

Wyndham City 2013/17 Municipal Early Years Plan

Bringing the
Community Together
to Support Children's
Futures



Mayor's Message



Wyndham City Council recognises that strong cohesive communities that support and encourage healthy families are critical to ensuring the wellbeing of the whole community, now and into the future.

Programs for children and families in Wyndham are provided by a diverse range of local agencies, schools and community organisations. The 2013-2017 Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) was developed in partnership with children, families and a broad range of local agencies and will facilitate a whole of community approach to the planning and delivery of services for children and families in Wyndham.

Council has been instrumental in facilitating the development of a strong local early and middle years service system and we will continue with our focus on long term infrastructure planning, child friendly city planning and advocacy at both State and Federal Government levels.

The 2013 – 2017 MEYP supports Wyndham City Council's vision: Our People, One Community, Our Future and aligns with Council's values of: Integrity, Community Focus, Respect, Commitment, Leadership and Teamwork.

We look forward to using this strategic plan in partnership with the community to create, deliver and evaluate programs that make a real difference in the lives of Wyndham's children and young people.

Heather Marcus
Mayor

Introduction

Providing an environment in which children develop, learn and grow to their optimum potential is one of the greatest responsibilities of any community. Children's experiences impact significantly on their immediate and long term wellbeing as well as that of their families and the wider community. This plan articulates a vision for children aged between birth and 12 years. It determines what we want to achieve, how we will achieve it and the process for measuring our progress.

The MEYP 2013-2017 articulates Council's role in infrastructure, service provision, planning and community development for children and families. It provides a strong foundation for collaboration between service providers, all areas of Council, other tiers of Government and the community. Underpinning this plan is a clear recognition of the importance of partnership and coordination between multiple agencies, organisations and services working towards the wellbeing of children and families. This plan aims not only to focus on the role of Council but to provide a broader vision for the early years and middle years sectors across the municipality. The document is written in the spirit of collaboration and partnership and recognises that everyone can play a role in realising the vision for children and families in Wyndham.

The development of the MEYP Strategy is guided by research into population, demographics and community consultation. It has been developed within the context of several local, State and Federal Government policies. In producing the plan we have been mindful of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the child.

Australia has its first national Early Years Learning and Development framework for early childhood services, staff and parents. The National Framework 'Belonging; Being & Becoming' (2009) is designed to reinforce the principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). The structure and development of this MEYP recognises that working in partnership with children and their families is an important element in the development of services and programs that respond to their needs.

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (2009) promotes best practice to achieve the following common outcomes for all children:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

Both the National and State frameworks acknowledge parents as children's first and most influential educators, and highlight the importance for children to be meaningfully consulted about their world and their community on all issues that affect them.



Acknowledgements

We appreciate the participation of the many children, parents, community representatives and agencies who contributed their time, expertise, knowledge and experiences towards the development of this strategic plan.

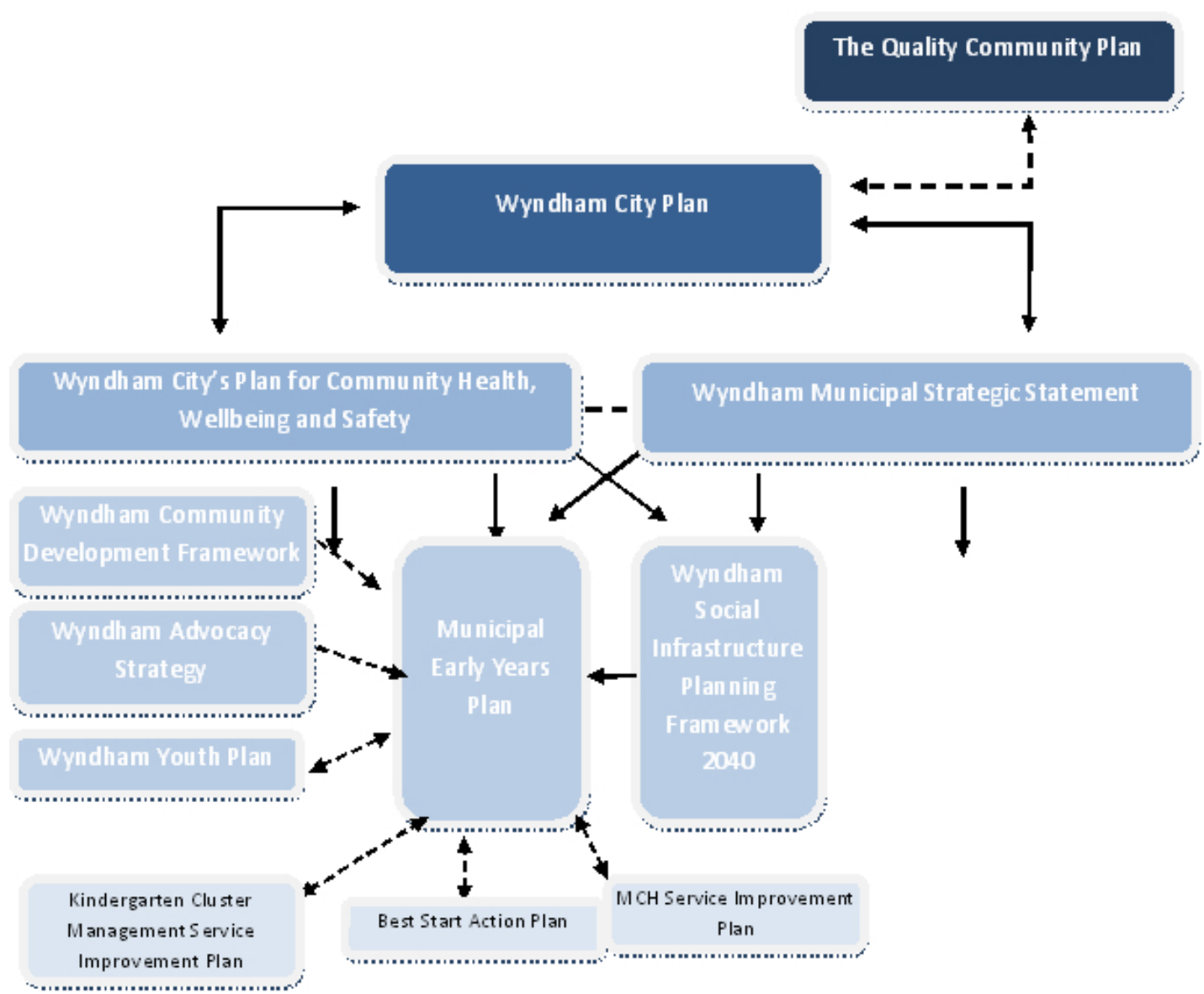
This plan reflects the shared priorities of all of those who contributed to its development. In particular we would like to thank the following members of the Wyndham Child and Family Services Network for their commitment and enthusiastic support in developing the plan.

- Berry Street
- Caroline Chisholm Society
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Early Childhood Management Services
- Goodstart Early Learning
- Grown 'N' Learn Child Care Centre
- Heathdale First Time Mothers Group
- ISIS Primary Care
- Jamieson Way Playgroup
- Karen Refugee Playgroup
- Little River Primary School
- Lumen Christi Primary School
- Manor Lakes College
- Maternal and Child Health
- Noahs Ark
- The Grange P-12 College
- The Smith Family
- VICSEG
- VIP Family Day Care
- Wyndham Additional Needs Playgroup
- Wyndham Best Start
- Wyndham Healthy Communities Team
- Wyndham Integrated Planning Group
- Wyndham Kindergarten Services Unit
- Werribee Primary School
- YMCA

Planning Context

The MEYP is viewed as one of the elements of Wyndham’s integrated planning model. It embeds early and middle years community priorities into Council planning processes and Business Plans. Below are some diagrams which articulate where the MEYP sits within Council’s planning processes

Children and Family Services Planning Context



“ I live around that place (the Point Cook Town Centre) and it has a great community and the place is just awesome.

- Maddison, 10, Point Cook

Broader Council Planning Context

Wyndham has experienced the largest and fastest population growth in all Victorian local government areas and is the fastest growing LGA in Victoria. In 2011/12, 6 families moved into the area every day, with an average of 66 babies born each week.

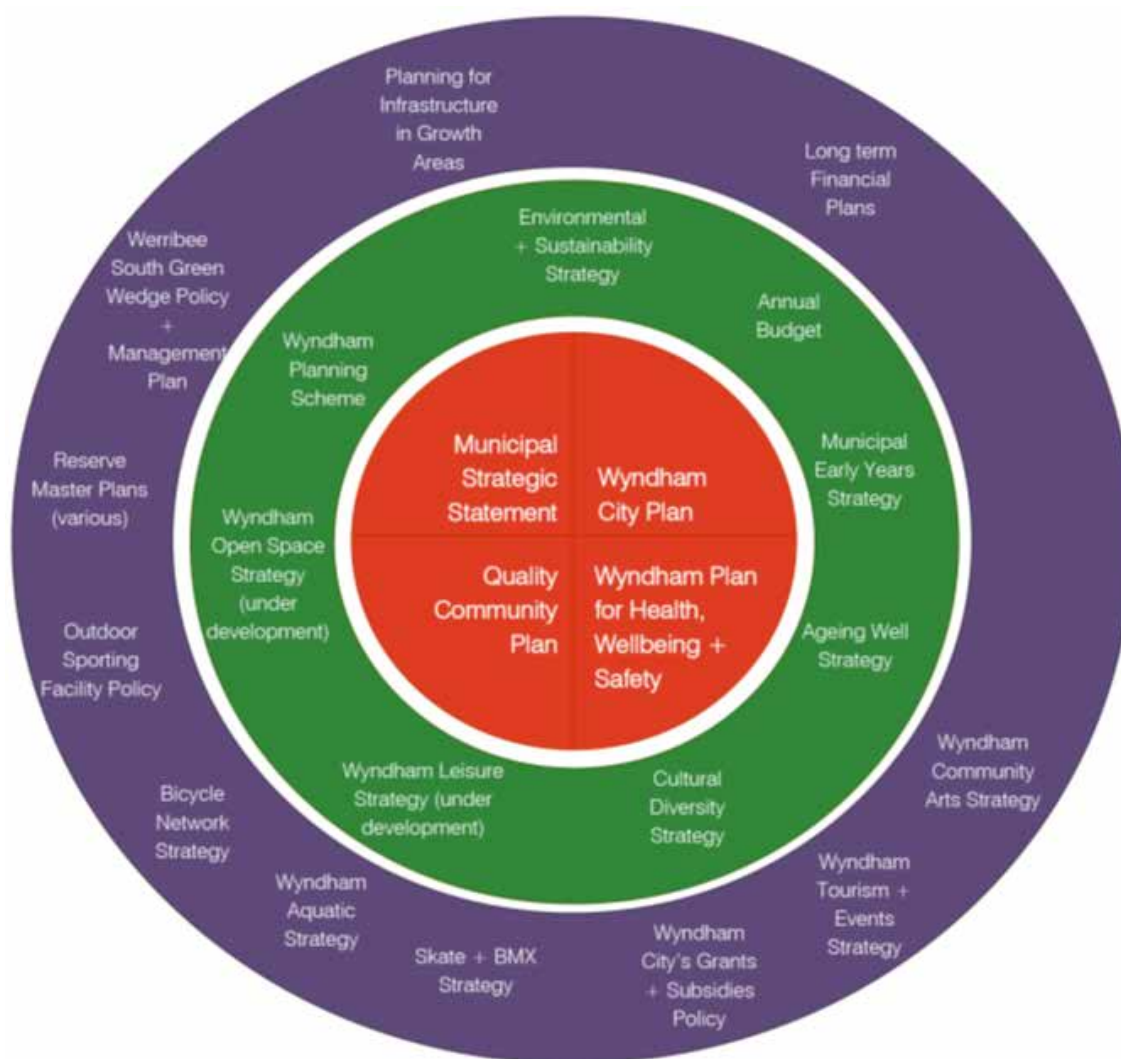
There are currently 31,662 children living in Wyndham aged between birth and 11 years (ABS 2011). This makes up 19.6 % of our current population. Children are a growing number of the total population of the municipality and this is especially noticeable in Point Cook where children of this age range comprise 24.6% of the population. Detailed demographic data can be obtained from Council's website www.wyndham.vic.gov.au.

The Wyndham community is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2011, 32% of children enrolled in Wyndham Council Kindergartens

were from a CALD background. The most widely spoken languages in Wyndham other than English are Italian, followed by Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic and Punjabi.

Wyndham City Council recognises that children and young people are an important part of our current and future community, and contribute to making Wyndham a healthy, safe, vibrant, and harmonious place to live.

Our plan now applies to children from birth – 12 years, expanding from the previous MEYP which included children from birth – 8 years. The extension of the MEYP to the age of 12 will enable Council to establish the needs of children in this age group – as it is likely that the needs of these children are unique, differing from younger children and youth.





Children's Rights & Child Friendly Cities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child reflects the belief that children are equal citizens with equal rights in a world which is often dominated by adults. It puts the onus on governments, policy makers, families, teachers, and anybody with responsibility for children, to ensure their rights are upheld. Both the Federal and Victorian Governments support and endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In acknowledgment of this Wyndham's Municipal Early Years Plan recognises that enhancing outcomes for children and families has been developed within a rights based framework.

A Child Friendly City is the embodiment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at a local level. The development and implementation of this MEYP aims to support the intent and direction of the world wide UNICEF Child Friendly Cities initiative. A Child Friendly City is defined by UNICEF as "a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children's rights". A Child Friendly City recognises that children deserve the same rights as adults and that they should be considered part of the present rather than the future. In a Child friendly City children are active agents. Their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision making processes. Wyndham Council is working towards the creation of a city that responds to the needs of all its residents, and is committed to gaining Child Friendly City, accredited under the global UNICEF initiative.



UNICEF says that a Child Friendly City guarantees the right of every young citizen to:

- Influence decisions about their city
- Express their opinion about the type of city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life
- Receive basic services such as health care and education
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Play safely in the streets on their own
- Meet friends and play
- Have green spaces for plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Participate in social and cultural events
- Be an equal citizen in their city with access to every service regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability and
- Be part of a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions.
- The principles underpinning the creation of a Child Friendly City can also be integrated into other various community services applications.

"Child Friendly City is a people friendly city"
www.childfriendlyasiapacific.net



Written with the community for the community

The vision and themes contained in the MEYP were developed in response to an extensive consultation process with children, families and local agencies.

Semann Slattery was engaged to undertake consultation with a broad range of families and local agencies to identify and assess the range of issues affecting children and families who live in Wyndham. This consultation took the form of:

1. Online surveys of community members and service providers
2. Focus groups with community members and service providers
3. Facilitated workshop with representatives from Wyndham Council

The data collected during the course of the project highlights a range of issues affecting children and families living and visiting the municipality of Wyndham. Themes become evident across a number of research instruments e.g. focus groups and surveys.

As such, five recurring themes were identified. These were:

- Infrastructure - quality and regularity of public transport, footpaths, roads, congestion, cycle ways
- Early childhood education - quality of early childhood services, waiting lists, resources, lack of Council offered childcare, occasional care and after school care
- Open spaces - quality, improvement and maintenance of play equipment for public parks
- Integrated services - location and delivery of integrated services and continued service provider networking opportunities

- Service provision - quality and consistency of intervention services, strategic advocacy of NGOs and other high-level service providers to come into Wyndham to provide for the needs of children and families.

A total of 223 people participated in these consultations. These recurring themes were used to inform the development of the four themes that are contained in the MEYP.

Wyndham City Council staff undertook a range of consultation activities with children to gain their thoughts, ideas, needs and aspirations about living in Wyndham to complement the consultations undertaken by Semann Slattery. Questions focused on what is important to children, what they like to do in their leisure time and what is important to them in relation to Wyndham's infrastructure and open spaces. The research uncovered a significant number of positive aspects about living in Wyndham, particularly related to open space.

Activities included:

- Interviews with kindergarten children
- Activities to identify popular features of parks and community spaces
- Pop Up Art installation to design a town
- Communal Chalk Board

Approximately 280 children participated in these consultations. Further information about the Community Consultation process is contained in Wyndham City – Where the voices of children and families are deeply valued, A Wyndham City Municipal Early Years Planning Community Consultation Document, Semann Slattery, 2012.

“My family makes me feel happy, I like to play games with my brother and with my mummy and daddy.

- Leila, 5 Hoppers Crossing



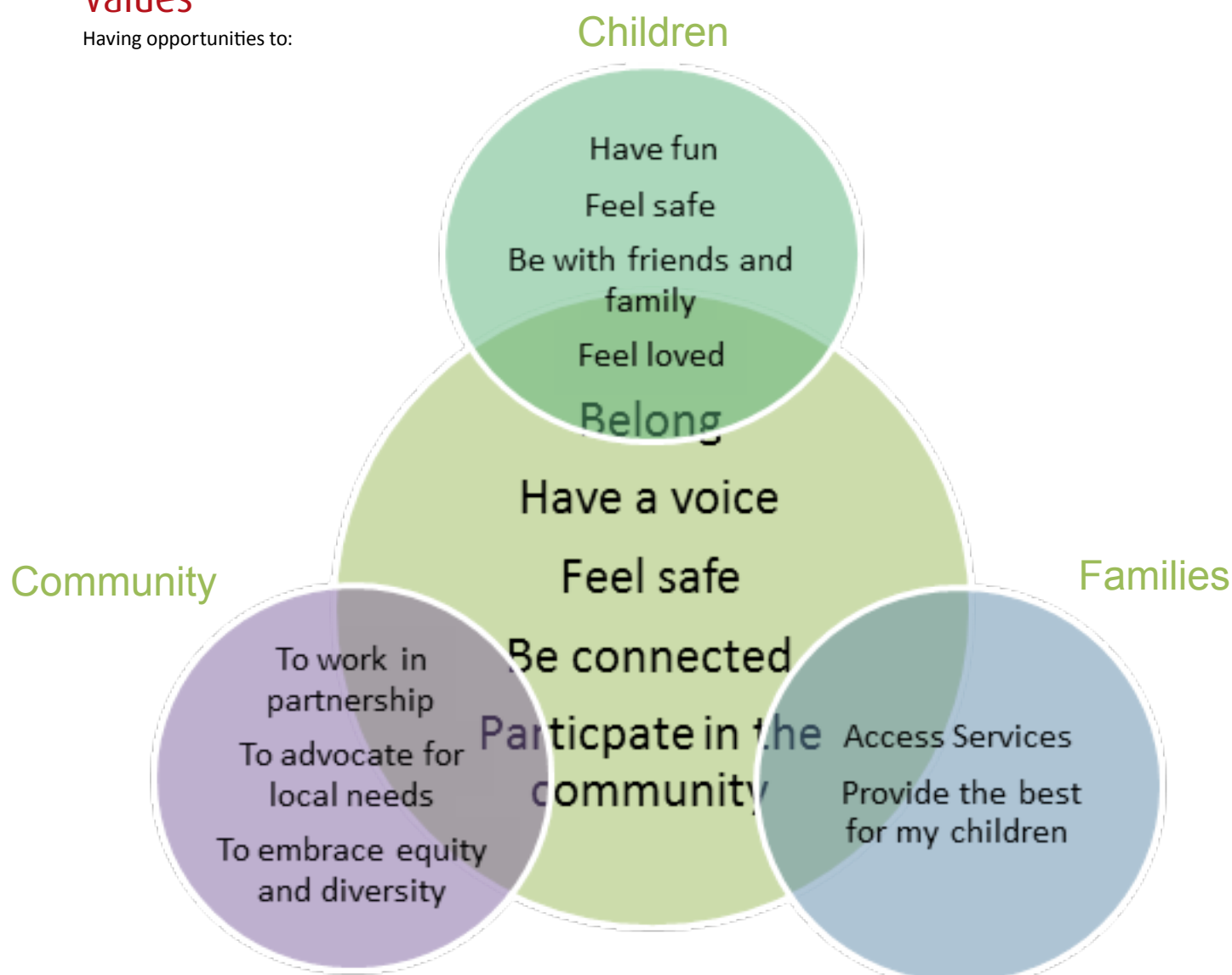
Vision

“Bringing communities together to foster an inclusive and nurturing environment that maximises child and family health and wellbeing in a growing community”.

The values and themes in this plan are based on detailed consultation with children, their families, the community, Council staff and child and family service professionals. They are as follows:

Values

Having opportunities to:



I love parks that are for big kids, like the Pirate Park and Presidents Park.

- Joel, 9 Werribee



Themes

Where We Live

Theme Planning and developing services and facilities to ensure that they respond to the changing needs of children and families.

Outcome High quality, accessible services and infrastructure to meet the needs of children and families to promote lifelong health and wellbeing.

Four Year Objectives

- Community facilities are planned, reviewed and developed in consultation with children, families and other key stakeholders
- To advocate to State and Commonwealth Governments for appropriate and increased funding for sustainable infrastructure and community services
- To create an accessible community, where all children and families can access parts of the community by a number of modes, including walking, riding and public transport.

Relationship to Child Friendly Cities Principles:

- Influence decisions about their city and express their opinion on the city they want
- Walk safely in the streets on their own

Relationship to VEYLDF and VELs:

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Where We Learn And Grow

Theme Creating environments and services that enhance the health, wellbeing, learning and development of all children.

Outcome Create an environment which enables children to grow and develop to their optimum potential.

Four Year Objectives

For community agencies, all levels of Government, children and families to work in partnership to support and promote physical, social and mental health for children and their families.

Work in partnership with key services and agencies to strengthen the quality of education and care services in Wyndham.

To promote and support services to respond to the National Early Years Reform Agenda in relation to service planning and provision.

Relationship to Child Friendly Cities Principles:

- Receive basic services such as health care, education and social support services.
- Are an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.
- Influence decisions about their city and express their opinion on the city they want.
- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.

Relationship to VEYLDF and Aus VELs:

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

How we connect

Theme Developing systems to connect and build strong communities

Outcome Children, families and services are well connected and linked

Four Year Objectives

- Encourage opportunities for children and families to participate in events and activities that increase social connectedness.
- Develop resources and programs to support community engagement and implement programs to build connections amongst families, particularly those in new or isolated communities.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with all levels of Government, schools and service providers to facilitate an integrated approach to service delivery and referral systems.

Relationship to Child Friendly Cities Principles:

- Participate in family, community and social life including cultural and social events.
- Influence decisions about their city and express their opinion on the city they want.

Relationship to VEYLDF and Aus VELs:

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners



Where We Play

Theme Children and families have opportunities to socialise, play and learn in a range of places and spaces in the community.

Outcome High quality, accessible environments which promote children's creativity and maximise social interactions.

Four Year Objectives

- To endeavour to provide public outdoor spaces and physical environments for children and families that encourage families to play with their children.
- To promote the value of play to parents.
- To create environments and services which enable children and families to participate in local arts and cultural activities eg drawing, painting, singing, sculpting, dancing.

Relationship to Child Friendly Cities Principles:

Participate in family, community and social life including cultural and social events:

- Have green spaces to play in nature with plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment.
- Influence decisions about their city and express their opinion on the city they want.
- Meet friends and play.

Relationship to VEYLDF and Aus VELs

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators



Themes and the City Plan

The themes identified in the Municipal Early Years Plan link to Council's Vision, and City Plan as shown in the diagram below.

"Our people, one community, our future"

"We will create a healthy, safe, vibrant, proud and harmonious community while respecting our environment."



Alignment of MEYP Themes and City Plan Pillars



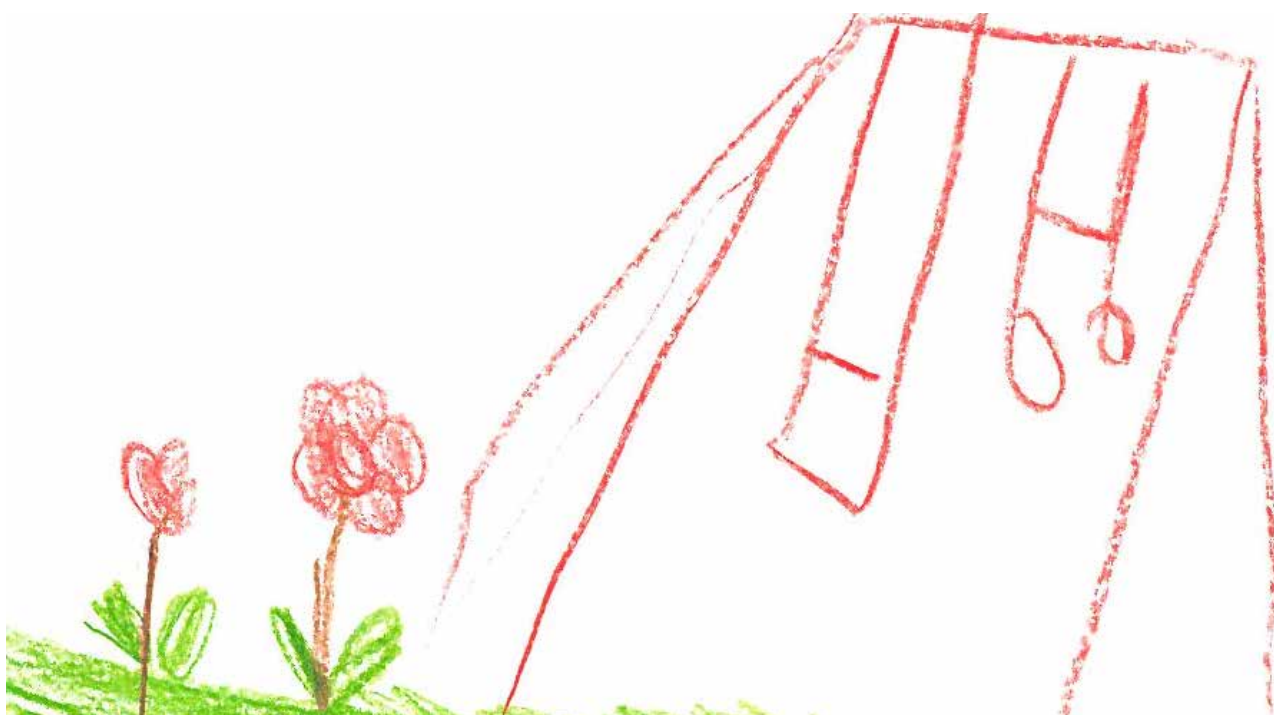
Themes and the Community Health, Wellbeing and Safety Plan

The themes also have strong alignment to Council's Community Health, Wellbeing and Safety Plan.

Municipal Early Years Plan 2013-2017: Themes

	Where We Live	Where We Learn and Grow	Where We Play	How We Connect
Municipal Early Years Plan 2013-2017: Themes	Planning and developing services and facilities to ensure that they respond to the changing needs of children and families.	Creating environments and services that enhance the health, wellbeing, learning and development of all children.	Children and families have opportunities to socialise, play and learn in a range of places and spaces in the community.	Developing systems to connect and build strong communities.

Community Health Well-being and Safety Plan 2010-2013: Focus Areas	People and Place	Promote Healthy Life-styles	Target Priorities for Health and Safety	Lead and Partner for Future Health and Safety
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Review and Evaluation

The Evaluation of the 2013-2017 MEYP will be an ongoing process and will be implemented using a whole of community approach.

Council will work in partnership with children, families and service providers to assess whether the MEYP has made a difference to children and families. Outcome and Impact Indicators will be designed to make it as easy as possible to assess whether annual strategies and actions are delivering the outcomes required.

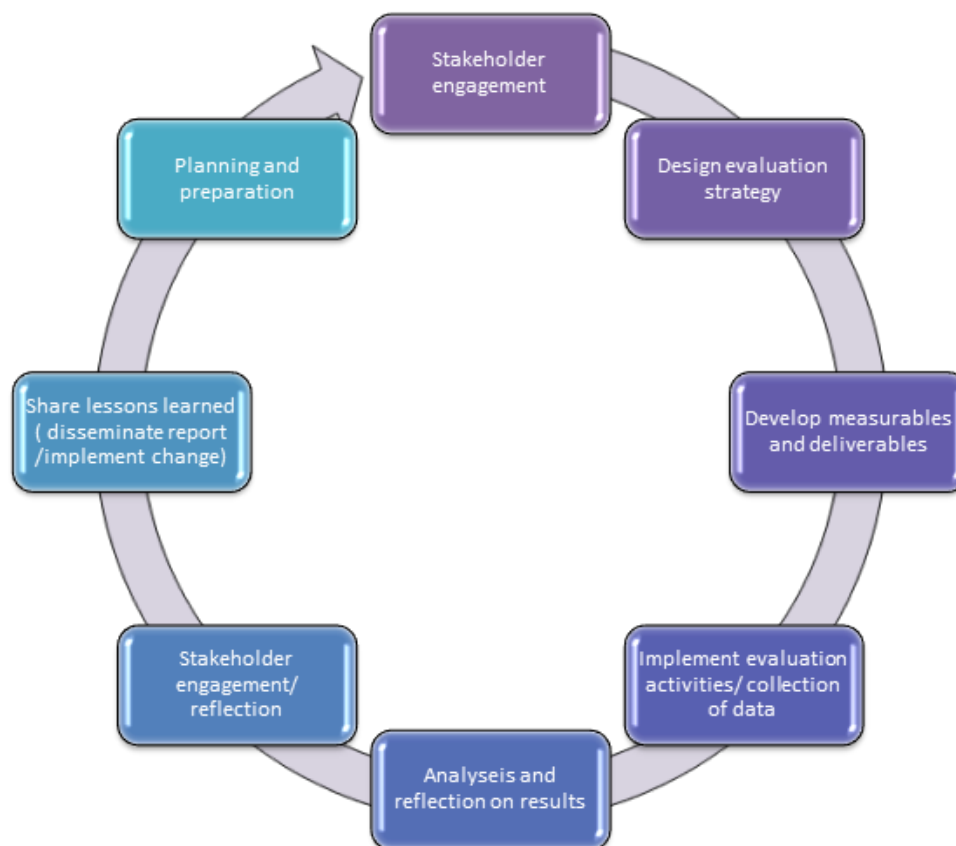
The evaluation process will enable both accountability within Council and the community, and learning and development based on what is working and what is not.

This comprehensive evaluation will enable decision makers, partner agencies and the community to better understand the impact of the MEYP on outcomes for children and families.

The evaluation will focus on four key aspects:

- The process which was used to develop the MEYP;
- The implementation of the MEYP;
- The impact of the MEYP; and
- Longer term outcomes for children and families.

It will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data including feedback from children and families, feedback from service providers and statistical data. The following table demonstrates the cyclic process that will be utilised to evaluate both the MEYP's Annual Action Plans and the entire MEYP process.



“ *I ride my bike around the lake and around the hill and to the park, it's fun.*

- Ben, 4 Wyndham Vale



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