‘A performing arts program for infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers & parents/carers’
What is special about Imagination Magic;

- uses the Performing Arts as a health strategy
- fosters healthy child development
- promotes positive parent/child interaction through play and imagination
- focus is on the earliest years of life

It is recognised that children begin learning at birth (prenatal) and during their earliest years.

; From Neurons to Neighbourhoods: The science of Early Childhood Development (2000)
Moorabool Shire is a peri-urban Shire located on the fringe of Metropolitan Melbourne

- Covering a geographic region of 2112 square km’s
- Population 26,800
- 2000 children under school age
- 1/3 population 0 – 19 years
- SIEFA score 1017 Vic 1015
- Jesuit Social Services Townships of significant disadvantage
Moorabool Shire Council
CHALLENGES

Limited infrastructure

• Community Buildings and facilities meager
• Transport system poor = high reliance on private cars
• Predominance of visiting professionals
• Low rate base
  • low employment opportunities
  • limited industries
Mental Disorders, is the highest burden of disease in 0 – 14 years

- Depression 13.1 %
- Attention Deficit disorder 12.1%

Source Department of Human Services Burden of Disease 1996
Child Wellbeing and Disadvantage

- Preschool participation rate is 6% lower than state average.
- MCH Key Health Assessments are mostly below the Regional and State average.
- Child Protection Notification rate 10.9%
  - Second highest rate in the Grampians
  - 36% of the notifications related to children under 5 years

Wellbeing & Adult Disadvantage

- Adult Depression
  - High prevalence of mental health disorder noted as a significant Moorabool Health issue.*
- 61.5% of residents have no formal education qualifications
HEALTH & WELLBEING STATUS

Social Health Indicators

- High Commuter Population (60%)
  - 1,200 secondary students leave the Shire for schooling.

- Families move into rural community for a lifestyle
  - Isolated from family and friends
  - Reduced social support structure
Goals of Imagination Magic

- Enhance Social and Emotional development
- Improve Interaction between children and parents (mental wellbeing)
- Increase Social Connection
Why Performing Arts?

- Play, Stimulation, Fun, Joy
- Normalizing
- Welcoming to the Community

In 1999, Vic Health, the Victorian health promotion foundation, assisted the development of community arts programs which aimed to improve mental and health and wellbeing by focusing on reducing social isolation, valuing diversity and increasing economic participation. McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras (2002) reviewed literature related to these programs and while evidence lacked rigour in their methodologies, again anecdotally demonstrated the positive outcomes of such approaches. Community arts programs continue to flourish with more recent examples being the Festival for healthy living developed by the Royal Children’s Hospital Mental health Service (Royal Children’s Hospital Mental health Service 2006) Imagination Magic provides another example of community arts but it offers a different, unique approach.
How?

- Monthly Performing Arts Program
- Two Venues, Ballan and Bacchus Marsh
- Two 45 minute sessions for each venue
- Each month Artist / Program is different
  - Artists are specifically chosen for their capacity to engage across the age range and to stimulate the imagination
Marketing

- Posters and pamphlets
- Word of mouth
- M&CHN invitation and promotion
- Local newsletter/ Moorabool for Mother’s
- Local Newspaper Articles/Media Releases
Process

• Registration via customer service
  • Phone or email
• Tickets are posted out to families
• Sessions are limited to 30 children
  • To ensure an intimate experience
• Entry is ticket & gold coin donation
  • Donation is not essential, but is encouraged
Preparation

• Artist, venue booked in advance
  • Annual Programme Plan
• Pre-organised badges
• Room set up
  • Colourful cushions and music
  • Limited chairs for when needed (pregnant or feeding mothers)
  • Balloons/ Badges
  • Posters and Community Brochures
On the day

- Families arrive and are welcomed by name
- Tickets provide name of child and adult
- Children enjoy putting their donation into the ‘piggy bank’
- Invited to settle into the circle
- Introduction of artist, inviting the children to give a Moorabool Imagination Magic welcome.
Research Outcomes

Social Connection

• 64% like living in Moorabool because of Imagination Magic
• Almost 50% are happier
• 27% parents had made new friends
• 38% met new people

*An evaluation of Imagination Magic Program Report
Researched and written by Merilyn Spratling December 2006 ©
Research Outcomes

Child development and family interactions

- 63% have more fun with children
- Close to 50% play more with their children

*An evaluation of Imagination Magic Program Report
Researched and written by Merilyn Spratling December 2006 ©
• Teaching through modelling, modelling by other parents as well as staff.

• Promotion of other Health and family activities.

• Observation of family interaction over a period of time in a non clinical venue;
  • Provides insights to family attachment and interaction.
  • Allowing a focus to draw on during the next clinical consultation.

Indirect Benefits
“Imagination Magic is diverse and introduces the arts in a simple way to young children. The presenters are very talented and the Shire of Moorabool is lucky to have such a fabulous program”

(Moorabool mother of a 1 and 2 year old)