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EARLY YEARS PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Held on 21 January 2021 at 10:00am, online – Microsoft Teams

Present:

Cr A Vandenberg, Councillor
 C Reich, City of Melton
 D Clarke, Community Member
 V Sharma, Community Member
 A Brand, Community Member
 M Costa, Melton West Primary School
 R Wilkinson, Catholic Education Melbourne
 D Wright, Victorian Inclusion Agency
 M Boyd, Brotherhood of St Laurence
 G Callander, Djerriwarrh Health Services
 J Weber, Caroline Chisholm Society
 C Owens, Djerriwarrh Health Services
 E White, City of Melton (PROXY – S Prestney)
 B Ball, City of Melton
 D Wilson, Department of Education and Training
 R Begley, Department of Health and Human Services
 C Fisher, Tweddle Child & Family Health Service
 Alysha Holmes, Tweddle Child & Family Health Service
 N Hoskin, VACCA
 B Maplestone, Foundation House
 K Curson, City of Melton
 L Xerri, City of Melton – (minute taker)

Chairperson: G Callander, Djerriwarrh Health Services

1. Welcome

G Callander welcomed all attendees to the meeting and proceeded with the Acknowledgment of Country. *'Melton City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the people of the Kulin Nations, and pays respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging'*.

2. Apologies

Cr M Deeming, Councillor
 H Schiele, Independent Schools Victoria
 S O'Kelly, BPA Children's Services
 H Zwick, VICSEG New Futures
 S Prestney, City of Melton
 A Connor Simon, VACCA
 N Smith, Early Childhood Management Services

3. Declaration of interests and/or conflict of interests

Nil.

4. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting**Motion**

J Weber / D Wright

That the Committee adopt the minutes of the Early Years Partnership Committee Meeting held on 10 December 2020.

5. Business Arising

One outstanding action from previous meeting, service gaps for 0-3 year olds. Given the timing of the last meeting a working group meeting was not possible, it has been added on today's meeting agenda for further discussion.

K Curson reminded the Committee that seven positions that are nearing the end of their term, they are;

- Delia Clarke – Community Representative
- Helen Schiele, Independent Schools Victoria – Independent Schools
- Sarah O'Kelly, BPA Children Services – Early Education and Care
- Genevieve Callander, Djerriwarrh Health – Health
- Jennifer Weber, Caroline Chisholm Society - Family Support
- Charry Owens, Djerriwarrh Health – A & TSI representative
- Suzie Prestney, Melton City Council – Libraries

and that another four positions are currently vacant;

- Government Primary School position
- Drug and Alcohol sector position
- Health Sector position
- new position for Early Intervention and Disability

K Curson thanked all these members for their active participation in the Committee, K Curson welcomed members to continue to participate while the nominations process is undertaken and welcomed them to re-nominate if interested and extended this invitation to associate members of the committee. A call for nominations will be sent to local organisations and through networks in February for all 11 positions.

6. General Business**6.1 Getting to know you – breakout rooms introductions**

K Curson provided an opportunity for committee members to introduce themselves using breakout rooms. Members were to provide an 'elevator pitch' about themselves and an overview of their role and what they were planning to achieve this year.



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6.2 3 year old funded kindergarten planning update

Brendan Ball, Manager Families and Children, Melton City Council

B Ball acknowledged the kindergarten providers for their continuous work with the three year old kindergarten planning.

Council's new Kindergarten Central Enrolment policy is in place ready for the intake of three year old kindergarten for 2022. This policy is aligned with the Central Registration Enrolment Scheme (CRES).

New Kindergarten Engagement Officer will be commencing on 28 January. Their role will be to identify children who are disconnected or not engaged within kindergarten and support them to re-engage.

Council has been working with kindergarten providers to allocate additional rooms to support extra sessions needed with the increased demand from the free funded 3 and 4 year old kindergarten.

Action

Karen to invite the Kindergarten Engagement Officer to the next meeting.

6.3 Best Start update

Karen Curson, Coordinator Early Years Partnerships, Melton City Council

The Best Start Annual Report was sent to the members as an attachment with agenda for today. As the Committee is the governing body of the Best Start Program, K Curson explained she was seeking endorsement of this report before submitting to the Department of Education and Training. K Curson asked the Committee if there was any feedback for the report, none was reported.

Motion

The Committee endorsed the Best Start Annual Report by consensus.

The Committee endorsed the Best Start Annual Report by consensus. Further to this, work is still continuing on the development of the 2021 Best Start Logic Model to confirm partners involved, K Curson will bring this to the Committee in the March meeting for endorsement.

Action

K Curson to share the Best Start 2021 Logic Model with the agenda for the next meeting.

6.4 DET update

Dannielle Wilson, Early Childhood Performance and Planning Advisor, Department of Education and Training

Free kindergarten announcement for sessional kindergarten for \$2000 per child, this amount is also available for children in long day care as a fee off set. \$1600 per child has been allocated to unfunded 3 year old kindergarten.

Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) eligibility has been extend to include refugee and asylum seekers families, further information on this has yet to be released.

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COVID-19 eLearn -modules are available for all early childhood education and care teachers, educators and staff on the online platform FUSE, the modules provide facts, practical strategies and information about precautions that can be taken to reduce risk while at work.

School Readiness Funding (SRF) plans are currently being reviewed by the Early Childhood Improvement Branch.

A Learning from Home survey has been developed. Families with children attending 3 or 4 year old kindergarten are being encouraged to complete the survey.

Action

D Wilson to share information with K Curson to be shared with the Committee

6.5 DHHS update**Robert Begley, Department of Health and Human Services**

R Begley stated to the committee if anyone had feedback on the report provided or wanted any additional information he was happy to include, if possible, in future updates.

An overview was provided in reference to the number of children and young people engaged with Child Protection.

At this present time, there are 31 vacant practitioner positions, which is providing a significant strain on workloads, ability to progress cases and staff morale. This number has been impacted by university's reducing the number of international students and a significant influx of investigations sent through by the intake team.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services can authorise an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisation to take on the care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children where this is in the best interest of the children, there has recently been a family where the care of the children has been transferred to VACCA (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency).

Currently trends within the last six months noticed by Child Protection practitioners have been Family Violence incidents and substance misuse. There have also been an increase of services making a report to Child Protection because they were unsure of a situation due to COVID-19 restrictions

J Weber asked about the present number of unborn reports, R Begley confirmed there were currently 16.

6.6 NDIS update**Matthew Boyd, Brotherhood of St Lawrence**

The Brotherhood of St Lawrence is Local Area Coordinator (LAC) for the NDIS within Melton.

The NDIS begun in Melton two and a half years ago, the initial focus has been working through the backlog of existing Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) referrals, the current wait time from initial referral to engagement is generally under a month. Recruitment for vacant staffing positions is underway.

An NDIS Early Childhood Intervention reset was announced in 2020 to consider how services can be delivered more in line with the way that was intended. A Discussion Paper explores how the NDIS is currently working, noting a lot of benefits and some challenges in areas where there is limited access to providers and clients are waiting for private providers in a 'thin' market, such as in Melton. Other information includes stretching eligibility up to the age of 9



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years old and how NDIS can help support vulnerable families to develop a plan and access services within it.

Action

M Boyd to share information with K Curson to be shared with the Committee

6.7 Melton City Council Families and Children Update – what is coming up in 2021

Brendan Ball, Manager Families and Children, Melton City Council

Conversations and work has begun with the immunisation team to define what local governments role will be if any with the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination.

In April, Supported Playgroup will become part of the Information Sharing Schemes as Information Sharing Entity (ISE). Work is underway to bring the Supported Playgroup team in line with Council's existing ISE's.

Kindergarten Central Enrolments are preparing for the roll out of 3 year old kindergarten registrations for 2022 that will open in March 2021

Discussion continued – service gaps for children under three

G Callander reintroduce the topic of the service gaps for children under three, which was discussed at the last meeting. Interest in formation of a working group was identified, with a focus on targeted engagement of the most vulnerable children under 3 years of age.

Common themes from the previous meeting

- increased Family Violence reports to police
- increased referrals to Brotherhood of St Laurance in December
- transportation, need of material aid, language barriers, system gap for children under three.

J Weber had an initial discussion with N Smith and developed an initial plan around arranging pop up support including material aid at kindergarten venues.

Discussions were held about under three year old services not communicating well with each other to support the families they are working with. Further discussions needs to be held in regards to how can we make the families journey through services and support easier for them and supporting organisations to work together.

M Boyd noted that families within this cohort are taking the longest time to become area of and access supported. B Ball discussed the issue of working with certain families and supporting them to avoid falling further into vulnerability and suggested an interim title of the 'First 1000 Days Project'.

K Curson and C Owens identified that there will be no duplication with the Vulnerable Children's Working Group (Best Start Program) or the Babaneek Booboop Early Years (BBEY) Project respectively and agreed that this work would enhance the Best Start program and BBEY Project.

Agreement from the members of the committee that there is value in this and will continue to explore this project. Any additional members who are interested can contact K Curson. C Reich expressed an interest in joining. Following up from last meeting K Curson will speak to S O'Kelly regarding the project.

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B Ball suggested this to be a standard item on the agenda, all members in agreeance to add as a standard item. J Weber thanked all in attendance for being open to exploring this matter further.

Action

K Curson will invite interested member to a meeting to continue discussions.

K Curson to include this as a standing agenda item on future meetings.

6.8 Election of Chair and Executive**Brendan Ball, Manager Families and Early Years, City of Melton**

B Ball thanked G Callander and S O'Kelly for their time as Chair and Executive Member for the past 12 months.

Vacant partnership positions of Chair and Executive Member were outlined.

Nominations received prior to the meeting were;

- Jennifer Weber (Caroline Chisholm Society)
- Sarah O'Kelly (BPA Children's Service)
- Genevieve Callander (Djerriwarrh Health Services)

B Ball asked for any further nominations, none were received.

J Weber withdrew her nomination, and work closely with K Curson on the 'First 1,000 Days Project' working group.

Due to the consensus from the Committee:

Genevieve Callander will now take up the lead in the role of Chair.

S O'Kelly in the role of Executive Member.

The committee welcomed the Chair and Executive Member to their continuing roles.

7. Other Business

B Maplestone shared information on Foundation House conversational style webinars in four community languages (Karen, Haka Chin, Dinka and Arabic) which discuss transition from kindergarten to school.

Action

B Maplestone to share information with K Curson to be shared with the Committee

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting is to be held on Thursday 18 March 2021 commencing at 10:00am, online via MS Teams

9. Close of Business

The meeting closed at 11.40am.