



**22 May 2008**

**Baby basics for new dads**

New dads in Kensington are benefiting together from a program that helps their relationships grow with their babies, partners and community.

The New Dads group is being run by Relationships Australia (Victoria) in partnership with the City of Melbourne Maternal and Child Health Centre in Kensington.

Program coordinator, Scott Hall, from RAV's Sunshine office, said the initiative had attracted strong numbers and had been very well received by families.

He said that new dads were able to learn practical skills through sharing experiences and information with others guys in the group. Creating connections between new mum and dads allows them to share what is important to them.

The first two weeks of the program involved mum, dad and baby, and covered changing roles, the trials and tribulations of arriving home with a new baby, and CPR/first aid.

"Parents were battling sleep deprivation and milk stained clothes to take on vital information and life saving strategies for their new little ones. In between, dads shared experiences of going back to work, singing songs and rhymes long thought forgotten at 2am, until baby eventually settles," Scott said.

"Week 3 sees the dads bring the babies along to learn about baby massage and bathing. Sometimes this is the first time the dads have taken the baby out independently. It is a win all round because mum gets some respite too"

Scott said the weeks 4 and 5 covered play and learning, settling techniques like music, and where to access books and resources in the local community.

Many dads continue to meet and network, forming strong links so important in new communities. Dads and kids playgroups grow and change with families; some were now running in North Melbourne, Yarraville, Williamstown, Hoppers Crossing and Caroline Springs.

"The dads usually keep meeting at the community centre, local café or at someone's place to watch their little ones grow and learn, sometimes, sharing a spare ticket to next week's game with a new mate. Stronger communities grow when dads are 'on board'. New friendships and supports networks like babysitting clubs are created which benefit the whole community."

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