

CASE STUDY – EVALUATION AND LEARNING ON THE GROUND

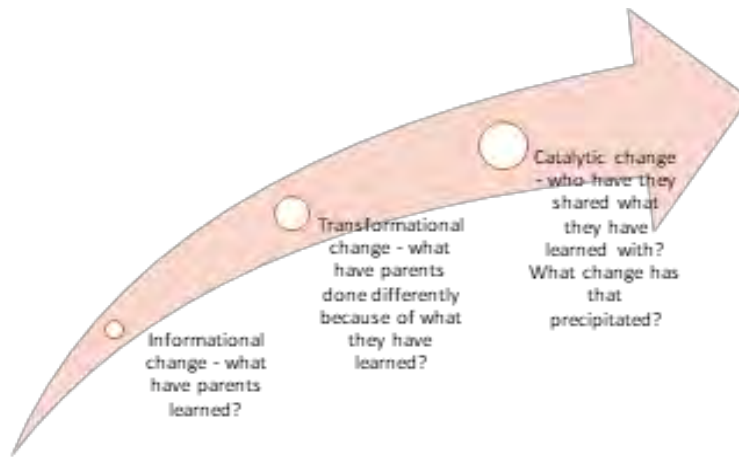
It's noisy in the Burnie Child and Family Centre today, in fact most days. Children run around underfoot, shouting, and playing, stealing the textas that are supposed to be used for notetaking. Peeping in the windows trying to get our attention. This is one environment where the Burnie Works team gets to be part of the chaos, what it is like working on the ground for Burnie's children.

While engaging with a little one peeping in from the playground outside, the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Officer (MELO for short), is listening as the speech pathologist and play therapist share passionately about a new program, *Look Who's Talking*. They have read widely and designed an eight-week interactive workshop program to help parents understand the link between attachment and brain development. What they were seeing in their practice and their frustration that they can't work one-on-one with all the families that need it, motivated them to try something new, a current example of local knowledge creating local action. They have the full support of their manager, who is enthusiastic and open to new ways of doing things.

The MELO is here to support the practitioners to communicate and evaluate the change they were hoping to see for parents and embed action reflection practice into the program design. Together they frame the theory of change:

'If parents have increased understanding and practical knowledge about how they can support their child's cognitive and language development from pre-birth, children will meet their language milestones and will be ready for school.'

Together they create a new way of describing and measuring this change process. It's a way of observing whether parents learn new things, change their interactions with children and tell family and friends about the difference it has made in their parenting confidence and child's wellbeing and behaviour. It's based on the assumption that understanding is not enough to create long lasting individual change. The more impact something has on us, the more likely we are to tell others. In this case if the theory of change is correct, there will be a reverberation of change in the community, that two practitioners could never achieve on their own, working one day a week one-on-one with parents.



Together the team develop evaluation tools for the child practitioners to use:

Using this change framework, the MELO works with a support worker to design interview surveys they will use to measure this change. The surveys are reworked and tested on parents to make sure the questions make sense. The practitioners reflect each week on the changes they observe, and the stories they hear about what occurred in the time period.

This evaluation approach provides the team with evidence that each participant experienced a degree of change at every level. Parents shared how they practiced and integrated the skills in their day to day. They shared stories of finding new ways to use rhymes in the pool, shower and when playing with playdoh. They reflected on how they felt more confident in their parenting to encourage brain development. And they told their partners, their sisters, and their friends. This in turn brought changes in how the extended network engaged with their kids.

“I’m a lot more aware on how to deal and teach my children, just really understanding the way that they’re wired and how I can help to get the best out of them is where I feel I’ve changed.” LWT participant

“I have spent a lot more time with her at her level, of a morning, we read two or three books a day just to help with communication and exploring the book more than just reading it.” LWT participant

The story of change goes beyond the program. The practitioners can design and implement something as innovative and responsive as Look Who’s Talking. However, Burnie Works can share the Measurement and Evaluation expertise to amplify the potential of Look Who’s Talking. The MELO provided the documents to show the impact for two cohorts of parents. The centre team presented at the Australian Early Development Conference. Eleven Child and Family Centres in Tasmania and 12

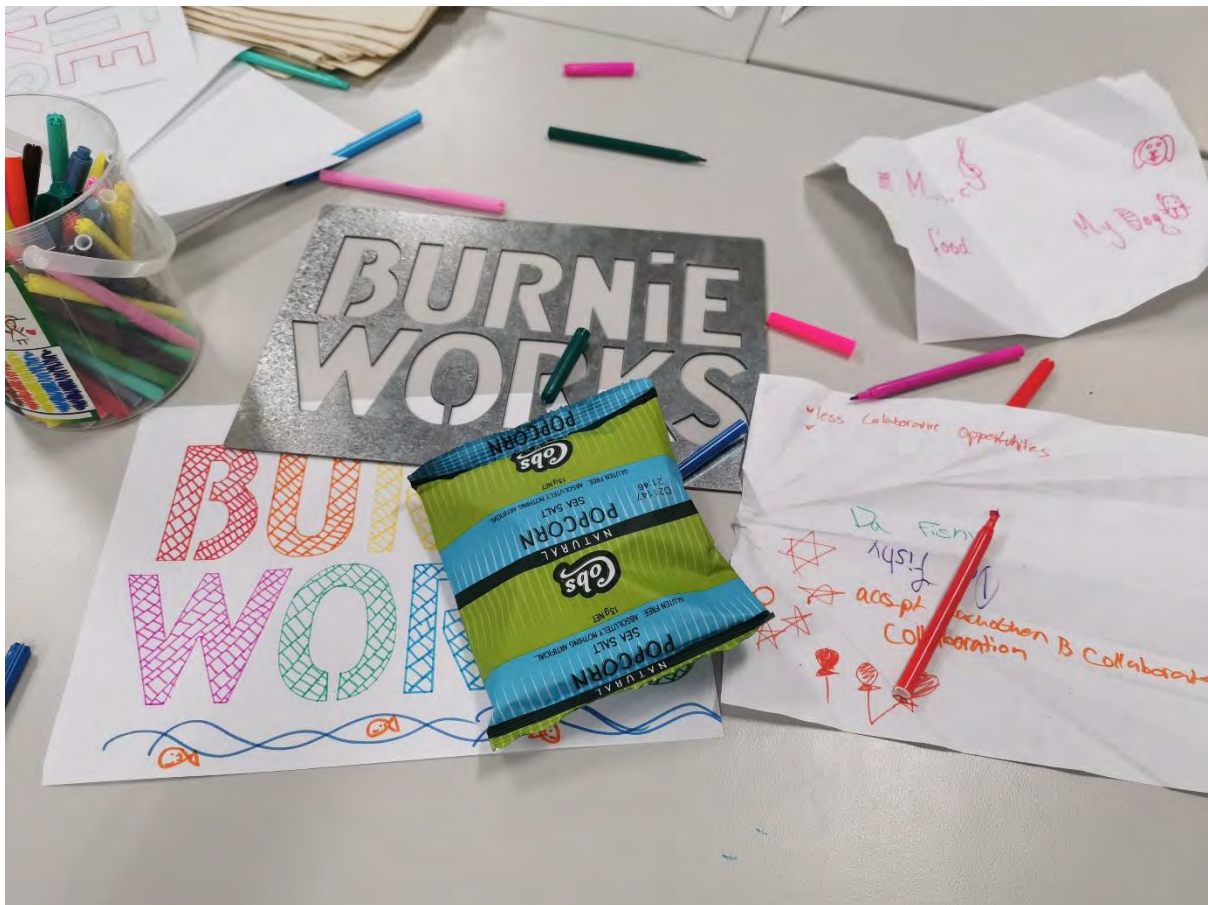
other organisations on the mainland have asked for the Look Who's Talking package recognising that the place-based innovative model is addressing issues found across all communities.

The Child and Family Centre is experimenting with the catalytic change framework with its other activities and programs. It's been shared through the Department of Education to the network of Tasmanian Child and Family Centres.

As with most collective change work, it's not only the product that creates the impact, but also the relationships, the processes and learning together. As Look Who's Talking shows, individual change contributes to wider community change; change in practice creates changes in the wider system.

"Burnie Works is having a huge impact on community life in Burnie. We have achieved greater outcomes in our work thanks to their background support.... I can see the strategies that BW has ready to make this happen and it's exciting to know that the momentum that has been built is being maintained."

Burnie Child and Family Centre Leader



IMPACT CASE STUDY

EVALUATION AND LEARNING ON THE GROUND

CHANGE IN THE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Movement building	The evaluation approach demonstrates the effective sharing of local expertise and meaningful collaboration. It is a precedent that is a lead indicator of potential whole of community change for creating ways to evaluate local innovative responses.
Community Aspiration	<i>Look Who's Talking</i> was led by a response to community need for support for parents to address the deficit areas identified through the Australian Early Development Census results for Burnie.
Strategic Learning and Shared Measurement	This case study demonstrates the impact of embedding an Understanding, Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (UMEL) framework within the design and implementation of an innovative project.
High leverage and system focus activities	Demonstrating the behaviour change for parents and others in their sphere's through participation in the program shows the impact of connecting two systems – attachment and parenting and development for educational readiness.
Authentic community engagement	The process was led by community practitioners and involved families.
Container for community change	Burnie Works role was supporting, providing expertise, facilitating co-design.

CHANGE IN THE SYSTEMS

Policies	The <i>Look Who's Talking</i> evaluation and the framework to evaluate parent change has been received by the Tasmanian Department of Education, a lead indicator for future changes in policies.
Practices	The evaluation process and report provided the Centre with evidence for changes in practice.
Resource Flows	The provision of expert UMEL resources resulted in a change in resource flows. The learnings and resources were shared with other similar teams outside Burnie.
Relationships and Connections	The co-design process built trust between the UMEL Officer and the Child and Family Centre team. A lead indicator is invitation to participate and lead further co-design processes.
Power Dynamics	The power was shared between the practitioners and the 'expert'. The pre and post participation interviews gave opportunity for parents to share their experiences.
Mental Models	The mindset shift generated through this process is that co-designed evaluations can create ongoing action on reflection and knowledge for adapting approaches as well as generate evidence for impact.

CHANGE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE BROADER POPULATION

Individuals	Thirteen families showed evidence of changes in understanding and parenting practices to support the brain development of their children.
Population	This is a lead indicator that in the longer term more families who have access to supported learning on attachment and its relationship to brain development will impact on educational readiness of children in Burnie.