

Gannawarra Shire Early Years Plan 2015-2018

Supporting every child to have a
great start to life



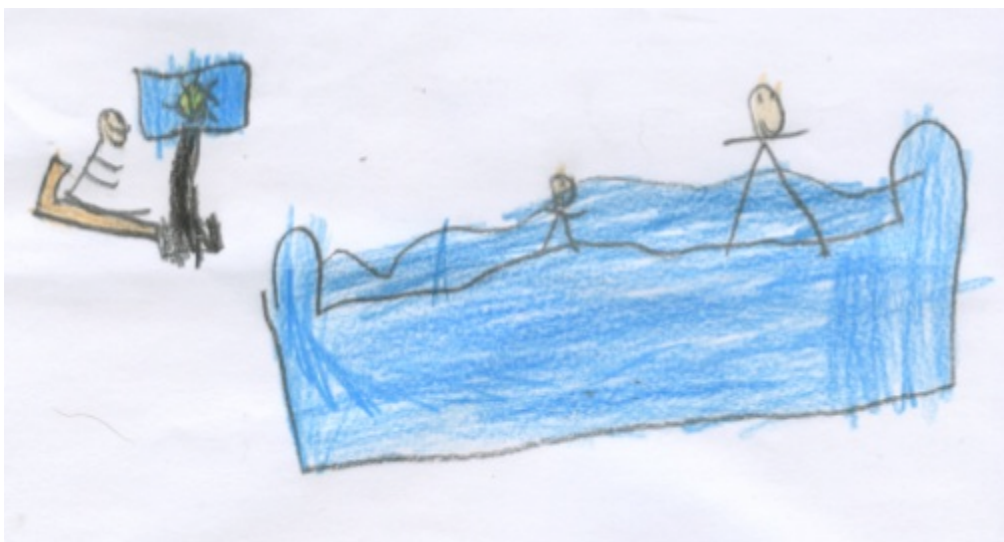
GANNAWARRA
SHIRE COUNCIL

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Executive Summary



Executive Summary.

The Gannawarra Shire Early Years Plan provides strategic direction for Council on how best to support children between birth and the end of primary school. The Early Years Plan has been developed using a range of current research and policy as well as significant input and feedback from community and other early years service partners.

Our Vision For the Early Years...

Supporting every child to have a great start to life.

Our Five Key Themes for the Early Years...

Shaping Our Shire: The voices of our youngest citizens are heard along with those of their families, enabling both children and their families to participate in decisions that affect them.

Healthy Learning and Development: Ensuring the potential of every child is realised by working together to support their learning and development.

What Our Families Need: Enabling and ensuring that children and families have information on and access to affordable services they need.

Value in diversity: The diversity of Gannawarra families and children is recognised as a valuable asset to our community and is integrated into all aspects of planning, policy and service delivery.

Effective partnerships: Partnerships with families, communities, education providers and other organisations underpin the development and implementation of services and initiatives. Advocacy and partnerships aim to improve coordination to deliver a collective positive impact on children's health and wellbeing.

Our Role in the Early Years...

Direct service delivery including maternal and child health services, early education and childcare services, library services and recreation and leisure activities.

Advocacy on behalf of children and their families to influence other levels of government and other organisations or agencies.

Funding body and funding seeker for programs and infrastructure supporting children and their families, such as children's events and festivals, arts programs, walking paths and play spaces.

Community capacity building through provision of forums, workshops and support to communities that encourages information sharing, workforce development, and local collaborations.

Facilitating partnerships and networks through initiatives like the Mallee Area Partnership and the Early Years Think Tank to build a strong, coordinated and responsive service system for children and their families.

Planning to develop and implement services, and/or advocate for shared goals to support the developmental needs of children.

Introducing Our Early Years Plan



me chasing
my dog.

Introducing Our Early Years Plan.



Gannawarra Shire is committed to being a pivotal provider and advocate for children in our community. The Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) provides an evidence-based approach to planning Council's involvement in social support and change for children aged between birth and 12 years of age. It provides a roadmap for planning services and facilities that will be delivered by the Shire and in collaboration with other partner organisations committed to the support and wellbeing of children.

With a small and currently decreasing population of families with children, spread over large distances, Gannawarra Shire has a challenge in sustainably delivering and advocating for quality children's services, programs and facilities. Gannawarra Shire is a regional leader in the support and care of children in our communities. The Shire is directly involved in the provision of childcare and kindergarten services as a direct and active response to the inherent issues that came from remote or long distance management of these services by third parties.

The Shire has shown a willingness to step into these child service and support spaces where it sees an absence of others doing so- a sign of a leadership and commitment to the wellbeing of it's children.

In an area where populations are inherently small and will remain so for the foreseeable future, area and organisational partnerships are crucial to ensure a coordinated, comprehensive approach to supporting families and children. This collaborative approach is crucial and, through the MEYP, Gannawarra Shire is committed to working with partners to ensure our children have every opportunity to not just survive but *thrive* in our community.

Gannawarra Shire is a regional leader in the support and care of children in our community.

Throughout the development of the MEYP, many hundreds of families, residents and other service providers have been involved in providing ideas, opinions, data and feedback on proposed direction. The MEYP itself is a product of collaborative community input and involvement and, as the strategic directions proposed within it are implemented, this collaborative approach with community will be maintained.

Gannawarra Shire is committed to working with partners to ensure our children have every opportunity to not just survive but *thrive* in our community.

The Municipal Early Years Plan 2015–2018 brings together a compelling evidence base and the aspirations of the community to define where our efforts should be focused to achieve the best outcomes for our children.

Our Vision for Early Years.



Our Vision

Supporting every child to have a great start to life

A supportive community in which our children are valued citizens with the same rights as any other is an important priority for the Shire of Gannawarra.

Delivery of the themes and outcomes outlined in this Municipal Early Years Plan will require genuine and sustainable partnerships with families and service providers.

Our Themes:

The research and consultation undertaken has helped define the following key themes, which have been used to develop the strategies of the Municipal Early Years Plan for the next four years.

Shaping Our Shire: The voices of our youngest citizens are heard along with those of their families, enabling both children and their families to participate in decisions that affect them.

Healthy Learning and Development: Ensuring the potential of every child is realised by working together to support their learning and development.

What Our Families Need: Enabling and ensuring that children and families have information on and access to affordable services they need.

Value in diversity: The diversity of Gannawarra families and children is recognised as a valuable asset to our community and is integrated into all aspects of planning, policy and service delivery.

Effective partnerships: Partnerships with families, communities, education providers and other organisations underpin the development and implementation of services and initiatives. Advocacy and partnerships aim to improve coordination to deliver a collective positive impact on children's health and wellbeing.

Our Children's Services.



Children’s Services within Gannawarra Shire

The separation of services across organisations that may have teams working within several large geographical areas can make coordination and responsiveness a challenge. The following table provides a broad understanding of the scope of services across the Shire.

Type	Description	Responsible Agency	Locations
Universal Services providing for all children to support families and children in broad areas of health, learning and general development.	Maternal And Child Health Services - often the initial service to engage with new parents and children.	Gannawarra Shire Council	Cohuna Koondrook Kerang Outreach
	Playgroups - local volunteer groups that can encourage and develop parent networks and socialisation.	Generally voluntary groups utilising a range of facilities	Cohuna Kerang Murrabit Quambatook
	Long Day Care and Family Day Care	Gannawarra Shire Council	LDC in Kerang FDC across Shire
	Pre kinder and kindergarten	Gannawarra Shire Council	Cohuna Kerang Koondrook Leitchville
	Primary Schools	State Schools Private Schools	Cohuna Leitchville Kerang Murrabit Cohuna Kerang Koondrook Quambatook Lake Charm
Specialist Services providing for children with specific need or through referral. Providing specific services for vulnerable children and families	Early Childhood Intervention - providing specific case management for families and children for more specialised support.	Noah’s Ark – Murray Mallee Early Intervention	Regional- responsiveness and capacity remain an issue
	DET specialist services - case management and referral		Regional- responsiveness and capacity remain an issue
	Disability Services	Gannawarra Shire Council (HACC)	Shire wide
	Allied Health - GP, Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, etc.	Northern District Community Health Services (NDCHS)	Kerang, Cohuna, Quambatook
	Family Support Services	Mallee Family Care Child First NDCHS	Regional Kerang, Cohuna, Quambatook

A young girl with long dark hair, wearing a pink headband and a light-colored floral dress, is shown from the side, reaching her right arm up towards a cluster of bright green leaves. The background is a clear blue sky and a green field. The text "Our Community Profile." is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Our Community Profile.

Our Community Profile

Gannawarra Shire has a small population spread across a large geographic area. The community is generally ageing (as are most communities in Australia) and there has been a slow but consistent diminishing of population over the last decade.

The Shire is remote from a number of main regional cities and obtaining high levels of consistent and timely service delivery is challenging due to travel distances and small population.

The Shire is made up of many smaller satellite townships with the two largest towns being Kerang (approximately 3,700 people) and Cohuna (approximately 1,800 people).

Although the Shire population is ageing and has decreased from just over 11,500 to fewer than 10,500 over the past decade, the number of families with children remains significant at approximately 1,380.¹ This is a reduction from the 2006 ABS figure of 1,591.

Most recent Census data provides a total of 568 children in the 0-4 year old cohort and 1,323 children in the 5-14 year old cohort (ABS 2011).

This is a reduction from 2006 population levels of 599 children in the 0-4 year old cohort and 1,622 children in the 5-14 year old cohort.

Over the 2006-2011 period, the 0-14 population in Gannawarra Shire has dropped by 33 children.

The number of working parents has also decreased as families have moved from Gannawarra Shire.

Cohuna has experienced significant growth in the 0-4 year old population with an increase from 67 children to 106 between 2006 and 2011. (ABS Census data)

MCH birth data supports this growth in Cohuna. 2009/10 birth data indicates 110 births across the municipality with just 27 from Cohuna with an increase to 113 births in 2013/14 with 44 from Cohuna.

OUR VITAL STATISTICS:

Around 10,360 people live here

2.8 people per square kilometre

The population is ageing

The population is declining

Population decline is occurring in the area of families with children

Approximately 1380 families with children live here

Approximately 1900 children aged between 0-14 live in the Shire.

Birth notices in Cohuna increased from 27 to 44 between 2010 and 2014.

Gannawarra is not ethnically diverse but has a higher than state average of indigenous people.

Higher than state average attendance to Maternal and Child Health consultations

Community Strength Indicators show higher than state averages

Crime rates are low and perception of safety is high

¹ ABS Census Data: 2011 and 2006 accessed February 2015

A close-up, profile view of a young child with curly blonde hair blowing bubbles. The child's face is on the left, and their hand is holding a bubble wand with orange sticks. Several clear bubbles are floating in the air, some in focus and some blurred. The background is dark, making the bubbles and the child's hair stand out.

Early Years
Policy and
Research.

Current Research

There is now an established evidence base of research and government policy regarding the benefits of investing in early years support and development. A summary of key pieces of research and current government policy are provided below.

GLOBAL: Child Friendly Cities Framework

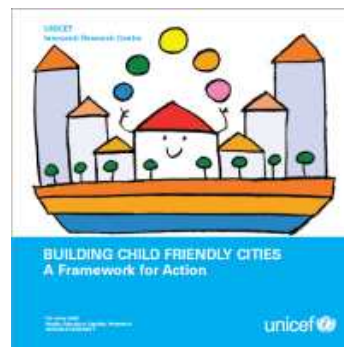
The Child Friendly Cities Framework is a global initiative aimed at translating the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child into action that can be implemented at the local level. The UN Convention was signed by Australia in 1990.

Promoting the concept of putting children first, Child Friendly Cities recognise that the wellbeing of children and young people is a more general indicator of a healthy habitat, and a democratic, well-governed society.

In practice at the local level a Child Friendly City aims to reflect children's rights in policies, laws, programs and budgets.

A key philosophy of the Child Friendly City is also to achieve a more livable city for all members of the community by creating one that is the safest, healthiest, and accommodating for its most vulnerable citizens.

The UNICEF document "Building Child Friendly Cities: A framework for action" provides a broad guide for developing a Child Friendly City and identifies steps to build a local system of governance committed to fulfilling children's rights.²



The UNICEF Framework for Action provides four key principles that could be useful in *all* Council actions. These include:

- 1. Non discrimination-** consider all children regardless of background
- 2. Best interests-** children are a primary consideration in decision making
- 3. Every child's right to life and maximum development**
- 4. Listening to children and respecting their views.**

² Document viewed at <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/416>

NATIONAL : The Australian Education and Development Census

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a population measure of how young children are developing across Australia, as they begin school. It occurs every three years and is due to be undertaken again in 2015.

Gannawarra Shire results for 2012 show a significant improvement on 2009 figures with children showing vulnerabilities in 2 or more areas decreasing by 5.1 percent and those showing vulnerability in 1 area dropping by 10 percent.

Comparisons with national and state averages is highly encouraging with lower than national averages and similar to average results across Victoria.

These AEDC results show a successful outcome for the Gannawarra Shire in addressing areas of vulnerability.

This result for Gannawarra indicates that current strategies regarding collaboration and partnerships within the sector, actively playing a role in service delivery and the bringing together of services locally has had measurable, positive impact.

Table 1: AEDC comparative data 2009-2012: Gannawarra Shire.

Legend: ▲ Significant decrease ▲ Non significant decrease ■ No change ▼ Non significant increase ▼ Significant increase

Gannawarra Community							
Year	Physical	Social	Emotional	Language	Communication	Vuln 1	Vuln 2
Developmentally vulnerable in 2009 (%)	19.1	14.9	13.8	8.5	5.3	25.5	14.9
Developmentally vulnerable in 2012 (%)	8.9	8	3.6	7.1	9.8	15.2	9.8
Change since 2009 (%)	-10.2 ▲	-6.9 ▲	-10.2 ▲	-1.4 ▲	4.5 ▼	-10.3 ▲	-5.1 ▲

Table 2: AEDC comparative data 2012 Australia, Victoria, Gannawarra

Geography	Physical	Social	Emotional	Language	Communication	Vuln 1	Vuln 2
Australia	9.3	9.3	7.6	6.8	9.0	22.0	10.8
VIC	7.8	8.1	7.2	6.1	8.0	19.5	9.5
Gannawarra	8.9	8.0	3.6	7.1	9.8	15.2	9.8

Federal Government Policy

It is also worth noting that several federal government agreements underpin the development of the Gannawarra MEYP. At a federal level there has been recognition that investing in the early years improves outcomes for children, families and communities.

These agreements include:

- The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education
- The National Quality Agenda for early childhood education & care
- Closing the Gap: National Agreement on Indigenous early childhood development
- The first National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

STATE: State Government Policies and Planning

Since the introduction of Federal partnerships, much of the Victorian focus has been on the implementation of universal early childhood services and integration of these services.

These twin priorities have seen the development of a number of resources and funding programs by the State encouraging the construction of multi-service facilities or Hubs, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH), kindergarten, long day care, playgroups and other services.

State Government Early Years Strategic Plan 2014-2020

The recently released Early Years Strategic Plan provides a broad level commitment to a continued emphasis and priority on improving early years development practice throughout Victoria.

The Early Years Strategic Plan aims to improve outcomes and better support all Victorian children from pregnancy up to eight years of age with a focus across three areas:

1. Supporting parents and communities to give children a great start
2. Early and sustained support for those who need it most
3. All children benefiting from high-quality early learning.

The Victorian Early Years Strategic Plan provides a range of actions under these three key areas that specifically provide opportunity for Gannawarra Shire to be encouraged and supported as a regional leader in early childhood care and education.

Victoria's Vulnerable Children: Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013-2022

A key initiative of this document is the implementation of Area Partnerships. Gannawarra Shire will be a key agency in the Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership.

Area Partnerships:

- are a critical step in establishing more effectively joined-up social services,
- take a holistic view of child vulnerability,
- will be a key mechanism by which the expectations for vulnerable children will be raised to that of other children, and
- contribute to a *collaborative* and broad-based model of *governance and leadership* that will help drive the *Vulnerable Children's Strategy* reforms.

Engagement with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal community controlled organisations will be an Area Partnership priority.

Ensuring cultural responsiveness in the implementation of the *Vulnerable Children's Strategy* is critical to its success and that of the Area Partnerships.



LOCAL: Gannawarra Shire Strategy and Actions

Gannawarra Shire Five Ways To Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing underpin the health and wellbeing directives of the Gannawarra Shire. And provide a foundation for considering how to support, engage and develop children living in the Shire. The five philosophies provide a holistic, “whole of person” approach to wellbeing and the aim is to create an approach to early years that deliver services, facilities and programs that encourage and engage children across these five areas.

Municipal Early Years Plan 0-6 Years (2011-2014)

The current MEYP has provided clear direction for Gannawarra Shire in being more directly involved in the delivery of services (particularly child care and kindergarten) within the Shire. Importantly the plan focused on several areas that continue to be a priority:

1. Leadership and service management
2. Educational programs and practice
3. Healthy lifestyles
4. Family Friendly Spaces
5. Professional Support
6. Collaborative partnerships

Early Years Think Tank

Since 2013, Council has initiated and coordinated the Early Years Think Tank to further enhance a partnership approach to early years health promotion and increase service coordination, with a particular focus on vulnerable children and families. Key directions from the Early Years Think Tank include:

1. Vulnerable family focus
2. Supporting transitions
3. Creating safe environments for service access
4. Developing trust and whole of community approach

Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership (MAP)

With their work in developing the Early Years Think Tank, Gannawarra Shire will play a pivotal role in the MAP. The focus of the Mallee Area Partnership will include increasing the reach and effectiveness of prevention and intervention for vulnerable children and families through

1. Building the capacity of caregivers
2. Building the capacity of the service sector's access and responsiveness through increased service coordination and the identification of local barriers and action to overcome them; gaps and resources to fill them.
3. Strengthening the support for children to engage in learning and development.
4. Improving outcomes for children in out of home care.

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Stay outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

What We Heard From Our Children, Parents and Services.



What we heard from our children.

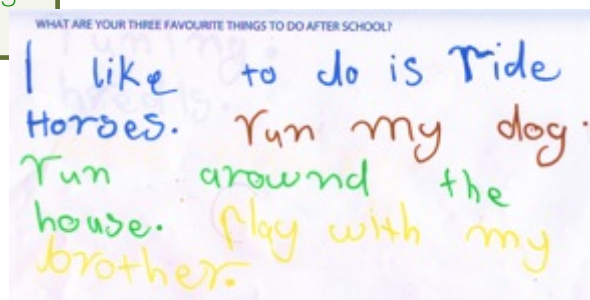
What are your three favourite things to do after school?

Visiting Friends Go to the pool Play on the computer

Riding my bike Play with my brother Motorbike riding

Playing tennis Going to see Dad Run with my dog

THIS MEANS: we need to consider local neighborhood connection, online engagement of children, space for free play and social /family connection opportunities.



What's your favourite spot in your town?

The swimming pool The library Where I walk with my dog

Going out to eat The park The river at Koondrook

The football ground Shops Backyard with the trampoline



THIS MEANS: we need to consider children's spaces in our community facilities, sporting facilities, urban design that is child friendly and safe walking trails.

What are some great things you would like to see near your house?

A crossing on the highway Good food places A zoo

Water slide Water park New school

Skate park A forest and woods Adventure Park

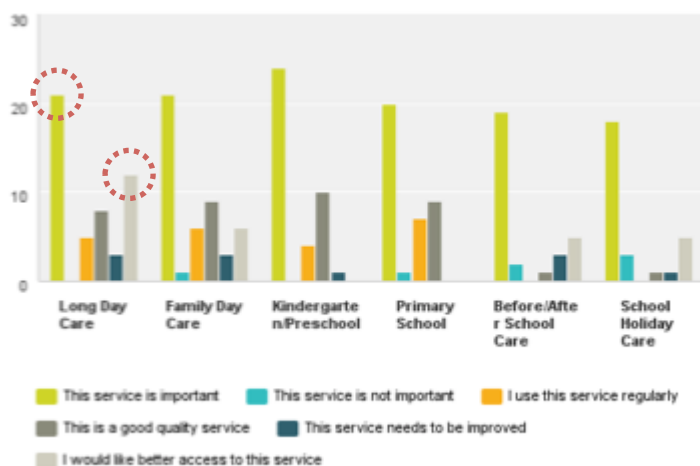
THIS MEANS: we need to consider water play, park development and street landscapes, places to hang out with relevant activities, like skate parks or adventure parks and safe pedestrian treatments.



What we heard from our parents.

Education and Care...

Unsurprisingly, most education services were rated as highly important. Interestingly, childcare was rated as the second most important service but was also rated most highly as the service that parents would like better access to. (see highlighted graph below)



Recreation and Leisure.....

Libraries and playgrounds were both seen as important and as good quality facilities, however walking/bike paths were seen as most important and also the facility most in need of improvement. (see highlighted graph below)



Our parents conversations...

"I have one child attending preschool at Koondrook. If the service was available for longer hours that would help me with work....but a long day care on the days that he does not attend preschool or to extend the hours would be great."

"Long day care and family day is either not available in my area or limited"

"The Boort Dental Clinic offers a service to our family at minimal cost. A similar service should be on offer within Gannawarra Shire."

"Mental Health Services are extremely important over here, due to isolation and often no transport to get to facilities outside of town"

"Our local playgroup was an opportunity to meet other parents in the district where our children would interact with one another. Friendships were gained over time and continued throughout their school life."

"The Playgroup is run by volunteer mums with no support from Shire. It would be great to have support."

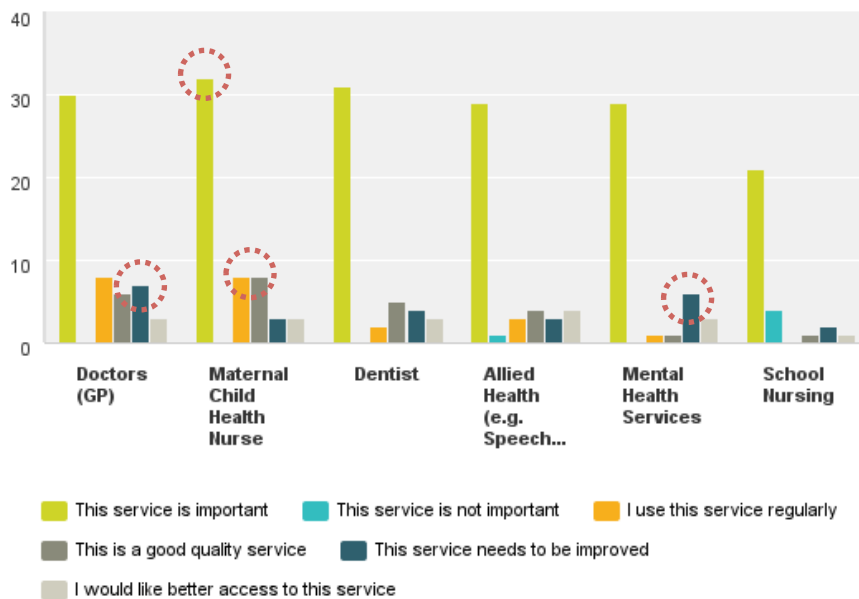
"Footpaths on both sides of Mitchell St."

"Opportunities for arts and culture activities"

"Improve access to childcare."

Health and Wellbeing....

Health and wellbeing related services were rated as being important however only Maternal and Child Health services rated in terms of quality. G.P. and mental health services rated most highly with regard to services that needed to be improved. (see graph below)



Although 70 percent of parents who responded felt part of their community, 20 percent felt isolated as a parent and did not feel they had friends or family they could call on to help with child care.

Priorities for the next few years...

1. Increased childcare services and facilities was a common priority.
2. Improved facilities such as toilets at playgrounds, road crossings and footpaths, particularly to schools.
3. Improve promotion of parent network opportunities such as Library Rhyme Time, Playgroups etc.
4. More navigable website, better information distribution.



A "word cloud" taking all parent responses and showing the most commonly mentioned words. The larger the word, the more often it was noted by parents.

What we heard from our services.

What's working well...

Gannawarra Children's Centre- affordable, quality childcare.

Connecting with families and attending first appointment with families to assist with integration.

Collaborative practice through great networks.

Ability to travel to people's homes to help families access services.

Key barriers to service access...

Poor access to public transport

Lack of awareness

Cost

Geographic location

Service at capacity

Major challenges for services...

Transport

Not enough housing

Lack of funding to allow innovative models of service delivery

After hours care

Helping families afford family day care

How services perceive Council's role....

Key contact/linking agency

Proactive, innovative leader

Coordinate information on services available to children

Network coordinator and facilitator

Distributor of news and information in the sector

Gatherer of local data

Great ideas for improvement...

One stop information portal/person/service

Transport Cost Assistance

Increased availability of childcare with rebate

Support around domestic violence issues

Fluoride in the water

Video conferencing with GP's and specialists

Breakfast availability at all educational facilities

Family friendly events and festivals

6 of the 12 services surveyed were either at capacity or had waiting lists for service delivery.

Only 4 services believed that families know what services they can contact for support.

9 services believed there was good communication between services and that services are good at connecting families to other support mechanisms.

10 services indicated that most families have to repeat their story every time they access a service.

6 services felt that more collaboration was a priority.

"I don't know that many families navigate the service system well. It is perhaps easier to find what's perceived as an essential service to the family, such as childcare."

Service respondent

Key Themes

Based on the research and consultation outcomes of the MEYP planning process, the following key themes and directions have been developed.

Shaping Our Shire with the Input of Children

The voices of our youngest citizens are heard along with those of their families, enabling both children and their families to participate in decisions that affect them.

Healthy Learning and Development

Ensuring the potential of every child is realised by working together to support their learning and development.

What Our Families Need

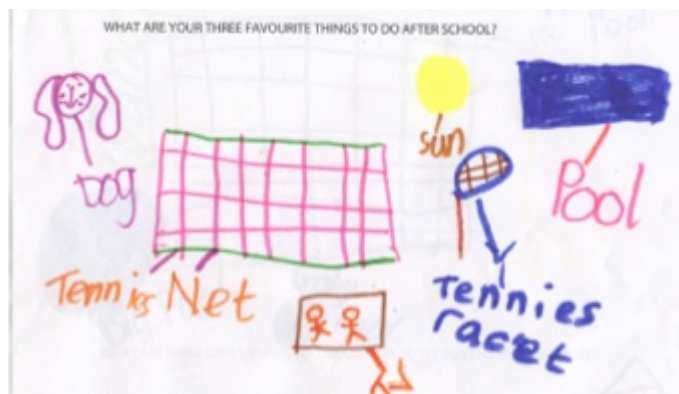
Enabling and ensuring that children and families have information on and access to relevant, affordable services they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Value in diversity

The diversity of Gannawarra families and children is recognised as a valuable asset to our community and is integrated into all aspects of planning, policy and service delivery.

Effective partnerships

Partnerships with families, communities, education providers and other organisations underpin the development and implementation of services and initiatives. Advocacy and partnerships aim to improve coordination to deliver a collective positive impact on children's health and wellbeing.



Council's Role

Gannawarra Shire has a variety of roles that will support the delivery of the strategies outlined in the Municipal Early Years Plan. These include:

Direct service delivery including maternal and child health services, immunisation, early education and child care services, occasional care and other children and family services, library services, recreation and leisure activities, and community planning, safety and advocacy

Advocacy on behalf of children and their families to influence other levels of government and other organisations or agencies.

Funding body and funding seeker for activities and programs supporting children and their families, such as play activities, children's events and festivals, community development, mentoring and arts programs.

Community capacity building through provision of forums, workshops and support to communities and organisations that encourage information sharing, enhanced professional development and workforce development, and local collaborations.

Facilitating partnerships and networks through initiatives like the Mallee Area Partnership and the Early Years Think Tank to build a strong, coordinated and responsive service system for children and their families.

Planning to develop and implement services, and/or advocate for shared goals to support the developmental needs of children.



The Action Plan

Theme 1:

Shaping Our Shire with the Input of Children.

Impact:

Children and families in Gannawarra have opportunities to contribute to and influence community decisions that affect their lives. Children are celebrated for their achievements and are made to feel valued.

Strategic Actions:

Strategic Action	Council Role	Stakeholders	Priority
1. Endorse the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter and seek to support its implementation across Gannawarra Shire.	Provider Advocate Partnerships	Council and other partners	Year 1-2
2. Allocate resources to specifically promote a "Child Friendly Gannawarra".	Provider Partnerships Advocate	Service Providers Community	Year 1-2
3. Encourage opportunities for children and families to participate in Council and community decision making.	Provider Capacity Building	All areas of Council	Year 1-2
4. Provide and promote opportunities to celebrate the achievements of local children.	Advocate Provider	Media Other agencies	Year 1-2
5. Ensure case management approaches include specific plans for and input from children as well as their families.	Advocacy	Specialist services	Year 3-4
6. Develop and promote a broad understanding across Council of standardised Council project planning requirements that consider implications for children and families. Facilitate training in this area to embed a culture.	Advocacy Capacity Building Planning	Council teams involved in external service delivery and infrastructure development	Year 1-2
7. Provide opportunities across Gannawarra Shire for community activities that celebrate Children's Week.	Partner Planning Funding	All agencies Arts and Culture Library	Year 1-2

Theme 2:

Healthy Learning and Development

Impact:

Our community works together to ensure the learning and development potential of every child is supported and realised.

Strategic Actions:

Strategic Action	Council Role	Stakeholders	Priority
1. Broadly promote research regarding the importance of early brain development in lifelong learning habits.	Capacity Building	State Government Research Institutes	Year 1-2
2. Promote parents reading to children as a key component of early years literacy.	Service Provider Advocate	Library MCH Kindergarten Primary School	Year 1-2
3. Promote play as a key component of children's early learning and development	Service Provider Advocate		Year 1-2
4. Improve oral health of children	Partnership Advocacy	LMMML	Year 1-2
5. Support playgroups across the Gannawarra Shire through promotion, use of venues and administrative support.	Provider Partnership	Local playgroups	Year 1-2
6. Develop a comprehensive approach to early years literacy and numeracy with key partners	Partnership Advocacy Provider	Primary School Kindergartens Library NDCHS Speech Therapy	Year 1-2
7. Provide universal services that value diversity and ensure inclusion of all children regardless of their abilities	Service Provider Advocacy	Other service providers Other Council departments	Year 1-2
8. Consider the development and improvement of local parks and pools (and their connection to paths) to provide opportunities for active outdoor play in local areas.	Service Provider Planner Funding body Funding seeker	State Government	Year 3-4
9. Provide access to online literacy and numeracy e-resources through library website.	Service Provider	Schools Kindergartens	Year 3-4

Theme 3:

What Our Families Need

Impact:

Enabling and ensuring that children and families have information on and access to relevant, affordable services they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Strategic Actions:

Strategic Action	Council Role	Stakeholders	Priority
1. Endorse business planning and feasibility studies for long day care provision in Cohuna and Koondrook	Service Provider Funding body Funding seeker	DET NDCHS	Year 1-2
2. Assess options for long day care facility development and operation in Cohuna and Koondrook. Seek funding as appropriate.	Service Provider Funding body Funding seeker	DET NDCHS	Year 1-2
3. Develop a new position that works with families that are experiencing vulnerability and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need support in navigating services - need support in attending regular kindergarten or primary school days - provide a welcoming connection between entry into universal services such as kindergarten or schools and more specialist services. 	Service Provider Partnerships	All other Early Years services	Year 3-4
4. Develop a walking and cycling strategy that prioritises families as pedestrians and participants. Consider priority connections to schools, parks and shops.	Planner Service Provider	Whole of community	Year 3-4
5. Support integrated service planning and delivery through the Mallee Area Children and Youth Partnership with the aim of supporting vulnerable children and families.	Partnership	MCYAP partners	Year 1-2
6. Provide integrated facilities and co-located services (where possible) to encourage use by families and create convenience for parents.	Service Provider Partner Funding body Funding seeker	DET NDCHS	Year 1-2
7. Continue to develop and refine various media (web, brochure etc.) that promote services, programs and facilities to parents	Service provider Partnership	Early Years Sector	Year 1-4

Theme 4:

Value In Diversity

Impact:

The diversity of Gannawarra families and children is recognised as a valuable asset to our community and is integrated into all aspects of planning, policy and service delivery.

Strategic Actions:

Strategic Action	Council Role	Stakeholders	Priority
1. Develop and deliver a range of cultural and arts programs that are family friendly and involve partners	Planning Funding Provider Funding Seeker Partnerships	State Government Arts/cultural organisations	Year 3-4
2. Involve indigenous elders in story times in kindergartens and libraries throughout the year and in NAIDOC week	Service Provider Partnership Funding Seeker	Indigenous community and representative organisations	Year 1-2
3. Promote cultural experiences and story telling from other community members with diverse cultural backgrounds	Service Provider Partnership	CALD communities	Year 3-4
4. Provide and promote opportunities to celebrate the diversity of local families and children	Advocate	Local media	Year 1-2
5. Maintain support for the My Time Support Group in Kerang for carers of children aged 0-16 years with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition.	Facilitator Advocate	Allied Health Services	Year 1-2



Theme 5:

Effective Partnerships

Impact:

Partnerships with families, communities, education providers and other organisations underpin the development and implementation of services and initiatives. Advocacy and partnerships aim to improve coordination to deliver a collective positive impact on children's health and wellbeing.

Strategic Actions:

Strategic Action	Council Role	Stakeholders	Priority
1. Continue to facilitate and support the Early Years Think Tank. Facilitate meaningful projects for member stakeholders to be involved in.	Leadership Facilitator	Early Years Sector	Continue
2. Play a lead facilitation role in developing the Mallee Children and Youth Area Partnership	Partnership	DET MCYAP partners	Year 1-2
3. Work closely with other Council departments to develop a child friendly city culture.	Leadership Advocate Facilitator	Infrastructure Parks and Recreation	Year 1-2
4. Work with local playgroups to provide coordination and further support opportunities such as local kinder teacher visits and library story times and rhyme times.	Facilitator Service Provider	Local playgroups Library	Year 1-2
5. Continue to demonstrate leadership in early years through the development, collation and distribution of localised data and research that informs the sector and enables more effective collaboration and referrals between agencies.	Leadership Facilitator Advocate	DET NDCHS Key service and data providers in the early years sector	Year 1-2
6. Plan and offer professional development forums for the early years sector. Work with partners in delivering opportunities for collegiate professional development.	Facilitator Partnership	Early Years Sector	Year 3-4
7. Work closely with the Gannawarra Shire business sector to create child friendly business accreditation. Promote businesses that meet Child Friendly City criteria to families.	Advocate Facilitator Partnership	Business groups in Gannawarra Shire	Year 3-4
8. Continue to use the well respected Maternal and Child Health service to create a first contact for participation in the spectrum of early years services.	Service Provider	Maternal and Child Health Service	Year 1-2

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Supporting every child to
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