



Emerge and Kingston City Council

Emerge Women and Children's Support Network has enjoyed a strong partnership with Kingston City Council for the past decade.

Established in the Kingston Municipality in 1975, EmERGE is a local/state community based support network for women and children impacted by family violence. The organisation provides crisis accommodation and outreach support combined with reputable therapy programs for women and children. All programs are co-ordinated by qualified therapists, counsellors, case managers and teachers.

Emerge is currently preparing for the build of a new refuge centre within the Kingston Municipality.

Partnership overview

Kingston City Council has been a long-standing financial supporter of EmERGE, primarily through its grants program.

Services supported through grants include:

- Financial counselling
- Little Sparkz holiday program for primary aged children
- Art therapy for mothers and children
- Enhancing safety and security for women and children experiencing violence

These services are essential for highly vulnerable women and children. The financial support enables EmERGE to provide intensive therapy and intervention programs, all of which aim to empower women to take steps towards a new life, to build closer bonds with their children, and to ensure children's needs are taken care of effectively.

Forging stronger links

Emerge and Kingston City Council are embarking on a new partnership in 2018, and one which has potential to break new ground in Victoria in supporting children about to start kindergarten or primary school.

Little Sparkz to Bright Minds builds on a successful pilot program run by EmERGE for infants to 36 months which highlighted the need for something similar for four to seven-year-old children.

The program will be run by therapists and child case workers who are experienced in addressing psychological problems that many traumatised children face. For instance, some children may speak slowly or not at all, while some cannot comprehend what is being said, read or conveyed. These children often feel hopeless and lack initiative and confidence.

What sets the program apart is the use of robots that have been programmed with data relevant to each individual child's culture and learning ability. The robots will 'work' alongside therapists and teachers to keep children occupied while one-one-one counselling occurs. The robots have been developed by Professor Rhajiv Khosla, Director of the Research Centre for Computers, Communication and Social Innovation at La Trobe University.

The program will be available to children from refuges, foster care and to children identified by Maternal Child Health Centres, Child Care Centres and schools.

This early intervention program aligns and links with Kingston City Council's Family Violence strategy and the Victorian Government's Family Safety Victoria outcomes. It is hoped that this pilot program will be rolled out to other regions in the next two years.