

STORY HUBS

A FEASIBILITY STUDY



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STORY HUBS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, 100 Story Building was funded by Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to conduct a feasibility study on Story Hubs — creative, co-designed spaces for children and young people — in the City of Brimbank. This idea is backed by international research that shows providing arts-rich learning opportunities to students leads to improved academic attainment, increased confidence in learning and positive community involvement.

These opportunities are particularly important in Brimbank, an area where complex challenges and barriers

to educational attainment and wellbeing exist. In this feasibility study, we looked at local and international research, spoke to community members, consulted venues, reviewed the experience of 100 Story Building in Footscray and tested comparative models. The findings show that 100 Story Building, together with schools, families and community agencies, is in a unique position to deliver Story Hubs and make creative learning the norm for the children and young people in our community who need it the most.

Community learnings

We spoke to 153 children, young people, family members and staff representing 13 schools, council and not-for-profit organisations covering youth, health and education services. Community members:

- Identified three key positive outcomes of participation in creative activities: increased confidence, connection to community and engagement in formal learning
- Strongly supported more creative activities being available for children and young people
- Wanted easily-accessible and supportive creative environments
- Were interested in collaborative and community-led approaches

Community members also discussed the barriers to realising these opportunities including:

- Access to information and specialised venues
- Limited organisational capacity to deliver creative opportunities: skills, knowledge, staff
- Creative activities are not often prioritised despite clear benefits to learning

Research findings

What we heard from the community was echoed in local and international literature about the increasing equity gap in Australia's education system, the benefits of arts-based learning, specific initiatives and interventions in the City of Brimbank and best-practice approaches to lifting learning outcomes in areas of persistent disadvantage.

Opportunity sites

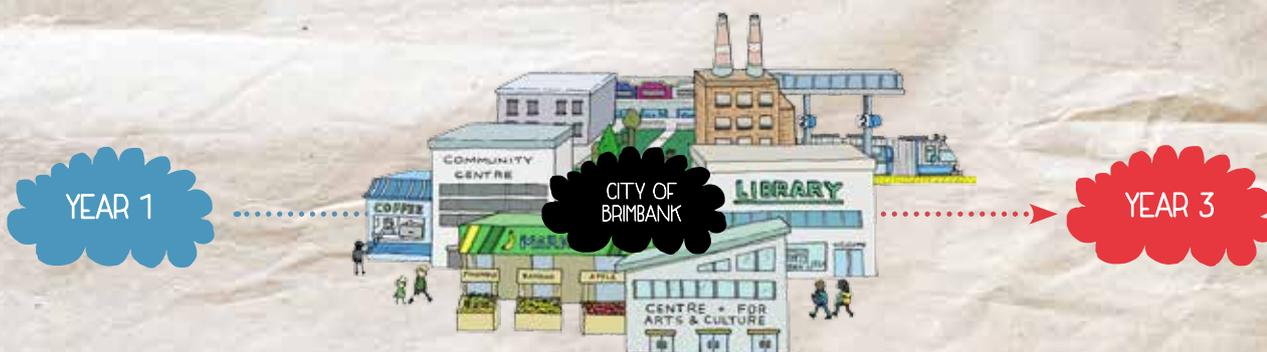
100 Story Building consulted with seven sites on the potential for a creative space for children and young people at their venue. We found strong support for the idea, but also practical challenges to be addressed.

Two sites, Holy Eucharist School in St Albans, and Westvale Community Centre in Kings Park, stood out as the most accessible and collaboration-ready sites in the area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this feasibility study, we propose a three-year pilot of Story Hubs: imaginative spaces for children and young people within already existing

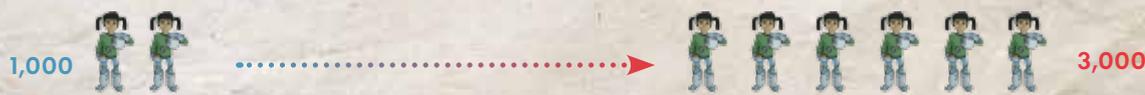
community facilities, surrounded by a targeted program of creative literacy activities and professional development.



NUMBER OF SITES



NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



NUMBER OF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



 = 500  = 2

To achieve the outcomes identified by the community and overcome practical challenges and barriers, we recommend Story Hubs operates under three core principles:

Leadership

- 100 Story Building operates as a lead organisation to: initiate activities, share experience and networks, foster energy and commitment, evaluate and report on outcomes
- Site partners operate as lead organisations in their Story Hubs to coordinate and deliver activities, share learnings and bring their communities along

Collaboration

- 2-3 organisational partners work in collaboration with 100 Story Building to deliver and sustain activities for at least 500 children and young people per site each year

- Partners work in collaboration with families and other community members to support and celebrate children and young people's work

Sustainability

- 100 Story Building works with community to build their creative skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver activities in multi-year projects
- Sites are carefully targeted and delivered to enable children and young people from areas of high community disadvantage access for the duration of their schooling
- Sites, activities and evaluation are co-designed using existing and accessible resources

Limitations

This feasibility study focused on grassroots community interest and was conducted only in English with people who were already connected to schools or services. Potential stakeholders in Story Hubs who were not consulted include decision-makers in Brimbank City Council and the Department of Education and Training, family members who do not speak English well and community members who are not currently engaged in services.

As a collaborative project, the specific roles and investment by partners outlined in this feasibility study are estimates only, subject to consultation and negotiation.

Funding

100 Story Building is seeking funding of \$936,442 over three years to lead and deliver Story Hubs, with the majority of these funds (\$675,442) to cover staffing costs.

We secured funding from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to deliver this feasibility study, and a multi-year grant from Perpetual Trustees to support further investigation of this project. These are preliminary costings only.

Next steps

To engage community in the idea and recruit pilot sites, we recommend the following:

February–April 2018:

- Develop multi-lingual marketing materials and relationships with local businesses
- Share feasibility findings with community members through partner meetings and community events
- Invite potential sites to an expression of interest and initial co-design process

May–June 2018:

- Secure investment in Story Hubs multi-year pilot
- Sign MOUs with two pilot sites

July 2018:

- Begin co-design and community consultation process with pilot sites

Story Hubs is an exciting opportunity to trial a place-based, best-practice approach to improving learning, and a successful pilot will provide a model for communities across Victoria to invest in community-led outcomes for their children and young people.

FEASIBILITY SCOPE

This feasibility study examines a place-based approach to student engagement in learning. It specifically looks at the viability of embedding creative approaches to learning in community settings, supported by significant data that shows providing students with an arts-rich education beyond the classroom helps them to achieve higher levels of literacy engagement and academic achievement.

This study extends on the experience and outcomes achieved by 100 Story Building in Footscray, as well as teacher professional development projects delivered across a number of local government areas: Maribyrong, Brimbank, Wyndham, Melton, Hobson's Bay and Dandenong.



Story Hubs
artist's impression