

The Mid Murray Family Connections network is a collaboration of community leaders, government and non-government agencies, health services, educational institutions and local businesses. It is a collaboration of passionate and committed people who have a diverse range of experience and background working towards the Common Agenda to change the alarming decline in the emotional wellbeing of our children.

MMFC network's mandate was to reduce emotional vulnerability of children aged 0 to 8 in the region. Results from the 2012 Australian Early Development Census highlighted that 25.7% of children in the Mid Murray were developmentally vulnerable on the Emotional Maturity domain. Although this number reduced in 2015 census there were still 16% of children vulnerable across the Mid Murray and 24% vulnerable in Mannum.

The Network has been working since 2013 to address these issues and formed working groups in 2017 to focus the strategic actions outlined in the Community Accountability Plan. This is a summary of the progress which has been made by the working groups this year.

Working group 1 (age group: Conception to 2 years) has the key result: *Children and their care givers share a secure attachment.*

This group has developed a closed Facebook group for parents and caregivers of 0 – 5 year olds. This group gives parents and carers a safe and supportive space to talk about parenting issues, child health and illness worries and family fun ideas. It has been set up by parents of young children who live across the region.

Working group 2 (age group: 2 to 5 years) has the key result: *Children are emotionally resilient.*

This group is focussing on improving playgroup numbers across the region, as this was highlighted as an issue in the data. The group is working on a brochure that reinforces the importance of play for healthy child development.

Working group 3 (age group: 5 to 8 years) has the key result: *Children are engaged learners.*

This group is focussing on social and emotional wellbeing and school attendance. They have engaged a film-maker from the Department of Education and Child Development to film and interview children and families about why attendance and engagement are important to school success. The film-maker will deliver a video highlighting engagement strategies specific to each school site for their own, and collective, use. The group are also developing a specific strategy to address school attendance.

Working group 4 (age group: Conception to 8 years) has the key result: *Children and their caregivers are safe and supported.*

This group is working towards a mural trail across the Mid Murray that helps to celebrate and value our children. The first mural is proposed for Mannum and will involve all of the children who live in Mannum.

Thank you to all of our Network Partners and Community members who have played a role in improving our children's emotional wellbeing in 2017. This is an exciting time to get involved in the Network and all new members and partners are welcome.

Contact the Network now to find out how you can ***'play your part'***.