



ERCRS is a ministry of the Christian Brothers that provides free learning support, tuition and a range of recreational services to students of a disadvantaged or refugee background in the Brimbank area of Melbourne.

Learning Programs



Director's update

by Br. Frank Perkins

It is often the case for people whose regular lives are filled with the busyness of the many activities that consume their daily hours, that taking time out to reflect on what has been absorbing their time and energy, is often seen as a luxury that can be dispensed with. Yet is it often in the exercise of stepping aside briefly to review our rationale for what we consider important, that we can gain much wisdom. Such reflection is essential also for organisations such as ERCRS, as we try to respond to real needs in our society.

The first four months of 2015 have seen an increasing number of young people seeking learning support with their educational studies. ERCRS now operates six different after-school hours tutoring sessions per week, during term time, with an average attendance of 32 students per session. Some of these students enrol with us of their own volition, some are encouraged to attend by their parents, and some are referred to ERCRS by various other agencies. What is important is that all these students are treated with patience, encouragement and respect, so that the journey towards educational achievement is not made more arduous.

We remain extremely grateful for the wonderful commitment of all the volunteer tutors who give not only academic help with literacy and numeracy skills, or guidance in a particular school subject, such as history or physics, but who also through their relationship with the students, help to broaden their world view.

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MSAC Visit

ERCRS fun day out for Sunshine Harvester and St Albans children was a great success. December 2014, ERCRS sponsored 30 children from Sunshine Harvester School and 22 Children from St. Albans homework club on two different days excursion to MSAC. Sunshine Harvester students were waiting at the school in the morning well before we were due to leave, so eager were they to go on the excursion. With some volunteers from Loyola College and other community volunteers, we made the trek to the city, with lots of excited chatter on the way in as the students

absorbed the wonders of the bridges and construction happening all around the city. Once into MSAC, the fun really began with water-slides and the wave pool, diving pool and the giant floating obstacle course. Everyone was smiling from ear to ear. The kids were exhausted at the end of the day, so the trip back to school was much more subdued. Thanks to all the volunteers for helping to make it a really great day and a fitting end to our activity program for 2014.

Visit to Sovereign Hill

By Asunta

St. Patrick's College, Ballarat organised an excursion for St. Albans students (Years 3 and 4) to visit Sovereign Hill, Ballarat in December last year. 24 children 4 volunteers and 3 staff including myself had a chance to team up with the St. Patrick's College students and staff in making the day a successful experience. We had an opportunity to learn first hand on what the life style was like back in 1860s.

We also visited underground tunnels where mining used to take place and where the largest gold nugget was found.

All the children had a turn trying to sieve the sandy water attempting to find gold. They also played a bowling game and watched a drama where guns were fired, while re-enacting a scene from the 1860s.

It was a very exciting day full of fun and great activities. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity.

For many of this kids, it was their first chance to witness such a learning opportunity.

On behalf of ERCRS and myself, we are very thankful to St. Patrick's College, Ballarat for sponsoring this excursion and for all the support given.



Child Protection and Reporting Training

ERCRS has continued with sound procedures by complying with the requirements of the Edmund Rice Network by making sure tutors are trained in this vital area of child needs and care.

Despite the busy time period chosen when many of our tutors were settling back to work or still finalising their university timetable, tutors found time to attend training. Again the feedback on the benefits of this training to tutors, was great.

And we are again confident that our students will be well looked after by these experienced tutors, who not only share their knowledge and skills with them but also make sure they are okay.

ERCRS thanks Dr. Pauline Meemeduma for offering her time and skills to provide this vital training.



Winners are Grinners



We would like to extend a big **THANK YOU** to **Grill'd Highpoint** for supporting the Edmund Rice Refugee Education Support Program (Homework Club) at Sunshine Harvester Primary School through the Grill'd Local Matters initiative.

Local Matters is a community donation program whereby each Grill'd restaurant donates a total of \$500 per month to local community groups. The funds raised are shared among three community groups per month.

According to their website, Grill'd aims to “find and support the unsung heroes rather than the big groups

who always get the limelight. We hope you'll see some groups you never knew existed and develop a new-found appreciation for what goes on in your neck of the woods.”

<http://www.grilld.com.au/localmatters/>

The Refugee Education Support Program came first in the race to share the funds from Grill'd Highpoint in December 2014, and we were awarded a cheque to the value of \$300.

In the photo is Assistant Homework Club program co-ordinator Elizabeth Diacos with a staff member at Grill'd Highpoint, receiving the Award Certificate.

Easter Kids Camp

During the Easter School holidays between 18th and 21st April, ERCRS sent 21 children on a camp run by Edmund Rice Camps Victoria. All the children who attended the camp were from the St. Albans Homework Club sessions and most were from Year Six.

These camps are very important for children from our services who have few or zero opportunities to engage in fun activities like this during school holidays.

Below is feedback on the children that we got from some of the camp's leaders:

- *Grew in confidence over the week*
- *Persistent and willing to give everything a go*
- *Created many positive relationships*
- *Came out of his shell over the course of the week*
- *Overcame fear about water slide*
- *Went out of his comfort zone and became more confident as a result, particularly at the waterslide and skate rink*
- *Would be a good leader*
- *Enjoyed the waterslides*



ERCRS is very grateful to the Edmund Rice Foundation for providing funds needed to sponsor our children on this camp. Thanks to Edmund Rice Camps for making it all possible.

Swimming Lessons

During term one school holiday, ERCRS in partnership with Life Serving Victoria have again run swimming lessons for children and families from the St. Albans program.

As in previous opportunities, children were provided with one week of free lessons which trained them in swimming skills, and how to be safe around water.

This is becoming a regular partnership between Life Serving Victoria and ERCRS. Since it started last year, many children have received training in these important life skills. Many can now swim more confidently and are aware of water safety.



Year Six Graduation

ECRCS officially farewelled its Year Six students of 2014. A graduation ceremony was held at homework club St. Albans, at the end of term four 2014.

Each student was issued a graduation certificate and given a gift as well.

This was an important transition for the students, since most of them have been with the ECRCS homework program since Year 3 and a sound number will return in secondary school.

ECRCS is grateful to have witnessed their academic growth and in other social skills. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.



Christmas Presents for all.

Smiling faces were all there were at the end of term four last year, as each student from homework club received a Christmas present.

Christmas is a period of celebrate, giving and family. For many of these children, ECRCS is like a family to them. We are grateful that we have celebrated it together in this way.

We thank St. Bernard's and St. Columba's Colleges for providing gifts. It would have not been possible without them.



Staff Member Farewell

Jenny McBride had served as a volunteer staff member since early 2008 to the end of 2014.

During this time, she has made a significant contribution to the ECRCS ministry.

Jenny is a 'zero-error' type person in her approach of working with us, and this was driven by her passion to help the most vulnerable. She was a team player and good friend to all. She has been greatly missed by the team, parents, children and our partners.

ECRCS wishes Jenny all the best in whatever she does, and will maintain a close contact with her.



Homework Club program



St. Albans Homework club which runs on a Monday and Wednesday from 3:30-5pm at Errington Community Centre, is very popular for families and children who live in St. Albans and the surrounding areas.

This year we have started strongly again with two sessions becoming over booked. Currently, Homework Club is providing for over 75 students each week. To ensure each learning session operates safely and smoothly, we cap the number of students to a maximum of 40 students for each session.

For maximum gain, ERCRS aimed at providing support of 1:1 ratio of tutor to student. To achieve this, we are currently reviewing students needs, and making sure each student attends only one session per week instead of two. This helps reduce session overcrowding and also offers fair chances to all.

With endless support from our partner schools who provide about 80% of tutors from their senior group, these sessions are currently running smoothly.

However, due to the renovation of Errington Community Centre, these sessions will not run between 25th May and 8th June. After this we will move to portable halls located at Errington Reserve, for the duration of construction.

For information on the progress of this program, please follow us on Facebook or on our website. ERCRS thanks all volunteers, schools and parents for their support.



Tutoring Program

A Tutoring Program for secondary and tertiary students operates on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30-5:30pm at the Errington Centre and Saturdays from 10:30am-12:30pm at the Catholic Regional College Library in St Albans. Students are paired one-to-one with an experienced adult tutor who can assist them with their studies.

This program has been running very smoothly over some years now. However, we have recently witnessed a surge in the student number. Both sessions are now providing for over sixty students each week.

The Saturday session is very popular with tutors, running at almost 1:2 ratio.

Tuesday session will unfortunately not run between 25th May and 8th June due to Errington Centre renovations. The session will then continue from the portable halls for the duration of renovations.



ERCRS appreciates all support received to making these sessions successful.

Sunshine Harvester Learning Program



2014 finished on a high note with a day trip to MSAC followed a few weeks later by a wonderful Christmas party with sandwiches, dips and crackers, traditional Aussie party pies and sausage rolls, balloon art and face painting. Everyone had a great time.

2015 has begun with a huge influx of tutors from Loyola College, Mt St Joseph's Girls' College, Caroline Chisholm Catholic College and the recent addition of Braybrook College, as well as 10 adult volunteer tutors from the community. This has enabled us to expand the number of Primary-age students we are able to take into the Homework Club, enabling them to improve their English skills and better prepare for their academic futures.

We now have 35 Sunshine Harvester Primary students enrolled on a Wednesday afternoon and 28 students on a Thursday afternoon.



Brighter Tomorrow Boys Group (Mentoring Program starting 11th June)

We are very excited to announce that we are running a pilot mentoring program for young men in the Brimbank area. The program is called Brighter Tomorrow Boys Mentoring Group and will operate as a partnership between Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services, the Edmund Rice Community Partnerships, Catholic Regional College, St. Albans, and Brimbank Council.

The Group aims to provide young people a platform from which they are able to experience success and build self-esteem. This will increase their ability to positively engage with the education system as well as the wider social community. The Group will target young men in Years 8 who come from an English as a Second Language background, are disadvantaged and are at-risk of becoming disengaged from the education system.

The Group will initially run as a 4-week pilot program based around soccer clinics in order to attract participants. It is proposed that the group will meet on Thursday nights at Errington Community Centre from 3:30 to 5:30pm. Each session will consist of an introduction, a soccer-based activity and an additional activity based around team confidence and aptitude building. The young men involved will be encouraged to suggest additional activities they are interested in.

We are currently looking for volunteer mentors who will provide one to one mentoring support to this group of potential future leaders.



Thank you...

To the Christian Brothers' Oceania Province and the ERCRS Board for their leadership and unwavering support in all areas of our work.

To the Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA), St. Patrick's College Ballarat, Minter Ellison Lawyers, Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and the Stan Willis Trust, for their committed financial support of programs in our ministry.

To the volunteers, students and families that make up the ERCRS community, who are making the connections, engaging in the learning and building friendships on the ground, to make it all possible.

To our students and tutor-providing schools for their ongoing commitment, passion and support.

We would also like to thank the staff at Edmund Rice Camps Victoria, Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, the Brimbank City Council, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), and Catholic Regional College St Albans, for their ongoing support.

Volunteer Tutors wanted

- We are currently looking for enthusiastic, patient and committed individuals to provide one-on-one homework support & tutoring to primary and secondary students of a disadvantaged or refugee background. Our volunteer tutors come from all walks of life to assist young people with improving their literacy, numeracy and general study skills.
- **Primary Homework Club;**
- Mondays and Wednesdays at the Errington Community Centre, Princess St, St Albans- 3:15-5:15pm. Wednesdays & Thursdays 3:15-5:00pm at Sunshine Harvester Primary School, Sunshine.
- **Secondary Tutoring;**
- Tuesdays at the Errington Community Centre, Hall 2, St. Albans. 3:30-5:30pm or Saturday morning at the Catholic Regional College (St Albans) library, Cnr Theodore and Winifred Sts. 10:30am to 12:30pm

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Australian Communities Foundation



On behalf of the Stan Willis Trust

