



MELTON CITY COUNCIL  
Municipal Early Years Plan  
*Our Community Begins With Our Children*

2014  
2017

*A Proud Community Growing Together*



## Mayor's Foreword



### Mayor's message

Melton City Council has developed its Municipal Early Years Plan 2014 - 2017, a key strategic document which sets the direction for services which impact on children aged 0-12 years living in the City of Melton.

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia, around 42 babies are born, and 34 families move in to, our municipality each week and our population is expected to continue to grow.

With such growth, Melton City Council is committed to delivering quality programs, services and early learning opportunities for our youngest residents.

The Municipal Early Years Plan is a guide that will assist Council and service providers to work together in partnership to deliver quality learning and support services for children and their families.

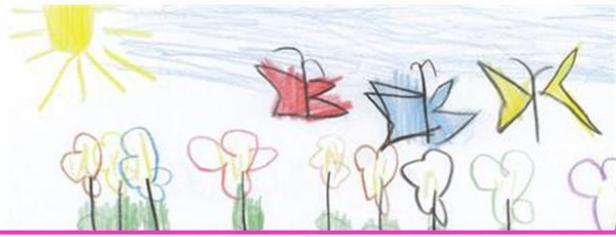
The priorities over the next four years will focus on the following themes: Growing Up Happy and Healthy, Shaping Our City, Our Learning and Development, What Our Families Need and Our Community.

I would like to thank all the parents, grandparents, carers, children and people in the children's services industry for their input into the development of this plan.

**Cr Bob Turner**

**Mayor**





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## Introduction

**A supportive community in which our children are valued and safe is an important priority for the City of Melton.**

**The Melton Municipal Early Years Plan provides direction for ensuring the health, learning and developmental needs of children are met and parents are supported in their parenting role.**

The Municipal Early Years Plan 2014-2017 brings together the aspirations of the community and the evidence base to identify and define where our efforts should be focussed to achieve the best outcomes for children.

Early Years Plan will require strong partnerships with families and service providers in meeting the needs of children in today's complex and changing environments.

The development of the 2014-2017 Municipal Early Years Plan for the City of Melton has for the first time included consultation with children, inclusive of children's views on natural playspaces and the City's infrastructure. These views have influenced the themes within the Plan.

In using the Municipal Early Years Plan as a guiding framework, the planning and provision of services across the City of Melton will improve outcomes for our children.



**'giving children a voice is not simply about the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinion; it is about having the power to influence change'.<sup>1</sup>**





## What is the Municipal Early Years Plan?

**‘working in partnership is the best approach to ensure that our children are valued as the part of our community’**



The Municipal Early Years Plan is designed to provide strategic direction to service providers from a variety of sectors that impact children aged 0-12 years in the City of Melton. The Plan expresses a vision for children that sets out the key themes and outcomes that have been identified as the most important to work towards in the next four years.

The context for the Municipal Early Years Plan is drawn from international best practice, Federal and State Government strategic directions as well as the Melton City Council - Council Plan 2013-2017.

The Plan also promotes working in partnership as the best approach to ensure that our children are valued as the part of our community.

### Council's Role

The Municipal Early Years Plan recognises the responsibility Melton City Council has in planning for the early years and the important role it plays in achieving positive outcomes for children.

The Municipal Early Years Plan is closely linked to a number of Council strategic documents and Action Plans.

### Service Providers' Role

As service providers, all involved have a collective responsibility to provide the best opportunities for children to grow and thrive in the City of Melton.

The Municipal Years Plan sets out a clear direction for all service providers to work together towards common goals.



## Highlights of the Municipal Early Years Plan 2010-2013



This Plan builds on the success of Councils previous Municipal Early Years Plan 2010-2013 and the work that has been undertaken to improve outcomes for children and families. The evaluation of the Municipal Early Years Plan 2010-2013 highlighted the following progress:

An increase of 8.14 % of parents/carers reporting that children's views and ideas about their local community are listened to and make a difference.

The development of the booklet "Engaging Children in Decision Making - A guide to consulting children".

An average of 5.2% increase in family attendance across the 10 recommended Maternal and Child Health Key Age and Stage visits.

Maternal and Child Health Saturday sessions trialled in the City.

Maternal and Child Outreach service Key Age and Stage visits conducted in Early Education and Care settings.

Increases in the percentages of:

- Participation in Kindergarten
- Parents who were able to access services for their children when they were needed.
- Parents who have opportunities to network and meet other parents/grandparents in their local community setting.



*"I have only just started to tap into services for myself and my new baby. Maternal Child Health, together with my new parents group, have opened a whole world of services for me, that I didn't even know were available in my community! These services have been excellent and so supportive. As a new mum, I couldn't be happier with what is available to me."*

Female parent with one child aged under 1 year Caroline Springs





## The City of Melton - Now and in the Future

The population of the City of Melton is 125,409 (as of 31 December 2013) with an annual growth rate of 4.7%. The population in the City will continue to grow rapidly and by 2031, it is expected to more than double and to be in excess of 243,000 residents.

The median age of residents was 31 at the 2011 Census, making the City population one of the youngest in Victoria.

Current population snapshot in the City of Melton

- One in five residents are under 12 years of age and this is expected to remain the same for the next 18 years.
- 56% of the households in Melton are families with children.
- 42 babies are born each week in the City of Melton.
- 34 additional families move into the municipality each week.

Population forecasting from now until the year 2021<sup>2</sup> indicates the number of children:

- Aged 0-4 years will increase by 2916 by 2021.
- Aged 5-11 years will increase by 4940 by 2021.

This will equate to 7856 more children under 12 years living in the City of Melton by 2021.

The City of Melton community is becoming increasingly culturally diverse:

- 30,000 immigrants presently call the City of Melton home.
- 130 different nations are represented in the City of Melton.
- The highest demand for interpreter services came from the following five cultures: Dinka, Chinese (Mandarin), Serbian, Spanish and Vietnamese.<sup>3</sup>

**1 in 5 people living in the City of Melton are under 12 years of age**





## How the City of Melton's Children are Doing

### Maternal and Child Health attendance at Key Age and Stage Visits

- Overall, the average attendance in Maternal and Child Health Key Age and Stage visits has increased by 5.2% over the past 3 years.<sup>4</sup>
- More than 92% of families attended each Maternal and Child Health visit up to 4 months.<sup>4</sup>
- In the 2012/2013 year the attendance rates for visits from 8 months onwards improved by an average of 4.5% compared to the previous year.<sup>4</sup>
- In the 2012/2013 year, 56.5% of children attended the 3.5 year old visit compared with 55.3% in the previous year.<sup>4</sup>

### Immunisation

The percentage of children who are fully immunised in the City of Melton is at least 1% higher than the State and National average at one year, two years and five years of age.<sup>5</sup>

### Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding rates for the City of Melton are below the average rate for the State.

- 49.8% of babies are either partially or fully breastfed at 3 months of age.
- 33% of babies are either partially or fully breastfed at 6 months of age.<sup>6</sup>



**'Children's immunisation rate in the City of Melton is at least 1% higher than the State (VIC) and National average'.<sup>6</sup>**



## How the City of Melton's Children are Doing

### Australia Early Development Index (AEDI)

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a population based measure of how children have developed by the time they start school. It looks at five areas of early childhood development:

Physical health and well being
Language and cognitive skills
Social competence
Emotional maturity
Communication skills and general knowledge

When comparing the City of Melton's children between 2009 and 2012, the data shows a statistically significant difference in the following areas.<sup>7</sup>

- There are fewer children developmentally vulnerable on the emotional maturity domain.
- There are more children developmentally vulnerable on the physical health and wellbeing domain.
- There are more children developmentally vulnerable on the social competence domain.
- There are more children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains.

**There are fewer children developmentally vulnerable on the emotional maturity domain.**



## When We Listened To You, We Learnt



We asked children

***"If I were the boss of Melton..."*** What would they do???

### Under 5 years of age:

- Want natural play spaces and adventure parks
- More bike paths and skate parks
- Have contact with animals

### Over 5 years of age:

- Build new infrastructure of varying types
- Want natural playspaces
- Want pool and water slide
- More bike paths and Skate parks

We asked the community

***"what makes Melton a good place for children to grow up?"***

- Safe streets and neighbourhoods
- Availability of parks and playgrounds near home
- Friendly neighbours and communities
- Choice of services for children.





## Voices from Consultations

### What the Children said ....

*'Help people'*

**Jayden, 5, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Build a big garden for everyone to visit'*

**Leah, 6, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Make sure the environment is looked after'*

**Micah, 5, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Build a swimming pool with a slide'*

**Sam, 3, Occasional Care children's consultation**

*'I would have community events in the area so that everyone can come together and have fun as a community'*

**Brianna, 11, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Add new shops in Caroline Springs'*

**Ingrid, 8, Harmony Day children's consultation**

*'Help other people with their work if they're having trouble'*

**Aplay, 7, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Have a hospital in Melton. It would help people that need a hospital but have to drive too far from home'*

**Catrina, 12, Family Day Care children's consultation**

*'Build a playground for lots of kids who don't live near other playgrounds'*

**Andrea, 8, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Put some fun stuff for people to do'*

**Mia, 7, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Make it a better place'*

**Alexandra, 8, Kororoit Creek Primary School children's consultation**

*'Build safe bike tracks'*

**Hayden, 4, Occasional Care children's consultation**





## Voices from Consultations

### What the Families said ...

*"If they can get us the 4yrs Kinder that I need close to home"*

**Male parent with 1 child aged 4 yrs. Brookfield**

*"Keep up the fantastic work because I know the Council run lots of programs for parents & kids"*

**Female parent with 2 children aged 5 and 2 yrs. Mount Cottrell**

*"For me the availability of the drop in breastfeeding counselling service was a great support with my baby."*

**Female parent with 2 children aged 3 and 1 yrs. Burnside**

*"The services available in Melton are of a very high quality. Unfortunately some of the waiting lists to see specialists for assessment of special needs are rather long."*

**Female parent with 2 children aged 3 and 1 yrs. West Melton**

*"Think about working families.....this should be your priority."*

**Female parent of 3 children aged 10, 6 and 5 yrs. Hillside**

*"Ensure there are sufficient kindergartens, schools and other programs to cater for our growing community. There is some fear in the community that in a couple of years time our kinder's and other facilities will be too full to cater for our kids appropriately."*

**Female parent of 2 children aged 2 and 1 yrs. Taylors Hill**

*"Generally I don't think the information for families is put out or publicized enough. I've had many families attending my playgroup in the past 2 years and they are often not aware of the things going on or available in Melton for their children. These are people of all backgrounds, cultures and age groups. Maybe information needs to be made more readily available and in a number of different ways to our community."*

**Female parent with 3 children aged 11, 7 and 4 yrs. Melton**

*"Proud to know and see the service, positive differences made to the local community."*

**Female grandparent. Melton**

*"We need more group sports activities for children. We do not get information for kids sports."*

**Male single parent with two children aged 12 and 4 yrs. Caroline Springs**





## What We All Want For Children

### Vision

Our Community Begins with Our Children.

#### The 5 Themes to support the vision:

Theme 1: Growing up Happy and Healthy

Theme 2: Shaping Our City

Theme 3: Our Learning and Development

Theme 4: What Our Families Need

Theme 5: Our Community



#### How the Municipal Early Years Plan 2014 - 2017 was developed

The priorities in the Municipal Early Years Plan 2014-2017 were identified through engaging and consulting with children and organisations who plan and provide services for children.

Multiple research methods were used to develop the Municipal Early Years Plan including:

- A Parent/Carer Community Snapshot survey completed by more than 375 individuals from the City of Melton.
- Small group discussions with parents.
- Group consultations with service providers.
- Analysis of data, population and demographics

The information gathered identified the 5 themes which have been used to develop the strategies of the Municipal Early Years Plan for the next 4 years.



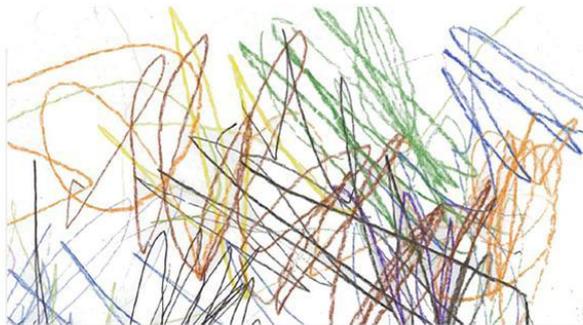


## Theme 1: Growing Up Happy and Healthy

**Outcome:** There is a partnership approach to supporting the happiness, health and wellbeing of all children. Childhood is recognised as a time for laying foundations for future health, ensuring that children are educated about behaviours that promote healthy lifestyles.

### Strategies:

- Advocate for the provision of services to address the health needs of children and families.
- Support services to partner with families in maintaining the health, and wellbeing needs of their children.
- Facilitate the provision of a range of partnership and networking opportunities across sectors to allow integrated planning and delivery of Early Years services.
- Support the access of children and families to educational information that promote the importance of healthy eating, physical activity, oral health and sun protection.
- Encourage services to provide inclusive environments that promote and support children to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- Provide opportunities for children to participate in prevention and intervention programs that improve their physical health and development.
- Promote and encourage active and social play for children.
- Develop and implement policies and initiatives to ensure children are protected.
- Advocate with services to work with protective systems to keep children from harm.
- Promote community education and awareness highlighting the possible risks to children's safety.



***“I want somewhere to run and climb with lots of colour”***

Kealan, aged 3 years.  
Maternal and Child Health children's consultation





## Theme 2: Shaping Our City

**Outcome:** Children are recognised as having opinions and processes are in place to engage them and ensure their voices are heard. Children are included in community consultation about issues that affect them.

### Strategies:

- Engage children in ethical, respectful and transparent consultation processes that assist service providers to understand their needs.
- Consult children about a range of issues including;
  - The design of a diverse range of play and recreation opportunities.
  - The creation of local identity through design of spaces and places.
  - Their participation in, or barriers to physical activity
  - The design and development of initiatives to improve and understand actual and perceived safety.
- Consult children with a disability and their families to identify ways to increase their participation in the community.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop and practice leadership skills.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn about the value of the natural environment and sustainable practices.
- Promote opportunities for children to experience safe contact with animals where appropriate.

***“If I was the boss of Melton I would make bigger playgrounds”***

Ella, aged 7 years. Family Day Care children's consultation



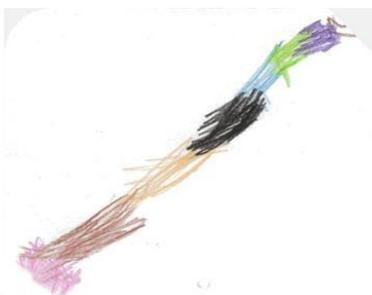


## Theme 3: Our Learning and Development

**Outcome:** Ensure the potential of every child is maximised by working together to support their learning and development.

### Strategies:

- Promote play as a key component to children's learning and development.
- Incorporate opportunities for play into the design of new and existing spaces and facilities.
- Support families to provide a rich home learning environment for their children.
- Provide opportunities for services to participate in the planning and coordination of a range of quality early years services.
- Advocate for a range of affordable early years services that meet the needs of children and families.
- Promote the provision of child focussed and family centred health, education and care services.
- Encourage and support family's engagement in key universal services with a focus on addressing barriers to participation.
- Promote a streamlined system that supports children in the transition to school.
- Provide universal services that value diversity and ensure the inclusion of all children regardless of their abilities.
- Utilise current research, relevant peak bodies and specialised support services to inform practice and continuous improvement.



***"I like to learn"***

Alei, 8 - Melton Specialist School, Children's Consultation





## Theme 4: What Our Families Need

**Outcome:** Family strengths are supported and they have the information to access the services they need for their children.

### Strategies:

- Identify and assist children and families at times when they are experiencing circumstances which may increase their vulnerability.
- Support service planning and delivery through the provision of key demographic information and available data.
- Affirm, support and develop the abilities and potential of families to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children.
- Provide integrated facilities where services are co located in a way that encourages active use by families.
- Promote the provision of current information about services to ensure that it is available to families.
- Provide flexible service models to allow all families to access the services they need.

***“Help homeless people, support nature and animals”***

Beau, aged 8 years, Summersault Festival Children’s Consultation





## Theme 5: Our Community

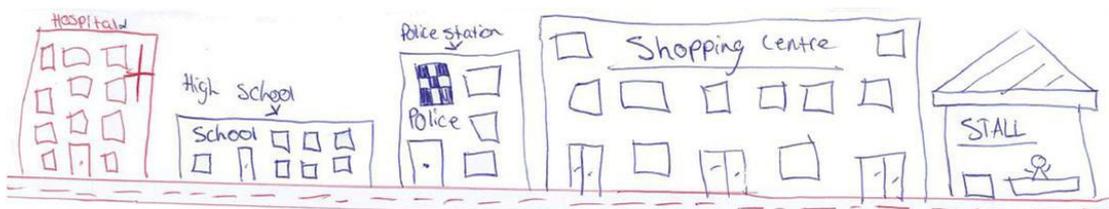
**Outcome:** The City of Melton community is inclusive, connected and child friendly, providing opportunities for children and families to be active participants.

**Strategies:**

- Connect children and families through opportunities for them to participate in community activities/events.
- Promote opportunities for children and families to increase knowledge and skills that build capacity and increase resilience.
- Provide children with opportunities to value the diversity and significance of arts and cultural experiences.
- Create a sense of pride and build local community identity for children through the provision of events and celebrations.
- Support the provision of opportunities to learn about and celebrate the diversity of our community.
- Promote child and family friendly spaces for socialising, playing and learning.
- Provide information about family violence and early intervention initiatives to the community.
- Partner with services to provide educational information on road safety and active transport options and encourage children’s use of safe walking and cycling networks.

***“I would have community events in the area so that everyone can come together and have fun as a community”***

Brianna, aged 11 years Kororoit Creek Primary School- Children’s Consultation





## The Municipal Early Years Plan in Action

*“It takes a village to raise a child”*

(source unknown)



### Implementation

**Melton City Council** has developed themes and strategies which will guide Council’s decision making and activities over the next 4 years. A process of continuous improvement will allow for flexibility in the delivery of the Plan and the ability to respond to identified trends and issues.

This approach will assist Council to consider opportunities for participation in projects and initiatives that support the outcomes of the Plan using a strategic approach.

**Service Providers** are encouraged to utilise the Municipal Early Years Plan themes and strategies to inform and/or support their own service planning. Stronger integrated outcomes for children and families can be achieved with all service providers contributing to the same strategic direction.

### Evaluation

**Melton City Council** will implement an evaluation program of the Municipal Early Years Plan, which will monitor and report on the success and progress of the Plan.

A Parent/ Carer Community Snapshot survey, focus groups with key stakeholders and available relevant data will be methods used to measure the effectiveness of the Municipal Early Years Plan.

**Service Providers** play an important role in assisting Council to measure the success of the Plan. The data collected from services will contribute to the evaluation framework, making this a cooperative and inclusive process.





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