



### “Local collaboration was vital to our success”: Mildura’s INFANT implementation drives regional healthy lifestyles

#### INFANT snapshot: Mildura

- LGA location: Regional
- Births per year: more than 700 (as of 2020)
- INFANT model: Lead organisation – Community Health; Session facilitators – Public Health Nutritionists (Health Promotion)
- INFANT funding model: uses Integrated Health Promotion funding for Public Health Nutritionists to facilitate the four INFANT sessions

***Mildura has taken a cross-collaborative approach to implementing INFANT with support from experts in dietetics, health promotion and maternal and child health.***

As one of the first INFANT Feeding, Active play and NuTrition (INFANT) sites, Mildura’s implementation is increasing regional families’ physical activity and nutrition support and skills. This program hopes to support families and their babies’ lifelong health. Led by Sunraysia Community Health Services, INFANT was initially implemented as part of the 2012-2016 Healthy Together Mildura initiative.

In 2012, Mildura began implementing INFANT to boost support for families in Victoria’s regional “Food Bowl” as part of the Healthy Together Victoria initiative. Since then the Sunraysia Community Health Services team worked in partnership in the region to sustain INFANT.

Now, INFANT’s ongoing implementation continues to build families’ confidence and skills to improve children’s healthy eating and physical activity behaviours. These behaviours underpin healthy growth and development in childhood and importantly will promote health across the whole of life.

#### Implementing INFANT in Victoria’s regional “Food Bowl”

Over 700 babies are born in Mildura each year. Research shows health trajectories for our whole lives are established in the first 1000 days. As such, Mildura is positioned to promote healthy behaviours from baby’s start of life with a significant ongoing impact.

At Mildura’s Family and Child Hub, INFANT is being run by Public Health Nutritionists over four face-to-face sessions for local families, filling a pre-identified gap in child nutrition and active play support in the community. Working together, Mildura Rural City Council and Sunraysia Community Health Services have established grassroots support for implementation of INFANT. “All partners can see the benefits in supporting INFANT as core business, whether they’re involved in referral, scheduling, or delivery of content,” said Mildura’s INFANT team.

The roles in implementing INFANT include:



## Case Study – Mildura

- Sunraysia Community Health Services' health promotion team who coordinate, deliver and evaluate the program. INFANT sessions are implemented by trained dietitians.
- Mildura Rural City Council's Maternal and Child Health nurses who engage in recruitment from existing and non-existing families.
- Collaboratively, the health promotion and maternal child health experts undertake administration (such as sending session registrations).

INFANT provides a key opportunity for New Parent groups to continue to meet, strengthen social connections and receive ongoing support.

“Local collaboration was vital to our success,” said Mildura’s INFANT team. Getting involved with INFANT, local stakeholders were able to integrate INFANT into community health services with sustainability at the forefront. In addition, having a team of Maternal and Child Health experts inviting parents to INFANT sessions has been highly successful. “INFANT recruitment is excellent, with the support of the MCH team, who have already developed a strong rapport with parents.”

### Embedding INFANT into LGA services

Sunraysia Community Health Services provides a notable example of embedding research into practice. Mildura’s success in embedding INFANT is built on the LGA’s integrated planning and reporting systems catalysed by Healthy Together. In Mildura, the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan is the “Community Health and Wellbeing Plan” and leverages the partnerships established during Healthy Together and includes shared actions from a range of organisations.

“This integration means that the strategies and actions undertaken by the Integrated Health Promotion Team are all embedded in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan,” said Mildura’s INFANT team. This intertwines with community strategic plans, local government and research for the best early health outcomes possible.

### Funding with impact

As a Healthy Together site, Mildura’s INFANT was in part funded through Healthy Together, but then was also aligned with existing Integrated Health Promotion (IHP) funding that the Community Health Service received. This alignment saw the creation of one team (Healthy Together Community Health Service) with population reach. Once Healthy Together Mildura funding ceased, INFANT continued to be delivered by Sunraysia Community Health Services dietitians using the same state government IHP funding as used in the trial. Sunraysia Community Health Services continued to provide administrative support for the program.

The Mildura Community Health and Wellbeing plan is the common strategic plan and reporting mechanism for the LGA, enabling clear alignment of Community Health Service funding (including IHP) and local government requirements under the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Act.

### INFANT empowers families



## Case Study – Mildura

Mildura’s INFANT provided an empowering approach to early childhood health services. In practical terms, Mildura has enabled families to access INFANT’s expert-led, evidence-based resources to support their journey with their new baby.

“Many parents worry about being left behind. For instance, some believe their baby might not be getting enough nutrients from milk alone after four months. INFANT’s evidence-based recommendations gave them [parents] such reassurance and relief,” said a Mildura INFANT facilitator.

From humble beginnings to current implementation, Mildura is paving the way for regional INFANT implementation. The work that Mildura is leading has already helped many families and with its sustainable implementation in the local health services, will continue to help many more into the future.

### Key takeaways

- Working together, Mildura Rural City Council, Maternal and Child Health Services and Sunraysia Community Health Services have established grassroots support for the implementation of INFANT.
- INFANT is included in the local Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan to support sustained implementation across the region.
- Mildura’s INFANT provides an empowering approach to early childhood health services, allowing Maternal and Child health experts to extend families’ support for healthy eating and active play.

Want to implement INFANT in your LGA? Start [here](#).

### Get in touch with Mildura

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