

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY 2015-2018

Listening to Children's Voices

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present Yarra City Council's *Early Years Strategy 2015-2018*, which focuses on children aged from birth to eight years. The Strategy provides direction about how Yarra's services and activities will be planned and delivered to ensure that young children feel safe, welcomed and confident as they move about their city of Yarra.

This Strategy is informed by the voices of children and is a response to children's ideas and interests as well as those of their families and the community of Yarra. It builds on the work undertaken in the previous Early Years Strategy and is informed by sector research and policy.

Yarra City Council is committed to ensuring that there is an integrated and coordinated approach to planning and delivering services for children across their key life phases and transition points. The Early Years Strategy has been developed as part of an integrated policy platform and joins with our Middle Years Strategy (8 to 12 years) and the Youth Policy (12 - 25 years). Collectively these plans provide the foundation for Council to build shared understanding and consistent approaches to supporting and working with children, young people and families.

Thank you to everyone - especially the children - who contributed to the development of this Early Years Strategy.

Cr Phillip Vlahogiannis

Mayor – Yarra City Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the Traditional Owners of this country, pays tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra and gives respect to the Elders past and present.

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the City of Yarra *Early Years Strategy 2015 - 2018*. It has five themes and related goals that together create the framework for the development of annual Implementation Plans. Each year these annual Plans will outline the actions the City of Yarra intends to take with its partners towards the achievement of the goals.

The Strategy is the result of a journey involving consideration of many sources of evidence. This also includes an outline of that journey.

Information considered in the development of the Strategy includes the current policy environment, advice and statistics about young children and their families in Yarra and an overview of key services and programs. It also includes reference to a range of other strategies and plans Council is implementing that impact and influence the experience of children and their families in Yarra.

The Strategy also builds on the idea of 'progressive universalism'. The core of this idea is that universal services should be delivered at a scale and intensity proportionate to the level of disadvantage experienced by the service.¹ From 2012 there has been much more general policy reform at both National and State level. Much of this aims to deliver integrated and streamlined service delivery in the community with both greater choice and more intensive support for the individual or family needing support.

Our key source of evidence was drawn from consultation with the community. We have incorporated what young children and families themselves have to say about what makes a child and family friendly Yarra.

We also acknowledge the many community members, colleagues and organisational representatives who have contributed their time and ideas to inform this Strategy.

¹ State of Victoria (2013) Victoria's Vulnerable Children – Our Shared Responsibility p.7 citing a concept promoted by Sir Michael Marmot Chair in Fair Society, Healthy Lives The Strategic Review of Health Inequality in England post 2010 (The Marmot Review) Executive Summary
[http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee.nsf/0/FC504554E6ABA97380257936004EFD4E/\\$file/5%20-%20Marmot%20Review%20-%20Summary.pdf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee.nsf/0/FC504554E6ABA97380257936004EFD4E/$file/5%20-%20Marmot%20Review%20-%20Summary.pdf)

WHY ARE THE EARLY YEARS IMPORTANT?

Positive experiences for children and their families in the early years of life deliver significant benefits in children's health and educational outcomes as well as strengthening their connection to the broader community. This means those children, families and their community all benefit from a good start in life.

Recent research has shown that over the years from birth to age eight, in addition to physical development children experience an extraordinary level of brain development. This new understanding of the importance of early childhood development has led to much greater focus at all levels of government across the world on strategies to improve support for children and their families.

The *Early Years Strategy* while recognising the unique developmental needs, issues and challenges of our youngest children has been developed as part of an integrated policy platform that complements the Middle Years Strategy (8-12 years) and the Youth Policy (12-25 years). This policy continuum from birth to early adulthood provides a foundation for Council to build shared understandings, a common language and consistent approach to supporting and working with children, young people and families across Yarra.

YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN YARRA

Over the past few years over 1,000 babies a year have being born in the City of Yarra². Yarra's population in 2015 is estimated at 86,580 and families with dependent children constitute around one quarter (24.7%) of all households³. In 2015, there are around 6,946 children aged from 0 to 8 years living in Yarra⁴. Children are born into two parent families, single parent, same sex, extended and blended families. Most families have one or two children (the average in Yarra is 1.6 children⁵).

The 2011 Census found that when compared to birth rates for Victoria, mothers in Yarra were slightly older than other Victorian mothers giving birth. The majority of births in Yarra were to women aged 30-40 years. These accounted for 74% of all births in Yarra. Births to women in this age group for Victoria account for 55% of births.

² Birth Notifications Yarra – 1,153 births in 2012, 1,138 births in 2013 and 1,179 births in 2014.

³ Population forecasts produced by i.d. Consulting Pty Ltd for Yarra City Council <http://forecast.id.com.au/yarra>

⁴ Population forecasts produced by i.d. Consulting Pty Ltd for Yarra City Council <http://forecast.id.com.au/yarra>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2011, Yarra Local Government Area Profile, http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA27350?opendocument&navpos=220

For new parents in particular, social support services during the period of transition to parenthood are often very important for many who may have limited access to family support and may feel anxious about their parenting skills.

Much of the city is advantaged with higher than average incomes and education attainments. Yarra is also home to a high proportion of residents living with socio-economic disadvantage. Council has acknowledged that Yarra has a pattern of health inequity in which people's health is profoundly affected by social inequality and is committed to increasing access to opportunities for all residents to improve their health and wellbeing⁶.

Disadvantage for children and their families results from a complex interplay of factors and may be episodic, short term or embedded through generational and life experience.

A range of factors can lead to hospitalisation of young children including injury, disease, congenital conditions and birth defects. Considering the leading causes of hospitalisation is important in monitoring changes or emerging risks for children. Such hospitalisation rates are often used as proxy indicators for the level of serious illness within the community. In 2010 the rate of hospitalisations for any cause for children aged 0-8 years in Yarra was 237.5 per 1000 children. This was greater than the rate of all hospital separations for children in this age-group across Victoria which was 231.2 per 1,000 children. The top three causes for hospital separation in children aged 0-8 years Yarra were other prenatal presentation (10.3 per 1,000 children), asthma (rate of 7.9 per 1,000 children) and sleep disorders, (rate of 7.1 per 1,000 children aged 0-8 years).⁷

Health statistics for the Medicare Local Inner North West, which covers the areas of cities Yarra, Melbourne, Moonee Valley and Moreland, provides comparative rates for child and maternal health. The child mortality rate for the region (125.0) was higher than the Victorian average (107.8) and equal to the Australian rate (125.0). Yarra (129.6), Moreland (136.2) and Melbourne (254.3) had higher infant mortality rates than Victoria and Australia. The percentage of infants' breastfeed at 3 months was higher in of the region's local government areas compared to Victorian average of 51.8%. Yarra has the highest rate of breastfeeding of 71.9%.⁸

⁶ City of Yarra – Health Status Report, Yarra City Council March 2013, p 5
<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Services/Community-Planning/public-health-plan/>

⁷ Sourced from the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Early Childhood Profile Yarra, 2010 presented in City of Yarra Health Status Report, Yarra City Council March 2013, p 64-65

⁸ Medicare Local Dataset PHIDU, 2012 and Victorian Department of Health profiles 2012 presented in Medicare Local Inner North West Melbourne - Population Health Needs Assessment, Final Report, June 2013, page 39

Asthma is the most significant chronic health disease complaint for young children with 12.5% of children aged 5-6 years were reported to have asthma. This is lower than the proportion of children aged 5-6 years reported to have asthma across northwest metropolitan region (NWR) (13.2%) and Victoria (14.4%). Written asthma action plans are an important component of asthma management. The proportion of children with a current asthma written action plan at school in Yarra was 39.1%, compared with 37.9% across the NMR and 39.9% across Victoria. Asthma is a leading cause of hospital visits for children. There were 7.9 hospital separations per 1000 children aged 0-8 years for asthma in Yarra. This is less than the rate for NMR (8.7 per 1,000 children aged 0-8 years) and similar to the rate for asthma in Victoria (8.1 per 1,000 children aged 0-8 years).⁹

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)¹⁰ provides another measure of how young children in Yarra are faring across developmental domains of physical, social, emotional, communication, language and cognitive capacity. The 2012 Survey found the majority of children in Yarra included in the survey were on track developmentally. Just over 9% of children were vulnerable on two or more domains of development. A further 18% of children were developmentally vulnerable in at least one domain (Refer Appendix 1 for more information). These results were a significant improvement since the previous survey but indicate that Yarra remains home to a substantial number of children who require proactive support.

CHILD FRIENDLY YARRA

Yarra City Council is committed to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities that has been developed for local governments, organisations and individuals to take action. Yarra City Council supports:

- ❖ Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs
- ❖ Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing

⁹ City of Yarra – Health Status Report, Yarra City Council March 2013, p64
<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Services/Community-Planning/public-health-plan/>

¹⁰ The Index was formerly called the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) and is now the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The AEDC is a population measure of young children's development based on a teacher-completed checklist. Categorisation is based on the derived score from the checklist. Those with scores ranked in the lowest 10% were classified as developmentally 'vulnerable' and those with scores between 10% and 25% were classified as developmentally 'at risk'. The last survey was completed in 2012 and data collection for 2015 Survey commenced in May 2015.

- ❖ Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability

The Victorian Charter is consistent with state, national and international protocols and embraces rights that are embedded in the Convention of the Rights of the child (1990), the Chiba Declaration for a Child Friendly Asia Pacific (2004) and the Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter (2006).

Child Friendly Cities (CFC) is a global framework for translating the United Nations Convention into action at the local level¹¹. With nine building blocks underpinning a child friendly city, at its essence Child Friendly City initiatives involve acknowledging that children are active agents. Just as those of adults are, children's voices and opinions should be taken into consideration and influence decision making processes.

Child friendly cities are particularly important because they promote a more liveable city for all members of the community, working for residents of all ages. The features of a city that make it the safest, healthiest, and accommodating for its most vulnerable cities generally contribute to a city more liveable for everyone.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Multiple consultation strategies were undertaken to ensure the Strategy was informed by the opinions of the community of stakeholders concerned about young children and their families.

This included direct consultations with 96 children between three and eight years of age. Their contributions included evocative drawings as well as statements expressing their views about what they like about living in the City of Yarra.

There were interviews with 57 families who have children under age three. Additional focus group interviews were conducted with culturally and linguistically diverse families, families at a playgroup for children with special needs and families at an adventure playground located near a public housing estate. Survey responses were also gathered from ninety more families.

¹¹ For more information Child Friendly cities website <http://childfriendlycities.org/>

A larger consultation involved a broader cross section of the community through a survey mailed to 2000 randomly selected households followed by face to face interviews with 500 households with and without children. Their priorities for children and families overlapped significantly with the priorities identified in the more targeted consultation.

Additional consultations included several workshops with the City of Yarra Early Years Reference Group including a range of community agency representatives; a series of focus groups involving participants drawn from community agencies including primary schools; an online survey attracting responses from government and community sector agencies; and two workshops with Council officers.

The Early Years Reference Group additionally highlighted the importance of the following for children:

- Feeling connected to their community and feeling valued, safe, supported, respected and encouraged to develop their sense of identity with opportunities to participate and feel they have a voice
- Are healthy, safe, educated and accepted
- Having access to lots of open space, education facilities, early childhood centres and affordable health care
- Access a good education especially in the early years to move out of the poverty cycle
- Equal access to all agencies and equal opportunities to succeed –especially important for children with disabilities.

Community agencies and other sector stakeholders also highlighted similar aspects of Yarra that make it family friendly

A workshop with stakeholders drawn from early years and other community agencies and peak bodies, Council, other local governments and the State Government considered the results of all the earlier consultations. They discussed actions that could be taken based on those findings.

These consultations highlighted a wide range of issues. There is a strong overlap in themes with a significant emphasis on the importance of open spaces and opportunities for active engagement with the outdoors including opportunities to interact with nature. Time spent

with families and friends were also highlighted. Families and other stakeholders also emphasised concern with children's safety and their health and general wellbeing.

A draft Strategy was released for community consultation in 2014. Additional consultations with parents / guardians, children and early years organisations and were held for feedback on the draft Strategy and to provide directions for the implementation plan. Consultations were conducted in community settings at playgroups, kindergartens and outside of school hours' services. Specific consultations were also held with children. Children aged 4 years old attending Council's kindergarten programs and children (aged 5-8 years) attending Council's Outside of School Hours Service (40 children).

Community consultation highlighted the importance of:

- Active outdoor spaces such as playgrounds, swimming pools parks and gardens and other opportunities to interact with nature, especially within walking distance
- Safety to move around independently and in public spaces more generally
- Access to services they need including libraries, early childhood education and care, schools, recreation options, and transport to facilitate access to the things children, young people and their families need and enjoy
- Health and wellbeing including support for families to develop their parenting capacity and affordable, accessible services
- The importance of young people having a say in decisions that affect them
- An inclusive community.

VOICES OF CHILDREN

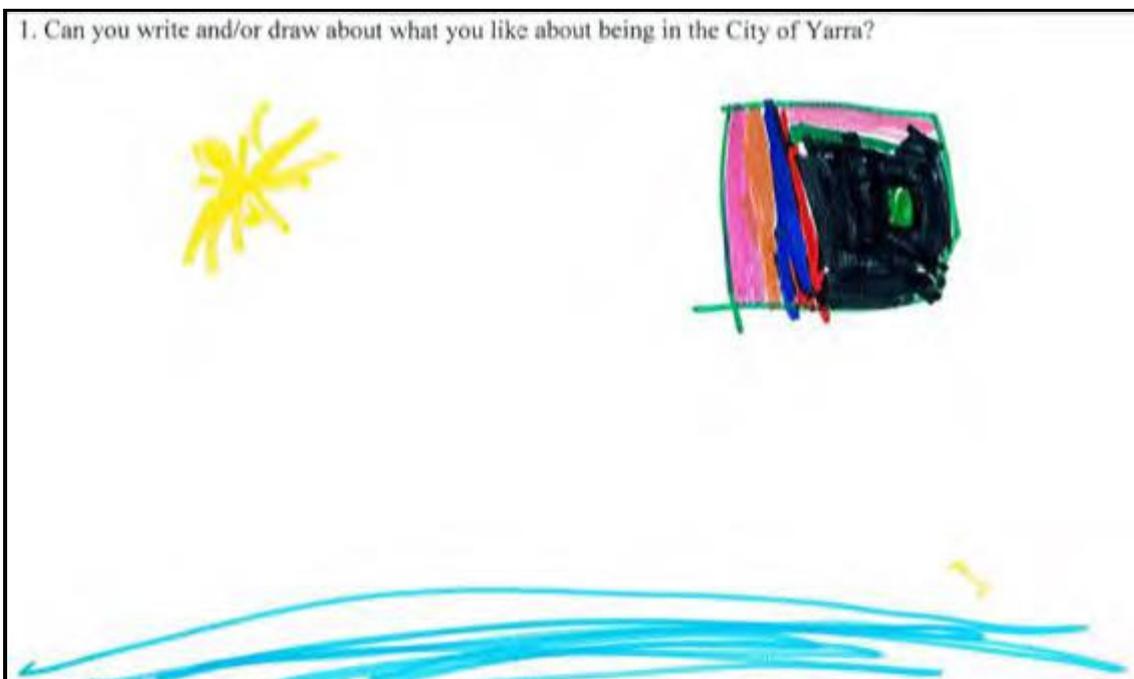
Consistent with this commentary and to guide the development of this Strategy, we asked children aged between 3 and 8 years to tell us what they liked about Yarra. Children enjoy many aspects of Yarra including the natural environments and parks. They enjoy spending time with their families and friends too. Yarra's facilities and services are very important to children and many spoke about the swimming pools, cafés and playgrounds.

❖ *Swimming. I like seeing my teacher (Child 3-8 years, Collingwood).*

❖ *We love swimming (5 year old, Fairfield).*

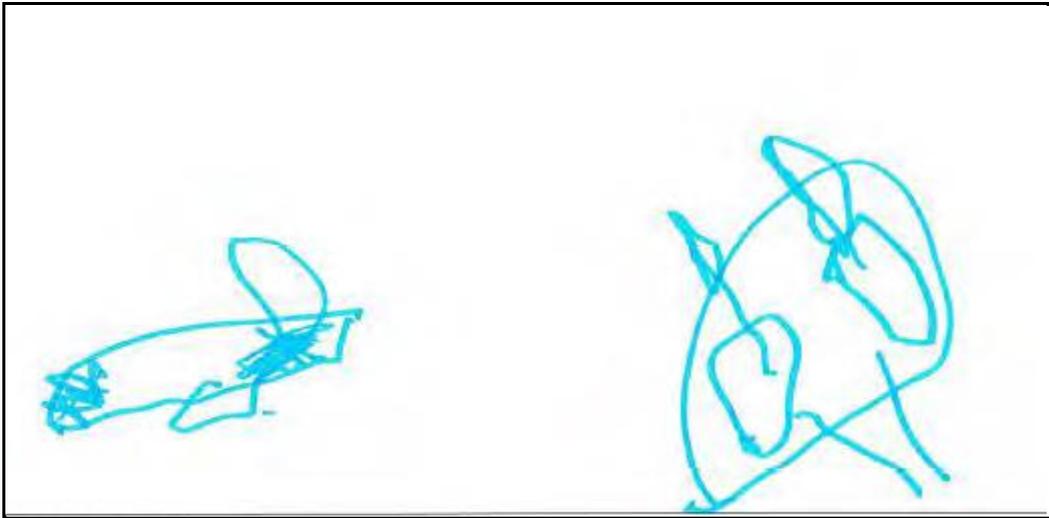


- ❖ *Going to the park, going to kinder going to Richmond gym crèche (4 year old; Richmond North).*
- ❖ *My dog; going to the zoo, the library, the park (4 year old, Carlton North)*
- ❖ *I like playing with the dirt and my new house. My favourite park is on Mary Street because it has baby swings and I can go super high. I like the bike tracks at Mary Street Park too. (4 year old, Richmond).*



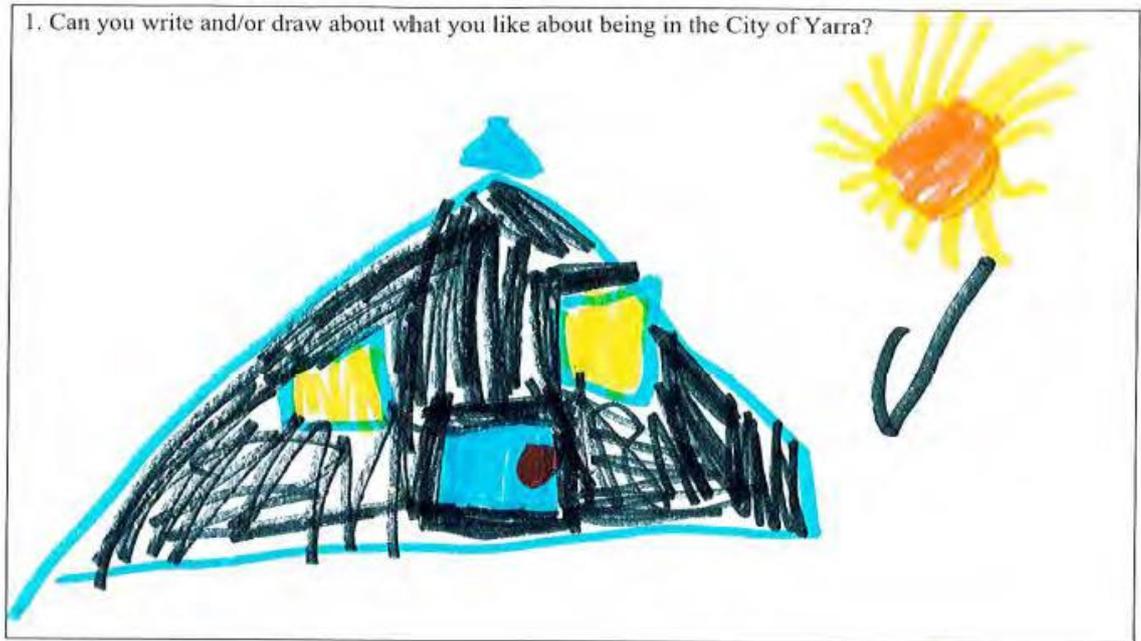
- ❖ *My friends from school live nearby and there are great cafes and restaurants here (8 year old, Princess Hill).*

- ❖ *Going for the Richmond Tigers; I like my school. I like the park. I like it that I don't live where there are snakes. I like the trains (8 year old, Richmond).*
- ❖ *Walking to the park. Going to the library (3 year old, Collingwood).*



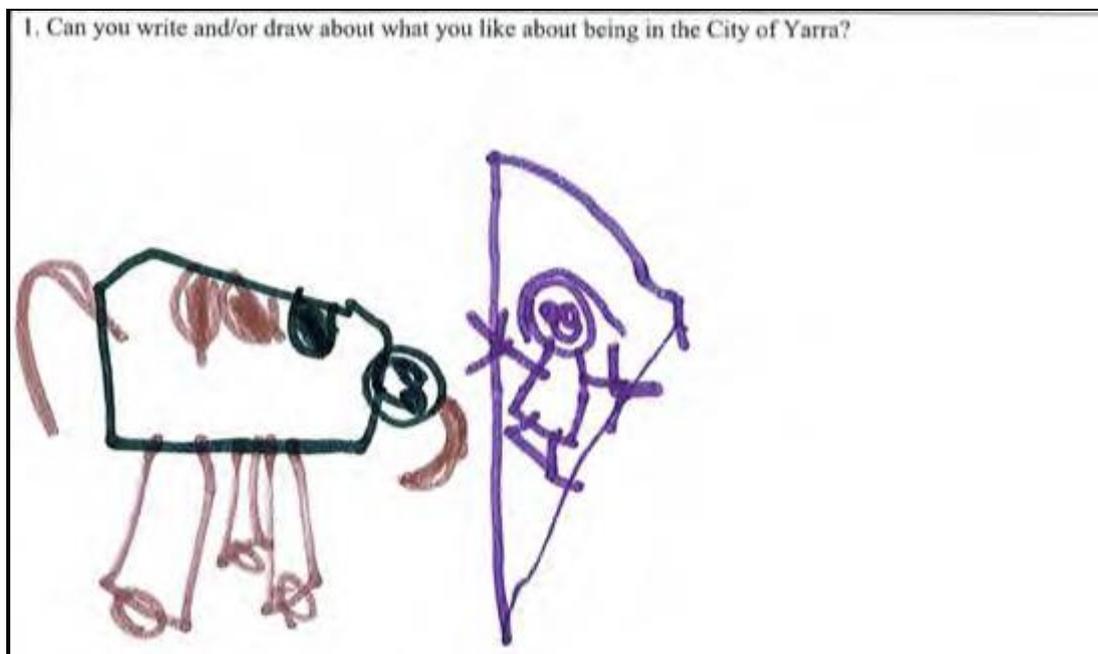
That's the slide I slide down. That's the swing at the park (Child 3-8 years, Clifton Hill)

- ❖ *Exploring the river. Playing in the backyard. But it is a little one. I don't have a trampoline. It is not like a playground at all. I do have a toy car I drive around. I go to Quarries Park when my friend came over but the slide wasn't slippery enough (Child aged 3-8 years, Fitzroy).*
- ❖ *Frogs and rabbits in the river and near my house is a pond and a little bit garden.*
- ❖ *Quarries Park, swimming pool - Collingwood leisure centre. Library our favourite is in Fitzroy (7 year old, Clifton Hill).*
- ❖ *Parks (Quarries and Darling Gardens) cafes for a hot chocolate, riding my bike and skateboard (4 year old, Clifton Hill).*



My house because I love my house...

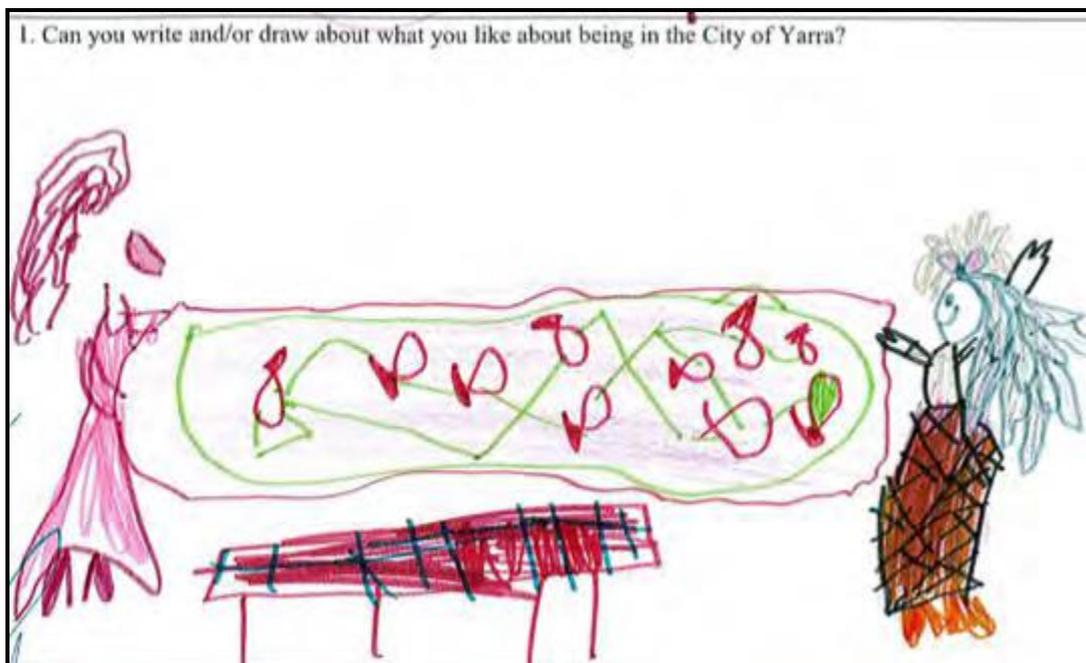
- ❖ *We live on a quiet street with quiet streets around us but just short walk to public transport, shops, cafes. Lots of green spaces . Being close to lots of parks. Being able to walk to school. Some places are pretty, lots of plants and trees (8 year old, Abbotsford).*
- ❖ *There are nice houses, the Yarra river and nice plants (7 year old, Richmond).*



The Collingwood Children's Farm

- ❖ *This is a sign saying 'Children's Farm'. Adults can go there too but it is mostly for children. Horses are my favourite (3 year old, Abbotsford).*

- ❖ *Lots of kids in the street to play with. Quiet street - not many cars. Nice adult neighbours. Street Christmas Party (7 year old, Fitzroy North).*



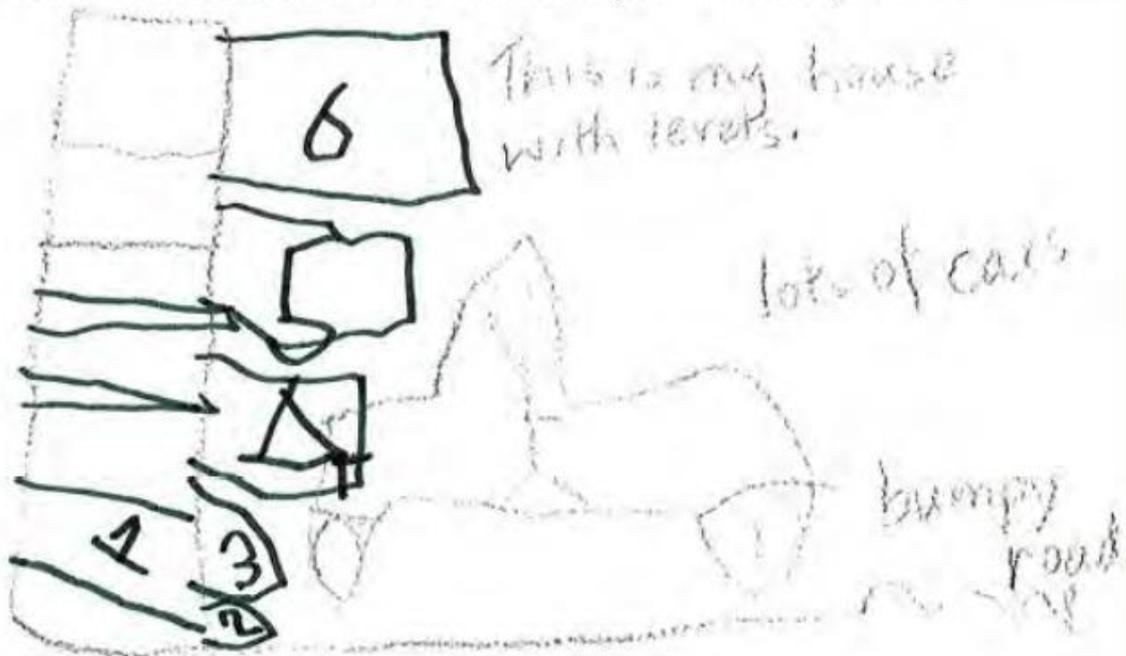
Me making a cubby house with my friend here at after school care, but not always (Child aged 3-8 years, Richmond)

- ❖ *Playing with the kids up the street (4year old, Fitzroy North).*
- ❖ *Friendly people. Next door neighbours. Every place I go we've got one person living next to us, our friends. And at our other house that is being renovated we've got four people who are friends and we have put holes through the fence to climb through and we are making cubbies (Child aged 3-8 years, Richmond).*
- ❖ *I live in Richmond. Richmond is Tigerland (Child aged 3-8 years, Richmond).*
- ❖ *Being with mummy. Kinder and the painting. Seesaws in the park (3 year old, Clifton Hill).*
- ❖ *Visiting nana and my kinder teacher (4 year old, Alphington).*

We also asked children about what makes it difficult for them to be in Yarra.

Common responses from children were about traffic and getting around. Children thought Yarra could be improved with less traffic, more parks and natural environments.

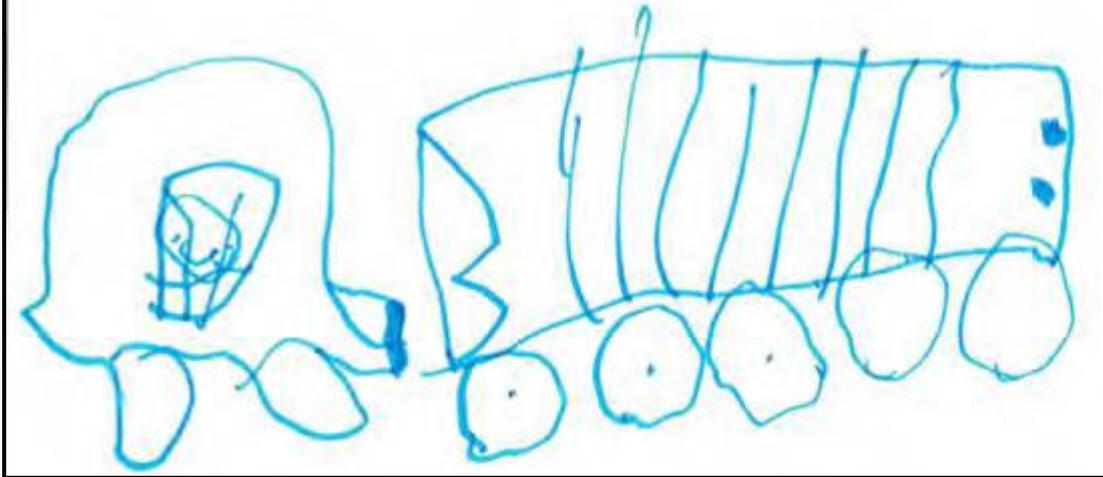
Can you write and/or draw about what makes it difficult for you to be in the City of Yarra?



This is my house with levels. Lots of cars. Bumpy road (3-8 year old child, Carlton)

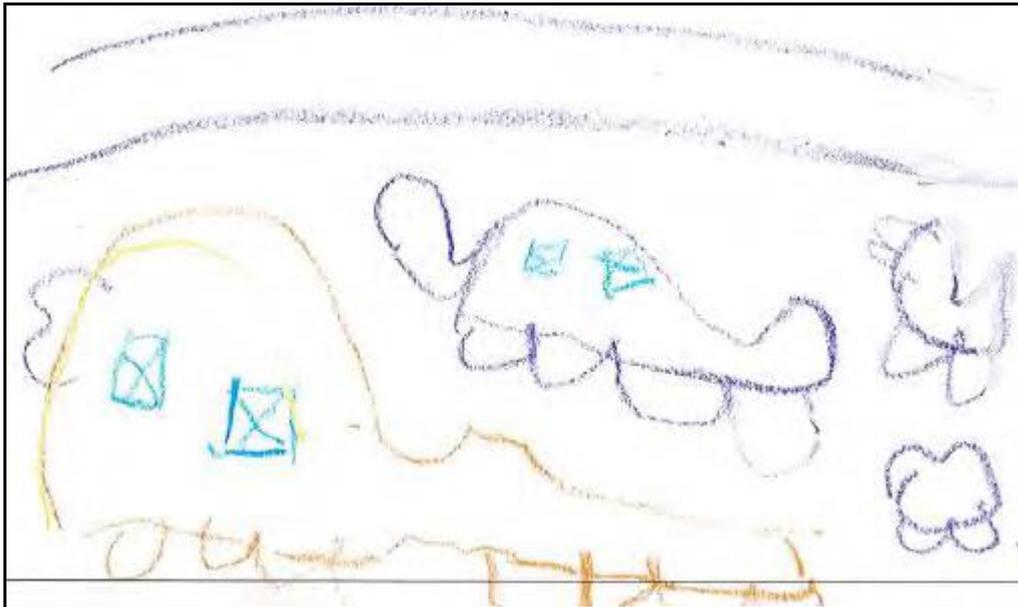
- ❖ *Nature strips on the side of road. Better zebra crossing on Johnson street. Better/ safer bike path on Nicholson St. Reduce car traffic. Get rid of traffic around parks to make them quieter. There is too much traffic and it is too noisy.) (8 year old, Abbotsford)*
- ❖ *More bike paths and less traffic and safer road crossing (8 year old, Carlton North).*
- ❖ *Nicholson street is too noisy (7 year old, Fitzroy North)*
- ❖ *No graffiti. No cars. More playgrounds; more subway shops; more trees. (8 year old Fitzroy).*
- ❖ *Some help crossing busy roads – it takes too long (6 year old, Collingwood).*

2. Can you write and/or draw about what makes it difficult for you to be in the City of Yarra?



Traffic jams (child aged 3-8 years, Abbotsford) .

- ❖ *More parks (4 year old; Richmond North)*
- ❖ *More bigger open natural spaces. Build a hacker space (place for young people to build robots, program and chat about technology) (8 year old, Abbotsford)*
- ❖ *More schools next to the parks. More parks to get rid of my energy. More parks! (4 & 5 years, Clifton Hill)*
- ❖ *I wish there were kangaroos (4 year old, Richmond)*
- ❖ *More sand (top up with clean sand) at sandpark (park st) & big playground (Edinburgh gardens) (7 year old, Fitzroy North)*
- ❖ *Would be great if bicycle track to Abbotsford could stay on one side (not cross river). (7 year old, Richmond)*
- ❖ *If there weren't so many cars making the air polluted. Less cars, more bikes. Monkey bars in the parks. Collect leaves in autumn so they don't blow into your eyes. More trees. More wildlife. (7 year old Abbotsford).*



Too many cars (3 year old, Fitzroy)

Children asked for the inclusion of additional resources to open space areas for younger children (for example, things at the skate park for the little kids only, a pirate ship to play on, more places to ride my bike, additional adventure play equipment for climbing, growing community gardens with flowers and fruit trees, outdoor movies and general tidiness)

Whilst children generally love the swimming pools at Yarra some children also told us that they like to have fun things added to the facilities such as water squirters, a water slide, a playground and wave pool and general play areas in the pool.

OUR VISION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

This Early Years Strategy articulates a vision for young children and their families that reflects the voices of children and the community and is confirmed by the information available on how to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Our community listens to children's voices supporting happy, healthy and resilient children and ensuring families experiencing vulnerability get the support they need when they need it.

PRINCIPLES

The Early Years Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities. Building on the Charter and drawing from the voices of children, their families, community, research and related evidence and advice, we have identified six key principles that put children at the centre of our planning, advocacy and service delivery:

- *Respect* – Children and their families’ strengths, interests and abilities are recognised and celebrated.
- *Participation* - The voices of our youngest citizens are heard along with those of their families enabling both young children and their families to participate in decisions that affect them.
- *Healthy learning and development* – Children’s services, the physical environment and infrastructure are all designed to promote young children’s health and wellbeing encouraging learning through play in safe and healthy environments.
- *Inclusive and accessible* - All young children and their families are valued and included. They have access to opportunity and support responsive to their level of need.
- *Valuing diversity* – The diversity of Yarra families and children is recognised as a valuable asset to our community and that diversity is integrated into all aspects of planning, policy and service delivery.
- *Effective partnerships* - Partnerships with families, education providers, community and other organisations and levels of government underpin the development and implementation of services and initiatives. Advocacy and partnerships aim to improve indicators of young children’s health and wellbeing.

The aspirations and ideas raised by children and the community aligned strongly with what the research is telling us about what improves outcomes for children and families. This has informed the five goals and supporting actions towards realising our vision for Yarra.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

Goal 1: The voices of young children in Yarra are listened to along with those of their families (principles of respect and participation)

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DELIVERABLE</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>	
1	Endorse the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter and seek to support its implementation across Yarra	Endorse the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter and seek to support its implementation across Yarra.	Progress towards promotion of Charter across Yarra.	As at December each year
2	Develop tools to support ethical and meaningful consultation with young children across Council and by community agencies working with children including provision for responses by young children in surveys of the general population	Work with Communications and Customer Services to identify and promote methods for consulting with children. Continue implementation of the National Quality Framework and engaging with children.	Information about consultative methods and opportunities available. External assessment on communicating with children in Council's education and care centres.	As at December each year As at December each year
3	Encourage case management approaches to working with families that provide specific plans for children as well as their families.	Family support services case management practice includes plans for children aged less than 8 years.	Percentage of relevant family support cases that have specific plans for children.	As at December each year

Goal 2: Yarra's urban design promotes active and adventurous children learning through play (principle of healthy learning & development)

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DELIVERABLE</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>	
4	Adopt 'child friendly' approaches to urban design and planning including streetscapes, roads and community infrastructure to promote independent, healthy, adventurous and active children.	Identify design project for piloting children's consultation and develop evaluation framework.	Pilot and evaluation framework established for project by September 2015	Complete by September 2015

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
	Consult with children about actions to improve pedestrian safety.	Actions to improve pedestrian safety i.e. education, request for additional signage.	As at December 2015	
	Work with Sustainability and Strategic Transport to promote safe cycling routes to/from community facilities, schools, early education and care centres and parks for children and parents wanting to ride with them.	Evidence of promotional activities and children's and their families engagement.	As at December each year	
5	Ensure the availability of inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces and places within the municipality that meet the needs and interests of young children and promote learning through play.	Updated Municipal Wide Infrastructure Plan to include design requirements for facilities and places.	Updated Municipal Wide Infrastructure Plan.	Completed July 2015
6	Maintain Yarra's swimming pools and develop new pocket parks, playgrounds and other infrastructure providing opportunities for active outdoor play and interaction with natural environments by young children and their families.	Continue to promote and/or provide recreational and leisure programs and activities for children. Provision and maintenance of playgrounds and natural environments in Yarra. Work with sustainability committee, Recreation and Open Space to support natural environments for children. Investigate opportunities to improve and/or promote access for all abilities activities for	Progress towards promotion of recreational and leisure programs and activities for children. Promotion of provision and the maintenance to children and families with children. Annual meeting with Sustainability Committee and early years services. Evidence of promotion and/or improvements in access for all abilities.	As at December each year As at December each year By July each year As at December each year

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
	children (indoor and outdoor play) in Yarra. Continue participation in Environmental Education in Early Childhood (EEEC).	Number of EEEC meetings / conferences / training attended.	As at December each year	
7	Continue to support the provision of structured and unstructured play and physical activities for young children in Yarra.	Update Children's Services page on Council's website to include information on play and physical activities opportunities. Continue to encourage participation in playgroups across Yarra. Encourage community organisations to access grants to provide activities for children	Website updated Quarterly review of information Number and variety of playgroups in Yarra; number of participants in Yarra Playgroups Network. Number of grants and number of activities funded relevant to children's activities.	As at December each year As at December each year As at December each year

Goal 3: Young children and their families in Yarra are resilient (principles of inclusive and accessible and valuing diversity)

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
8	Continue to support families in the development of a child's emotional development	Maintain Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service and service responsiveness to changes in demand at centres. Continued Implementation of National Quality Framework in education and care services and quality programs in occasional child care.	Number of key ages and stages visits conducted by the MCH service. External assessment of service ratings.	As at December each year As at December each year

ACTION		DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY
		Continue to provide Parenting Information Program responsive to community's needs and interests.	Number of participants and participants' feedback.	As at December each year
		Continue to encourage participation in playgroups across Yarra.	Number and variety of playgroups in Yarra.	As at December each year
			Evidence of communication of programs to culturally and linguistically diverse and vulnerable residents and ancillary services.	As at December each year
9	Maintain the high rates of breastfeeding and immunisation of young children in Yarra and promote stronger participation in all ages and stages of the Maternal and Child Health program including from 18 months onwards.	Maintain Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service responsiveness to changes in demand at centres.	Number of key ages and stages visits for children; participation of vulnerable families in MCH service; number of new parent groups.	As at December each year
		Promote and provide MCH service information in languages others than English.	Evidence of service information in languages other than English and Plain English and number of consultations where interpreters were used.	As at December each year
		Continue provision of immunisation service in the community.	Immunisation service sessions and statistics.	As at December each year
		Identify and promote locations such as the Connie Benn Centre where drop in breastfeed and baby change facilities can be offered.	Evidence promotion of facilities.	As at December each year

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
10	Continue to develop welcoming and safe opportunities for young children to exercise their sense of curiosity, develop new skills and enjoy learning with family and friends such as through programs and activities at Yarra Libraries, playgroups and other options.	Work in partnership with Yarra Libraries, Civic Venues and Events, Recreation and Open Space, Building and Property, Community Planning to look at spaces available for early years' activities and services that are safe and welcoming.	<p>Evidence of cross collaboration and communication.</p> <p>Number of early years services and activities provided in Council facilities.</p> <p>Evidence of communication of programs to culturally and linguistically diverse and vulnerable residents and ancillary services.</p>	<p>As at December each year</p> <p>As at December each year</p> <p>As at December each year</p>
11	Continue to participate in the delivery of services and collaborations and further develop Council's understanding of service delivery challenges and opportunities in Yarra.	<p>Continue to facilitate the Early Years Reference Group and encourage local services to showcase their services and also provide policy and information updates.</p> <p>Develop a Yarra forum with key service and policy providers to support policy and planning to support transition and development for children from birth to 12 years.</p> <p>Continue to organise and promote educational leaders network with focus on professional development and quality of education for children (education and care services).</p> <p>Continue to participate in and promote the Yarra based Transition Network to support</p>	<p>Early Years Reference Group quarterly meetings.</p> <p>Yarra from Birth to 12 Forum established with Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Number of meetings and participants attending meetings Annual evaluation of network by participants.</p> <p>Number of meetings attended.</p>	<p>As at December each year</p> <p>As at December 2015</p> <p>As at December each year</p> <p>As at December each year</p>

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DELIVERABLE</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>
	<p>transition of children from kindergarten to primary school.</p> <p>Review existing Outside School Hours Care programs to identify areas of enhancement and ways that these programs align with new middle years' programs and youth school holiday program to ensure seamless transition for children and families.</p>	<p>Promotion materials, programs and processes for Outside School Hours Care programs, middle years and youth school holiday program are aligned and offer effective pathways.</p> <p>Evidence of communication of programs to culturally and linguistically diverse and vulnerable residents and ancillary services</p>	<p>As at December 2015</p> <p>As at December each year</p>

Goal 4: Children and families experiencing vulnerability are identified early and experience effective, respectful responses to their needs (principles of inclusion and accessible, valuing diversity and effective partnerships)

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DELIVERABLE</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>
12	<p>Develop and support agile response models that enable respectful, episodic intervention where families of young children are experiencing vulnerability and avoid creating ongoing dependency where possible.</p> <p>Explore and identify service models and improvements through appropriate consultation with children and families about their service experience.</p>	<p>Evidence of casework and referral practice.</p> <p>Children's and Family Services client feedback (service experience from client perspectives).</p>	<p>As at December each year</p> <p>As at December each year</p>

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY
		Continue to monitor research and pilots relevant to universal services and vulnerability.	Monitoring of programs and research and their potential application to Yarra. As at December each year
13	Promote increased participation in the spectrum of early childhood services including antenatal care, maternal and child health, playgroups, early childhood education and care and before and after school care by families experiencing vulnerability in line with the principle of progressive universalism.	<p>Staff training and promotion of culturally sensitive service practices.</p> <p>Encourage Participation in early years and family services.</p> <p>Maternal and Child Health and family support services engage with and refer vulnerable families to appropriate services. Work in partnership with community organisations to deliver playgroups service model to align with other services and opportunities for parents.</p> <p>Improve transition from New Parent groups to playgroups and learning programs</p>	<p>Evidence of staff training and professional development in culturally sensitive service practices.</p> <p>Diversity in participation in early year's services commensurate to Yarra's population profile.</p> <p>Number of vulnerable families and referrals in Family Services</p> <p>Evidence of partnership and promotion opportunities for playgroups.</p> <p>Evidence of communication about playgroups to culturally and linguistically diverse and vulnerable residents and ancillary services.</p> <p>Project established to investigate and pilot improving transition for families between MCH New Parent groups, with neighbourhood houses, learning programs.</p> <p>As at December each year</p> <p>By September 2015</p>

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
14	Develop initiatives that promote inclusion of all families including a focus on local services, availability of transport to facilitate access, and enhancing the cultural mix of the early years workforce and outreach to hard to reach families.	Continue Yarra involvement in the Patchwork Project (an online tool that allows services to see the contact details of the other organisations and workers who are providing assistance to vulnerable families).	Progress of Patchwork project	As at December 2015
		Seek to improve transport and promotion of alternative transport for families accessing early years services in Yarra.	Council's website, service information and communications promote alternative transport to access early years and family services.	As at December each year
			Evidence of communication of service to vulnerable and culturally and linguistically diverse residents and services	As at December each year
		Work with People and Culture on workforce planning and forecasting service for family and early years' services.	Progress towards implementation of One Yarra Strategy workforce planning activities for family and early years services.	As at December each year
15	Advocate for and develop partnerships that respond to the needs of children experiencing developmental challenges including the need for programs such as enhanced Maternal and Child Health, therapeutic playgroups and increased preschool field officer support	Joint advocacy effort to increase program funding for children experiencing developmental challenges through Inner and Northern Regions.	Evidence of advocacy and partnership approaches	As at December each year
		Continue to attend key network sector and local meetings to build strategic partnerships to	Frequency of network and local sector meetings and partnership involvements	As at December each year

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	MEASURE	PROGRESS BY	
		response to needs of children experiencing developmental challenges		
16	Enhance the creative delivery of Maternal and Child Health services to ensure they are responsive to the diversity of families including those experiencing the transition to parenthood for the first time.	Seek client feedback on responsiveness of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service. Parenting Information Program that promotes MCH service and includes transition to parenthood.	Family Services Client Feedback report (service experience from client perspectives). Number of participants and feedback	As at December each year As at December each year
17	Support improvements in responding to the asthma and poor dental health for children in Yarra	Increase links with Asthma Victoria to promote and conduct free one hour education for staff and parents / carers of preschool and school age children about asthma to increase community awareness and understanding and service responsiveness. Seek recognition for all of Yarra's education and care and children's services as Asthma Friendly Children's Services from the Asthma Foundation of Victoria. Continue to participate in health programs for children such as Smiles for Miles and promote connections with	Number of asthma education sessions conducted in Yarra. Percentage of Council's relevant services for children recognised as an Asthma Friendly Children's Service. Level of participation by local services in dental health and asthma prevention and education programs	As at December each year As at December each year As at December each year

<i>ACTION</i>	<i>DELIVERABLE</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>
	community health providers such as community dentist practitioners.		

Goal 5: Collaborative service planning and service capacity in the early years and well managed early childhood transitions (principle of effective partnerships)

<i>ACTIONS</i>	<i>DELIVERABLES</i>	<i>MEASURES</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>	
18	Continue to demonstrate leadership through the development of and advocacy for models of flexible service delivery and quality programming that can be replicated across the sector including through the Child First Alliance.	In collaboration with Innovations Branch investigate options for developing central enrolment system for all early childhood education and care services (building on the system for Council operated services).	Research to inform business case for project bid for Council's annual planning cycle.	As at December 2015
19	Maintain and broaden partnerships with parents, community agencies, schools and service providers and other levels of government to improve the sharing of information, expertise and knowledge of the early years	Engagement with neighbouring councils to plan for early years services including for those living near the borders of Yarra.	Participation in northern region early years planners group; Northern Region Children's Services Managers group.	As at December each year
		Improve links between Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Preschool Field Officer and school nurses.	Quarterly meeting established for school nurses, preschool field officer and MCH services with all areas of Yarra covered annually.	As at December each year
		Quarterly parent evenings are held at Council's early education and care centres.	Frequency and number of meetings.	As at December each year
	Investigate interest in Yarra wide Parents Committee to inform	Parents' survey and implementation of proposals reflecting of	As at December each year	

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	MEASURES	PROGRESS BY	
	service delivery and planning. Facilitate networking and collaboration between multicultural groups, service providers and Council.	Yarra wide participation. Evidence of communication of service with culturally and linguistically diverse residents and service providers.	As at December each year	
20	Continue to ensure that Aboriginal children and families have access to culturally appropriate and safe services and programs that acknowledge and meet their health and wellbeing needs, challenges and aspirations.	Contribute to the implementation of the Aboriginal Partnerships Plan 2015-2018	Evidence of building relationships with Aboriginal organisations and families and building participations in early years services and programs across Yarra.	As at December each year
21	Develop reliable data sets for undertaking research and evaluation to support stronger collaboration and referrals between agencies addressing the needs of young children and their families.	Establish non-identifying baseline data to strengthen information for research and evaluation.	Evidence of use of data supporting service planning and development.	As at December each year
22	Plan and offer professional development forums and workshops that build the capacity of early childhood services, community agencies and schools to collaborate effectively to deliver quality programs especially at key transition points for young children and their families	Work with Community Health to continue to improve nutrition, quality and variety of meals for children in education and care settings. Invite staff from community managed education and care and occasional care services to attend Council's professional development days. Explore opportunities for staff / organisational training in cultural	Nutrition analysis and meal planning advice and support provided to cooks in Council's Education and Care services. Professional Development Days include provision for staff from community managed early years services to attend sessions relevant to them. Planned approach to cultural competency.	As at December each year As at December each year As at December each year

<i>ACTIONS</i>	<i>DELIVERABLES</i>	<i>MEASURES</i>	<i>PROGRESS BY</i>	
	competency. Hold annual forum with services and organisations working with children and young people (birth to 25 years).	Forum planned in collaboration with early years reference group, Yarra from Birth to 12 and youth advisory committee	As at December each year	
23	Advocate for the rights and interests of the Yarra community in the development of directions in Federal and State Government policies and programs for early childhood	Monitor and participate in reviews of National Quality Framework, funding and regulations. Continue senior officer participation on MAV Early Years and Maternal and Child Health Committees.	Evidence of information and advocacy for Yarra. Frequency and number of meetings.	As at December each year As at December each year

REVIEW

Council will annually review the progress and achievements of the Early Years Strategy. And an annual report on the implementation of the Strategy will be presented to Council, which will also enable appropriate responses to emerging issues.

Appendix 1 –Australian Early Development Census, 2009 and 2012

Domain	Proportion of children developmentally vulnerable		Change in children's development between 2009 & 2012
	2009 Survey	2012 Survey	
Physical health & wellbeing	8.3	8.4	Increase in vulnerability but not significant
Social competence	8.1	6.1	Significant decrease in vulnerability
Emotional maturity	9.5	7.1	Significant decrease in vulnerability
Language & cognitive skills (school based)	5.7	5.7	No change in vulnerability
Communication skills & general knowledge	10	10	No change in vulnerability
Vulnerable on one domain	22.2	18.3	Significant decrease in vulnerability
Vulnerable on two or more domains	10.6	9.1	Decrease in vulnerability but not significant
Number of children	555	582	

Source: Australian Government, Australian Early Development Census <https://www.aedc.gov.au/>