

It's
your
life

DAYS OUT FOR dads

By Jade Glen

MOTHERS' groups are a long-established key support in early parenting - but very little exists to help dads similarly transition in to parenthood.

Healesville Dads Group, established in June 2016, is helping fill that gap by getting dads and their young children together every month to play, make new friends and share their experiences.

Local dad Graeme started the group with support of Dads Group Inc, a group which aims to establish dads' groups in council areas across Victoria.

The group started with three first-time dads whose partners had met through a Maternal and Child Health run mother's group.

It has now expanded to include 20 dads - a diverse range of men who are united by their babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

"The age of dads ranges from mid-twenties, through to mid-forties. We've even had a dad in his sixties who is involved in foster care," Graeme said.

"There is a real mix of dads. Most are full-time or part-time workers, and some are (stay-at-home parents) one or more days a week."

The group meets monthly, with free coffee and hot drinks thanks to the support of its sponsor Beechworth Bakery, Healesville.

"These gatherings are about spending time with our children at a park, playing on the playground, and catching up with other dads in a similar life stage. Also it's about giving mums a break!

"The dads' group exists for us to share our experiences, make new friends and promote healthier, happier family lives.

"Why should mums be the only ones who get to catch up with others over a coffee in the park?"

"We've also had one 'dads only' event, which was a free brewery tour and tasting at a local brewery in Healesville, run by two dads.

"Needless to say the brewery night was highly enjoyed by the dads!"

Graeme said Healesville Dads Group was about connecting men with other men in a similar life stage.

"Having a child is a big life transition and, along with the joys and rewards, it is important to acknowledge that it can lead to social isolation and impact dads' mental health.

"Whilst we don't readily admit it, dads need to, and enjoy, sharing their experiences with other dads.

"When dads become more engaged with their local community, friends, children, partners and families, it all leads to better and more fulfilling lives."

For more information, search Healesville Dads Group - DGI on Facebook or visit www.dadsgroup.org.

Tom and Natalie get up close to the chooks.



Needless to say the brewery night was highly enjoyed by the dads!

Cindy McLeish MP
State Member for Eildon

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Enjoying a day out with dad.
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