

Vươn lên *Facilitating friendship, belonging and achievement for young Vietnamese people*



About Vươn lên

The Vietnamese Families with Special Needs Group (VFSNG) in collaboration with Extended Families Australia will soon be launching an innovative community inclusion pilot program for young autistic people of Vietnamese background who are experiencing significant barriers to meaningful community participation.

The *Vươn lên* (*To Rise* in Vietnamese) program will address the isolation and lack of independence experienced by young people and families, assisting them in overcoming the disconnection felt that limits social, vocational and community participation.

The pilot, funded under NDIS (Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program) will offer participants and their families access to a weekly group support program to:

- Deepen understanding of inclusion barriers and how to overcome them
- Build social and pre-vocational skills
- Facilitate community participation opportunities linked to individual interests and strengths
- Develop individual resilience, confidence and the motivation to participate
- Increase knowledge about available community inclusion supports
- Establish a model of ongoing peer support

Who is eligible to take part in Vươn lên?

The pilot program will be made available to 8 young people aged 17-25 years of age (and their families) who:

- Have been diagnosed with Autism
- Reside in the Western Metro Region of Melbourne
- Are of Vietnamese background
- May be (or hope to be) involved in a community activity; in studies, volunteering or paid employment but are experiencing difficulties connecting socially and fulfilling their personal goals to participate more fully in the community and/or workplace
- Have been unable to successfully access available inclusion supports in overcoming barriers to participation

Vươn lên Program Details

The program will be launched in October 2019 with weekly group support meetings commencing **mid-January 2020**.

Program facilitators will meet individually with participants and families in November and December 2019 to complete in-home assessments that will identify individual interests, strengths, inclusion barriers experienced, support needs and to develop tailored community inclusion support plans.

Group meetings for participants will run in Brimbank (most likely at Brimbank Learning Futures in Sunshine) over a **15-week period on Tuesdays 4.30pm to 8pm**.

Each group meeting will be facilitated by two project workers (one bilingual) with a focus on improving social connection and strengthening key life skills. The program will offer a combination of in-house activities,

incursions and excursions, formal and informal learning opportunities, mentoring and peer support, group and individual activities that will foster greater community connection.

A short series of bilingual info-workshops will also be offered to the families of group participants as part of the pilot program. The workshops will be interactive and will provide:

- Information about inclusion barriers and practical advice on how to help children overcome barriers
- Information about key inclusion supports and an opportunity to meet local inclusion support providers
- Opportunities to hear from other Vietnamese families who will share their stories and steps taken towards overcoming inclusion barriers
- Guidance in developing a peer support network

Vườn lên Program Costs

There are no fees for participants and families who take part in the pilot. A small financial contribution towards some of the activities that participants elect to undertake may be needed - information about this will be discussed with the group in advance.

Some participants may require specialist assistance to participate fully in the group and achieve individual community participation goals. In this situation, advice will be given in how to access NDIS support to meet this need.

Participating in Future Vườn lên Programs

As the program will initially run as a pilot with only a small number of places available - an expressions of interest register will be developed for individuals and families who may be interested in participating in future programs that we anticipate developing based upon learning outcomes gained from implementing the pilot

An application for ongoing funding will be made by the project partners to the ILC in its current 2020-21 Individual Capacity Building Grant Round. Dependent upon funding, it is anticipated that second phase programs will be offered more widely across the metropolitan region of Melbourne addressing community inclusion support needs of isolated Vietnamese families living with disability.

Who to contact if you are interested in referring someone to the pilot or registering for future programs

For further information, please fill in the attached **Expression of Interest Form** or contact:

- Julia Klieber (Extended Families Australia Project Manager – julia@extendedfamilies.org.au 0481 955 551) or
- Nga Do (Extended Families Australia – Vietnamese Community Coordinator and VFSNG Parent Group Facilitator nga@extendedfamilies.org.au 0433 103 401).

About the Project Partners

The **Vietnamese Families with Special Needs** is a parent led Incorporated Association that has been providing vital support and services to the Vietnamese Community for 15 years. The group, based in the Western Region, aims to enhance the mental and social wellbeing of Vietnamese families who have children with a disability and help them to overcome barriers for community participation. The VFSNG seeks to build a positive, strong and supportive community and provides weekly parent support and information sessions, an annual family camp and other events / activities for children and young people with a disability that build skills, connection, cultural understanding and wellbeing.

Extended Families Australia is a not-for-profit community organisation that supports children and young people 0-30 living with disability and their families in Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula to build friendships and create meaningful connections within the community. Extended Families offers a wide range of programs that aim to facilitate positive connections within the community, seek to widen social networks, promote inclusion, empower individuals and strengthen the bonds people have within their communities.