

A life lived with friendship is a  
life fully lived.



Vươn lên Peer Support  
Program  
**EXTENDED FAMILIES**





Extended Families Australia is a non-for-profit organisation that supports children and young people with a disability aged 0-30 in Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula to build friendships and connect with their community.

Our VL peer support program is carried out in with collaborative partner Vietnamese Families with Special Needs. The VSFN is a non-profit organisation supporting Vietnamese people with a disability and their families.

The VL program facilitates fortnightly peer support groups for Vietnamese youth with autism in the Western and Southern regions of Melbourne. The VL program supports young people to connect with each other, learn new skills and build confidence through group activities and community engagement. With a strong focus on individual goal plans the VL program offers group-based opportunities to build young people's life skills, physical and mental health awareness and strategies, pre-vocational skills, develop community interests, and enrich social connection.



# How do Vuon lên peer support groups work?

Vuon lên (**which** means To Rise in Vietnamese!) addresses the isolation and lack of independence experienced by young people and families, assisting them in overcoming the disconnection felt that limits social, vocational and community participation. The program offers fortnightly structured small group friendship meet ups for young people with Autism (ages 15-18 and 19-24 years) with the aim of supporting participants to improve their social connection, build on their interests and strengths, develop key life skills to boost confidence and motivation, and facilitate community and vocational inclusion.

The program runs three groups in the western region in **Sunshine** (one teen group and two young adult groups). Each group has a capacity of ten participants and run in person fortnightly for 2 -3 hours.

Each week we cover a **fun new topic of interest**. The sessions are planned in accordance with individual goal plans, which are reviewed and assessed throughout the program. Every 1-2 months the group will participate in an excursion with a local activity provider with the aim of **connecting individuals to community life and services**. The participant's dinner is provided by Extended Families (except when on community excursions).

Each group is run by two experienced Extended Families' Facilitators who are experienced in working with children and youth with disabilities. All staff have relevant NDIS checks and have completed training with Extended Families.

The program, funded under NDIS (Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program) focuses on:

- Deepening understanding of inclusion barriers and how to overcome them
- Building social and pre-vocational skills
- Facilitating community participation opportunities linked to individual interests and strengths
- Developing individual resilience, confidence, and the motivation to participate
- Increasing knowledge about available community inclusion supports

**Parent Peer Support** - The program also provides peer support for the parents of VL participants, supporting them in their parenting role and assisting them in finding solutions to overcome inclusion barriers faced by their children. Parent meetings take place every second month.



“The VL program has helped to build my confidence and make new friends”

VL participant in the Southern peer support group

“I see that since his participation in the program, he has improved a lot. It has brought him joy.”  
Parent of VL participant in the Western peer support group.



# WE Currently RUN 3 VL Autism GROUPS

1. VL Sunshine – Teens Group 13-17 years of age; Tuesday evenings fortnightly

2. VL Sunshine – Young Adults Group 19-24 years of age; Monday evenings fortnightly

3. VL Sunshine – Extra Supports Adults Group 17-24 years of age; fortnightly Tuesday evenings and fortnightly Saturdays

Under our current funding, existing groups will run through to April-2024 and we anticipate expanding and extending the program this time.



## Who is eligible for the Vuon lên Program?

As places are limited in each VL group, we consider the following points when determining a young person's eligibility to participate in the program:

- Age & Vietnamese cultural background
- Lived experience of Autism
- Level of social isolation experienced
- Goals of participation
- Level of individual support needs to take part
- Ability to attend meetings regularly
- Area in which young person lives

# How to participate in VL Peer Groups

1.

Families are asked to pre-register in Vuon lên by contacting:

- Nghi Trinh - Vuon lên Program Coordinator (Vietnamese and English speaking)  
email: [Nghi.trinh@extendedfamilies.org.au](mailto:Nghi.trinh@extendedfamilies.org.au)  
Phone: 0416 173 484

2.

Once we have had a chat to you about the program, we will send you an enrolment form. If you need help with completing this form, one of our Group Facilitators can help you in Vietnamese or English.

3.

The enrolment form information you provide will enable us to check that your child is suitable and feel comfortable in a particular VL Group. If so, we will meet with you and your child to gain more details about their interests, support needs and goals of participation in VL!

**As we currently operate with a government grant, there are generally no costs to participating in the Vuon lên program.**



# SAFETY

All VL staff are fully trained in disability inclusion support and meet mandatory NDIS screening requirements. External activity presenters we collaborate with, work alongside our staff and have undertaken required safety checks relevant to working with children. Each participant enrolled in the VL program is provided with an assessment so that everyone's individual abilities and support needs are considered in program design.

All our events are compliant with government Covid-19 guidelines.

## Contact Us

Nghi Trinh (Vietnamese and English Speaking)  
Vuon lên Program Coordinator (**ALL GROUPS**)  
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*Extended Families Australia is a not-for-profit registered disability service provider and a child safe organisation.*

**Extended Families**

*Established in 1978 as the Foster Grandparents Scheme.*