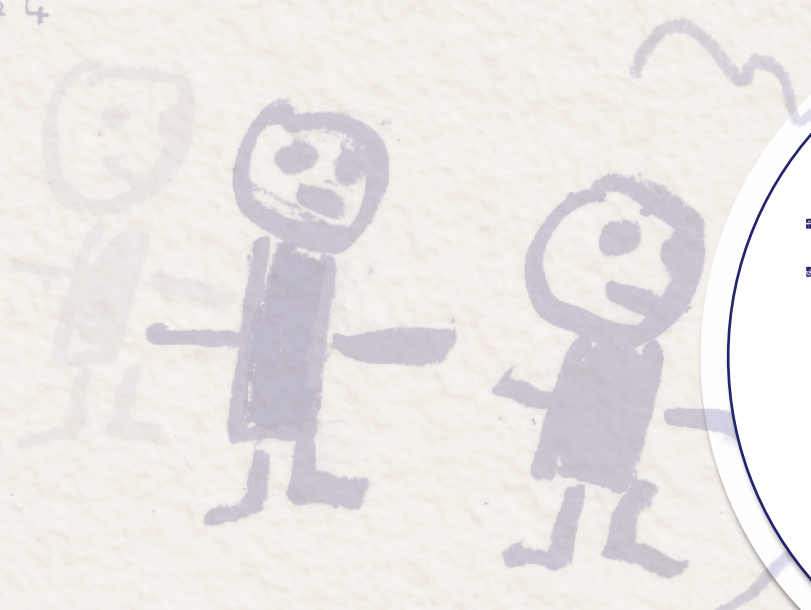




PETER  
Age 4



# Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015-2018



In the Woi wurrung language of the traditional owners of the City of Maribyrnong, 'wominjeka' means welcome and 'yurrongi' means to proceed. The City of Maribyrnong is welcoming of Indigenous Australians and intends to proceed its support and celebration of their people and culture.

We acknowledge that we are on traditional lands of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past and present.

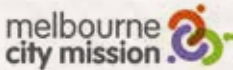
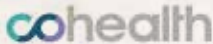
Acknowledgements and thanks

We would like to acknowledge all the children and families who participated in the consultations. This strategy exists because of you, and your views were a crucial element of the plan's development.

We would also like to thank the education and care services that supported the engagement process; Angliss Children's Centre, Brenbeal Children's Centre, Bulldogs Community Children's Centre, Cherry Crescent Kindergarten, Church St Children's Centre, Clare Court Children's Service, Empire Early Learning Centre, Explorers Early Learning, Highpoint Kinder Haven, Little VIP's Child Care Centre, North Maidstone Kindergarten, Maribyrnong River Children's Centre, Merriwa Kindergarten, Saltwater Child Care Centre and VICSEG New Futures Family Day Care.

Additionally we would like to thank 100 Story Buildings and the Women's Circus who developed the X-Ray Specs and Walking School Bus projects to support our consultation with children in the middle years of primary school. Thank you also to the local schools that participated in these projects and encouraged children to be part of the online Kids Neighbourhood Survey.

We would like to thank all the organisations and community partners that make up the Maribyrnong Early Years Alliance (MEYA) for their time and contributions to this strategy.



VALARIE  
Age 5



"Valarie's library" Valarie (5 years old) Explorers Early Learning a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014



# Executive Summary

The Maribyrnong Strategy for Children's 2015-2018 is the City of Maribyrnong's third strategic plan for children (formerly known as the Maribyrnong Early Years Plan).

This Strategy builds on the achievements of previous plans and has strengthened the partnership approach with local community service organisations and schools who collaborate with Council to deliver the actions in this strategy for children from birth to 12 years of age.

Children in the City of Maribyrnong are growing up in a place of dynamic change and growth. The cultural diversity and community spirit of local neighbourhoods attract families raising children, with a projected 30% growth in the number of children in the next 15 years. As an inner city municipality, gentrification is also changing the local demographic profile of children. For example the 2012 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) revealed that 5 year old children living in the City of Maribyrnong were less developmentally vulnerable than 5 year old children were in the 2009 AEDI Census.

Recent consultation with over 700 children aged between 2 and 12 years of age, and 200 families revealed that Maribyrnong is a good place to raise a family and that local children, families and young people seek opportunities to express themselves, participate in local activities and live in neighbourhoods that allow them to feel safe and part of the community.

**Maribyrnong City Council invests in services and facilities for children and families to provide a strong foundation for learning, health and wellbeing. Council's roles include:**

- Community development – to promote social cohesion and inclusion
- Planning for community infrastructure – to meet the demand of a growing population
- Facilitator of partnerships – to tackle wicked social problems
- Coordinator of the local service system – to avoid service duplication and to prevent children and families from falling through the gaps
- Advocacy for children and families – to ensure the voices, knowledge and ideas of local children inform decision making

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest Framework (2013) guided the consultation process to determine what constitutes a good life for children in Maribyrnong City. The Nest has also formed the structure for decision making and priority setting for this Strategy under the headings of Loved and Safe, Material Basics, Healthy, Learning and Participating.

**The Maribyrnong Early Years Alliance (locally known as the MEYA) is a partnership group that has representation from a range of organisations including those from local Health Services, Education and Care Services, Children and Family Support Services, community organisations, State Government and Maribyrnong City Council.**

**Some of the priority actions for 2015 include:**

- Engaging children and families from diverse backgrounds into universal programs such as Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services, playgroups and kindergarten
- Improving Council owned MCH, childcare and kindergarten facilities to meet National Standards and be fit for purpose
- Implementing the Family Strengthening Strategy and enabling the thoughts of local families to inform the future actions of the strategy

The Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015-2018 is not just Maribyrnong Council's Strategy. The yearly action plans will be developed with the Maribyrnong Early Years Alliance of community based organisations to share the implementation of this Strategy, through collective good will and shared impact.

This Strategy represents a strong foundation for collaboration with local partners, as well as shared planning tool that specifically places the needs of children at the centre of creating the conditions for a good life in the City of Maribyrnong. It also represents children's agency and ability to give considered and meaningful opinions on their lives and lived experiences. Throughout the consultation process, children frequently talked of "our community" and indicated that they saw themselves as having responsibility to create "a good life".

*Dear Mr Mayor, Hey, how are you? I heard that you need help from people like me to help improve our community. Well you have asked the right person. I have a great idea. How about more public toilets in Footscray. You can not have enough toilets. If your child was busting to go to the toilet I will tell you now it will not end well. Just think about it, if we had more toilets there would be less accidents and more happy people and that is what you want right? I told you I had a great idea. Anyway please consider this suggestion.*

*A local primary school student as a part of the XRay Specs project 2014*

**Some of the key messages that children told us:**

- Children enjoy peaceful streets, walking and riding bikes within their local neighbourhoods
- Children enjoyed having friends and caring neighbours close by
- Green spaces, trees and parks are important to children
- Children are aware of pollution, traffic and graffiti in their neighbourhoods
- Festivals and community events are enjoyed by children
- More water taps and public toilets are needed

*"I like living in the neighbourhood because the park is really close and it gives my family an opportunity to bond with each other... I also like living here because my neighbours are really nice and they gave me moon cakes and all sorts of things. My mum even learnt new recipes and loves baking now!"*

*From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014*

**The Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015 – 2018 links to a number of initiatives and strategies including:**

- Maribyrnong Family Strengthening Strategy 2014-18
- Council Plan 2013-17 which incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Maribyrnong Strategy for Young People 2014-2018
- Maribyrnong Community Infrastructure Plan 2011
- Revitalising Braybrook
- Department of Education and Training (DET) Best Start Action Plan 2015
- Human Rights and Social Justice Framework 2013-16



# What is 'a good life' in Maribyrnong?

This Strategy has employed the ARACY Nest Framework (2013) as a basis to guide decision making and develop key priorities for the next four years. The aim to support families to have "a good life" is at the centre of the ARACY vision<sup>1</sup> and aligns with the aspirations of Maribyrnong City Council, the Maribyrnong Early Years Alliance (MEYA) and local children and families. Council and its partner organisations understand that a positive sense of self and culture is central to the welfare of children and families and is encompassed in all priority actions.

The ARACY Nest Framework provided the basis for the consultation process with children and the local service sector to obtain a collective view of what makes "a good life" for children aged 2 to 12 years of age. The Maribyrnong Strategy for Young People (2014-2018)<sup>2</sup> also used the ARACY Nest as a framework for understanding and measuring the health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25 years of age. The consultation theme "what is a good life" was incorporated into the consultations that Council undertook with parents, grandparents and carers to develop the Maribyrnong Family Strengthening Strategy (2014-2018).

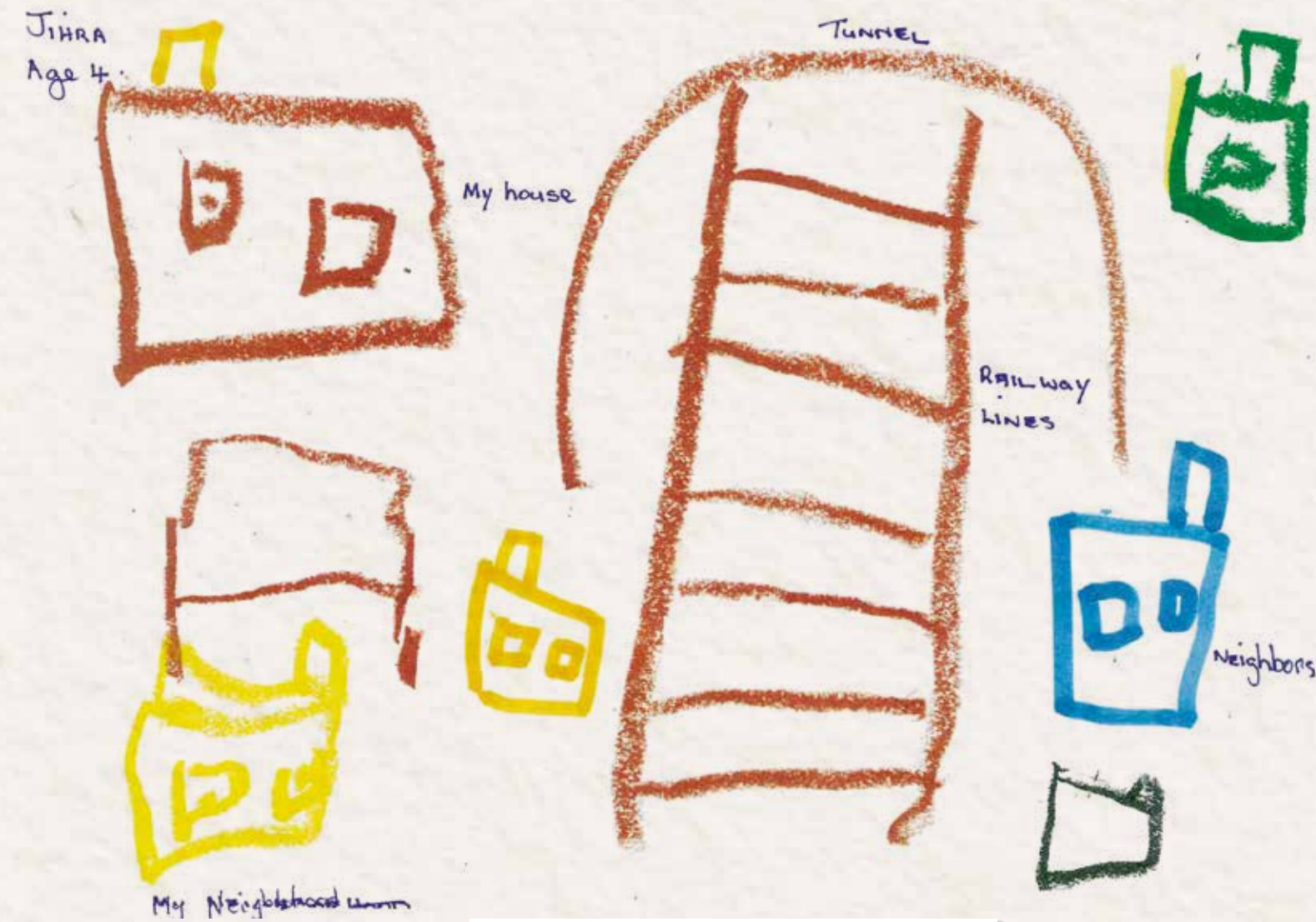
As a result of this process, Maribyrnong City Council now has a full picture and a continuum of needs of what children, young people and families view as necessary to have a good life

in the City of Maribyrnong. The actions in this Children's Strategy are directly informed by what our community told us, as well as an evidence base of relevant local data sets and research findings relating to the children who are growing up in the City of Maribyrnong.

Integral to the ARACY Nest is the understanding that economic productivity is linked to the wellbeing of children and young people. Research in Canada shows that reducing the rate of early childhood vulnerability outweighs the costs by a ratio of 6:1<sup>3</sup>. ARACY's goal is to see a shift in Australia's early childhood vulnerability with a reduction from 22% to 15% by 2020.

What makes "a good life" means different things to different people but intrinsic to all good lives is the need to have health and wellbeing determinants nurtured. To achieve a good life, communities need to have agency, feel engaged and have a sense of belonging<sup>4</sup>.

Children participating in the Women's Circus 'Walking School Bus' consultation 2014



"My neighbourhood" Jihara (4 years old) Angliss Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services Consultation 2014

The Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY) has developed the following shared vision:

"All young people are loved and safe, have material basics, are healthy, are learning and participating and have a positive sense of identity and culture."

This vision is for all children and youth regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnicity, race and socioeconomic status.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aracy.org.au/projects/the-nest>

<sup>2</sup> [www.phoenixyouth.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MCC-youth-strategy-v1.0-web.pdf](http://www.phoenixyouth.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MCC-youth-strategy-v1.0-web.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://journal.cpha.ca/index.php/ciph/article/view/2012>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/early\\_years\\_learning\\_framework.pdf](https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/early_years_learning_framework.pdf)



# Consultation findings – what we were told and what we will do

The following section summarises the contributions of 713 children aged between 2 and 12 years, who provided feedback through online surveys, drawings, focus groups, letters to the mayor and interactive physical activities. The consultations gathered a range of considered responses in which children frequently talked of “our community” and indicated that they saw themselves as having an active level of responsibility to create “a good life”. Local children and families also mentioned the desire to have opportunities to express themselves, participate in local activities, and to live in neighbourhoods that allow them to feel comfortable, safe and part of the community.

*“A good neighbourhood is a place where you know lots of people who live nearby, when you walk to the shops or go to the park you stop and talk to lots of people, a place with a strong sense of community.”*

Braybrook parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014

**The Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015-2018 focuses on children from birth to 12 years of age. The strategy is based on the thoughts of children, families and local service providers on what is “a good life”.**

The consultation findings are presented according to the five key areas that the ARACY Nest identifies as needing to be present for children to have a good life: loved and safe, material basics, healthy, learning and participating. Surrounding these areas is the presence of supportive systems and environments, which is built through government and non-government sector partnerships, shared strategies and a secure economic and environmental context.



“Peter with his family at home” Peter (5 years old)  
North Maidstone Kindergarten as a part of the  
Maribyrnong Preschool Services Consultation 2014



# Loved and Safe

Being loved and safe embraces positive family relationships and connections with others, along with personal and community safety. Children and youth who are loved and safe are confident, have a strong sense of self identity and high self esteem. They form secure attachments, have pro-social peer connections and positive adult role models or mentors are present in their life. Children and youth who are loved and safe are resilient: they can withstand life challenges and respond constructively to setbacks and unanticipated events.

ARACY 2013: The Nest Framework

## What children told us...

Children shared that they like to enjoy their time and activities with friends and family. They enjoy peaceful streets, walking and riding to school and spending time in and around their neighbourhoods. Having friends living close by and caring neighbours were often mentioned. Children across all the consulted age groups talked of going to local shops, cafés, libraries and swimming pools. The need for green spaces, trees and local parks were common observations.

Children were keen to mention things that concerned them, these included:

- graffiti that they regarded as hurtful or racist
- pollution created by traffic
- the amount of traffic on the roads
- the need for more bike paths and safe crossing points on roads
- litter in the streets
- the need for public toilets
- the need for more swings in local playgrounds

- the need to be able to access good food and water easily
- the need to have appropriate amenity such as seating, play equipment, shade
- the need to have a caring attitude to homeless people

The children suggested a number of solutions to the challenges they identified. The children's ideas included:

- having more community art and security lighting to lessen graffiti
- having more safe places to cross roads
- having more community events such as festivals and classes
- having activities at events and spaces that are appropriate for both children and adults
- planting more trees
- developing more bike paths and footpaths
- providing more play equipment in parks
- supplying water taps and public toilets

Dear Mr Mayor, Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I have heard you want some input from the community. So here's my idea. I reckon a big colourful mural in the middle of Nicholson Street Mall (on the floor). It would be cheap (just a few cans of paint) and add a striking effect to it. It may even become a tourist attraction if you make it good! Add character, rise public moral, promote local artists. These are just a few things something like a mural could cause, I think you get the idea.

A local primary school student as a part of the X-Ray Specs project 2014





### What parents told us...

Parents and carers shared views that were similar to their children. Many highlighted the inner city location, community spirit and open spaces as integral to their good life within the City of Maribyrnong. The proximity to schools, work and shops were also important to parents and were consistently noted as a positive part of raising their family in the City.

Parents felt festivals and events contributed to opportunities for cultures to learn about each other and celebrate differences. Many noted that Maribyrnong City's cultural diversity is unique and beneficial to their family life.

### What local service providers told us...

Service providers identified the need to create a strong rapport and sense of trust with families to support them in building strong attachment with their children, reinforce understandings of child development and strengthen capacity building practices within families. Service providers were keen to be involved in the development of innovative practices to target "wicked" problems. Services also want to further develop supports for newly arrived communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families and those families who are at risk of disadvantage.

*"My organisation focuses on the family as the most important factor for a child to feel loved and safe"*

Melbourne City Mission staff member at the MEYA Consultation and Planning Forum July 2014

*"I feel part of the community because people smile and wave (even though) I can't speak much English"*

Braybrook parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014

### What the data and research findings tells us...

- Some families and neighbourhoods within the City of Maribyrnong fare less well than the state average on a number of the ADEC (Australian Early Childhood Census formerly known as the AEDI)<sup>5</sup> domains. The domains encompass physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge.
- The 2012 AEDI census indicated that 10.6% of children living in the City of Maribyrnong were noted as developmentally at risk<sup>6</sup>, this is a decrease since the 2009 AEDI census when the figure was 12.8%.
- Social connections are known to be important for good physical and mental health across the lifespan (Holt-Lunstad, Smith & Layton, 2010; Small et al., 2011; Morgan & Eastwood, 2014). This is particularly the case during the early years of parenting as this is a life stage where many parents report an increased need for informal support (Miller & Darlington 2002; Hanna et al., 2002; Hogg 2009; Devolin et al 2012).
- In 2014-15 the Tweddle Child and Family Health Service situated in the City of Maribyrnong has worked with 69 local families. The issues faced by families have included primary relationship attachment issues, parenting support, mental health issues, financial issues, sleep settling, feeding difficulties and isolation (both social and geographic). (Sourced from Tweddle Child and Family Health Service)

- Parental perception of neighbourhood safety can affect children's daily activities. In the VicHealth Indicators Survey 2011, 96% of respondents said they felt safe in their local spaces during the day. During the night, 71.5% of households with children felt safe in their local space.
- In 2011-12, children were present in 35.7% of family violence incidents reported in Maribyrnong City.
- Children who are bullied are more likely to feel disconnected to school and consequently have poorer outcomes. Children who are bullied also tend to have less attendance and completion rates. The annual Attitude to School Survey of government school children suggested around 17.5% of Year 5 students feel they have been bullied.
- In 2012, Maribyrnong City had an 87.3% rate of "School Connectedness". The State average was 85.8%.

*"I like that there are always friendly people around and that the shops are just around the corner. I like living close by to the City. I feel safe in my community. I know that if something went wrong someone would help me. I like that there's lots of parks around so there's lots of things to do."*

From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014

## Strategic Direction 1 – Loved and Safe

We will work with our community to enable all children to feel loved, safe, resilient and able to withstand life's challenges.

### Priority Actions 2015-2018

- 1.1 In consultation with local families develop initiatives involving bi-cultural workers to engage children and families from diverse backgrounds in universal programs such as MCH, playgroups and kindergarten.
- 1.2 Involve children and families in the development of initiatives and projects.
- 1.3 Develop innovative, local level responses to enhance access to programs and to support smooth transitions between services for children and families.

*"The west has diversity of culture and diversity is the spice of life"*

Braybrook parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.aedc.gov.au/ClientData/CommunityProfiles/2012\\_24330.pdf](http://www.aedc.gov.au/ClientData/CommunityProfiles/2012_24330.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Children are noted as developmentally at risk when they are of vulnerable across two or more ADEC Domains.



# Having Material Basics

Children and youth who have material basics have access to the things they need to live a "normal life". They live in adequate and stable housing, with adequate clothing, healthy food, and clean water and the materials they need to participate in education and training pathways.

ARACY 2013: The Nest Framework

## What children told us...

Generally the children's responses to what they like about their neighbourhoods focused on the opportunities available to them to move around their neighbourhood easily and safely, having the places they like to go close by and the people they need available to support them. Children from all the age groups noted their family and parents as the key supports for them to live "a good life", as well as friends, teachers, school crossing supervisors and other children's parents. When asked what they would need to be more healthy a substantial amount of the children talked of access to good food, being close to parks, enough swings and play equipment at parks, clean water, more water taps available, less pollution and less traffic.

## What parents told us...

Parents identified that having a range of options for health care, education, recreation, employment and the ability to be financially stable all contribute to a healthy life. Parents also noted that having appropriate neighbourhood amenity played an integral role in community attitudes both within a neighbourhood and from those who don't live there.

## What local service providers told us...

Service providers suggested a key role for their programs was to support families to have a "safe landing". Services noted that there needed to be an integrated approach between service providers, one that wraps around families and allows family ownership of decisions and actions. Improved information sharing and a greater awareness of the way other services worked and how they could work together in a more coordinated way were mentioned at both the consultation forums.

"When I first came here I heard that Footscray is the worst place, I thought that something might happen to me. Now I live here, it is a good place to live"

Footscray parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014



"Me and my mum walking to the supermarket to buy food"  
Sam (4 years old) Brenbeal Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014

"My organisation will connect with a broader range of services to support our diverse community of families"

Explorers Early Learning staff member at the MEYA Consultation and Planning Forum December 2014





"Charlotte walking down the street" Charlotte (4 years old) Brenbeal Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014

"Make things out of toothpaste so you could just wipe your toothbrush on something and clean your teeth. Make more fruit trees."

From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014

## Strategic Direction 2 – Having Material Basics

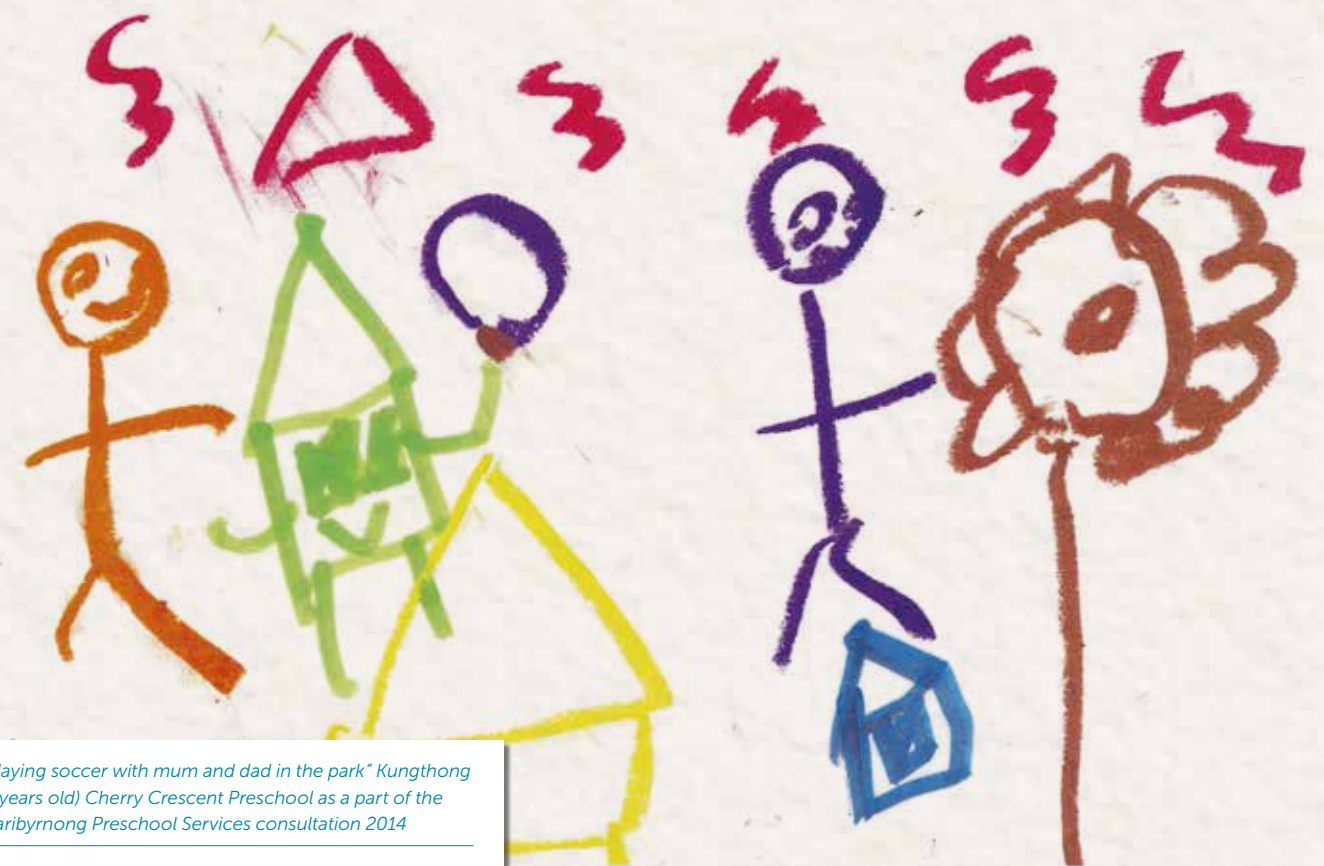
We will work with our community and partner agencies to support children to have their basic needs met enabling them to make successful transitions between home, preschool services and schools.

### Priority Actions 2015-2018

- 2.1 Promote participation in community health and educational services.
- 2.2 Support the participation of Maribyrnong residents in the workforce by providing local child care choices in community owned and private child care services.

### What the data and research findings tells us...

- The ADEC identifies that there is more vulnerability across those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island backgrounds and those children from a language background other than English.
- Braybrook is the fourth most disadvantaged suburb in metropolitan Melbourne (SEIFA 2011) and the DET (Department of Education and Training) State of Victorian Children 2012: Early Childhood<sup>7</sup> notes that children who speak a language are more likely to live in social economic disadvantage areas than children from English speaking backgrounds.
- In the 2010 Victorian Population Health Survey 1 in 20 adults responded that they had run out of food in the previous 12 months.
- 2012 AEDI results show that 11.1% of children are developmentally at risk on the Physical
- Health and Wellbeing Domain in Maribyrnong City which is comparable to the State average of 11%. Children in Yarraville (14.1%) and Braybrook (13.9%), were most at risk.
- 19.3% of Braybrook residents rent social housing compared to 2.9% in Melbourne. (SEIFA 2011)<sup>8</sup>.
- Braybrook has an unemployment rate of 12.6% compared to 5.5% for Greater Melbourne.
- Braybrook has lower levels of Year 12 completion at 47% compared with 54.6% for Greater Melbourne (Census 2011).
- Losses from Electronic Gaming Machines are higher in Braybrook than other suburbs in the municipality, with \$15.3 million in 2013-14. (VCGLR 2014).



"Playing soccer with mum and dad in the park" Kungthong (5 years old) Cherry Crescent Preschool as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/pages/reportdatachildren.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Maribyrnong Social Policy & Partnerships - Fact Sheet 3 - Feb 2015



# Being Healthy

Healthy children and youth have physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental health needs met. They achieve their optimal developmental trajectories. They have access to services to support their growth and development, and have access to preventative measures to redress any emerging health or developmental needs.

ARACY 2013: The Nest Framework

## What children told us...

When asked about being healthy children listed good food and access to open green spaces as important determinants in maintaining a good life. Many children wanted to see cooking classes and green spaces offering veggie gardens and fruit trees. Children across the age groups mentioned pollution, trucks and traffic as something they would like to change to support them in being healthier.

*"More bike paths - sometimes my family rides to the City and there's bike paths from my house to middle Footscray station and then a really scary bit until the bridge over the river."*

*From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014*

*"Parks and playgrounds are a big thing! I wish they were safer."*

*Braybrook parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014*

## What parents told us...

Parents mirror their children's views on what contributes to a healthy life. During the Family Strengthening Strategy consultation parents noted that parks and playgrounds are important for physical health and for the development of connected community.

Parents also highlighted the value of accessing community services as a support to them. Parents want services that work effectively together and have a strong community profile so families know where to access them, when they need them.

## What local service providers told us...

Like parents, services also noted the need to work in more integrated ways, develop innovative practices to reach out to families and articulated a desire to engage in a more meaningful way with local families.

Service providers are particularly concerned for those that have extra challenges and complexities due to their circumstances. These families can include international students, refugee and asylum seeker families, young mothers, those facing domestic violence and those with unstable housing.

*"There are a growing proportion of families just missing out on Health Care Cards that are under financial pressure, leading to increased levels of vulnerability in a community of working poor."*

*CatholicCare staff member at the MEYA Consultation and Planning Forum December 2014*





## What the data and research findings tells us....

- Children learn behaviours in their early years that have lasting impacts on their physical and psychological health as adults. There are opportunities in these early years to reinforce positive behaviours such as physical activity and healthy diet to set strong foundations for their future wellbeing (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing 2011).
- In 2012 Maribyrnong City had 82.1% of children who were "on track" for the ADEC Physical Health and Wellbeing Domain this compares to the Victorian average of 81.1%.
- Breastfeeding is known to provide nutrition and strengthen the immune system. There is strong evidence that non breastfeed babies are more likely to suffer ear, gastrointestinal and urinary tract infections as well as being more susceptible to more chronic conditions such as diabetes. (Dyson, McCormack & Renfrew 2005; Chung, Raman, Trikalinos, Lau & Ip 2008). Breast feeding until at least 6 months has been recommended by both the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).
- In 2012-13 within Maribyrnong City, 60.6% of babies were breast feed at 3 months and 43.9% at 6 months. (Source Maribyrnong Maternal and Child Health Services).
- Participation in the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Key Age and Stage visits is lower for Aboriginal children than for all other children.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2012 Department of Education and Training (DET) state-wide figures showed 100% of Victorian newborns receive an initial MCH visit. By the time of the 3.5 year KAS check this figure drops to 64.4%.
- In 2012, Maribyrnong City had a participation rate of 68.9% for the 3.5 year MCH visit.
- At 91.6% areas of the highest Socioeconomic Status (SES) had the lowest immunisation rates in Victoria compared to 93.4% in the lowest SES area (AIHW 2010).
- Parents complete a School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) when their child starts school. In 2012 State-wide data indicates that 89.4% of children starting school were reported to be in excellent or good health.
- During 2013-14, 33.9% of children (birth-5 years) examined at cohealth Footscray Dental Clinic (main catchment area Maribyrnong City) had a decay experience. The State average for this age group is 35.1%. For children who speak English at home, 29.1% had a decay experience, the State average is 34.1%. For children who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home 52.9% had decay experience. The State average is 49.9% (source cohealth Dental Services).
- The Australian Health Survey (2011-12) found that 23.6% of Victorian Children aged 7 years and under were obese. Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing data indicates that obesity rates increase with age, with girls more likely to be affected than boys.

*Dear mayor, I think Footscray should have more cooking classes for those who love to cook and others who would love to learn the joyful gift of cooking for other people. I love cooking so I think it would be a great experience for other people to try a new thing. I think other cultures should share their cooking"*

*A local primary school student as a part of the X-Ray Specs project 2014*



<sup>9</sup> DEECD State of the Children Report 2012



## Strategic Direction 3 – Being Healthy

We will work with our community to meet the health needs of our children to support their optimum growth and development

### Priority Actions 2015-2018

- 3.1 Develop integrated child and family hubs to allow the community to access a range of services in the one location in areas experiencing population growth and change.
- 3.2 Work with children and families to identify the locations of water fountains and additional sites that require access to drinking water.
- 3.3 Promote opportunities for active play, and participation in accessible sport and recreation areas for local children and families.



"Eve and mum riding" Eve (4 years old) Saltwater Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services Consultation 2014



# Learning

Learning is a continuous process throughout life. Children and youth learn through a variety of formal and informal experiences within the classroom and more broadly in their home and in the community. Children and youth who are learning participate in and experience education that enables them to reach their full potential and maximise their life opportunities.

ARACY 2013: The Nest Framework

## What children told us...

Children across the age groups spoke positively about their learning environments and showed enthusiasm for going to libraries, homework clubs and some suggested having more of these types of opportunities. Many of the children who were consulted were well linked in with sporting facilities although local data indicates that this is more likely for boys than girls<sup>10</sup>. In the Maribyrnong Kids Neighbourhood Survey (2014) 67% of children noted teachers as a key person in their lives. Children also frequently mentioned the importance of a range of adults from educational settings such as school crossing supervisors, librarians and coaches.

*"... a few more programs in the libraries not only on holidays but on weekends and after school"*

*From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014*



## What parents told us...

Parents acknowledged that parenting is challenging and the need for parents to be nurtured and supported is essential to support good outcomes for children. Parents reported feeling well supported through the early years with services such as the MCH key age and stage visits but noted that professional parenting support drops off between the ages of 5 to 18 years. That is, once children start formal school programs.

Parents noted their desire for the delivery of family support programs to be more flexible. Many expressed the desire for a more casual, drop in approach to some activities. Parents also mentioned the need to develop programs that cater more broadly to families including fathers and siblings. Many parents also had the desire to foster community connections across learning environments.

Parents shared concerns on the difficulty in accessing educational and support programs when they need them. They wanted to be educated and be able to educate their children in their local area.

*"My organisation will continue to look at ways to work better with parents. We could partner to better integrate our services for early interventions. Families will be able support their child's healthy development and nurture them. I hope we can improve outcomes for children."*

*Tweddle Child and Family Health Service staff member at the MEYA Consultation and Planning Forum July 2014*

## What local service providers told us...

Maribyrnong City has a broad service mix that is offered through a range of providers. Service representatives noted that while this mix is rich it doesn't always act in a coordinated way. Services want to enhance pathways between services to allow improved information sharing and greater support for the children and families as they transition between programs.

Services also noted the importance of working with families in building their capacity to support their child's learning both in the early years and once at school. The need to get better at engaging with families, setting up processes to allow for divergent needs to be met and the desire to design programs based on community feedback were mentioned as common aspirations for MEYA services.

*"We have strong communities built around local kinder and primary schools but these break down when the kids disperse to many different schools for secondary education."*

*Yarraville parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014*

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/activemaribyrnong>



## What the data and research findings tells us....

- The State of Victorian Children Report (DET 2012) notes that children who speak a language other than English are less likely to attend a preschool than other children and that children who do not attend a preschool in the year before school are more developmentally vulnerable than children who do.
- In the 2012 AEDI indicates that 97.2% of children within Maribyrnong City had a non parental preschool education and care experience. The State average is 97.6%. Children from Braybrook (93.3%) and Seddon (95.6%) had the lowest level of participation in a formal early years program.
- Participation in high quality early education and care services (i.e. child care and kindergarten programs) enable children to learn well at school and learn the skills required for their future lives (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing 2011)
- In 2012, 89% of children across Maribyrnong City participated in a funded kindergarten program. This compares to the Victorian average of 98%.
- 2012 AEDI results show that in Maribyrnong City 9.5% of children are developmentally at risk on the Language and Cognitive Skills Domain. The State average is 9.9%. Children in Braybrook (16.4 %), Kingsville (15.1%) and Footscray (13.2%), were most at risk.
- 2012 AEDI results show that in Maribyrnong City 15.6% of children are developmentally at risk on the Communication and General Knowledge Domain. The State average is 14.6%. Children in Braybrook (27.9 %), Footscray (17.6%) and Kingsville (15.1%) were most at risk.
- 15 hours per week of funded kindergarten was a part of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. In 2015 all kindergartens across the municipality are offering a 15 hour program; most child care centre programs incorporate a funded kindergarten program as a part of their service.
- Melbourne University has used the longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC) to show that attending a preschool program has a positive impact on year 3 Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results<sup>11</sup>.
- The University also found that 4 year olds who are read to every day (as opposed to 1-2 days a week) have better outcomes in literacy, numeracy and other cognitive skills (Kalb & Van Ours 2013).
- In 2012, State wide data shows children attending school from the prep to year 3 had an average of 15 absent days each year. Across the Western region this was slightly higher and it was substantially higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. (Source DEECD/VCAMS and SOVC 2012)

"Dear mayor, My name is ... and I'm a student from Dinjerra Primary School. In our area the Aeroplane Park is GREAT... But there is one problem, there's a lot of stealing and graffiti, it is so disgusting. Gangs write mean things and sometimes it's racist. But I have a solution you should put more lights and security up so you and other people can see the footage. I know you might ask yourself how much is it going to cost? I researched this on Google and it's cheap. There are some good weatherproof security cameras. It will cost around \$100 - \$200 each. And lights will cost around \$100 - \$300. By adding these things all graffiti and stealing will be stopped! Thank you so much for taking your time to listen. I hope I persuaded you enough"

A local primary school student as a part of the X-Ray Specs project 2014



"Dear mayor, I hope everything is running smoothly for you. Footscray is a great place filled with friendly people, lots of trees and shops and people of different cultures. But nothing can be perfect and I am going to give some of my ideas to make Footscray a better place. Firstly in Footscray we have a great train station that is close to most peoples houses but I think putting a tram line onto roads that don't have a problem with traffic might be an easier way of travelling (ps towards the City). ..."

A local primary school student as a part of the X-Ray Specs project 2014

"Riding my bike to the library" Audrey (2 years old) Church St Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014

<sup>11</sup> [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/publications.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/publications.aspx)



## Strategic Direction 4 - Learning

We will work with our community to support all children to access learning opportunities based on their interests and lay the foundation for them to reach their full potential.

### Priority Actions 2015-2018

- 4.1 Promote participation in kindergarten programs by children who experience vulnerability, are newly arrived and from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- 4.2 Support the local education and care sector to deliver high quality programs that engage all children and families through the development of networks, capacity building and mentoring opportunities.
- 4.3 Improve Council owned MCH, childcare and kindergarten facilities to meet National Quality Standards and be fit for purpose.
- 4.4 Promote activities to increase literacy and numeracy skills in local children.



"3 butterflies in Australia on a windy, sunny day"  
Scarlett (5 years old) Merriwa Kindergarten as a part of  
the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014

Picture  
3 butterflies in Australia  
on a windy sunny day

Scarlett  
Age 5



# Participating

Participating includes involvement with peers and the community, being able to have a voice and say on matters and, increasingly, access to technology for social connections. In practice, participating means children and youth are supported in expressing their views, their views are taken into account and they are involved in decision making processes that affect them.

ARACY 2013: The Nest Framework

## What children told us...

Children valued opportunities to be asked about their opinions. They like to discuss their thoughts with parents, class teachers, friends, by writing letters to the newspaper and contacting their local Councillor.

## What parents told us...

Parents indicated that they want to share parenting experiences. Many indicated that they believed participation was enhanced when they were placed in situations where they can share their views and have opportunities to have input into services and programs. Parents also noted that activities need to provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas with neighbours and other parents rather than "an expert" telling them what to do.

## What local service providers told us...

Local service providers noted the need to develop child and family centred practices that are based on meaningful consultation, with a view to strengthen the sense of belonging and support participation. Services are working to shift organisational thinking that sees certain families as being hard to reach instead they want to improve the way they engage with all children and families to strengthen practices.

Services hope to provide a strong spring board to involve and support children and families in being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on their world.



*"Well our school has just written to the mayor talking about some things that we want to improve or to have. I think that was a good idea because then the mayor can see OUR point of view"*

From the Kids Neighbourhood Survey August 2014

*"I think the greatest way to strengthen family values is to hear and see what other families do and draw from the experience so you can apply it in your own way and to your own family."*

Braybrook parent as a part of the Family Strengthening Strategy Consultation 2014

*"We will try to communicate and engage better with more English as a Second Language families, and better understand and celebrate their cultures."*

A Brenbeal Children's Centre committee member at the MEYA Consultation and Planning Forum December 2014



### What the data and research findings tells us...

- Participating in early education and care services is considered to be beneficial for with better outcomes in intellectual development and independence, sociability and concentration and cognitive development. (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing 2005).
- In the 2012 AEDI, Social Competence Domain children from Braybrook (18.2%), Footscray (15.4%) and Maidstone (14.3%) were most at risk. The State average is 13.3%.
- The National Quality Framework governs the provision of education and care services and cites the provision of active learning and a sense of agency, where children are able to make decisions and choices, to influence events and to have an impact on their world as integral to a high quality children's service<sup>12</sup>. The framework articulates the need to bring this level of involvement across community life.
- Developing an understanding of the nature of children's concerns and perspectives for the future will benefit and have a significant impact on (and perhaps change) the way we think about children and provide services and education that considers their perspective (Sargent 2010).
- Service providers and Council are mandated to uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC)<sup>13</sup>. UNCRC says that children everywhere have the right to survival, to develop to their fullest potential, to have protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. It reflects the belief that children are equal citizens with equal rights in a world often dominated by adults and puts the onus on governments, policy makers, families, teachers, and anybody with responsibility for children, to ensure their rights are upheld.

*Dear Mr Mayor, As a class we've been discussing ways in which we can improve our community. After some thoughts I've come up with an idea for Footscray Station. We should have more seats for people such as pregnant women, the elderly and young children. So they don't need to be tired from standing. So I hope you like the idea. Thank you.*

*A local primary school student as a part of the X-Ray Specs project 2014*



In 2014 the Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA), in consultation with a working group of made up of representatives from Local Government Authorities including Maribyrnong City Council launched the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. A Toolkit offers guidance for Councils and community organisations to adopt practices to promote the principles of the Charter.

<sup>12</sup> Victorian Early Learning and Development Framework 2011  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veylframework.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> United nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1990)



## Strategic Direction 5 - Participating

We will work with our community to provide opportunities for children and families to have a voice and be involved in their communities.

### Priority Actions 2015-2018

- 5.1 Sign the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter and develop engagement strategies to involve children and families in the co design of programs, community facilities and public spaces.
- 5.2 Implement the Family Strengthening Strategy based on regular consultation and engagement with local families.
- 5.3 Create a baseline of local level data to record the development of ongoing statistical evidence to inform on the best way to utilise available resources.



Darcy  
Age 2 1/2.



"Darcy riding his bike" Darcy (2 years old) Highpoint Kinder Haven as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014



DARCY RIDING HIS BIKE



# The Consultation Process

This strategy places the voices and knowledge of 713 locally engaged children as central to the development of priorities and actions.

The thoughts and considerations of parents and carers were gathered as a part of consultations undertaken for the Maribyrnong Early Years Service Improvement Review (2013) and the Maribyrnong Family Strengthening Strategy (2014).

"Engaging Children in Decision Making" 2013 is a consultation guide that was developed as a joint project between Maribyrnong City Council and a consortium of Western Region Councils, Kurrajong Primary School and the Department of Education and Training. This guide was used to inform the children's engagement strategy

The Maribyrnong Children's Consultation strategy 2014 focused on 4 separate processes. The aim was to enable a diverse range of children to be involved. Activities were developed to engage children from 2 to 12 years of age.



## Kids Neighbourhood Survey

An online survey was developed and opened to children between 5 and 12 years old.

*Implemented by Maribyrnong Early Years Team*

## Maribyrnong Preschool Services Consultation

Children aged between 2 and 5 years who attend local education and care services were involved in focus groups. Children drew pictures and discussed their thoughts.

*Implemented by Maribyrnong Early Years Team*

## Walking School Bus

Children aged between 5 and 12 years were led through a physical and interactive journey through their schools and encouraged to share their thoughts about their neighbourhood. The games and activities placed an emphasis on a range of expression types and were tailored to support children who had a limited amount of English

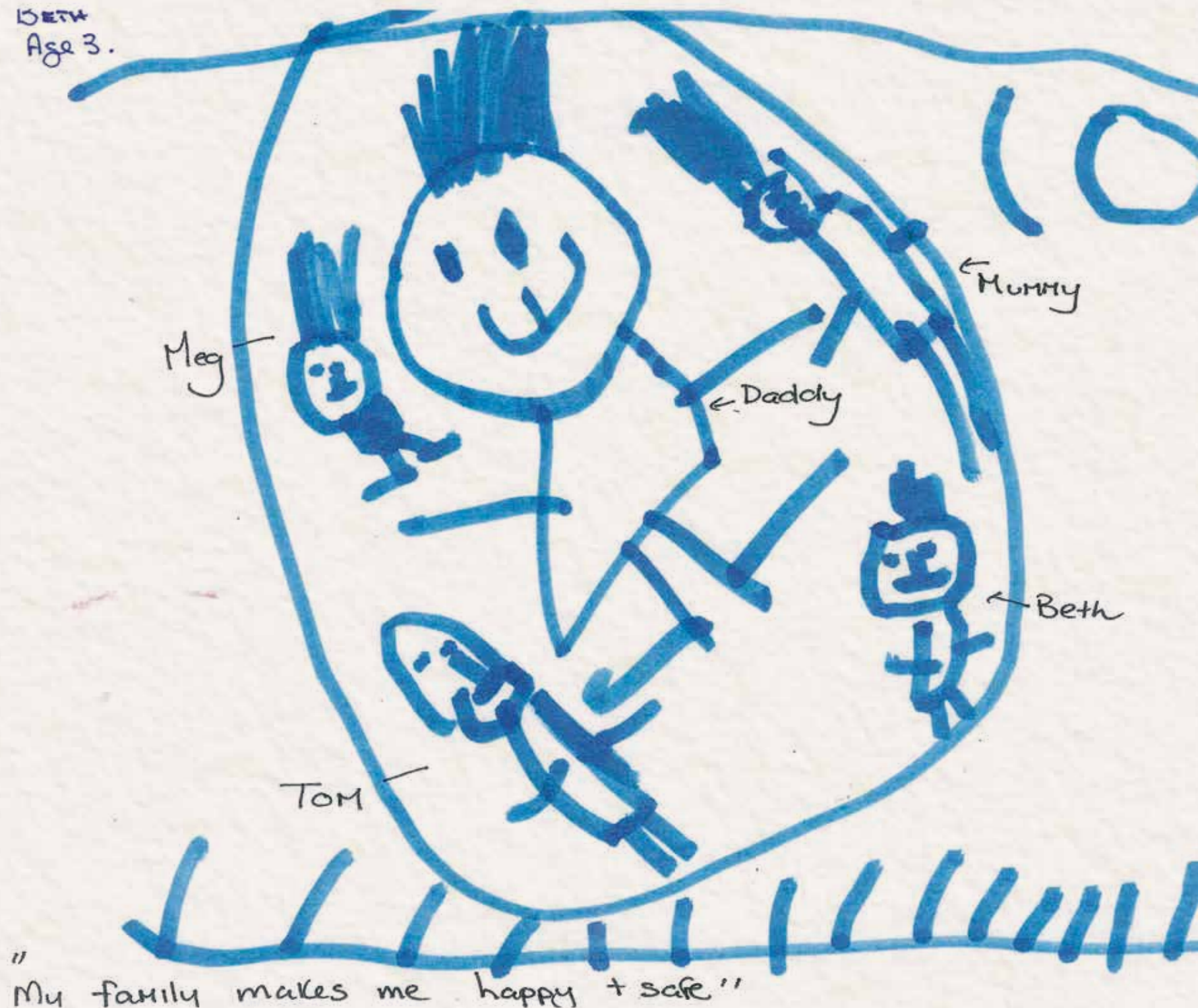
*Implemented by the Women's Circus*

## X Ray Specs

A series of one off workshops were delivered to school groups and as a holiday program. The children aged between 5 and 12 years focused on looking at our world through different lenses and after sharing ideas and thoughts students were able to write a letter to the Mayor

*Implemented by 100 Story Building*

"My family makes me happy and safe" Beth (3 years old) Clare Court Children's Service as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014





# Our Community at a glance...

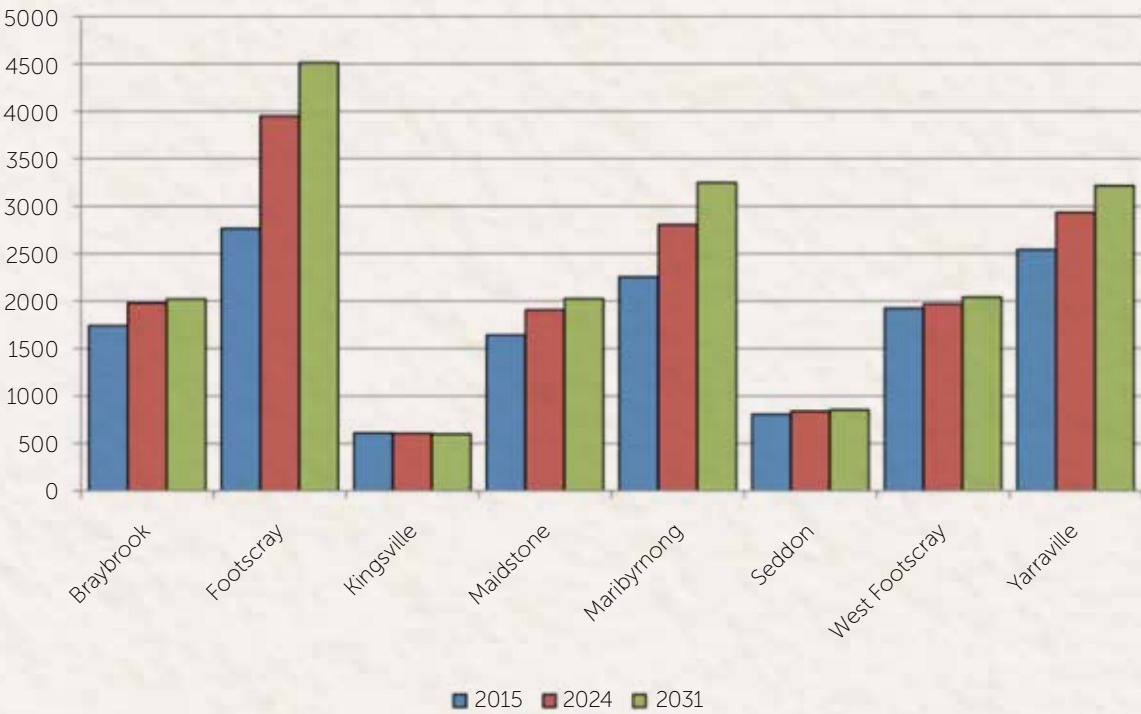
- ➔ Maribyrnong City's total population is estimated at 79,302 persons. (ABS estimate, June 2013)
- ➔ There were 323 people (0.5%) who identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. (ABS June 2013)
- ➔ 40% of our population were born overseas and 43% speak a language other than English. (ABS June 2013)
- ➔ 9.9% of the population do not speak English well or at all. (ABS June 2013)
- ➔ Children aged up to 12 years make up 15 % of our population. Across the municipality "families with children" are the group expected to experience the largest population growth, with a 30% increase by 2031. (Source ID consulting)
- ➔ At 16.9% Maribyrnong City has the highest percentage of sole parent families in the Western Region. This compares to the Victorian average of 15.5%. (Source Victoria's Future 2014 Update)
- ➔ Maternal and Child Health (MCH) data is an important actual measure of population growth at the local level. Population forecast figures predicted we will reach 1517 births in 2021 but we are already at that birth rate now.
- ➔ MCH data for the 2012-13 indicates a peak year of growth with 1575 births in Maribyrnong City. This was an 11% increase on the birth rate for the year 2011-12.
- ➔ In 2013-14, approximately 28 babies were born each week in the City of Maribyrnong. Most babies were born in Maidstone, Maribyrnong and West Footscray. (Source Maribyrnong Maternal and Child Services)



Figure 1.1 Number of children aged between 0-12 years in Maribyrnong City – (Source ID consulting)

Age group (years)	2015	2021	2031	Change between 2015 and 2031	% Increase by 2031
Babies and preschoolers (0 – 4 )	5,966	6,775	7,160	1,194	20%
Primary Schoolers (4 – 11 )	5,953	7,182	7,651	1,698	29%

Figure 1.2 Neighbourhoods where children live – (Source ID consulting)



- ➔ By 2031, the greatest growth of children will occur in the neighbourhoods of Footscray (63%), Maribyrnong (44%), Yarraville (26%) and Maidstone (23%). (Source ID consulting)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.id.com.au>



**Figure 1.4 Demand for 4 year old State funded kindergarten programs –**  
(Based on a 95% participation rate. Source ID consulting 2014/Public Place 2014)

Local area	4 year old population	Licensed places	Projected 4 year old population	Additional places for 95% participation rate	Projected 4 year old population	Additional places for 95% participation rate
	2014	2016	2021	2021	2031	2031
Footscray	175	163	244	69	306	128
West Footscray	158	81	134	46	134	46
Seddon	75	0	60	57	58	55
Yarraville	216	133	202	59	220	76
Kingsville	66	11	46	33	45	32
Braybrook	147	148	163	7	164	8
Maidstone	114	177	137	-47	142	-42
Maribyrnong	140	78	221	132	249	159
Total	1091	791	1210	359	1321	464

- In Victoria, most kindergarten programs are delivered in dedicated, Council owned buildings. Within Maribyrnong City there are 12 dedicated kindergartens, 10 of these are housed in a Council owned facilities and are operated through Committees of Management and not for profit cluster managers.

→ Within Maribyrnong City, 14 long day child care services offer funded kindergarten places, 8 of these services are housed in Council owned buildings.
- Figure 1.4 accounts for the recently increased kindergarten places at the Braybrook Community Hub and the Maidstone Child and Family Centre. Even with these new places, population growth will add to demand for kindergarten services across all areas.

→ The neighbourhoods with the highest increase in demand for kindergarten are Footscray and Maribyrnong. The data indicates that Yarraville, Seddon and Kingsville will also require additional places.

**Figure 1.5 Demand for child care programs –** (Based on the current utilisation data remaining constant. Source ID consulting 2014/Public Place 2014)

2013 Number of places	2021 Number of places required	2031 Number of places required	Change between 2013 and 2031
929	1,081	1,176	247 places

- Highest Growth in Demand for Child Care - Footscray, Maribyrnong and Maidstone (Source ID consulting 2014/Public Place 2014)

# Our Services at a glance...

A range of local services are offered for children from birth to 12 years old and their families. Some services are community based, some services operate from Council buildings and some services are operated by private providers. Services include:

- Maternal and Child Health
- Immunisation Programs
- Playgroups - both community run and supported
- Toy Libraries
- Child Care Services - centre based and Family Day Care schemes
- 3 and 4 year old Kindergarten programs
- Primary School
- Out of School Hours Care

39% of local preschool education and care services currently operate in Council owned facilities. Council has committed to a coordinated approach to infrastructure development through the provision of integrated children and family hubs across the City. Hubs provide a range of early years and allied health services in the one location. A number of these services have been completed and planning for hubs in Footscray and Maribyrnong is required to meet population growth in the future.<sup>15</sup>

In 2014, Council adopted an infrastructure renewal approach that aims to upgrade and enhance 5 existing services to meet current and future demand. The rejuvenation plans have been developed to ensure compliance with the National Quality Standards and allow the service managers to operate best practice programs.



<sup>15</sup> As noted in the Early Years and Infrastructure and Needs Mapping 2010, the Community Infrastructure Plan (2011) and the 10 year Capital Improvement Plan (2014-2024)



Maribyrnong City Preschool Education and Care Services

Local area	Location	Maternal & Child Health	4 year old Kindergarten	Long Day Child Care	3 year old Programs
Footscray	Angliss Children's Centre*	•	•	•	
	Brenbeal Children's Centre*		•	•	
	Empire Early Learning Centre**	•		•	
	Hyde St MCH /Kindergarten	•	•		•
	Saltwater Child Care Centre**			•	
	Victoria University Footscray Park Centre **			•	
West Footscray	Victoria University Footscray Nicholson Children's Centre **			•	
	Bulldogs Community Children's Centre**	•		•	
	Church St Children's Centre**	•		•	
	Roberts St M&CH/Kingsville Kindergarten	•	•		•
Seddon	Scots Presbyterian Kindergarten		•		•
	Yarraville				
	Clare Court Children's Service*	•	•	•	•
Yarraville	Merriwa Kindergarten		•		•
	Norfolk Street Child Care Centre	•		•	
	Yarraville Community Kindergarten		•		•
Kingsville	Dickory Dock Early Learning Centre (Private) **			•	
Braybrook	Braybrook Community Hub	•	•		•
	Cherry Crescent Pre School		•		•
	Good Start Braybrook (Private) **			•	
	Little Champs (Private) **			•	
Maidstone	Maidstone Child & Family Services Centre	•	•		•
	Maidstone North Kindergarten		•		•
	Explorers Early Learning (private) **			•	
	Little VIP's Child Care Centre (private) **			•	
Maribyrnong	Highpoint Kinder Haven (private) **			•	
	Maribyrnong Kindergarten		•		•
	Maribyrnong River Children's Centre**	•		•	

\* Integrated service: Long Day Child Care with funded four year old kindergarten as part of the service including sessional kindergarten

\*\* Integrated service: Long Day Child Care with funded four year old kindergarten as part of the service

Maribyrnong City Primary Schools

Local area	Location	Primary School	Out of School Care
Footscray	Footscray	•	•
	Footscray City	•	•
	Footscray North	•	•
	Footscray West	•	
	St Monica's		
West Footscray	St John's	•	•
Seddon			
Yarraville	St Augustine's	•	•
	Wembley	•	•
	Yarraville West	•	•
Kingsville	Corpus Christi	•	
	Kingsville	•	•
Braybrook	Christ the King	•	
	Dinjerra	•	
	Western English Language School	•	
Maidstone			
Maribyrnong	St Margaret's	•	•





## Maribyrnong City Family and Health Services

Maribyrnong City is home to a broad range of providers who support families in areas such as settlement support, community health, family support, welfare support, disability support and training programs.

Many of these services are also responsive to the broader Western region community.

Maribyrnong City Council facilitates the MEYA Partners. The MEYA Partners is a key reference group that guides strategic planning and aims to work in a spirit of partnership and collaboration in order to improve outcomes and services for the children and families in our community. The MEYA Partners has developed from the Best Start Partnership Group (formed in 2002) and the group remains a key driver for the DET Best Start Program and associated action plans. Upper level managers from a range of organisations have signed the MEYA Agreement and regularly come together to develop shared practices and understandings. Currently the MEYA Partners are:

- Caroline Chisholm Society
- Catholic Care
- cohealth
- Early Childhood Management Services
- MacKillop Family Services
- Melbourne City Mission
- Tweddle Child and Family Health Service

A broad range of local service representatives

also come together to plan collaborative practices, improve local service connections and develop methods to support families through transitions between services through a number of other local networks. These opportunities are facilitated through the:

- Maribyrnong Early Years Service Partnership Group
- Maribyrnong Vulnerable Children's Working Group
- MEYA Forums

The facilitation of the MEYA Partners and other reference groups allows managers and practitioners to come together to plan activities to better coordinate a large and fragmented service sector. Facilitating this process is a key component of Council's role.



"Jack wearing his helmet riding his bike" Jack (5 years old) Bulldogs Community Children's Centre as a part of the Maribyrnong Preschool Services consultation 2014



# Looking back at a glance...

The Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015-2018 builds on previous Maribyrnong Early Years Plans. Listed below are a few of the highlights from the Maribyrnong Early Years Plan 2010 – 2014 “Our City – Our Children. Hearing their Voices”, these actions have laid the foundations for this children’s strategy.

Three new Children and Family Hubs developed and opened: – Clare Court Children’s Service (2011) – Maidstone Children and Family Centre (2014) – Braybrook Early Learning Centre (2015)	✓
In 2012, the “Engaging Children in Decision Making” guide was developed to support Maribyrnong City Council to include children in consultation strategies in line with the UNICEF Child Friendly City benchmarks <sup>16</sup> .	✓
The outreach Bilingual Preschool Story Time initiative was implemented in 2011. Story times are currently held in Chin Burmese, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Hindi at Central West Plaza and a number of local playgroups.	✓
In 2012 and 2013 literacy development in primary school children was supported through “Word Circus” (in partnership with the Women’s Circus and the Western English Language School) and “In Other Words” (in partnership with 100 Story Buildings and Dinjerra Primary School).	✓
A pilot project involving outreach Maternal and Child Health checks for 2 and 3.5 year olds in Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS) child care programs was successfully implemented in 2013.	✓
MacKillop Family Services, Maribyrnong City Council and Central West Shopping Centre Management implemented Central West Play in 2013. Central West Play is a supported playgroup at Central West Shopping Centre.	✓
In 2013 the Melbourne Indigenous Church Fellowship supported by Maribyrnong City Council developed an art therapy project strengthening family ties and building relationships with the local Aboriginal community.	✓
The bilingual worker community champion model was trialed to engage and link in with diverse cultural groups through the Braybrook Early Years Project (2012) and the MEYA Early Years Bicultural Worker project (2014).	✓
A range of network groups to improved the partnership and professional development opportunities for local education and care, health and family services.	✓

# Mayor’s Message

The City of Maribyrnong is a great place to live - so say the children who live here! Maribyrnong children really love our green spaces with plenty of trees and parks, as well as our peaceful streets where caring and friendly neighbours live.

I was the proud and grateful recipient of a number of letters from local children who whom Maribyrnong City Council consulted to develop our Maribyrnong Strategy for Children 2015-2018. They told me all about the things that are important to them to live a good life in the City of Maribyrnong – and their feedback was not only informative, but also inspiring.

Our four year Strategy for Children, that encompasses this feedback, will support Maribyrnong children and families to have the necessary services, facilities, networks and supports to reach their maximum potential and to have a good life in our dynamic and evolving community.

Children in the City of Maribyrnong are growing up in a place of great change. Our inner City location, our cultural diversity and the community spirit of local neighbourhoods are key features that attract families raising young children. There is so much incredible diversity in our City, yet, we all share a common thread – family, and our children, is of vital importance.

Children aged up to 12 years currently make up 15% of our population here in Maribyrnong. Across our great City, ‘families with children’ are the group expected to experience the largest population growth, with a projected 30% increase by 2031.

Naturally then, this Strategy has been developed with our youngest citizens, local children, at its centre. We wanted to ensure we heard from enough children in our City to adequately harness their ideas and their voices. To meet this need, Council’s consultation process engaged with more than 700 local children aged between 2 and 12 years of age.

We found out that children in our City feel overwhelming positive about Maribyrnong and they welcome opportunities to express themselves, participate in local activities and live in neighbourhoods that allow them to feel safe and part of the community.

Children have the ability and interest in giving considered and meaningful opinions on their lives and experiences in the City of Maribyrnong. The future is very bright for the children of Maribyrnong. We are confident this Strategy continues that positive and empowering outlook as our children and our City grow together.



<sup>16</sup> UNICEF’s Building Blocks for Developing a Child Friendly City (2004)





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**After Hours/Emergency: 9688 0200**

**A comprehensive list of services and organisations  
is in Council's Directories or at**

**[www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au](http://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au)**

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