

# PARENTZONE OUR IMPACT.



## **About Parentzone:**

Parentzone is the Regional Parenting Resource Service for the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Metropolitan regions of Melbourne and the Gippsland region of Victoria. Every year, Parentzone works with thousands of parents, carers and professionals to provide parents and carers with access to the resources and support they need to parent effectively.

Ultimately, this is an investment in the healthy development of children. Evidence clearly shows that parenting plays a major role in the development of resilient and capable children, and changes in parenting practices have lifelong impacts.

In analysing our Impact for 2014-2015, Parentzone has examined 3 key areas; **REACH, QUALITY & OUTCOMES.**

## **For more information, contact:**

**Parentzone Southern** | 03 5945 2000

Level 1, 66-68 Main Street Pakenham

Level 2, 60-64 Wells Street Frankston

**Parentzone Eastern** | 03 9735 4188

47-51 Castella Street, Lilydale

**Parentzone Northern** | 03 9465 0322

42 Mary Street, Preston




**Parentzone Gippsland** | 03 5133 9998

65 Church Street Morwell

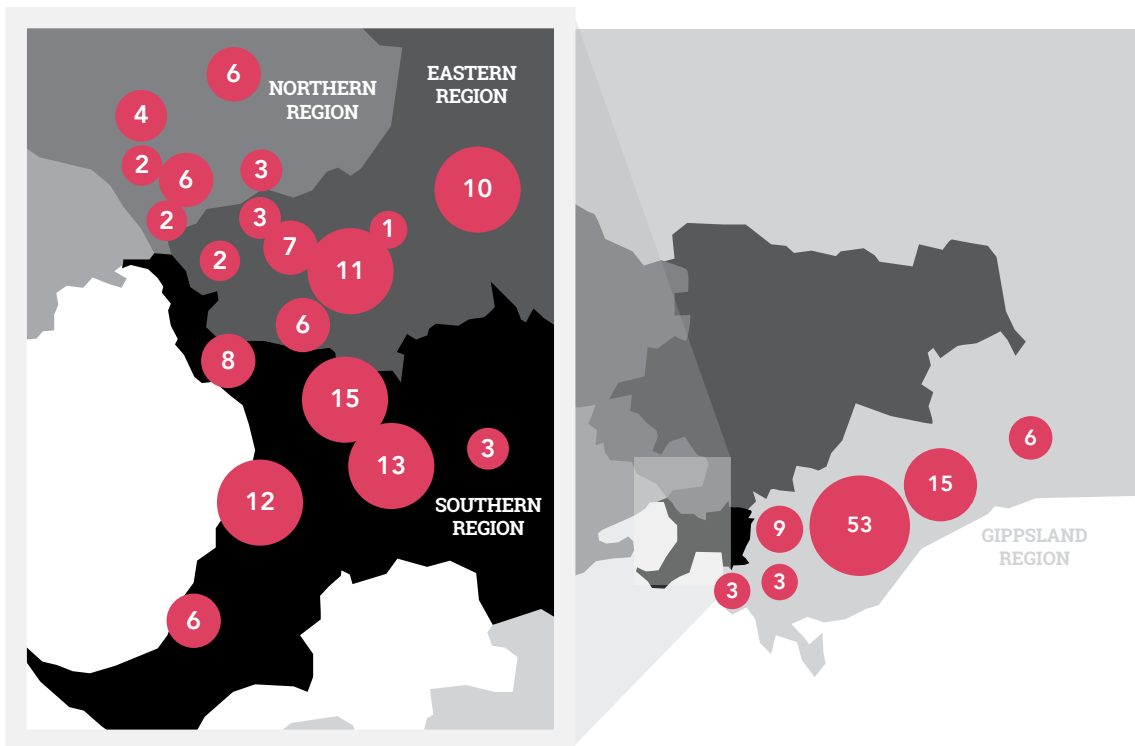
Parentzone is funded by the Department of Education and Training (DET), Department of Social Services (DSS) and various other funders from region to region.

**Parentzone worked with 2322 parents and carers during 2014-2015.**

During this period, Parentzone also:

- Provided support, training and resources to 1202 professionals 
- Responded to 2543 enquiries about parenting resources or groups 
- Supplied 16 Newsletters, which were downloaded a total of 10,208 times 

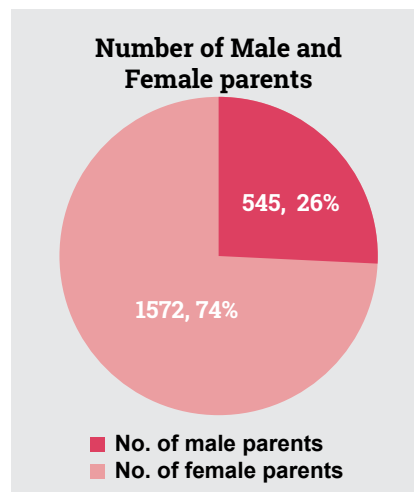
In total, 209 groups and forums for parents were provided across the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Gippsland regions:

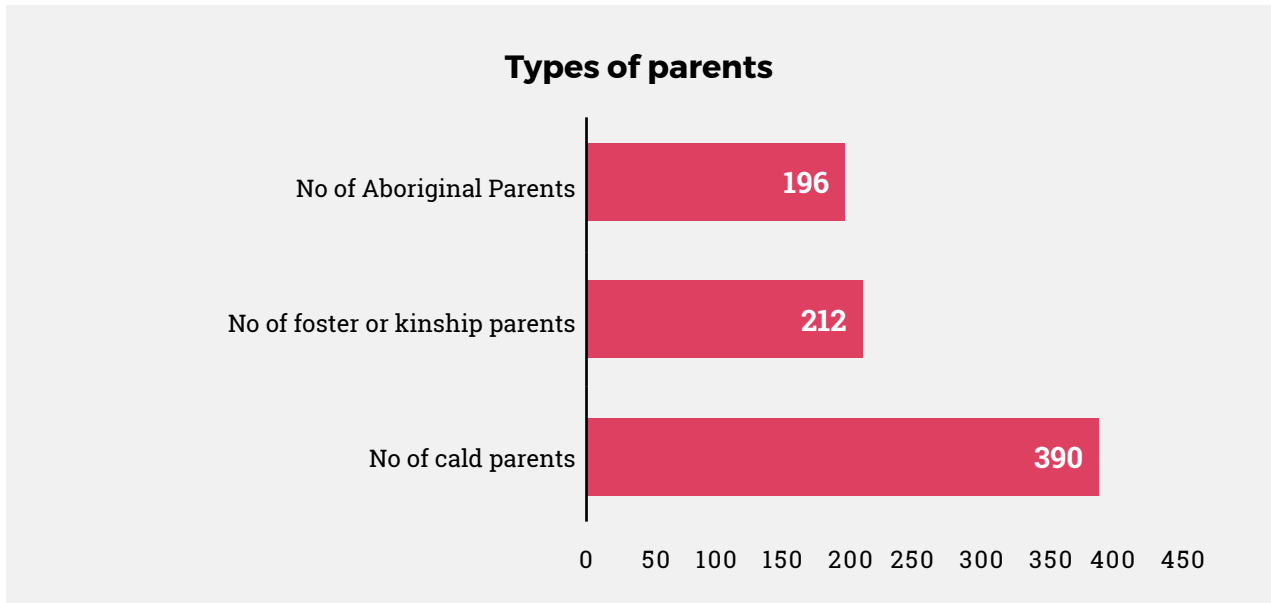


 Number of groups or forums run in that LGA

Parentzone delivered services to 545 Fathers, 196 Aboriginal Parents, 390 parents from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds and 212 Kinship or Foster Carers. This occurred through general parenting programs, as well as programs responding to specific issues, including:

- Parenting in Australia
- You and Your Foster Kids Matter
- Aboriginal Dad's Groups
- Parenting support at Koorie Kids Playgroups
- Dad's Matter, and Dad's Matter for Chinese Fathers
- Being a Dad (Fulham Correctional Centre)





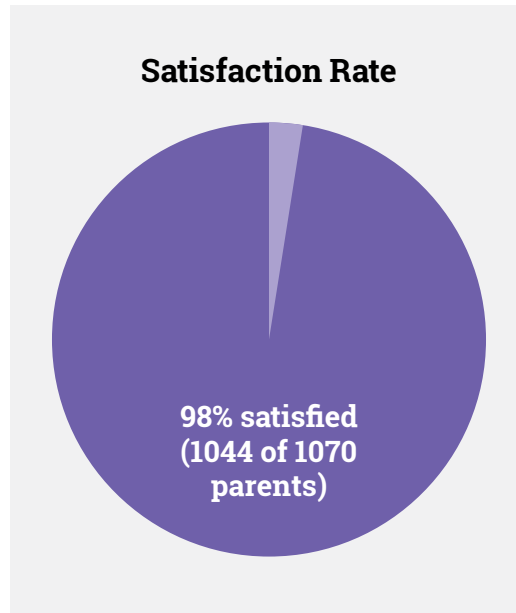
**Parenting in Australia**

Our work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

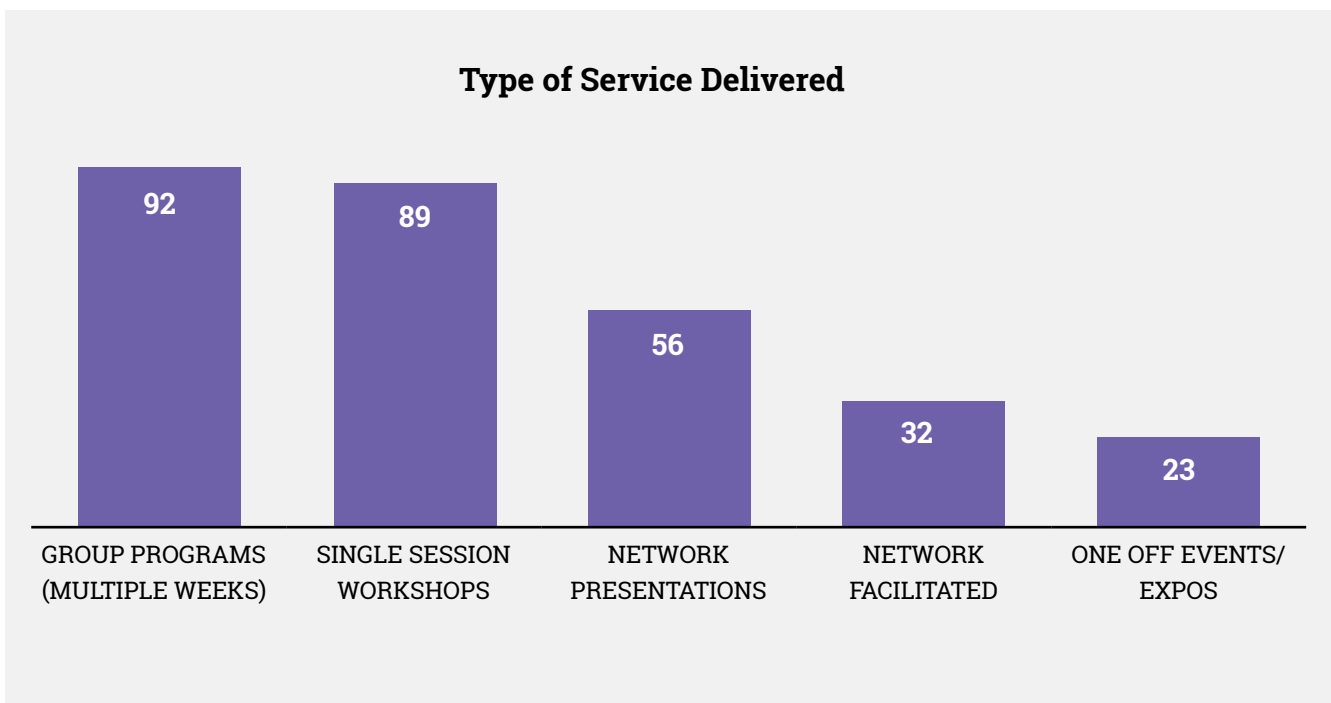
During 2014-15 Parentzone provided a range of programs designed to respond to the needs of newly arrived migrants, and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Parenting in Australia is one of these programs, developed in response to frequent requests from services in the Dandenong area for support in helping the CALD community parent in Australia. Parents from Migrant and Refugee backgrounds are engaged in 4 to 6 weeks of interactive, group based discussions focussing on developing culturally appropriate parenting skills that support healthy childhood development, as well as understanding the Australian legal system and societal expectations about Parenting in Australia.

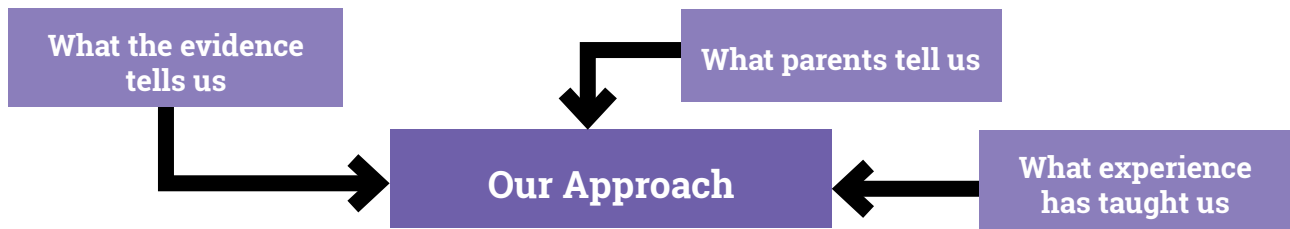
The interactive, strengths based program draws from the Parents Building Solutions (PBS) approach pioneered by Parentzone. The Parents Building Solutions approach supports parents to develop positive rules and consequences based on their family (and cultural) values and beliefs, to develop positive parent-child relationships and develop emotional and social skills in children. Parenting in Australia reduces feelings of alienation and isolation and provide migrant parents with the opportunity to participate more fully within their local community.

During 2014-15, **1070** parents were surveyed about the service they received and **98%** (1044 parents) indicated they were satisfied with Parentzone.



A variety of activities were delivered, including parenting programs over multiple weeks, as well as forums, workshops, events, professional networks and training programs.





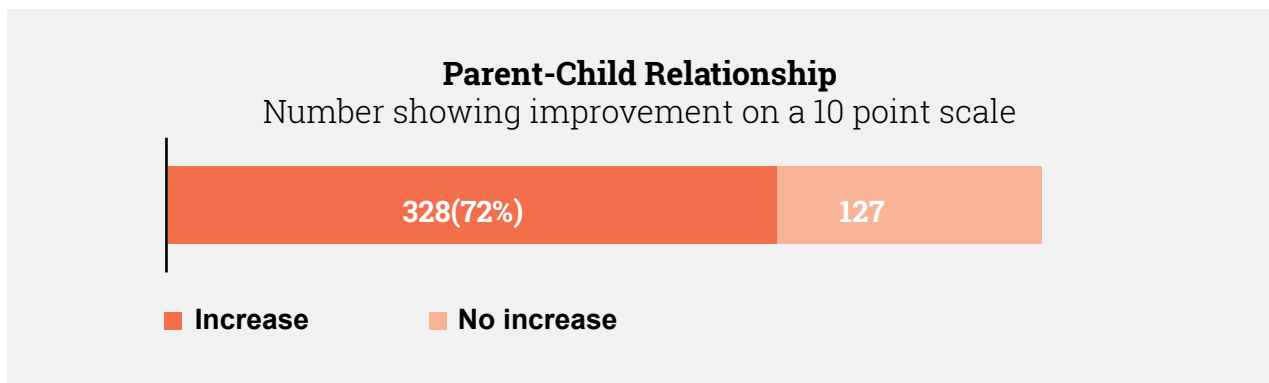
<p><b>What the evidence tells us</b></p>	<p>A wide variety of factors influence parenting in complex ways, including the child’s temperament, family characteristics, social and economic factors, culture, and a parent’s own experiences of being parented.</p> <p>Essentially no two children and no two parents are the same, and parenting intervention should encourage parents to “adapt their practices to meet their children’s changing needs” and “aim to enable parents to solve problems for themselves.”<sup>1</sup></p> <p>The best predictor of outcome is the quality of client engagement.<sup>2</sup> Effective parent education therefore draws on a combination of interventions and is tailored to parents needs.<sup>3,4</sup></p> <p>Interventions with an empowerment or strengths-based approach are more effective than those that are ‘expert-driven’.<sup>5</sup></p>
<p><b>What parents tell us</b></p>	<p>“The facilitator made it real and interesting... very professional, yet showed compassion and understanding”</p> <p>“The resources and handouts provided were fantastic”</p> <p>“The best part was learning new strategies and tools that I’ll actually use”</p> <p>“The interactive discussions of my own experiences were great, it was really helpful to share experiences and insights amongst the group”</p> <p>“Just understanding my children’s behaviour was so helpful”</p> <p>At the beginning of every program, we ask parents about the topics they want to cover, and develop a tailored package to meet their needs, drawing on evidence-based materials.</p>
<p><b>What 15 years of experience has taught us</b></p>	<p>Parenting Programs work best when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We discuss the things that are of interest to the group and follow the participants’ agenda rather than our own</li> <li>• Parents are active participants rather than passive recipients</li> <li>• We work with an emphasis on what parents (and children) CAN do rather than what they can’t do</li> <li>• We respect the ideas of participants and the solutions that they find for difficult situations</li> <li>• We are having fun, there is hope and a sense of optimism</li> <li>• Participants feel safe to try to do some things differently</li> <li>• Parent education is about learning rather than teaching</li> <li>• We focus on children’s best interests</li> </ul>

**Outcome Domain 1:**

Children have strong relationships with parents and caregivers

Why this domain is important: Research into early childhood development shows that the internalisation of rules and the ability to self-regulate emotions and behaviour occurs through repeated healthy interactions with an emotionally available caregiver<sup>6,7</sup>. Shonkoff & Phillips state: *“Regulation in early development is deeply embedded in the child’s relations with others.”*<sup>8</sup>

Outcomes achieved 2014-15: 455 parents provided feedback on the quality of their relationship with their children both before and after the group on a 10 point scale. 72% of parents showed improvements at the end of the group.

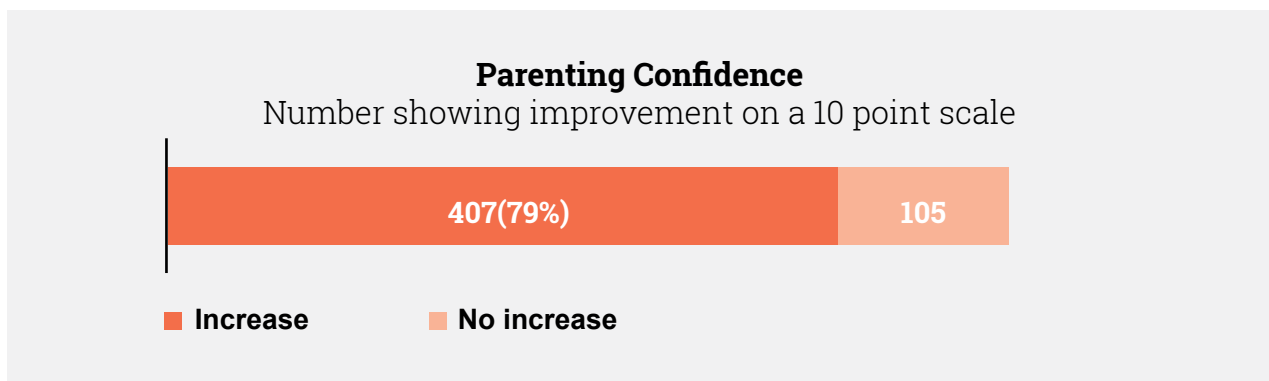


**Outcome Domain 2:**

Parents are more confident in their parenting role

Why this domain is important: Parental psychosocial functioning has been shown to have a significant impact on children’s wellbeing.<sup>9</sup> Mental health, parental conflict and parental confidence all impact on the ability of parents to respond effectively to children’s behaviour in an emotionally attuned way.<sup>10</sup>

Outcomes achieved 2014-15: 512 parents measured their parenting confidence at the beginning and end of a Parentzone program, with 79% showing an improvement on a 10 point scale.





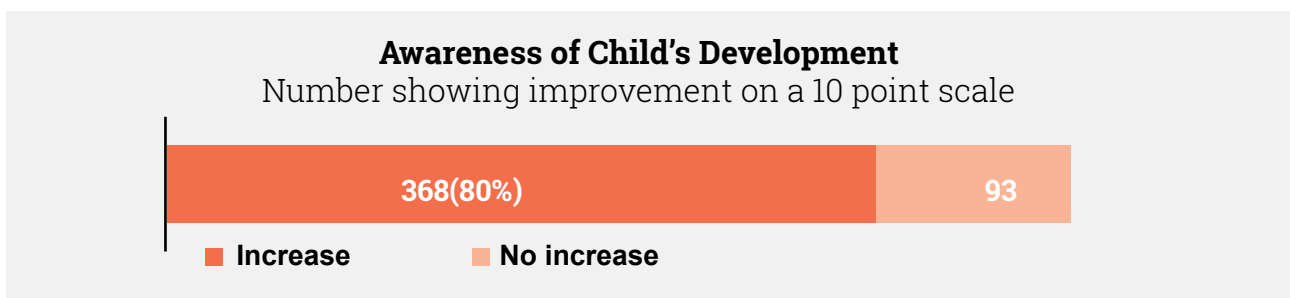
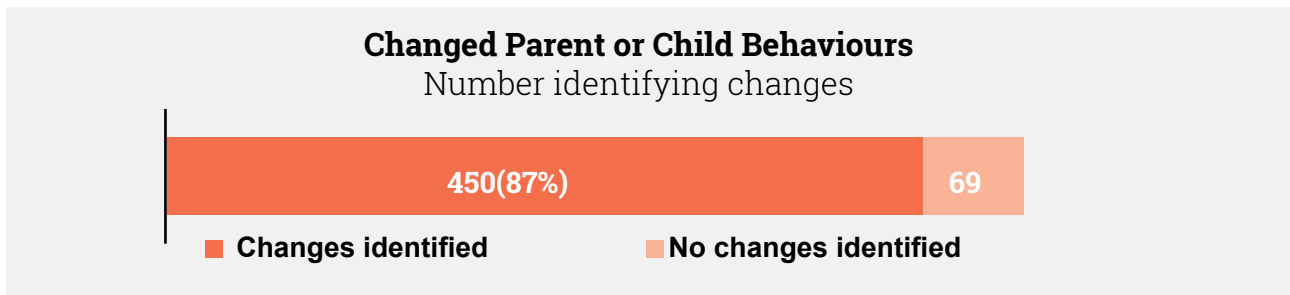
## Outcome Domain 3:

Children have parents who are able to respond effectively to their behaviour

**Why this domain is important:** The way in which parents respond to children's behaviour plays a role in the development of emotional functioning, social skills, the developing sense of right and wrong, and the ability to self-regulate behaviour.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

**Outcomes achieved 2014-15:** 87% of parents indicated that they had changed their parenting behaviours following the Parentzone group. In open ended responses to this question, the most commonly identified changes were that parents were better able to respond more effectively to their own and their children's emotions.

80% of parents also showed improvements in their self-rated understanding of their children's development.



## Being a Dad

'Being a Dad' is a Parentzone program designed specifically for men who are incarcerated at Fulham Correctional Centre in Gippsland. The program helps fathers to look at how they were parented themselves, and how that affects their own parenting. It gives them skills for parenting their children from a distance while they are in prison, and for when they get out. The following comments were made by fathers who participated in the Being a Dad parenting group:

*"IT'S NEVER TOO LATE OR TOO EARLY TO MAKE A FEW CHANGES FOR THE BETTER, NOT JUST FOR OURSELVES, BUT FOR OUR CHILDREN, AND LOVED ONE'S TOO HEY!!!"*

"As educated and mature I thought I was, the Facilitator has shown me what it takes to be a man who can be a Father to my son. For that I will be ever grateful."

"The activities that related to communicating with others have helped me personally. I'm sure I'll be using this knowledge wisely in the future regarding relationships."

"I'm glad I did the program now too as it's turned out to be the best program I have done since being locked up, it's opened my eyes up to where I think I have gone wrong for so many years."



## Helping parents change their approach

One of the fantastic things about parenting programs is the shared learning that occurs in group settings. This was the case for one program in the North, who despite being a very diverse group, found that they were mostly struggling with the same issues. A common theme emerged with a large number of the parents having 9 year old daughters, whom they described as being extremely difficult to manage, large personality, disruptive to the whole family, causing lots and lots of stress and domineering.

*“I’VE COME TO SEE THAT I HAVE TO CHANGE THE WAY I RELATE TO MY DAUGHTER, THAT I HAVE TO TAKE CHARGE OF MY OVER-REACTIONS TO HER BEHAVIOUR.”*

At the start of the 6 week program, the parents felt that this was the way their daughters were and that outside factors were causing the issue. By the third session, the group had shifted their perspective considerably and parents were making comments such as:

And by the end of the program, these same parents had experienced a dramatic shift, with a more calm and relaxed home and family.

## Supporting Family Relationships

Parents coming to Parentzone programs sometimes tell us that they struggle to develop a shared parenting approach with their partner. This was the case for two parents who came to a Parentzone program in the East. Both parents were keen to engage with what the program might offer, and open about their struggles with their children. The parents felt that their children were caught in the middle of their two very different styles.

Over the weeks attending the group, they re-introduced aspects of their relationship which had been lost: having time where they could talk together about themselves, their day, what they were hearing from their children and planning what decisions needed to be made in the best interests of the kids.

*DURING THE PROGRAM, BOTH PARENTS BEGAN DEVELOPING HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND NOTICED A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN PARENT/CHILD CONFLICT.*

The parents began creating 1:1 time with each child, involving them in setting family rules and consequences, also planning for family time together with no technology present for anyone – no exceptions!

Mother and father felt they had become significantly closer as a couple. This positively affected the children, making them feel greater security in their parent’s relationship, and more supported to reach out to their mum and dad.

## Creating a different home environment for kids

One of the most common things parents tell us they want from coming to a parenting group is to stop yelling at their kids. This was certainly the case for Sita\*, who was referred by DHS to a parenting program in the South. At the start of the group, Sita said that she wanted to “stop showing my anger with the kids and show them my loving kindness.” Sita confided with the group that she was shouting and smacking the kids when they wouldn’t follow instructions. Through the group program, she learnt new skills and strategies in dealing with her own feelings, which led to a more calm and consistent approach for the children. Sita also began implementing family meetings, rules and consequences, praise, and care for herself as parent. On her post group evaluation form, Sita stated that she had stopped “shouting, anger and smacking” and that “there is a close intimate, they are free to talk to their mum about anything. I am really impressed because they have choice to be good or bad and which consequences.” Perhaps most telling of all, Sita wrote,

*“THEY ARE NO MORE SCARED OF INTERACTING WITH ME ANYMORE”.*

\* not her real name

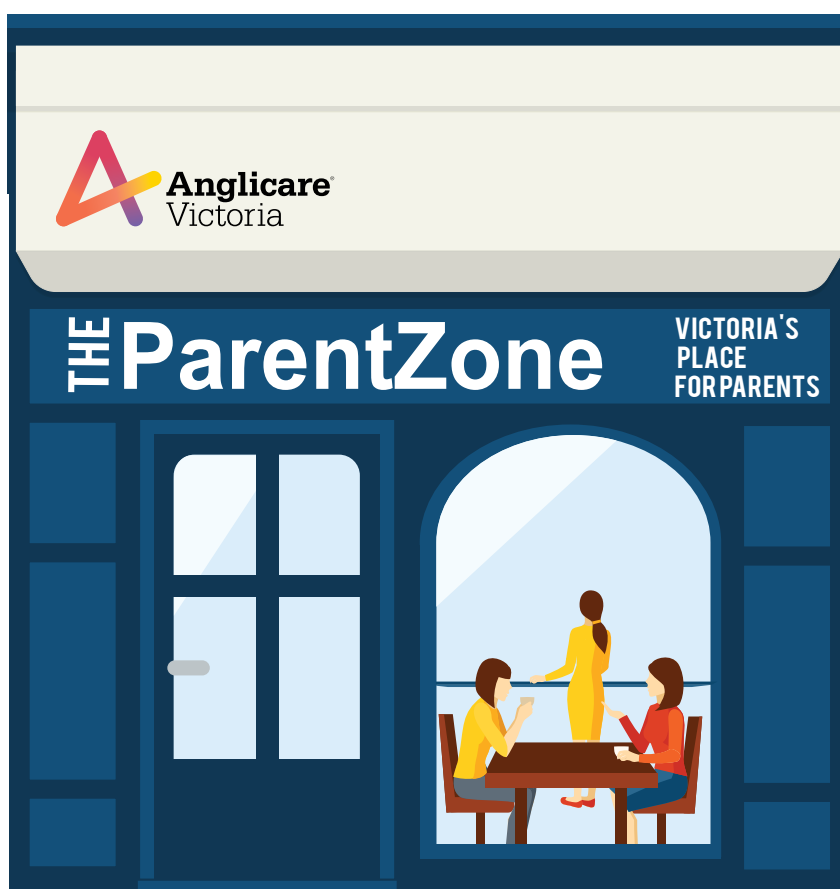
## WE HAVE A VISION...

### **The ParentZone: Victoria's Place for Parents**

In 2014-15 Parentzone directly supported 2322 parents - but what if we were able to reach 20,000+ every year?

Imagine if Victorian parents had a place where they found a listening ear, helpful information, and the support they need, without having to fill in hundreds of forms, tell their whole life story or meet strict eligibility criteria. Imagine a place parents could go that connects them to playgroups, parenting, and community groups as well as a range of more formal supports if needed.

Imagine if, as a parent, you had a place that really responded to *you*.



The ParentZone will be a place for all Victorian Parents. A place in their local community, that's highly visible, accessible and where it's easy to walk through the door.

### **Expressions of Interest**

We are looking for interested parties from the government, corporate and community sectors who are wanting to help create a highly visible and accessible statewide parenting service.

**If you are interested in partnering with us to achieve this vision, please contact:**

**Andrea Dwyer**

Regional Director, Southern

P: 9781 6700

E: [andrea.dwyer@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:andrea.dwyer@anglicarevic.org.au)

## References used in this publication

- <sup>1</sup> Centre for Community Child Health (2004). Parenting information project. Volume One: Main Report. Canberra: Department of Family and Community Services.
- <sup>2</sup> Norcross, J., & Wampold, B. (2011). Evidence-based therapy relationships: Research conclusions and clinical practices. *Psychotherapy*, Vol 48(1), 98-102.
- <sup>3</sup> MacLeod, J., & Nelson, G. (2000). Programs for the promotion of family wellness and the prevention of child maltreatment: A meta-analytic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24(9), 1127-1149.
- <sup>4</sup> Parker, R., & McDonald, M. (2010). Assessing and responding to parenting support needs in disadvantaged families: Lessons from parent education programs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- <sup>5</sup> Holzer, P., Bromfield, L., Richardson, N., & Higgins, D. (2006). Child abuse prevention: what works? The effectiveness of parent education programs for preventing child maltreatment. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- <sup>6</sup> Kochanska, G. (1993). Toward a synthesis of parental socialization and child temperament in early development of conscience. *Child Development*, 64(2), 325-347.
- <sup>7</sup> Perry, B. D. (2002). Childhood experience and the expression of genetic potential: What childhood neglect tells us about nature and nurture. *Brain and mind*, 3(1), 79-100.
- <sup>8</sup> Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P. (Eds.). (2000). From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. National Academies Press. Page 122.
- <sup>9</sup> Barlow, J., Smailagic, N., Huband, N., Roloff, V., & Bennett, C. (2014). Group-based parent training programmes for improving parental psychosocial health. status and date: New search for studies and content updated (conclusions changed), published in (5).
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Eisenberg, N., Cumberland, A., & Spinrad, T. L. (1998). Parental socialization of emotion. *Psychological inquiry*, 9(4), 241-273.
- <sup>12</sup> Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P. (Eds.). (2000). From Neurons to Neighborhoods:: The Science of Early Childhood Development. National Academies Press. Page 122.
- <sup>13</sup> Kochanska, G. (1993). Toward a synthesis of parental socialization and child temperament in early development of conscience. *Child Development*, 64(2), 325-347.

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OUR FOCUS IS ON TRANSFORMING  
THE FUTURES OF CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND  
ADULTS. OUR WORK IS BASED  
ON THREE GUIDING PILLARS,  
PREVENT, PROTECT, EMPOWER.

**BETTER  
TOMORROWS**