Kingston Family and Children’s Strategy
(Incorporating the Municipal Early Years Plan) 2013 - 2017
Background Information and Data Supplementary Document
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1. Introduction

The Kingston City Council has developed the Family and Children’s Strategy (F&CS) to provide a local area strategic plan for the development and coordination of education, care and health services, activities and other local developments for children and families. The F&CS has been tailored to suit local circumstances.

Kingston City Council’s F&CS is designed to provide a starting point for the strategic direction in the development and coordination of educational, care and health programs and other activities that impact on the development of all children aged 0–12 years. The F&CS articulates Council’s role in service and infrastructure provision, planning, advocacy and community development for children aged 0-12 years and provide community service organisations with information to assist in making decisions about the allocation of resources to meet the needs of children and families who live in the municipality.

1.1 Objective

The family and children’s service system in the City of Kingston is complex, multilayered and is required to be responsive to differing needs and issues experienced by children and their families. Through the development of the F&CS, these needs have been considered in the context of demographic, health and social data, community consultation, current early years research and contemporary practices; and the international, national and state policy environment.

The information contained within this F&CS Background Information & Data Supplementary Document aims to provide additional information and increase the body of knowledge provided in the F&CS. This will be of particular assistance to children and family service providers and other interested parties by providing additional information regarding the previous planning for children and families in the City of Kingston, the current policy context, broader Council planning frameworks and the health and social profile of Kingston’s children and families.

This Background Information & Data Supplementary Document should be read in conjunction with the F&CS.

2. Municipal Early Years Plan 2005-2008

The first Kingston City Council’s Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) resulted in a range of initiatives that benefited children and families living in or having strong links to the City of Kingston. The MEYP 2005 - 2008 comprised 90 actions, for 28 objectives/dimensions across five goal areas. The five goals were:

- To promote the importance of valuing and investing in children and their families in the early years of a child’s life;
- To respond to the needs of children and their families across all community and Council planning;
- To deliver appropriate and timely information and effective communication strategies to allow families to make informed choices;
- To improve the capacity to respond flexibly to the diverse needs of children, families and communities; and
- To provide opportunities for children and families to participate actively in their local communities.

During 2008 a review of the MEYP 2005-2008 resulted in the identification of the following outcomes:

- Securing Commonwealth funding for a time limited premature babies support group;
- Commencement of strategic work in relation to Council’s provision of Long Day Care Services;
- Development of Sundowner play space;
- Delivery of the annual Children’s Services Training Seminar and Workshop Calendar;
- Ongoing delivery of Kingston Child and Family Networks;
- Ongoing advocacy to the Commonwealth Government regarding the inadequacies of the Inclusion Support Subsidy to meet the needs of children with complex needs in mainstream child care environments;
- Facilitation of the Fathers Conference 2005;
- Implementation of the Baby Book Start Bag program;
- Ongoing provision of a range of family and children’s services; and
- Commencement of the Kingston Family and Children’s Services Partnership in 2008.

2.1 Planning gap between Municipal Early Years Plans

In 2009, Council of Australian Governments (COAG), committed to making early childhood an area for national reform and endorsed a National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. This agreement recognised the importance of early childhood to human capital development and Australia’s future prosperity.

Significant policy change coupled with regulatory changes in Victoria impacted on Kingston City Council’s ability to progress a new MEYP / F&CS in 2009-2010 and consequently an interim Municipal Early Years Plan 2009-2012 was developed.
The interim plan was directed by a developed brief and the Kingston Family and Children’s Service Partnership (KFCSP) and was continued through the analysis of:

- Key legislation and policy relating to early years;
- Existing Council strategies and plans; and
- Demographic data provided by Council, and through service mapping.

The emerging themes for action were continued from the 2005-2008 MEYP report and supported by the vision statements of the KFCSP group and Council.

In line with the priority of action outlined in this MEYP 2009-2012, the following achievements were made:

- Social marketing strategy was completed and implemented in July, 2009;
- A service review of the Vacation Care Program with the objective to develop holiday programs that meet the needs of children with additional needs was completed in September 2009;
- Development of an advocacy information pack regarding Kingston’s children and families with additional needs;
- Development of playgroups in response to the needs of all Kingston residents;
- Improvements have been made to the Family and Recreational Services social marketing strategies and communication strategies to enhance community knowledge of the range of services available in Kingston; and
- The development of Family and Recreational Services to meet the needs of fathers, this includes the establishment of a father’s playgroup.

In addition to these achievements, significant progress was made on:

- Achieving the outcomes of Universal Access for all children to 15 hours of quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) through the review of key policy and agreement schedules in preparation of the 2013 timeline of implementation;
- Providing support to kindergartens through improvements to participation and information provision for both families and service providers;
- The promotion of inclusive and welcoming playgroups that are delivered in partnership with community groups; and
- Investigating the implementation of Child Friendly Cities.

Ongoing consultation with the Kingston community through surveys, focus groups, and general discussions, are primary in the development and continuing improvement of services for the Kingston community.
3. Policy Context

3.1 International Context

International research indicates that the early years of a child’s life are the most critical in influencing child development. Children learn from birth and their learning and development at each stage of life forms the foundation, competence and coping skills that affect lifelong learning, behaviour and health. During the period from birth to eight years, children experience more rapid brain development and acquire more skills and knowledge than in any other period in their lives.

Primarily based on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) international report on early childhood policies and government spending, it is now acknowledged by many governments in Australia and overseas that an investment in supporting children and families in their early years of life has a lasting, positive impact in adult life. Some key outcomes of this research include evidence that:

- The effectiveness of early interventions in early childhood in improving health, education, social and emotional outcomes for children and in the long term preventing school dropout, delinquency, early pregnancy, and is associated with better employment outcomes;
- Disadvantage, child abuse and / or neglect in early childhood has the potential for long term negative outcomes for children;
- Early childhood safety, stability and development is the foundation for learning, behaviour and health through school years and into adult life;
- Negative experiences in the first three years of life can have long-lasting effects on brain development;
- Children who have negative experiences in early childhood are more likely to experience behavioural and learning problems, substance abuse, involvement in crime, poor physical health and subsequently demonstrate poor parenting in later life; and
- Adequate nutrition and positive nurturing enhances physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that recognises and protects the human rights of children. It was unanimously adopted by the United Nations [UN] General Assembly in 1989 and is the most widely ratified international human rights instrument. The convention requires all state parties to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child their progress against the convention.

The purpose of including the UNCRC statement is for all children in the City of Kingston to be recognised and protected. In this statement the protection and wellbeing of children is paramount and therefore speaking out or taking action in the presence of unethical practice is an essential professional responsibility.

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1 Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009
In respect to the rights of children as enshrined in the UNCRC (1989) and in the commitment for advocating for these rights, the initiative for Building Child Friendly Cities is a policy applicable to the governance of all communities which include children. A Child Friendly City is committed to the fullest implementation of the UNCRC.

A Child Friendly City is the embodiment of the UNCRC at the local level, which in practice means that children’s rights are reflected in policies, laws, programmes and budgets. In a Child Friendly City, children are active agents; their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision making processes.

It is a City, or more generally a system of local governance, committed to fulfilling children’s rights, including their right to:

- Influence decisions about their city;
- Express their opinion on the 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;
- Walk 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 cultural and social events; and
- Be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability. 2

3.2 National Context

3.2.1 Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020


Under the Framework all families should have access to universal supports, such as education and health care. Those families requiring more assistance should be able to access more intensive prevention interventions. Tertiary interventions, such as Child Protection, are seen as a last resort.

The key outcomes of the Framework are to:

- Achieve safe and supportive families and communities for children to live in;
- Improve children and family access to adequate support to promote safety and early intervention;
- Identify and address risk factors for child abuse and neglect;
- Ensure that children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for safety and wellbeing;
- Ensure indigenous children are supported and safe in their families; and
- Prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation and ensure survivors receive adequate support.

3.2.2 The Council of Australian Governments

Through COAG, every State and Territory government and the Commonwealth have committed to making early childhood an area for national reform. COAG’s reform agenda includes action to:

- Address early childhood workforce issues;
- Establish a national Early Years Learning Framework;
- Create a national approach to quality and regulation of early childhood education and child care;
- Improve data and performance information in early childhood; and
- Develop a National Early Childhood Development Strategy.

3.2.3 National Early Childhood Development Strategy July 2009

On 2 July 2009, COAG endorsed the National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECDS) - Investing in the Early Years.

The NECDS aims to ensure that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation. The NECDS relates to children from before birth to eight years and aims to improve the health, safety, early learning and wellbeing of all children and better support disadvantaged children to reduce inequalities.

The NECDS supports engaging effective partnerships across governments, with the non-government sector, and with families around the needs of young children. The NECDS proposes six priority areas for reform. These six priority areas are:

1. Strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services;
2. Support for vulnerable children;
3. Engage parents and the community in understanding the importance of Early Childhood Development;
4. Improve early childhood infrastructure;
5. Strengthen the workforce across early childhood development and family support services; and
6. Build better information and a solid evidence base.

The National Reform Agenda seeks to improve early childhood outcomes and includes:

- A National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education to achieve universal access to quality early childhood education for all children in the year before school by 2013;
• A National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood;
• Development to establish 35 new Children and Family Centres and to increase access to antenatal care, teenage sexual health and child and family health services for Indigenous children and families;
• A six-year National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health with a focus on strategies to prevent chronic diseases that commence in early childhood;
• A national quality agenda for ECEC which includes stronger standards, streamlined regulatory approaches, a rating system and an Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF);
• National workforce initiatives to improve the quality and supply of the ECEC workforce;
• The Closing the Gap initiative which includes ambitious targets for Indigenous children related to infant mortality, literacy and numeracy and participation in quality early childhood education;
• A National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children;
• The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians;
• A National Family Support Program which brings together eight Commonwealth programs for children, families and parenting;
• Paid parental leave arrangements;
• A National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children;
• Development of an Early Intervention and Prevention Framework under the National Disability Agreement; and
• A National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, with a focus on intervening early for children and their families at risk of homelessness.

3.2.4 National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education / Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education

States and Territories are responsible for the delivery of kindergarten education in the year prior to the child commencing primary school. Previously in each state and territory, different arrangements existed for the regulation, funding and delivery of early childhood education and child care services. This resulted in differing outcomes for children and disjointed service provision.

In February 2009 COAG endorsed a National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. This agreement recognises the importance of early childhood to human capital development and Australia’s future prosperity.

The National Partnership Agreement provides $970 million in Australian Government funding to ensure that by 2013 every child has access to a quality early childhood education program in the year before formal school (known as preschool or kindergarten). $955 million of this funding will go to State and Territory governments through bilateral agreements to support their implementation of the Universal Access commitment. There will be ongoing funding of $450 million a year once Universal Access has been achieved by 2013.

As part of the COAG reform agenda for ECEC, the Commonwealth have developed a series of frameworks which commenced on 1 January 2012 and will inform the development of quality ECEC.

3.2.5 National Quality Framework

The National Quality Frameworks (NQF) aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services and school aged care through:

• The Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services Nation Regulations (National Law and National Regulations);
• The National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Educations and care and School Aged Care (National Quality Standard);
• A national quality rating and assessment process;
• Streamlined regulatory arrangements; and
• A new national body jointly governed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments – the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to oversee the new system.

The NQF will take effect on 1 January 2012 with key requirements being phased in overtime. Requirements such as qualifications, educator-to-child ratios and other key staffing arrangements will be phased in between 2012 and 2020.

The new system replaces existing State and Territory licensing and national quality assurance processes.

3.2.6 Belonging, Being & Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

The Early Years Learning Framework is a key component of the Australian Government’s National reform agenda for ECEC. The Framework underpins universal access to early childhood education and will be incorporated in the NQF in order to ensure delivery of nationally consistent quality ECEC across all early childhood sectors and jurisdictions.

The Frameworks describe the principles, practice and outcomes essential to enhance young children’s learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. The Framework has a strong emphasis on play-based learning as play is recognised as the best vehicle for young children’s learning. The Framework also recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development.

3.2.7 My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Child Care in Australia

My Time, Our Place—Framework for School Age Care in Australia is another key component of the COAG’s national reform agenda for childhood education and care. It will be incorporated in the National Quality Standard in order to ensure delivery of nationally consistent and quality school age care across sectors and jurisdictions.
The Framework builds on the EYLF and extends the principles, practice and outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of the children and young people who attend school age care settings.

The Framework will ensure that children in school age care will have opportunities to engage in leisure and play-based experiences which are responsive to the needs, interests, and choices of the children attending the service and contribute fully to their ongoing development. It will support and provide guidance to educators working with school age children in outside school hours care, long day care, and family day care settings.

3.3 Victorian Context

3.3.1 Charter of Human Rights

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities is a Victorian law that sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria.

It requires that governments, police, local councils and other public authorities (for example, government school councils, public hospitals and privatised prisons) consider human rights when they make laws, develop policies or provide services.

It aims to build a fairer, more inclusive community by requiring that the Victorian Government, local councils and other public authorities consider human rights when they make laws, develop policies and provide services.

The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights, such as the right for people to have a fair trial, the right to say what they think, the right to join groups and meet freely, and the right to enjoy their culture.3

3.3.2 Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all Children from Birth to Eight Years

The Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework (VEYLDF) for children aged from birth to eight years was released on 27 November 2009. The VEYLDF focuses on advancing children’s learning and development from birth to eight years by early childhood professionals working together, and with families, to achieve common outcomes for children.

The Victorian Framework:

- Identifies five Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes for all children;
- Identifies eight Practice Principles for Learning and Development, categorised as Collaborative, Effective and Reflective. The Practice Principles describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to facilitate learning and development; and
- Emphasises the importance of supporting children’s and families’ transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

The VEYLDF complements the discipline specific resources that already support early childhood professionals, for example the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the Maternal and Child Health Service Activity Framework. In this way the VEYLDF supports common understandings and shared conversations with other professionals and families to support children’s learning and development.

3.3.3 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 came into effect in July 2007. The Act provides for the protection of children; community services to support children and families; to make provisions in relation to children who have been charged with, or who have been found guilty of offences; and the Children’s Court of Victoria as a specialist court dealing with matters relating to children.

To meet legislative requirements of the Act, Child FIRST teams were established in catchments across Victoria. Child FIRST was established for the Inner Middle catchment (incorporating the City of Kingston) in April 2008 and Family Life is the facilitating agency. Child FIRST in this catchment established a co-ordinated community based intake point for Family Services.

3.3.4 Strategic Framework for Family Services

The Strategic Framework for Family Services provides a framework for a new Integrated Family Services System. This Framework provides an opportunity to establish a contemporary approach to responding to vulnerable and at risk children, young people and their families. As part of this service redesign, Child FIRST catchments were established across Victoria, which created a dual track system for dealing with child protection and welfare issues.

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3.3.5 Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, enacted in June 2006, provides a critical legislative foundation for government and non-government services to work together to better support families and to promote children’s health, development, learning, wellbeing and safety. The Act creates an overarching legislative framework designed to encourage and support a shared commitment towards children. It does this by:

• Articulating a set of principles designed to guide the provision of services to children;

• Establishing the Victorian Children’s Council to provide the Premier and the Minister for Children with expert independent advice about policy for Victorian children;

• Establishing the Children’s Services Co-ordination Board to further cross-government collaboration to achieve positive outcomes for children, particularly the most vulnerable; and

• Providing the legislative functions and powers of the Child Safety Commissioner.

4. Overview of Council Strategies and Plans

4.1 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013

The Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (PH&WBP) embraces children and families as a key population group for action and acknowledges Family, Youth and Children’s Services contribution with the delivery of health services particularly through MCH and Immunisation services.

The PH&WBP 2009 health profile identifies that children aged 0-14 years of age had an above average admission rate for mental diseases and disorders. This issue is being addressed broadly through the following goal:

• To build a community that embraces positive impacts on mental health by fostering a socially connected and cohesive community.

The PH&WBP goes even further to recognise issues relevant to children and families to broadly support increased healthy eating and physical activity to reduce the impact of lifestyle related illness through the following goal:

• To have a community which supports access to healthy foods, promotes physical activity and encourages active living.

4.2 Kingston Indigenous Policy

Council adopted its first Indigenous Policy at its 26 May 2008 meeting. This policy was developed in response to the Inter Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee’s request that Council formalise policies, procedures and practices in relation to working with the Indigenous community and traditional landowners of the municipality. As a pledge to developing closer working relationships with the local Indigenous community and Indigenous representative groups, Kingston City Council committed to:

• Flying the Aboriginal flag at Attenborough Park;

• Consultation with the Indigenous community and traditional owner groups as identified as relevant to Council;

• Ensuring that all Aboriginal Heritage legislation is complied with for new works;

• Consultation with Indigenous representative groups when considering using Aboriginal words for naming of sites within the municipality;

• The recognition of significant Indigenous celebratory weeks with the flying of the Aboriginal flag at Council offices. These include: NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week; and

• The reading of a Statement of Acknowledgement at public events where Indigenous representatives have been invited to participate.

This policy supports children and families by recognising the value of Indigenous and Torres Straight Islander cultures and is reinforced by the learning outcomes listed in the VEYLDF and the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Belonging, Being and Becoming.

4.3 Community Safety Strategy 2009-2012

Community Safety incorporates crime and injury prevention as well as broader quality of life and well-being issues. Community Safety promotes people’s confidence to participate fully in the life of their community without fear of or actual harm or injury.

The development of the Community Safety Strategy 2009 - 2012 involved an analysis of international and national approaches to community safety, a review of Council and state government policies and extensive community consultation. The Kingston Community Safety Strategy supports a number of safety concerns raised during the F&CS consultation around the safety of children and families. The following is a list of the six key strategic action areas:

• Coordination and leadership of Community Safety;

• Safety related to young people;

• Safety in public open space;

• Effects of alcohol & other drugs on crime, violence and injuries;

• Safety on and around public transport; and

• Home and family safety.
Of particular note to children and families is the strategic action Home and Family Safety, which will provide public education around home safety, provide support for vulnerable families and encourage community building and neighbourhood awareness activities. Actions will also provide support to organisations that assist people affected by family violence.

Further actions in the Strategy target concerns raised by families during the F&CS consultation, and they include:

- Regular communication about community safety through local newspapers;
- Safety audits of perceived ‘high risk’ locations and develop and support strategies to promote beach and water safety;
- Develop a targeted approach to underage binge drinking and risk-taking behaviour, develop and implement an approach to address safety issues in and around licensed venues; and
- Conduct safety audits of all train stations in the City of Kingston and review pedestrian and railway crossings for safety.

4.4 Disability Action Plan

According to the Survey Disability Ageing and Carers data, in the City of Kingston, there is an estimated 32,228 people (23% of the population) who have a disability. Of these it is estimated that 1,951 are children aged 0-14 years. (Health Profile for the City of Kingston 2009)

Kingston City Council’s Disability Action Plan 2009-2013 (DAP) responds to the requirements of the Federal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 that it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability. Under the Act, Council must ensure that all its services, facilities, programs and planning processes are accessible to all people, and that the needs of people with a range of disabilities are considered in all areas of operations.

The DAP acknowledges the right of people with a disability to participate fully in the community and continues to reaffirm its commitment to meeting the needs of its residents who have a disability. Kingston City Council’s DAP aims for Council to address the barriers and challenges experienced by people with disabilities limiting their ability to be active and engaged citizens. The DAP aims to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination and implement strategies within Council that encourage and facilitate change.

The DAP was developed after consulting people of all ages with disabilities, carers and service providers and a number of key themes emerged from the consultations. These themes formed the basis of the key strategic directions. The five key strategic areas of focus were identified as:

- Access to the built environment, facilities and transport;
- Provision of services;
- Provision of information;
- Developing an inclusive culture within Kingston City Council; and
- Developing recreational, cultural, leisure, learning and employment opportunities.

The DAP relates directly to children and families in terms of service provision and advocacy for increased funding and resources for family and children’s services. The DAP also supports access for people with disabilities to the built environment, transport and community facilities.
4.5 Multicultural Action Plan 2006-2009

The Multicultural Action Plan 2006-2009 (MCAP) is currently under review and aims to ensure that members of the community who come from multicultural backgrounds have the same experience of community well-being that is enjoyed by the general community.

The Kingston City Council has explored and supported the needs of residents from culturally diverse backgrounds, not only through celebrations and events, but also through service provision and programs. Across Council, various teams and departments have been involved in communication strategies, media campaigns, and program development to assist residents from culturally diverse backgrounds to access services.

The MCAP aims to ensure that Council and the Community:

• Works with ethnic communities and residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
• Delivers services that meet the needs of multicultural communities; and
• Works with and supports Kingston Council staff to respond to cultural diversity.

The MCAP identifies services for families and children as important supports in the community.

4.6 Arts & Cultural Strategy 2011-2015

This Arts and Cultural Strategy 2011-2015 has been developed to strengthen the value of arts and its impact on the cultural life of Kingston and its communities. It is the expression of Council’s commitment to arts and cultural activity in the City of Kingston. The Strategy provides the overarching vision and policy direction for Council and Council staff as well as a plan to implement Council’s support for arts & cultural activity. It is intended as a living document that guides Council’s support and investment in events, community and infrastructure.

The Strategy aims to foster a stronger, more engaged and resilient community, increase profile and support for creative industries, and strengthen leadership of both Council and local communities. It will see Kingston positioned to be a more liveable creative city, with increased opportunities for creative engagement and cultural tourism, resulting in a growth in the local economy and improved sustainable built and natural environments.

The Strategy aligns to the F&CS in terms of actions that aim to develop partnerships with schools and other community organisations and agencies that will engage young people in arts and cultural programs that increase their cultural awareness and historical knowledge, and ‘art diversion programs’ to positively address issues around graffiti. The Strategy doesn’t define an age range for the term ‘young people’, so it is assumed for the purposes of the F&CS, that the term also refers to children.

4.7 Road Safety Strategy 2011-2015

The Road Safety Strategy 2011-2015 is a strategic document that assists in determining the actions that are likely to have the greatest impact on reducing the number and severity of road crashes. It is critical that road safety behavioural programs area is evidenced based to ensure Council’s priorities are aligned with best practice and provide value for money.

All sectors of the community have a role to play in promoting road safety. Local governments are in an ideal situation to be able to advocate and educate their communities in attempts to reduce the number and severity of road crashes. Traditionally, local governments have taken an infrastructure approach to reducing road crashes through the delivery of traffic engineering treatments. Although engineering is an important component of road safety, it is recognised that it needs to be accompanied by education and social marketing activities to address the behaviour of road users.

The Action Plan follows the Safe System approach and is divided into the following categories:

• Safe Road Users;
• Safe Roads, Paths, and Public Transport;
• Safe Vehicles; and
• Communication and Evaluation.

The Strategy lists 10 objectives of which Objective 7 is of particular interest to children and families:

• To coordinate the provision of road safety related information and programs for early childhood and safe school travel within the City of Kingston.

This objective will include actions that deliver up to date information and programs to educate young children and families in relation to road safety and safe travel around early childhood centres and schools.

4.8 Open Space Strategy

The Open Space Strategy guides open space planning and provision for the entire municipality. The Strategy includes all open spaces regardless of setting and/or function and guides Council on open space projects and supports planning in seeking developer contributions. Adopted in 2005, the current Open Space Strategy is in the process of being updated. The update will look at changes in demographics and any open space development that has occurred in the past five years.

Of interest to children and families is the focus on creation of social / family recreation spaces. These spaces are designed to provide a diverse range of activities for residents within each local planning area. The current issues that have been identified are the provision of non organised recreational activities spaces that are incorporated into the design of the park (i.e. basketball rings, skate facilities, tennis rebound walls).

Of further interest to children and families is the focus on playgrounds that are diverse in equipment and provide valuable play experiences, are accessible to all ages and abilities and are appropriately located.
4.9 Playground Strategy

The main objectives of the Playground Strategy are:

- To analyse the existing distribution and style of playgrounds across the municipality with regard to equitable provision, demographic data and trends, diversity of play opportunities and demand;
- To assess each playground and play space in Kingston and make short and long term recommendations;
- To provide a blueprint for future playground renewal and construction; and
- To provide design principles and guidelines for the planning and design of spaces for children and young people’s play and recreation.

The Strategy is important in relation to children and families as it provides the Kingston City Council Policy Statement on play. The Statement is founded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and states the following:

- Kingston City Council recognises the significance and value of play in children’s development;
- Kingston City Council recognises the significance of the physical environment in providing opportunities for outdoor play; and
- Kingston City Council recognises risk-taking is an inherent part of play and child development and therefore must be treated in a different way from other risk management issues.

This Statement is a valuable tool in supporting and guiding the design of newly developed and refurbished playgrounds in open spaces and in early childhood education and care settings that embrace current theories and best practice.

4.10 Kingston Library Strategy

Kingston City Council’s Library Services are an integral community asset and important for the cultural, economic and social connection of the Kingston community. The Kingston Library Service has eight branches throughout the municipality. Kingston’s Library Strategy will:

- Establish the direction for the development and improvement of Kingston’s Library Services;
- Reflect the ongoing strategic objectives and priorities of Kingston which includes:
  - Positive customer experience; and
  - Efficient support services, which covers library resources and facilities, community engagement, administration practices, marketing and communication.

4.11 Kingston Active Youth Spaces Strategy

The Kingston Active Youth Spaces Strategy:

- Provides a dependable and robust framework for the provision of Active Youth Spaces in Kingston, which complements existing Kingston City Council strategic documents;
- Identifies site requirements and potential locations for such facilities; and
- Defines a program of implementation including cost estimates and project timeframes.

Development of the Kingston Active Youth Spaces Strategy is a direct outcome of Council’s 2010-2014 draft Active Leisure Plan and the 2006 Youth Leisure Needs Study. Both highlighted Council’s need to provide opportunities for young people to be involved in leisure and recreation through providing appealing, affordable and accessible facilities for young people. Whilst it is recognised that skate, BMX and active youth spaces attract users from a wide age range, the Active Youth Spaces Strategy primarily concentrates on people aged 5-24 years as these are considered the core target audience and highest users of facilities.

Eight key themes emerged during the Strategy consultation and of particular interest to children and families is there is a growing number of children under 12 years of age using skate park facilities. As a consequence the spaces are becoming family spaces. This has impacts on the design of the facilities in relation to space for skateboarders, scooters and BMX bikes. In general, children’s participation in cultural and leisure activities has increased between 2000 and 2010.

4.12 Community Service and Facility Review 2011

The Kingston City Council engaged K2 Consulting to undertake the Community Services and Facility Review for Kingston. This report has provided triggers and planning advice regarding facility provision and planning across all community services areas in Kingston, with the recommendations being used to inform community service planning including identifying opportunities to develop community hubs.

Kingston City Council is currently using the following three criteria, to identify the crucial triggers for facility development. These are:

- **Fitness for Use** - This is a measure of a building’s physical condition relative to its condition when first constructed or refurbished. This condition rating is a measure of the deterioration of a building over time and of the maintenance actions taken to arrest the deterioration. As such, Fitness for Use takes account of the current condition of the building structure, architectural finishes and services supporting the building use by the occupants.

- **Fitness for Purpose** – This is a measure of a building’s match to its current or intended use. Fitness for Purpose considers the minimum feature set required and additional features desirable to enhance the usability of a building asset. Fitness for Purpose is tied to the use of a building asset rather than the asset itself and takes account of changing requirements for different features over time. In terms of Fitness for Purpose, a building initially fit for its intended purpose may reduce as standards and community expectations change over time.

- **Environmental Fitness** – This is a measure of an asset’s level of sustainability based on an assessment of its energy consumption and construction.
Through the development of a numerical rating system, Kingston City Council now have scores for all early years facilities for each of the three criterion above, which in summary show that:

- Buildings across the municipality are in average overall condition;
- Buildings are extremely inefficient from an environmental perspective; and
- From a fit for purpose assessment, buildings are generally satisfactory now, but will not meet changes required in 2013 and 2016.

A social and demographic analysis has also been undertaken to guide early years infrastructure planning. In terms of kindergarten facilities, priority areas for additional funded (four year old) kindergarten facilities are Clayton South, Heatherton, Cheltenham, Parkdale/Mordialloc, Chelsea, Chelsea Heights and Bonbeach. The analysis also indicates that unfunded kindergarten (three year old kindergarten) is under supplied in all areas of the City of Kingston.

4.13 Youth Services Strategy 2012-2016

The Youth Services Strategy 2012-2016 is a local area strategic plan which provides a framework for improving the health and well being for young people aged 12-25 years. As a major group in the Kingston community, young people have been integral and at the centre of the development of this Strategy.

The Strategy articulates a model for broader partnership with young people, families, community, and other levels of government in the planning and provision of high quality services to young people and families, whilst continuing the strong focus on youth participation and engagement. This approach is based on the assumption that greater partnership will result in better outcomes for young people and their families.

The Kingston Youth Strategy Action Plan forms part of the overall Strategy and is based on community consultation undertaken in 2011 and analysis of local health and social data sets.
The following key themes were identified:

1. Communication – strategies to inform young people and families;
2. Service enhancement – improve service access and awareness with a focus on young people’s health and wellbeing;
3. Youth participation and engagement – deliver and support programs, activities and events for young people; and
4. Leadership and innovation – provide leadership in youth affairs and empower young people to make a difference.

There are strong links between the Youth Services Strategy and the Family and Children’s Strategy given the significant transition for children moving from children’s services settings into a more independent youth orientated settings. Both strategies reflect that children and young people are valued active citizens who are articulate and have relevant views and opinions on what they value and in their vision for the future.

4.14 Walking and Cycling Strategy 2009-2013

The vision for the Cycling and Walking Plan 2009-2013 is ‘a safe, accessible and appropriate network of well connected cycling and walking facilities.’

There are extensive benefits associated with an increase in cycling and walking. An increase in cycling and walking will bring health related benefits to the community through increased physical activity and as both are sustainable forms of transport they each have the potential to assist Council in its efforts to reduce local traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions if car trips are replaced by bicycle/walking trips.

While the Cycling and Walking Plan will aim to make local cycling and walking conditions safer, more accessible and more appropriate for existing cyclists and pedestrians, it is also intended to increase the actual numbers of cyclists and pedestrians, particularly amongst those groups who cycle and/or walk less frequently in Kingston such as women, and school children.

The data and consultation findings has also highlighted the need for Council to give priority to the following areas when developing the local cycling and walking network over the coming five years:

**Priority Area 1** - Links to and from Neighbourhood Activity Areas including schools, activity centres, and reserves.

**Priority Area 2** - Major trails and on-road lanes.

**Priority Area 3** - Cross Municipal Access Routes including East-West Links/North-South Links and LGA boundary linkages.

**Priority Area 4** - Supporting Network Infrastructure including bicycle parking and signage.

There are a number of actions in this Strategy that target women and school children, as they are a group who are identified as cycling less frequently, and those actions focus on the promotion of the benefits of cycling and walking in the Kingston community. Other relevant actions that support families will include an audit of the existing cycling and walking network to assess and identify areas which require safer network design, construction and management practices.

4.15 Activity Centre Structure Plans

The Activity Centre Structure planning process provides Council with an opportunity to work with the local community to discuss and carefully plan for the future societal and economic changes envisaged over an extended planning period. The plan provides for managing growth within the centre and in so doing will make Kingston a more vibrant and functional place to visit, work and live.

4.16 Kingston Planning Scheme

The purpose of the Kingston Planing Scheme is:

- To provide a clear vision and direction for what land use planning should achieve in the City of Kingston;
- To provide certainty for future land use development by setting out clear strategic objectives and outlining the means by which they are to be implemented;
- To identify locations where specific land uses will be supported and promoted;
- To provide the basis and rationale for the application of zones, policies and overlay provisions in this planning scheme; and
- To provide guidance to Council, the community and developers in the assessment of land use and development proposals, planning scheme amendments and other policy related issues.

4.17 Park Master Plans

Park Master Plans are generally developed by bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to guide the development of ‘blue prints’ for future works and upgrades at regional or district park facilities where there are multiple users eg: sporting clubs and general community users.
5. Kingston Health and Social Profile - Our Children and Families in the City of Kingston

5.1 A Demographic Profile

The City of Kingston has an estimated population of 149,076 (ID Profile, 2010). The population is projected to increase by 12.5% over the next 20 years to 167,397 in 2031 (ID Profile, 2010). In 2011 the City of Kingston is estimated to have 22,481 children aged between 0 and 12 years of age living in the municipality, accounting for 17.8% of the total population.

5.2 Children Aged 0 to One year

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding rates in Kingston are better than those in Victoria for three and six month old babies. In 2009-2010 the percentage of babies fully breastfed at three months in Kingston was 60.5% compared to 51.4% for Victoria. At six months Kingston is 43.7% compared to 35.7% in Victoria (DEECD, 2011).

Hospital Admissions for Gastroenteritis in Children Under One Year of Age

There were 9.1 hospital separations for gastroenteritis per 1,000 infants aged under one in Kingston during 2008-2009. This is less than the rate of hospital separations for gastroenteritis in Victoria (9.5 per 1,000 infants aged under one). The rate of hospital separations for gastroenteritis in Kingston has decreased from 13.7 per 1,000 infants aged under one in 2004-2005 (DEECD, 2010).

5.3 Children Aged One to Four Years

MCH Participation Rates

The maternal and child health service monitors children’s health and development via 10 visits to the nurse up until the child reaches 3.5 years of age. In 2009-2010, 103.6% of infants in City of Kingston received a home consultation visit. This was greater than the percentage of infants in the Southern Metro Region receiving a home consultation visit (101.1%) and greater than Victoria (100.1%). Participation at the 3.5 year check was 76.3% in Kingston in 2009-10, higher than both the Southern Metro Region (64.5%) and the Victorian State average of 62.8% (DEECD, 2011).

Immunisation

In the City of Kingston in 2008–2009 the percentage of children fully immunised at 12-15 months is 94%; greater than the percentage fully immunised in the Southern Metro Region and Victoria (91.9%).

The percentage of children fully immunised at 24-27 months in Kingston was also 94%; slightly higher than Southern Metro Region and Victoria (93.7%).

The percentage of children fully immunised at 60-63 months in Kingston was 84.9%; higher again than Southern Metro Region and Victoria (84.1%) (DEECD, 2010).
Playgroup Participation
In January 2012 the playgroup participation rate in the City of Kingston is 9.9% (909) of all children aged 0-four years (Playgroup Victoria, 2012).

Unfunded Kindergarten Participation (three year old kindergarten)
In 2012 the three year old kindergarten participation rate in the City of Kingston is 47% (868) of all three year olds.

Given that three year old kindergarten is unfunded there is no central agency that collects this participation data. In this instance participation data has been calculated using enrolment data collected from community operated kindergarten service providers.

5.4 Children Aged four to five years

Funded Kindergarten Participation Rate (four year old kindergarten)
In 2009 the kindergarten participation rate in City of Kingston was 83.1%. This was lower than the participation rate in Southern Metro Region [88.6%] and Victoria [92.7%]. The funded kindergarten participation rate for children in Kingston was lower than that in Victoria for the five years between 2005 to 2009 (DEECD, 2010). However, according to the AEDI data, in 2011 the kindergarten participation rate in City of Kingston was 91.9%. This is higher than the participation rate in Victoria (90.7%) and Nationally (80.9%) (AEDI 2011). This difference in participation rates indicates an increase in the number of eligible children participating in kindergarten.

It is estimated that 94.1% of children in the City of Kingston had experiences in some regular non-parental care or early childhood education programs in the year prior to primary school, such as kindergarten, long day care, family day care or care by a grandparent (AEDI, 2011).

5.5 Children Aged Six to 12 Years

Children Entering School with Basic Skills for Life and Learning
In the City of Kingston 3.8% of parents were concerned about how their child behaves. This proportion was lower than Southern Metro Region [4.1%] and Victoria [4.6%] (DEECD, 2010).

Children with Reported Difficulties with Speech and Language
In Kingston 174 Prep children were reported to have difficulties with speech and language, representing 13.4% of all Prep students in this area. Of these, 21.4% were reported to be seeing a speech pathologist (DEECD, 2010).

Children Living in Families with High Levels of Family Stress
In the City of Kingston 6.9% of families with children entering school reported high levels of family stress over the past month. This was lower than Southern Metro Region [8.8%] and Victoria [8.7%] (DEECD, 2010).

The majority of families with children entering school in the City of Kingston reported low levels of family stress over the past month (64.5%). This proportion was higher than Southern Metro Region [63.2%] and Victoria [63.0%] (DEECD, 2010).

Student Attainment at the Designated Text Level at the End of the Designated Year Level in Reading
In 2008 87% of Prep children enrolled in government schools in the City of Kingston achieved a reading accuracy score of 90% or more on Level 5 text. This was greater than the percentage in Southern Metro Region [81.7%] and Victoria [81.3%] (DEECD, 2010).

In 2008, 90.9% of Year 1 students enrolled in government schools in the City of Kingston achieved a reading accuracy score of 90% or more on Level 15 text. This was greater than the percentage in Southern Metro Region [87.3%] and Victoria [86.4%] (DEECD, 2010).
Average Absence Days in Primary School
Prep students attending government schools in the City of Kingston were absent for an average 14.1 days over the 2009 school year. The average absence days for Prep students in the City of Kingston has remained similar to 13.9 days in 2008 and increased from 12.6 days in 2006 (DEECD, 2010).

Year 1 students attending government schools in the City of Kingston (C) were absent for an average 13.4 days over the 2009 school year. The average absence days for Year 1 students in Kingston has remained similar to 13.4 days in 2008 and increased from 12.1 days in 2006 (DEECD, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 to 12 years</th>
<th>Kingston</th>
<th>Southern Metro Region</th>
<th>Victorian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental concern with child behaviour</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep children with difficulties with speech and language</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living in families with high levels of family stress</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prep children achieving a reading accuracy score of 90% or more on Level 5 text</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 students achieving a reading accuracy score of 90% or more on Level 15 text</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average days absent from primary school – Prep students</td>
<td>14.1 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average days absent from primary school – Year 1 students</td>
<td>13.4 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 All Children Aged 0 to 12 years

Disability
In 2006, 262 (1.3%) children aged 0 to 12 years in the City of Kingston required assistance with a core activity (ABS, 2006).

Asthma
In the City of Kingston 33.5% of Prep children who were ever told by a doctor that they had asthma, had an asthma action plan at school. This was lower than the proportion across the Southern Metro Region (40.9%) and Victoria (39.9%) (DEECD, 2010).

During 2008-2009 there were 8.8 hospital separations per 1,000 children aged 0 to eight years in the City of Kingston for asthma. This is greater than the rate of hospital separations for asthma in the Southern Metro Region (8.1) and Victoria (8.1) (DEECD, 2010).

Child Abuse
In 2008-2009, the rate of child protection substantiations in the City of Kingston was 1.5 per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years. This rate has decreased from 3.0 per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years in 2007 - 2008 and decreased from 3.3 per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years in 2004-2005 (DEECD, 2010).

Over the five year period between 2004-2005 to 2008-2009, the rate of child protection substantiations in the City of Kingston (C) has been decreasing at an average rate of 3.0 per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years per year (DEECD, 2010).

In 2008 - 2009, the rate of child protection substantiations per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years in the City of Kingston was less than Victoria (7.0 per 1000 children aged 0 to eight years) (DEECD, 2010).

In 2008-2009, 32.6 per cent of children aged 0 to eight years in the City of Kingston were re-reported to child protection services within 12 months of a report. This rate has decreased from 35.9 per cent in 2003 - 2004. The rate of children re-reported within 12 months has been decreasing at an average rate of 1.6 per cent per year over the past six years (DEECD, 2010).
For more information
📞 1300 653 356
or visit the website