

From Ukraine to the Northern Beaches



Australia has welcomed refugees from war-torn Ukraine. One family from the Ukraine is staying with extended family on the Northern Beaches. After enrolling in a school on the Northern Beaches, the family were supported by the school to enrol their child in the onsite after school care program.

All the educators were excited about this child joining them, but they knew they would need assistance to include him as they had limited knowledge about his experiences and the language he spoke. The service contacted their Inclusion Professional who told them about the Innovative Solutions Support funding stream. The Inclusion Professional helped the educators to create a project proposal for a Ukrainian bilingual worker to increase their understanding of Ukrainian culture and teach keywords in Russian. The funding application was approved.

The bilingual worker has been attending the service one afternoon a week and is a valuable resource for everyone. Some of the practices being embedded by educators through this project include:

- ▶ Weekly language sessions led by the child with support from the bilingual worker where the child teaches his friends and educators key words in Russian;

- ▶ Afternoon teas with Ukrainian treats, such as Ukrainian dumplings which all the children enjoy;
- ▶ Educators downloading and using the Google Translate App to support conversations; and
- ▶ Children creating visuals to wear on a lanyard to support communication between peers.

The educators and the child's peers played a significant role in making inclusion a success from the start. Planning for inclusion focused on educators asking children what emotions someone might be feeling about moving to a new country and what they could do to create a welcoming space. The children made welcome cards, with photos of themselves and descriptions of what they like to do.

When the children heard about the circumstances in Ukraine, they decided it would not be appropriate to continue playing their war games. Instead, they invented a new version of the game, changing the name to 'City versus Jungle' using different props.

This experience has highlighted for educators the ability of children to be perceptive of their peers and adapt their interactions and play to be inclusive. With the support of the bilingual worker, educators and all children have learnt about the Ukrainian culture and developed ways to effectively communicate and play together.