

INCLUSION IN ACTION

Lessons from HIPPY Australia

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Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**



Acknowledgement of Country

HIPPY Australia acknowledges the sacred sovereign Nations on whose lands we live, work and play, and extend our respect to the many rich and diverse Nations across this country.

We honour Elders, Ancestors and Knowledge Holders who have carried stories and songlines for over 60,000 years.

We also recognise the important role children play in keeping culture strong and caring for Country through their connections, curiosity and everyday actions.

This artwork is from the “Five Essential Features”, created by Tutors and Coordinators at HIPPY Alice Springs.

HIPPY Australia acknowledges Aunty Geraldine Stewart, Mica Fleming, Aunty Joyce Palmer and Sarah Carmody , whose knowledge, creativity and practices shaped how the HIPPY “Five Essential Features” are understood, communicated and represented to this day. The artwork continues to be used across HIPPY materials and is a key part of the HIPPY Australia framework.



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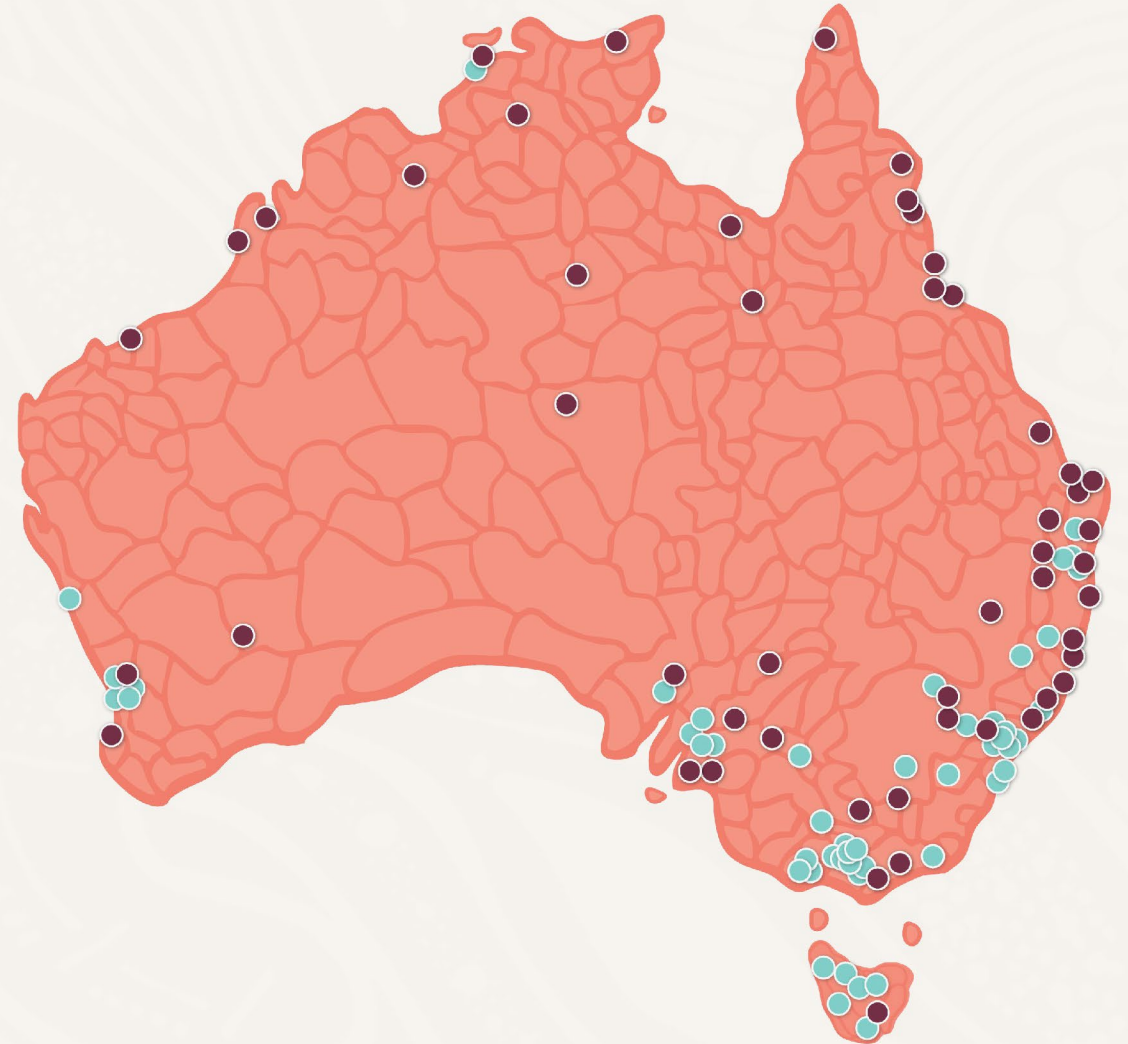
Why now?

- Inclusion is a mainstream issue: **1 in 5 children** have developmental vulnerability (NDIS Review)
- Inclusion benefits everyone
- Children with disability are less like to participate and be included
- Many staff lack confidence in making adjustments
- Strong policy and regulatory basis: UNCRC (1989), NQF, Disability Standards for Education
- Current Thriving Kids reforms

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HIPPY across Australia

- Free two-year home learning program
- Operating in Australia 25+ years
- Delivered in 100 communities
- Home visits, family gatherings and 'everywhere learning'
- Peer workforce: parents and carers are home tutors



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Research approach

- National survey of HIPPY Coordinators (n=41)
- Case studies (n=5)
- Qualitative analysis and synthesis of key themes





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1. Flexible and individualised delivery

“ No Dalai (children) excluded or left behind.

We mould the program around our families, we do not mould our families around the program. ”

- HIPPY Kempsey
Burrin Dalai Aboriginal Corporation



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2. Local adaptation of resources

“ One of the things that came up [in the survey] was non-speaking children because the HIPPY curriculum doesn't really work a lot of the time the way it's written with a non-speaking child, so it does need to be adapted.

In training we go through that and we come up with some ideas together and we practice those kind of responses and those activities and how to adapt them as a team. ”

– HIPPY Frankston North



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3. Delivery in accessible and welcoming spaces

“ We empower parents to think creatively in their approach to activity delivery.

Many families spend hours sitting in waiting rooms for therapy - this is a great time to plan or deliver activities.

By offering suggestions like this it gives families the tools to integrate HIPPY into their routines.

”



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4. Building parent confidence through family-centred and relational practice

“ Our HIPPY tutor explained the why behind each activity, helping us understand how everyday play was building Rory’s speech, motor skills, and confidence.

We felt that HIPPY was “running in parallel with therapy” – providing motivation, reassurance, and depth to Rory’s development. ”

– Rory’s story



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5. Peer workforce development and fostering peer networks

“ The parent’s face lit up and I could see the weight lift off her shoulders, so we had that in common and she felt safer to share some of her struggles and I was able to normalise this. ”

– HIPPY Midland, Ngala



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6. Building staff capacity, capability and confidence

“ The HIPPY Tutors often do not have formal qualifications, and the training guides help to reinforce best practice in inclusive delivery of service. ”



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7. Local partnerships and helping connect families to local services

“ A lot of our families are CALD families and culturally there is a lot of stigma and shame around disabilities so supporting them through an organic relational way is much better as families don't feel singled out or embarrassed. ”

– HIPPY Davoren Park, Novita

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Lessons for practitioners

- 1** Be flexible and responsive to families
- 2** Adapt resources to meet diverse needs
- 3** Create accessible and welcoming environments
- 4** Build strong, family-centred relationships
- 5** Invest in staff capability
- 6** Value lived experience and peer support
- 7** Strengthen local partnerships

Lessons for policymakers

- 1** Strengthen workforce capacity and build peer workforces
- 2** Balance fidelity with flexibility in commissioning
- 3** Allow flexible funding for inclusion
- 4** Invest in shared resources and knowledge exchange
- 5** Resource local partnerships and integrated models
- 6** Embed lived experience in design and decision-making
- 7** Strengthen inclusive mainstream services

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Seven lessons from HIPPY

- 1** Flexible and individualised delivery
- 2** Local adaptation of resources
- 3** Delivery in accessible and welcoming spaces
- 4** Building parent confidence through family-centred and relational practice
- 5** Building staff capacity, capability and confidence
- 6** Peer workforce and peer network development
- 7** Local partnerships and connections

