

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 1 March 2017

### **Migrant families benefit from school-ready program**

Newly arrived and refugee children are benefiting from a new school-ready program in Fawkner.

Ready, Set, Prep addresses poor school-readiness and has commenced rolling out across four local schools; Fawkner, Moomba, St Mark's and St Matthew's primary schools.

"We know that there are many barriers to accessing early learning for families in Fawkner. Ready, Set, Prep will support a smooth transition into primary school. A good start to education can dramatically improve wellbeing outcomes," said Jackie Evers acting manager of Merri Health's population health unit.

The program includes weekly education sessions for parents and carers of pre-school aged children, and resources for families to support family engagement in a child's education.

School principal Peter Wilson said that more than 50 students start their first year of school at St Mark's primary school, and will benefit from the additional support.

"We want to give our students the best start to school life and are very excited to be trialing the program here. We have lots of newly arrived families that aren't familiar with the school system in Australia. Ready, Set, Prep will not only help the child but also the family as they settle into school life," Mr Wilson said.

In 2015, approximately 36.6 per cent of Fawkner children were assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more areas, compared to the Victorian average of 22 per cent, according to the Australian Early Development Census.

Fawkner is home to high numbers of newly-arrived refugee, asylum seeker and migrant families; many who are socially isolated and less familiar with the Australian educational system.

– Ends –

#### **Quick facts**

For Fawkner, the Australian Early Development Census found:

- Low enrolment at kindergartens with 92.7 per cent compared to the Victorian average of 95.7 per cent
- Poor attendance of children enrolled in kindergarten and schools
- High rates of late school enrolment, with a startling number of students arriving on the first day of school without enrolling

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