



## Project overview: Improving CALD Kindergarten Engagement Project

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has worked with communities from refugee and migrant backgrounds for over 60 years. The Brotherhood's **Cross-Cultural Consultancy Team** bring this experience and knowledge to help organisations understand how they ensure their services are more welcoming and recognise the strengths and benefits of being inclusive of more people of refugee and migrant backgrounds.

The Victorian Government's Department of Education and Training (DET) commissioned the Brotherhood of St Laurence to engage with **four refugee and migrant communities** (Afghan, Arabic Speaking – Iraqi / Syrian born, Assyrian / Chaldean and Burmese) to understand community attitudes and experiences concerning kindergarten for their children. We will seek to understand specific concerns or challenges for each community in addition to barriers or rationales, whilst recognising and respecting that there may be a number of reasons families choose not to engage in funded kindergarten programs.

### Objectives

The project has 3 key objectives:

1. Build knowledge and understanding about the four newly arrived communities in metropolitan Melbourne and their
  - a. Awareness of and attitudes about, kindergarten in a cultural context
  - b. Issues of access for families who hold awareness of kindergarten and would like to participate but have encountered barriers
  - c. Factors that contribute to inclusion, retention and engagement for families who are aware and accessing
2. Utilise project findings to inform future micro and macro policy reforms
3. Utilise project findings in conjunction with a desktop review of best practice to inform the development of a Best Practice guide for the Department of Education and Training to embed future practice changes across the early childhood education sector.

### Key activities in the Project:

1. **Desktop review:** to understand potential barriers children and families from refugee background face in accessing kindergarten services; and gather expert knowledge regarding best practice to promote inclusion, retention and engagement for families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.
2. **CALD Community Consultation:** With parents / carers, early childhood and relevant CALD specific service providers to:
  - Understand community levels of awareness about Kindergarten.
  - Ascertain an understanding of access issues for those newly arrived children/families who are aware yet are not accessing Kindergarten:
  - Understand factors of inclusion, retention and engagement, that foster greater participation for newly arrived CALD children who are enrolled and attending.
3. **Policy Recommendations:** Utilise project findings to inform micro and macro policy reforms to improve awareness, access, inclusion and retention of children from newly arrived CALD communities in kindergarten.
4. **Resource Development:** Utilise project findings in conjunction with the desktop review to inform the development of a Best Practice Guide to resource DET in embedding practice changes.