

## THE PLATFORMS STRATEGY CITY OF MOONEE VALLEY, VICTORIA

### *What is the project about?*

The Moonee Valley Platforms project is a feasibility study to develop a local government model of service coordination for young children and families. The overriding goal is to improve the early identification and response to health, development and behavioural concerns in children aged 0-8 years. It acknowledges the important role parent play in children's development and validates parents' expertise and the role of informal community networks that support children.

The project, which was launched at a community forum in 2002, reflects a strong partnership between the Centre for Community Child Health and the Moonee Valley City Council. The contributions of staff from both organisations have been paramount to the success of project to date.

### *Where is the project set?*

The project is set in the City of Moonee Valley, a Victorian municipality located just north of the CBD spanning some 44 square kilometres. It is home to more than 112,000 people – one third of who were born overseas - with more than 100 different languages being spoken by residents. Two specific areas within the municipality were selected as target areas for the project: the northern and southern ends. The northern end includes suburbs of



Parents gathered at Hopetoun Maternal and Child Health Centre to discuss Vitamin D deficiency. Discussion centred on the importance of sunlight providing Vitamin D to maintain wellness.

Avondale Heights and Keilor East, with Flemington, North Melbourne and Kensington located in the southern end of Moonee Valley.

### *What does the project seek to do?*

In summary, the Platforms feasibility project seeks to:

- increase the community's understanding of brain development in children and the importance of the early years of life.
- acknowledge and validate the critical role that parents play in children's development
- foster partnerships between early childhood professionals and parents to appreciate the expertise that

each can bring to health, development and wellbeing of a child

- increase access to and co-ordination between local children services and informal community networks.

### *How have you been going about it?*

The project consists of several strategies to determine and respond to the needs of local residents in relation to children services. During the first stage of the project, several consultative processes were undertaken. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) were conducted with a broad range of parents to determine which services parents used, the level of satisfaction with these services and where parents would go to seek help if they had concerns about their children's health, development and wellbeing. Early childhood professionals were surveyed to determine the practices and processes they use to identify and respond to behavioural and developmental concerns in children. Community leaders were consulted in an effort to establish links with representatives from different culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Community advisory groups were established to facilitate the process of service redevelopment and development of informal support networks and the mapping of children's services across the municipality commenced.



The PEDS tool (Parents Evaluation of Developmental Status) offers a structured focus for parents to discuss concerns with early childhood professionals in a relaxed, informal discussion.