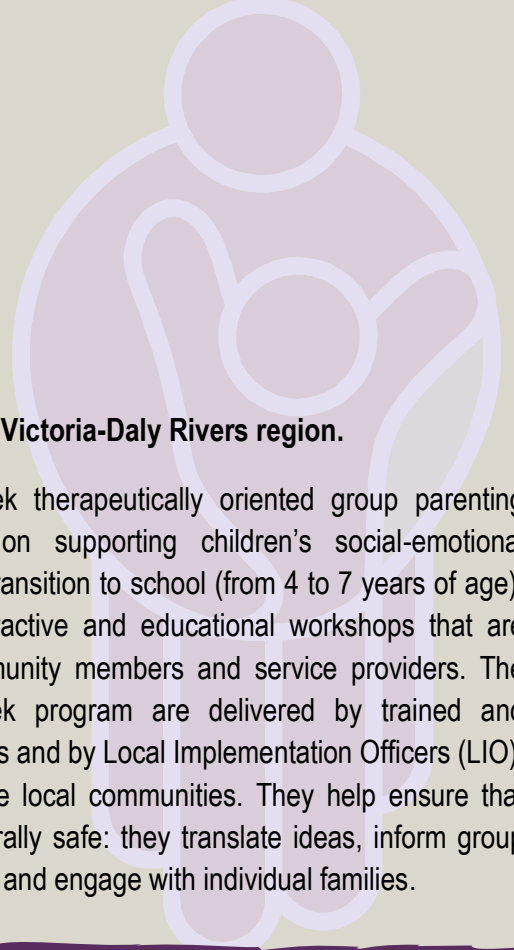


let's start

parent-child program



Let's Start is now in the Victoria-Daly Rivers region.

Let's Start is a 10 week therapeutically oriented group parenting program that focuses on supporting children's social-emotional development during the transition to school (from 4 to 7 years of age). Let's Start includes interactive and educational workshops that are open to interested community members and service providers. The workshops and 10 week program are delivered by trained and experienced group leaders and by Local Implementation Officers (LIO). LIOs are members of the local communities. They help ensure that program delivery is culturally safe: they translate ideas, inform group leaders of relevant issues and engage with individual families.

The Vic-Daly region encompasses a geographical area of 168 277 km², which comprises 8 Indigenous communities and surrounding outstations. The region's population is estimated at around 8,000. Across the region, around 10 different Indigenous languages as well as Kriol and Aboriginal English are spoken. Let's Start works in 4 communities: Nauiyu Nambiyu (Daly River) on the east of the Daly River and Peppimenarti, Nganmariyanga (Palumpa) and Nganambala (Emu Point) to the west of the Daly River.

Workshops are an integral part of Let's Start's engagement strategy in the Vic-Daly region. Group leaders introduce core elements of the program content and format in a non-threatening and non-stigmatising setting. They help to introduce the 10 week Let's Start program to families.

In 2011-2012, 4 workshops for parents and training for early childhood workers were delivered in each community. The workshops were followed by 10-week Let's Start programs in Daly River and at Emu Point. Merrepen outstation participated in a modified version of both the 10 week program and workshops. In Peppimenarti, where the cohort of children between 4 and 7 was too small to deliver the 10 week program, workshops were held for families and professional development sessions for local staff.

WE WORK FLEXIBLY.

In one community, disputes resulted in a large group being relocated to surrounding outstations. Upon invitation by families, Let's Start delivered a modified form of the program at Merrepen outstation where the population is normally too low to deliver Let's Start. Men, women and children enthusiastically participated in interactive play workshops and information sessions.





The workshops provide parents and other care givers with information on parenting and child development: that is, what children need to grow up healthy and safe and what science tells us about early brain development. It also engages parents about their needs and concerns and problems they find difficult to deal with. It helps to develop a community discussion on parenting and families' needs. Let's Start encourages parents to *think about* and to try to *make sense of* children's behaviour in terms of children's feelings and needs rather than simply reacting to a child's behaviour in ways that may not produce change. The development of this awareness is at the core of Let's Start practice. Workshops involve sessions of interactive play between parents and children that is structured but flexible and gives the opportunity for guided experiential training in key themes of parent-child interaction. These activities help prepare parents for the 10 week program.

After the Let's Start 10 week program, teachers reported improvements in classroom behaviour in children who attended the program regularly. Teachers wanted those children who only attended a few sessions to attend future Let's Start programs.

The Peppi Crèche manager commented that "the ladies really liked your training session. It made them realise that they can have fun with the kids."

Feedback from community workshops' participants included comments such as "I remember what you said about how the brain grows quickly for little kids. That was really good. We would like to encourage the young fathers to come to those workshops so they can learn too."

Let's Start aims to support community strategies for early intervention and prevention. It is the only parenting program specifically developed for Aboriginal children and families for which there is evidence of effectiveness. Drawing on social learning theory, attachment theory and family systems theory, it has an integrated focus on child development, early learning and parenting and on the wellbeing of parents and children.

For more information:

See: <http://ccde.menzies.edu.au/letsstart>

Email: letsstart@menzies.edu.au

Call: 08 8943 5043

TEACHERS

Let's Start helps build teacher-parent relationships. "I went to see a child's parents the other day to let them know that their child did really well in class that day. Usually I only go see them when I need to complain about the child's behaviour. It was really nice to talk to them about positive achievements of their child and they were really happy."

