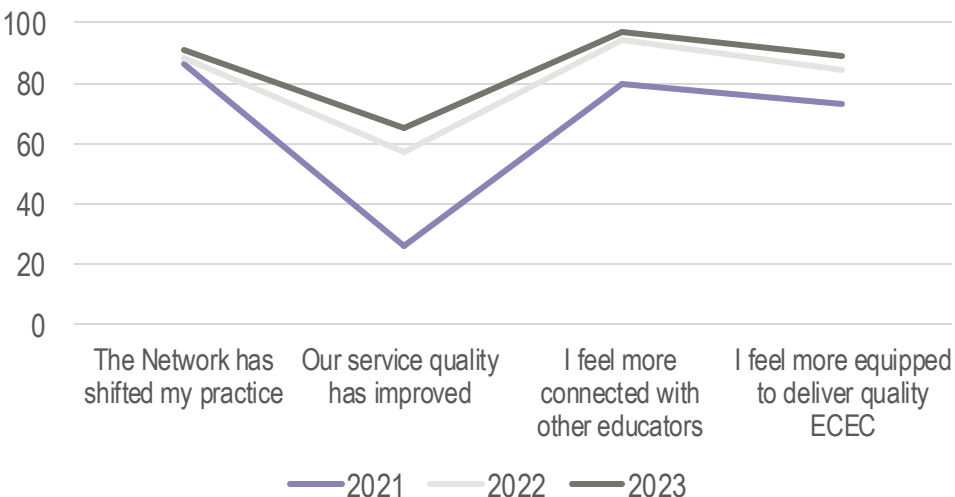
Population-level data shows there has been consistent improvement in the quality of Early Childhood Education Care Centres (ECECs) in Mt DrUITT. Educators identify the ECE Network as having an impact on their practice.

## What the data says

The number of ECECs 'Meeting' or 'Exceeding' the NQS in the 2770 postcode has steadily increased in recent years, and the number 'Working Towards' the NQS has dropped. The 2770 ratings are shown in the graph below.



## The Hive's 2023 ECEC Network Survey found:



## Key insights from data

- 100% of ECECs actively engaged with the Hive and the network are now meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standards.
- The vast majority of ECEC educators agreed that the ECEC Network has improved their practice, made them feel more equipped to deliver quality care and education, and feel more connected to other educators.
- The ECE Network survey results have shown consistent improvement in every area year on year.
- Despite a staffing shortage in the ECE sector, the network has maintained its attendance rates. However, centres express that they struggle to release staff for professional development due to these shortages.

## Network facilitators are ...

"dedicated and prepared to do all they can to support all peoples living in 2770 to have better access to skills to work with families"

- Educator

## The ECE Network...

"makes the educators feel valued and that they are part of this learning community"

- Educator



## Implications for The Hive's work going forward:

- ✓ Given the success of the ECEC network and the improved ECEC ratings, the Hive has made this work a key priority in its advocacy strategy to ensure the Department of Education replicate the success of the network in communities similar to Mt DrUITT.
- ✓ The Hive will focus over the next 3 years on advocating to the Department of Education to begin contributing resources to the 2770 ECE Network in order to scale it up to engage all centres in Mount DrUITT.
- ✓ The Hive will reflect on how to enable more educators from participating ECECs to attend and to connect with new ECECs who are not yet engaged with the Network.

# Increased Access to Early Intervention

The Hive and its broader collective partners have worked collaboratively with Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) and local ECECs to increase support to early intervention, including advocating for a place-based paediatrician clinic and allied health embedded in ECEC.

## What the data says

The data below is from initiatives that are now under the leadership of WSLHD as a result of The Hive's advocacy and partnership.



The Willmot  
Paediatrician Clinic  
held  
**285**  
appointments  
**30%**  
were First Nations  
children



**78%**  
Of children were  
referred for allied  
health supports  
**52%**  
Of families were  
referred for ECE/NDIS  
support



CUBS Program has  
seen  
**301**  
children for  
developmental  
checks  
**2/3**  
of these children were  
First Nations

The Hive also designed and delivered a new ECE incubator in the last 2-year period called Specialised Support. This initiative brought allied health specialists into early learning settings, worked with children with additional needs and upskilled educators.



**14**  
ECECs had  
Allied Health  
specialists  
embedded in  
their service



**6**  
of those  
ECECs now  
have their  
own funding  
to continue  
the program

### Educators said about the program:

*"I can't believe that I was about to quit, but you came in and helped organise the students so that [the centre] is working – feels so much better"*

*"This child is much more settled now. He is attempting to interact with friends, pays attention to what is being taught in groups and has attempted using words recently"*



### Key insights from data

- CUBS has been effective in providing access to developmental checks for the most marginalised children. Two thirds of the children seen had never received a child health check or had not been seen since their initial 4-week check.
- ECECs highly valued the specialised support with almost 50% finding ongoing funding to continue the program in their service.
- The Place-Based Paediatrician Clinic has been highly effective at addressing early intervention needs of the most marginalised children in 2770, with 78% of children seen receiving referrals for allied health supports.
- Despite the effectiveness of the Paediatrician clinic, it currently has a wait list of 10 months, showing a significant need for greater access to place-based health services.



### Implications for The Hive's work going forward:

- ✓ The Hive's advocacy is effective and necessary. There is a need to increase existing place-based health services, such as CUBS and the Paediatrician clinic, and for the Paediatrician clinic to expand to other allied health supports.
- ✓ The Hive will utilise this data to advocate for increased allied health funding based on these findings.
- ✓ The Hive will explore ways to advocate for equitable distribution of funding to ECECs in recognition of the high support needs of children in Mt Drutt.
- ✓ The Hive's leadership in enabling stronger collaboration between all health services is vital. The Hive will work together with WSLHD to form a steering committee to oversee all place-based health initiatives in our target suburbs.

# Collaboration

Indicators: CM7, CM8, CIA1, CIA2, CIA3, CIA4, GA1

The Hive's Stakeholder Survey showed that collaboration partners value being part of the Collective\*, and that the Collective has a positive impact on Mt Druitt. The Collective is strengthening its focus on building community leadership.

## What the data says

The Hive's Stakeholder Survey indicated partners' attitudes towards the Collective:

100%

Agreed that the Collective has made a positive impact in 2770.

97%

Agreed that being a member of the Collective helps them to feel more connected to services and community.

78%

Agreed that their organisation works towards being Community Led.

66%

Felt that their organisation listens and responds to community voice.

Qualitative survey responses revealed that respondents believe that the Collective works well together:

"I think we have had a lot of change in the past few years, as well as a heap of new staff that have come in. I think this year we have started to come back **reinforcing the collective principles and bringing us back to the clear understandings of the work.**"

"I think we mostly work very well together and our intention to truly **collaborate and keep community voice at the centre.** Sometimes we need reminding as we fall into old habits and focused on the 'doing' and internal organisational pressures, but **we have the trust and relationship to reflect together and come back to shared goals.**"

Respondents shared how their organisations respond to community voice:

"We regularly develop programs based on community **aspirations and needs.** We constantly **change and adapt** programs based on community feedback."

"Doing LLLs and reflecting on them actively and discussing these at the working groups. Taking **community stories into advocacy submissions or meetings about policy change.**"

"We **employ program participants** so are able to adjust things each year to better suit people if needed."



## Key insights from data

- The Hive's Stakeholder Survey received a total of 43 respondents in 2023, which is an increase on the previous MEL period with 28 respondents.
  - All respondents were members of the Collective, workers with a Collective organisation or community volunteers.
  - In 2022, 27% of respondents were residents of 2770. This increased to 37% in 2023.
- Results from the stakeholder survey showed that 100% of respondents believe that the Collective has made a positive impact in 2770.
- The majority of respondents believe that being part of the Collective benefits them and helps them feel more supported.
- First Nations respondents overwhelmingly felt heard, respected, and included in Collective work.
- Key areas for improvement from the stakeholder survey are organisations more effectively listening and responding to community voice and being more community-led.



## Implications for The Hive's work going forward:

- ✓ The Collective Governance Group will introduce celebratory events to reflect on positive impacts of our shared work.
- ✓ The Collective will continue to increase opportunities for community leadership, such as community leadership program, advocacy forums, and local events.\*\*
  - The goal being creating a culture within the Collective where community can lead.
- ✓ The Collective is increasing conversations to help define with it means to be 'community led' and how we improve.

\*For more information on the 'Together in 2770' Collective, see page 2.

\*\*For more information on leadership opportunities that are ongoing, see page 17.

# Community and Services

Indicators: CM3, CM4, CM5,  
CM6, CM7, CM8

There is emerging evidence of community members feeling more connected to one another, as though they can make a positive difference in their community and feeling less isolated. The Hive is focusing on deepening its understanding of how to adequately measure levels of ‘trust’.



## What the data says

Through its listening activities (Impact Yarns and Linger, Listen, Learn), The Hive has captured qualitative data indicating that members of the Mount Druitt community derive benefit from The Hive and the ‘Together in 2770’ Collective:

### Families, community members and stakeholders in Mount Druitt say that they feel included, are connected to each other and supported (CM7)

*“This area has a bad reputation, and I find that some of my senior friends didn’t feel safe coming over here; over time the group had grown, and I believe it is because of the beautiful staff around here that help make this place feel safer and everyone feel welcome.”*

*“I feel like children that come here not only have a connection to the place but to the people that run the place. So when we do our programs like playgroup they want to come because they know they are safe and supported”*

*“I haven’t been whole for a long time, but now I’m feeling whole again. Here I feel like a person.”*

### Community members say that they have increased knowledge of services in key suburbs and feel safe to connect with them (CM8)

*“You can use (them) as a stepping stone to get access to services. That’s different than having to go directly to services.”*

*“It’s so great that these services make the time to come to 2770 to help the people with difficulties get the help they need at a place where they feel most comfortable”*

### Community members feel as though they have made a positive difference in their community. (CM5)

*“My life is a thousand times better now. I’ve got community. I’ve got great women to support me. I try and support them as well. It makes me feel alive, really alive.”*

*“The fights that have occurred every weekend have now stopped. It’s a wonderful place to live in.”*



## Key insights from data

- Qualitative evidence collected from community members showed that key indicators are being achieved:
  - Families, community members, and stakeholders in Mount Druitt say that they feel included, are connected to each other, and supported
  - Community members feel as though they have made a positive difference in their community
- Community members report spending more time with others, experiencing less isolation and having a say in what happens in their community
- While there is some evidence that community members within key suburbs say that they have greater trust of services’, there is uncertainty for The Hive about how to adequately measure “trust” through the current tools for evidence gathering.



## Implications for The Hive’s work going forward:

- ✓ The Hive will focus on increasing the number of Impact Yarns gathered for future reports to ensure there is strong evidence from a diverse range of respondents.
- ✓ The Hive will reflect on how to more authentically measure “trust” in community. The Hive recognises that people identify what ‘trust’ means to them differently, therefore measuring an increase of trust is complex. This is particularly important when understanding the environment of deprivation in disadvantaged communities and how this often drives community decisions, rather than trust. (i.e. Residents may access Centrelink or Housing because they have no other choice, but this does not necessarily mean they trust it).
- ✓ The Hive is committed to continuous improvement in monitoring, evaluation and learning, and will continue to consider how best to strengthen qualitative data collection and interpretation.

# Advocacy outcomes

Indicator: CF4, CF5, CF6, CF7,  
GA4, GIA 5.1, GIA 5.2

The Hive and its partners have taken its learnings and insights from early childhood incubators to successfully advocate for systemic change.

## Equity in Early Education – Council Bonds, Arrears, and Specialised Support Changes

**What was the problem?** Children faced barriers enrolling at Blacktown City Council (BCC) Kids' Early Learning (KEL) centres due to bond costs and/or developmental needs. Enrolled children were being terminated suddenly due to arrears without consideration or support for the family's situation.

**How did The Hive advocate for change?** The Hive and the 'Equity in Early Ed' Working Group collected numerous stories of families who could not afford the significant bond payment to enter a KEL centre, who had been refused enrolment due to their developmental needs, or who were unethically terminated without warning due to falling into financial hardship and arrears at the centre. The Working Group met repeatedly with BCC to raise these concerns, share these stories and advocate for change. The Hive presented to BCC their Specialised Support program model which utilises inclusion funding to embed allied health professionals in the centre to upskill early educators on how to support children with disabilities in their care. The Hive utilised their own funding to pilot the program in two KEL centres for two terms each in 2023 to demonstrate its approach.

**What was the outcome?** After hearing the data and stories of families' negative experiences in trying to both access and remain enrolled in the KEL's, Blacktown City Council removed the requirement for a bond payment per child and replaced it with a flat enrolment fee per family that could be paid in instalments in a payment plan across all centres in the LGA. BCC also changed their termination processes, so families were first informed of their arrears and offered a payment plan to pay the arrears. Due to these changes, The Hive are contacted significantly less frequently by families for support in enrolling in a KEL centre or seeking support to manage their arrears. BCC also applied for their own sources of funding to self-fund and deliver the Specialised Support Program in three of their Mt Druitt centres from July 2024.

## WSLHD – Relationship and Positive Changes/Outcomes

**What was the problem?** Families in 2770 were struggling to access child health and development services available at the local Community Health Centre due to transport barriers, lack of knowledge of services available and their importance, or fear of a new service.

**How did The Hive advocate for change?** The Hive has a positive relationship with WSLHD Child & Family Health through the partnership and handover of the Check Ups Before School (CUBS) Program where The Hive shared with WSLHD the barriers that families faced in accessing child health checks, and what alternative solutions were available. The Hive also shared similar learnings with the Paediatric team regarding families struggling to access a paediatrician, which resulted in the Willmot Paediatric Outreach Clinic in Willmot that received permanent funding in 2023 due to its success. Both projects are now being operated and funded by WSLHD, with the Hive providing periodic advice and connection to local people and organisations in 2770.

**What was the outcome?** There has been a strengthened partnership with WSLHD, working together to reduce the barriers families face in accessing child health services, and a prioritisation of place-based approaches. The Hive now sits on the WSLHD Brighter Beginnings Steering Committee, providing advice on the roll out of the Brighter Beginnings Program district wide. The Hive are also in regular contact with the Program Lead of Child & Family Health where ideas are shared for new possible partnerships and projects, as well as the planning for a '2770 Child Health & Development Partnership' working Group to continue the collaboration & monitor existing and new place-based projects for 2770.

## Development of The Hive's Advocacy Strategy

The Hive has always engaged in advocacy throughout its work as opportunities emerged to share learnings from its work in community. In 2023 The Hive dedicated a new role to pull together the numerous stories we have heard from families about the barriers they face, and place intentional resource in developing an advocacy strategy with clear 'asks' to advocate to achieve equitable policy change for families.

The four priority areas that The Hive identified as the key advocacy priorities include:

1. Abolish bonds for low-income families in accessing early education and care
2. Remove barriers to access birth certificates for low-income families
3. Integrate & scale Linker roles to support families access the services they need
4. Increase capacity building supports for ECEC services in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage

These priority areas will form the basis of The Hive's advocacy work in the Early Years for the next three years with an Advocacy Roadmap in development. These priority areas have been informed by our deep relationships with families and early learning services in Mt Druitt and The Hive will partner with others advocating for similar goals.

# Community Leadership and Advocacy

Indicator: CM1, CM3, CM4, CM5, CM7,  
CIA1, CIA3, GA3, GA4, GA5.3

In response to the Collective's commitment to improve community leadership opportunities, there has been a focus on new initiatives and programs that aim to enable a community-led change.



## Leadership Group

**What was the problem?** The Collective has committed to a Community Led approach as one of our 7 Collective Principles (i.e. shared ways of work). In response to the previous MEL report, the Collective reflected that there is significant room for improvement in how it creates a collective that is genuinely community led.

**How did The Collective advocate for change?** The Hive along with key Collective partners designed and delivered a Community Leadership program. This program engaged residents in 2770 where there were existing strong relationships, and the Collective saw a desire to contribute more meaningfully to positive community change. This was an 8-week program that focussed on building local people's skills in communication, collaboration, leadership, advocacy for change and event planning.

**What was the outcome?** This program was delivered in 2024 with an average of 11 community members attending at each meeting; 24 community members have attended overall. Participants have shared that their confidence is growing and that they feel more empowered to become involved and lead Collective initiatives. Participants have volunteered to speak at community events and have led activities at a Collective event with over 40 attendees. The delivery of the community leadership program has enabled the Collective to develop a stronger culture of building community leadership, while creating opportunities for participants to use the tools in real time. The next steps for this group is that they will stay involved in the Collective and continue to take on leadership roles in future activities, including the Collective's overarching governance group.



## Bidwill Reserve Advocacy

**What was the problem?** Bidwill Reserve is a large land area located in the centre of Bidwill, adjacent to Bidwill Public School and Bidwill Square. The community raised concerns that the Reserve is not safe, accessible, or usable, as it lacks basic amenities such as benches and lighting.

**How did The Collective advocate for change?** Collective partners facilitated community listening activities in Bidwill Reserve, held after school hours to engage residents who use the space. Local families were asked what improvements they would like to see in the park. FUNPARK created and circulated a petition advocating for lighting in the Reserve, particularly to make the basketball court usable at night. Community members actively participated, with one going door-to-door to gather opinions from those living near the Reserve about the proposed lighting, while another created mock-ups of their vision for the space.

Based on the feedback collected during the listening activities, The Collective developed a report summarizing the community's aspirations for Bidwill Reserve. The FUNPARK petition received hundreds of signatures from local residents and other interested parties. The petition, report, and design ideas were then presented to the Blacktown Mayor and members of Blacktown City Council.

**What was the outcome?** In response, representatives from Blacktown Council visited Bidwill to hear directly from Collective members and community residents about their vision for the Reserve. The Council has since committed to improving the Reserve in collaboration with The Collective, and planning for these improvements is currently underway.



## Transport Forum

**What was the problem?** Public transportation in the 2770 area is often inaccessible and fails to meet community needs. Bus travel to economic hubs, such as Marsden Park and Mount Druitt take significantly longer compared to driving. Limited public transport options also affect students' ability to access local schools, restricting their educational opportunities. Public transport infrastructure is also inadequate, estimating that only about 20% of bus stops across Lethbridge Park, Tregear and Willmot having shelters. In Bidwill, this figure is as low as 11%.

**How did The Collective advocate for change?** Over several years, The Collective listened to community aspirations and concerns, leading to the organization of a Community Forum focused on transportation. It saw the largest volunteer turnout for any Collective event, with over 35 community members involved. 6 community members shared their personal experiences of relying on public transport to access health services and education.

**What was the outcome?** As a result of the Transport Forum, Blacktown City Council has committed to working with the community and The Collective to build more bus shelters and engage residents in deciding the locations for these shelters. Additionally, The Collective is working to provide a bus service to ensure children in Willmot can travel to Shalvey High School. Transport NSW attend the forum and expressed willingness to support the advocacy efforts. The forum had a positive impact on community attitudes, with participants expressing a greater sense of belonging and community pride. The event helped build the confidence of those who spoke, and many went on to share their personal stories at other community events after the Transport Forum.