Frankston City

Municipal Early Years Plan **2026–2030**

Acknowledgement of Country

Frankston City Council acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters in and around Frankston City. We value and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritage and enduring connection to Country, which has nurtured children, families and communities for thousands of years. We are committed to helping all children honour this cultural legacy with curiosity and respect.

Council pays its respects to Elders past and present and recognises their important role in maintaining and sharing culture, knowledge, and traditions.

Council also respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong Land Council as the Registered Aboriginal Party responsible for managing the Aboriginal cultural heritage of the land and waters where Frankston City Council is situated.

Child safety statement of commitment

Council has zero tolerance for child abuse. Council is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe environment where all children are valued and protected from harm and abuse and will promote a whole of community approach to keeping children safe.

All children, who attend services, programs, events and spaces (including online environments) that are delivered, owned or managed by Council, have the right to be heard, to participate and feel safe regardless of their, or their families', age, gender, race, ability, health, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or social background. Council will encourage and support Aboriginal children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights and commits to creating culturally safe environments.

Council will actively facilitate the voices of children in Council planning, the design and delivery of services, programs and events and in the management of facilities. Council's priority is to involve children in opportunities to influence matters that affect them as active citizens in their community. Council will treat all reports of child safety concerns seriously and will actively encourage children to raise such issues.

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1 Executive Summary

The Frankston City, Municipal Early Years Plan 2026–2030 is Council's four-year framework for planning, delivering and improving services, programs and infrastructure for children from birth to school age, and their families. It establishes a whole-of-Council approach to early years planning, articulates Council's role across service provision, planning and advocacy, strengthens partnerships across the early years system, and provides a foundation for collaboration with other levels of government.

The Plan is written for a broad audience and is intentionally high level. Detailed service data, supporting evidence, and community survey analysis are available via other sources and companion documents. The Plan, therefore, centres on Council's strategic direction, making it a focused and accessible planning tool.

The Plan is universal in its reach, supporting positive outcomes for all children and families, while applying an equity approach that directs additional consideration and tailored responses to those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Gender impacts will also be considered in the implementation of priorities and actions.

The Plan was directly informed by a community survey conducted in early 2026, which attracted 538 responses from families, grandparents and service providers. The responses and findings directly shaped the Plan's priorities and actions.

The Plan is organised around six priority areas, each aligned to the Frankston City, Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 and directly connected to what the community identified as most important:

1. Health, Safety and Wellbeing — children enjoy optimal health and wellbeing, free from preventable harm
2. Inclusive Access and Participation — every child and family can access and participate in early years services, regardless of ability, culture, income or location
3. Strong Families and Community Connections — strong, supportive family relationships and connected communities underpin children's wellbeing and development
4. High Quality Early Learning and Development — every child experiences enriching learning opportunities and gains strong foundations for school and life
5. Integrated and Responsive Early Years System — early years services operate as a coordinated, well-managed system that responds promptly and effectively
6. Child Friendly, Accessible and Sustainable Places — Council's built environment is safe, welcoming and designed to support the play, development and participation of young children and families.

Each priority area is supported by strategic directions, intended outcomes, action themes and measurable outcome indicators.

The Plan will be implemented through annual action plans, with Council working in partnership with health services, early learning providers, community organisations, schools and other government agencies. Progress will be monitored through an outcomes framework and a mid-plan review, ensuring the Plan remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

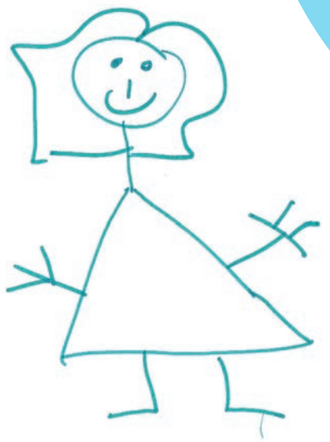
The Plan is available at Early Years Planning - Frankston City Council:

www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Community-and-Health/Health-and-support-services/Child-and-family-services/Early-Years-Planning

2 Glossary

Term	Description
Best Start Best Life	Victorian Government reform program expanding access to early childhood education, including Free Kinder and the transition to Pre-Prep.
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse. Refers to people and communities from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.
Child or children	A common definition of a child is anyone who is not an adult, ie someone who is under 18 years of age. For this Plan, the use of the term child or children is to be taken as someone who is aged between birth and school age (typically 0 and 6 years unless otherwise stated).
Community Engagement	Activities undertaken to gather input from families, service providers, stakeholders and the broader community to inform planning and decision-making.
Council	Frankston City Council.
Council and Wellbeing Plan	Frankston City's Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029.
Decision Making Framework	The approach used to identify, assess, prioritise and implement initiatives that support the MEYP's priority domains.
Early years	Birth to school age.
Evidence Base	The demographic, socio-economic, service and consultation information used to identify needs, opportunities and priorities.
Frankston City	City of Frankston.
Frankston Council	Frankston City Council.
LGA	Local government area.
MCH	Maternal and Child Health.
MEYP (or Plan)	Frankston City Council, Municipal Early Years Plan 2026-2030.
Municipality	City of Frankston.
Partnership	Collaborative arrangement between Council, service providers, government agencies and community organisations to improve outcomes for children and families.
Pre-Prep	The Victorian Government's expanded kindergarten program will progressively increase funded learning hours for four-year-old children.
Primary Caregiver	Any adult who holds primary responsibility for the day-to-day care, wellbeing and development of a child.
Priority Domain	Key area of focus identified through analysis, evidence and engagement.
Service System	The network of services, facilities, programs and organisations that support children and families.
Stakeholder	Individuals, groups or organisations with an interest in or contribution to early years outcomes.
Universal Services	Services available to all children and families, regardless of need, such as kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health services.

3 Introduction



3.1 Background

The early years are a critical time in a child's life, shaping health, learning and wellbeing into adulthood. Families, communities and services all play an important role in supporting children during this period, and Frankston Council has a key role in bringing these efforts together at a local level.

This Municipal Early Years Plan 2026-30 (MEYP) outlines how Frankston Council works with families, service providers and community partners to support children from birth to school age and creates the conditions for a positive start to life. It reflects the needs and strengths of the local community and provides a shared understanding of how early years services, programs and environments contribute to children's development and family wellbeing.

3.2 Purpose and Scope

Frankston Council recognises that the MEYP delivers significant benefits for the municipality by providing a coordinated, long-term framework for early years planning and action. In particular, the MEYP:

- Establishes a clear, whole-of-Council approach to early years planning, including guidance for service delivery and infrastructure planning
- Articulates Council's role across service provision, planning, advocacy and community capacity building within the universal, targeted and intensive service system
- Strengthens partnerships by clarifying the roles of community organisations and other stakeholders in working towards locally agreed outcomes
- Supports informed decision-making and the effective use of resources across the early years system
- Provides a foundation for collaboration and negotiation with other levels of government.

The MEYP also guides how Frankston Council, its partners and service providers respond to community needs and support a positive start to life for children from birth to school age by shaping:

- How, where and when services, programs and infrastructure are delivered to promote connection, inclusion and engagement for families with young children
- How families are supported to feel safe and included, maintain good health, and remain actively engaged in their community.

The MEYP is universal in its focus, seeking to support positive outcomes for all children and families. Within this universal approach, it recognises that children, families and communities have diverse backgrounds, strengths and needs.

Implementation of the Plan will be guided by an equity approach. While actions are designed for all, additional consideration, prioritisation and tailored responses will be applied where needed to ensure fair access, participation and outcomes, particularly for those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.

In addition, the Plan recognises that gender can influence experiences of access, participation and outcomes. Gender impacts will be considered in the implementation of priorities and actions to identify and respond to any differences in experience or outcome. More detailed consideration of gender impacts will be undertaken through the development of annual action plans and specific initiatives.

3.3 Vision Statement

All children from birth to school age in the municipality are safe, valued and heard, grow up healthy, confident and curious, and have access to inclusive early learning, welcoming places and the support needed to thrive.

3.4 Commitment Statement

Frankston Council is committed to listening to children and working in partnership with families, services and community organisations to provide the best start in life. We will create inclusive places, reduce barriers to participation, and ensure support is accessible, equitable and timely.

3.5 Guiding Principles

Guiding principles provide the framework for decisions, programs, and services delivered under this Plan. They ensure alignment with national standards while reflecting the specific needs and aspirations of the local community. By embedding the principles into practice, Council ensures that the commitment to children and families remains consistent, transparent, and focused on long-term positive outcomes.

3.5.1 Child-Centered and Rights-Based

Children are recognised as citizens from birth with distinct voices, needs and rights. Council values children's perspectives and supports opportunities for them to influence decisions in ways that reflect their age and stage of development. The rights of every child to be safe, heard and supported to reach their full potential are upheld across all levels of service delivery.

3.5.2 Equity, Inclusion and Diversity

The municipality includes children and families with diverse cultures, languages, abilities and life experiences. Frankston Council is committed to recognising and removing barriers that prevent children from participating fully in community life. This principle ensures that every child, regardless of background or ability, experiences a strong sense of belonging and has equitable access to essential opportunities.

3.5.3 Collaborative Partnerships

Families are recognised and valued as a child's first and most influential teacher and supporter. Children and families thrive when they are within a network of relationships involving services and the wider community. This principle emphasises building trusting and respectful partnerships between families, services and community organisations to create a coordinated and integrated approach to support.

3.5.4 Quality, Evidence and Sustainability

Planning and service delivery are informed by evidence, research and best practice in early childhood development. Council is committed to creating high-quality, sustainable services, infrastructure and workforce capability.

3.5.5 Safety and Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of children are the paramount responsibilities of Frankston Council. It adopts a proactive, zero-tolerance approach to harm and is committed to creating child-safe environments that support children's physical, emotional, social and developmental wellbeing. Priority is given to early intervention, ensuring the needs of children and families are identified and responded to as soon as they arise. It maintains strong governance, policies and practices consistent with child safe standards.

4 Frankston Council's Role in the Early Years

Frankston Council plays a central role in supporting the health, development, learning and wellbeing of children from birth to school age and their families.

As the level of government closest to the community, Council contributes to the early years system through a combination of strategic planning, service delivery, partnership development, advocacy and community capacity building. These roles enable Council to respond to local needs, support prevention and early intervention, and promote equitable access to services and opportunities in early childhood. Together, these functions underpin Council's leadership in the early years and provide the foundation for the actions and priorities outlined in this MEYP.

4.1 Planner

Council plays a strategic role in planning for the early years by using data, community input and policy alignment to identify current and emerging needs of children from birth to school age and their families. Through place-based planning, Council helps to ensure early years services, infrastructure and supports are appropriately located, coordinated and responsive to local conditions. The MEYP provides a framework to guide this planning role over the life of the Plan.

4.2 Service Provider

Council plays a key role in the early years system as a provider of universal and targeted services that support the health, development and wellbeing of children from birth to school age and their families. Details of its direct delivery of early years services are summarised in Appendix 1.

4.3 Partner

In addition to direct service delivery, Council partners with other service providers and community groups to improve outcomes for children and families through coordination, information sharing and integrated responses. Current partnerships and initiatives are listed in Appendix 2.

4.4 Advocate

Council plays an advocacy role by representing local early years needs and priorities to other levels of government and funding bodies. Using local evidence and community insight, Council advocates for policy settings, investment and service models that support equitable outcomes for children from birth to school age. The MEYP provides a planning and evidence base to inform and support this advocacy role.

4.5 Community Capacity Builder

Council supports community capacity building by strengthening connections, knowledge and capability within the early years sector and the broader community. Council facilitates engagement, builds local leadership and supports families and communities to participate in shaping early years services. Through the MEYP, Council reinforces its role in fostering strong, connected and resilient communities that support children's development and wellbeing.

5 Community Profile

5.1 Background

This section presents a profile of Frankston City's early years community, drawing on demographic, health, development and service-use data relating to children from birth to school age and their families. The datasets provide an evidence base for understanding the size and characteristics of the early years population, patterns of participation in universal and targeted services, and indicators of wellbeing, development and equity across the municipality.

The purpose of the community profile is to inform early years planning rather than to draw conclusions in isolation. Taken together, the data supports an understanding of current and emerging needs, anticipated demand over the life of the MEYP, and potential areas for early intervention or targeted response. A detailed mapping of how each dataset informs Council's early years planning levers of services, infrastructure, partnerships and advocacy, is provided in Appendix 3.

5.2 Early Years Population Forecasts

Understanding the current and projected number of children from birth to school age is fundamental to early years planning. Population forecasts, particularly when disaggregated by single-year age cohorts, provide insight into anticipated demand for services such as maternal and child health, immunisation, kindergarten, early learning and family support over the life of the Plan. This data establishes the baseline for planning service capacity, workforce needs and infrastructure, and assists Council to anticipate changes in demand rather than to respond reactively.

Overall, the number of children from birth to school age is forecast to remain steady over the period 2026 to 2030, with a minor peak occurring in 2027. Most suburbs in the municipality follow Frankston City's overall population forecast trends, but several diverge. These local variations may need to be considered when structuring service delivery and planning for infrastructure requirements for the various age groups.

5.3 Maternal and Child Health

Frankston Council delivers a Universal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service for families with children from birth to school age, alongside an Enhanced MCH service for those requiring additional support. Services are provided through a combination of centre-based appointments and outreach, including newborn home visits, to promote early engagement and accessibility. MCH offers a comprehensive model of care that includes routine health and developmental checks, as well as guidance on common early parenting issues such as infant feeding, breastfeeding, sleep and settling, child development, parental wellbeing and adjustment to parenthood. Group-based programs, including first-time parent groups and supported parenting sessions, contribute to building parental confidence, social connection and the early identification of support needs, forming an integrated prevention and early intervention system.

Participation in MCH key age and stage visits in Frankston is strong during the early months when support needs are highest. Attendance declines progressively at later visits, particularly at the two-year and three-and-a-half-year stages, reflecting changing family priorities over time. The service is delivered across 12 MCH centres with 23 consultation suites, all co-located with kindergartens, including seven fully integrated sites. Centres operate during weekday business hours, with additional evening sessions available for parent support activities.

5.4 Immunisation

Frankston Council delivers an Immunisation Service for families with children from birth to school age, providing access to National Immunisation Program vaccines alongside a limited vaccines-for-purchase program. Services are delivered through a combination of centre-based community clinics and outreach sessions, supporting accessible and timely immunisation during weekdays. This flexible model aims to promote early engagement and equitable access for families across the municipality.

In addition to vaccine administration, the service provides information and guidance on the recommended immunisation schedule, vaccine safety and expected post-immunisation responses. Reminder and recall systems, along with follow-up support, assist families to remain up to date with vaccinations. Together, these activities contribute to a preventative public health approach, reducing the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases and supporting the health and wellbeing of children and the broader community.

5.5 Kindergarten

Kindergarten enrolment and participation data offers insight into access to and uptake of early learning opportunities within the municipality. Participation rates, when considered alongside population data, help to identify whether all children can engage in funded kindergarten programs, including three- and four-year-old kindergarten. This information supports planning for service provision, inclusion strategies and coordination across the local early years system to ensure equitable access to early learning.

Given the diversity of kindergarten service types operating across the municipality, including sessional, integrated and private providers, Council takes a broad, population-level approach to monitoring participation in three- and four-year-old kindergarten. By analysing demographic trends, demand levels and utilisation of Council-owned facilities, Council can build an informed picture of community engagement with early childhood education. This approach supports ongoing planning to ensure kindergarten places are accessible and responsive to the needs of all families across the municipality.

Frankston Council owns 21 facilities from which sessional kindergarten services are provided by either committees of management or early years managers.

Reference documents include Council's Kindergarten Partnership Strategy 2024 2036; and the Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan, which is prepared in conjunction with the Department of Education.

5.6 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC provides a nationally consistent measure of children's development at the point of school entry. The data highlights areas of developmental vulnerability and strength across multiple domains of early childhood development. While not diagnostic at an individual level, this data assists Council and partners to understand broader trends, identify areas where children may benefit from additional support, and inform place-based and preventative early years planning.

In the 2024 census, 23.43 per cent of Frankston City children assessed at school entry were considered developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains, compared with 19.80 per cent in 2021 (and 22.3 per cent in 2024 for Victoria overall). Domain-specific results indicate a significant increase in vulnerability in Domain 2 (Social competence) and Domain 3 (Emotional maturity), highlighting the importance of targeted early years supports in these specific areas or cohorts.

5.7 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This section highlights aspects of equity, diversity and inclusion that are relevant to early years planning in Frankston City, recognising that children and families experience different opportunities and barriers across the municipality.

5.7.1 Socio-Economic Indicators

Socio-economic indicators provide important context about the conditions in which young children and families are living. They help to identify communities where families may face greater barriers to accessing early years services or experience increased vulnerability. This information supports an equity-focused approach to early years planning, ensuring that Council and its partners consider how services, supports and infrastructure can be targeted to reduce barriers and improve outcomes for children most at risk of disadvantage.

5.7.2 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) rank areas on relative advantage/disadvantage using Census data (income, education, employment, occupation, housing, and family structure).

The SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) summarises a range of Census variables relating to income, education, employment, housing and household composition. A lower score indicates relatively greater disadvantage.

Frankston City sits around the Victorian midpoint overall, with substantial variation across the municipality and some areas experiencing significantly higher levels of relative disadvantage.

5.7.3 Median Household Income

Median household income reflects the overall economic capacity of households and influences affordability, stability and access to services.

Frankston City median household income was $1,653 per week, which was below the Victorian median of $1,759 per week, indicating a comparatively lower overall household financial capacity.

5.7.4 Housing Tenure and Housing Stability

Housing tenure provides insight into stability and exposure to housing stress.

Frankston City has a relatively high proportion of households in private rental (28 per cent), but this is still consistent with Victoria (28.5 per cent), with some areas experiencing higher levels of housing stress and residential mobility.

5.7.5 Labour Force Participation

Labour force participation reflects household economic engagement and stability.

Labour force participation in Frankston City (63 per cent) is above the Victorian average (62.4 per cent), reflecting varied employment circumstances across the community.

5.7.6 Lone parent families

The proportion of families headed by a lone parent is an important indicator of potential economic and social pressure.

Frankston City has a higher proportion of lone parent families (20.2 per cent) compared with the Greater Melbourne average (15.2 per cent). Lone parent households are more likely to experience financial pressure and time constraints, which can affect access to early years services and supports.

5.7.7 Educational Attainment (Adult Population)

Educational attainment is closely linked to employment opportunities, income and engagement with services.

Educational attainment levels in Frankston City are below the Victorian average in some measures, with variation across the municipality.

5.8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population

Within Frankston City, 1.4% of residents identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, which is slightly higher than the Victorian average of 1 per cent.

While representing a small proportion of the population, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families are present across the municipality.

5.9 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community (CALD)

Frankston City is predominately Anglo-Australian although there are several well established and emerging culturally diverse communities. Key indicators from the 2021 Census include:

- 21.4 per cent of residents were born overseas (lower than the Greater Melbourne average of 35.7 per cent)
- 83.6 per cent of residents only speak English at home (higher than the Greater Melbourne average of 61.1 per cent)
- 11.3 per cent of residents used a language other than English at home (lower than the Greater Melbourne average of 34.1 per cent)
- Top nominated ancestries were English (40.4 per cent), Australian (35.5 per cent), Irish (10.8 per cent), Scottish (10.7 per cent), and Italian (4 per cent).

While overall CALD proportions are lower than some inner-Melbourne metropolitan LGAs, diversity is not evenly distributed, with higher concentrations in particular neighbourhoods and among families with young children.

[1] Unless otherwise stated, socio-economic indicators are derived from the 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing, including associated SEIFA indexes

6 Policy Context and Strategic Alignment

6.1 Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029

Frankston City's Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025–2029 (Council and Wellbeing Plan) provides the strategic policy context for the MEYP, integrating the municipal health and wellbeing plan and adopting an all-ages, life-course perspective. It is guided by a life-course approach, promoting wellbeing at every life stage, beginning in early childhood, and underpinned by a health equity commitment to fair opportunities for all. Through these principles, the plan embeds early childhood development within its core health, wellbeing and community outcomes. The plan explicitly recognises that supporting children in their first years through services like maternal and child health and early education is essential to building healthy, inclusive communities. Accordingly, its strategic objectives and health priorities highlight early years needs, such as fostering positive early development and safe family environments, as fundamental to achieving a resilient, inclusive and safe community for everyone.

Appendix 4 shows how the key themes of the Council and Wellbeing Plan inform early years planning focus areas for children from birth to school age. It provides a high-level alignment between Council's broader wellbeing objectives and the direction of the MEYP.

6.2 Other relevant policies, frameworks, etc

The MEYP has been developed within a well-established national, Victorian, and Frankston Council policy environment that shapes how early childhood services are planned, delivered and coordinated. Rather than providing an exhaustive list of legislation, this Plan focuses on the key frameworks and reforms that most directly influence local government's role in supporting children from birth to school age and their families.

Several other legislative instruments and regulatory frameworks also apply to early childhood services in Victoria and remain relevant. However, many operate primarily as compliance or enabling mechanisms rather than shaping local strategic decision-making. To maintain clarity and strategic focus, these are acknowledged, where relevant, but not emphasised in this Plan. A summary of the key frameworks informing the MEYP is provided in Appendix 5.

7 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

7.1 Consultation Process

Council ran a one-month community survey eliciting the community's views on the shape and content of the MEYP. In particular, to 'understand your vision, your experiences, and what you believe young families need from local services. Your insights will guide how Council plans and delivers services, programs and infrastructure over the next four years.'

The survey was directed separately at primary carers and staff / service providers.

A total of 538 surveys were completed, the majority of which were from community members (490), with the remainder being from service providers and staff (48).

7.2 Key Findings from the Engagement

Respondents ranked the following as the most important focus areas for Council over the next four years:

- Access to child and family health and wellbeing services including MCH, playgroups, and parenting supports
- Access to early learning opportunities
- Playgrounds and open space
- Family violence prevention and safety.

While still valued by respondents, cultural and language supports and broader social inclusion initiatives were ranked lower in priority.

When asked about their perceptions of current services, respondents noted that:

- The majority agreed Council supports healthy, active lifestyles for families with young children
- Around two thirds of respondents felt they know how to access early years services, though 12% disagreed, reflecting a genuine information access gap, particularly among residents new to the municipality and those in outer suburbs
- Food security was rated very positively, with most families reporting reliable access to healthy food
- The majority felt public parks are safe and easy to get to, though 14 per cent of respondents disagreed, with concerns concentrated in specific suburbs, where safety issues, unfenced playgrounds, and limited amenities were raised.

The survey also captured valuable qualitative insights through free text comments, with key themes including:

- MCH services
- Playgroups and first-time parents' groups
- Community connection and parental wellbeing
- Kindergarten registration
- Inclusion and access gaps
- Information access and service navigation
- Parks and public spaces
- Cost of living and financial hardship.

The survey also identified areas of unmet service need.

Further information on the survey findings is available on the Engage Frankston web page[2]: engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/

7.3 How Engagement Informed the Plan

The survey results have directly informed the priorities, strategies and actions in this Plan. The eight community messages identified through the survey, covering MCH quality, playgroups, community connection, kindergarten registration, inclusion, information access, parks safety and equity, and cost of living, are reflected in the Plan's focus areas and the actions to be advanced over the next four years.

[2] engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/municipal-early-years-plan-2026-2030

8 Priority Domains

8.1 Introduction

The Priority Domains identify Council's key areas of focus for improving outcomes for children from birth to school age. It translates the Vision, Commitment and Guiding Principles into strategic priorities that will guide service planning, infrastructure development, partnership activity and advocacy. Each priority area includes:

- Strategic directions
- Council and Wellbeing Plan alignment
- Intended outcomes
- Action themes
- Outcome measures

Detailed initiatives will be developed through Annual Early Years Action Plans

8.2 Priority Area 1: Health, Safety and Wellbeing

8.2.1 Priority Statement: Children enjoy optimal health and wellbeing, free from preventable harm

This priority focuses on promoting physical activity, nutritious food and preventive health care, and fostering safe, nurturing family environments for children.

The aim is to protect children from injury, abuse and neglect, and strengthen families' capacity to care for their children's health and emotional needs.

8.2.2 Strategic Directions

- Promote healthy growth, development and wellbeing through early years' services
- Strengthen early identification and intervention for developmental and health concerns
- Promote child safety and safe home and community environments
- Support parent wellbeing and positive, safe family relationships
- Contribute to the reduction of child abuse and neglect through early intervention and system connection

8.2.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

This priority aligns with Council's Healthy and Inclusive Communities' theme (Strategic Outcome 1 and related Strategic Objectives 1.1 and 1.3), which aims to improve community health, safety and wellbeing by reducing harms and promoting healthy lifestyles.

It also reflects Council's commitment to a well-managed, diverse workforce… (that) ensures child safety by embedding child-safe standards in all its operations (Strategic Objective 4.6).

These goals reinforce Council's commitment to safe, healthy environments for children and families.

8.2.4 Intended Outcomes

- Children experience consistently strong health, development and wellbeing outcomes
- Families can easily access the right support at the right time
- Safe, nurturing home and community environments are the norm
- Parents' wellbeing and family relationships are strengthened
- A shared, preventative approach to child safety and wellbeing is embedded across the community

8.2.5 Action Themes

Healthy Development and Preventive Care

Activities that support children's physical health, development and early identification of concerns. This includes promoting active play and healthy eating, maintaining strong access to MCH and immunisation services, and ensuring early intervention pathways are well coordinated and responsive.

Safe, Supportive Environments for Children

Creating and maintaining safe home, service and community environments where children are protected from preventable harm. This includes injury prevention, child safe practices across Council services, culturally safe environments, and community awareness of child safety and protection responsibilities.

Parent, Family and Children's Wellbeing

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of both parents and children. For parents and families, this means building resilience and capacity to provide nurturing, stable and safe care through parenting programs, family wellbeing supports, and early responses to family stress, violence or vulnerability. For children, it means recognising and responding to their mental health needs, as shaped by family, peers, community and broader life experiences, through mental health supports, early intervention services, and responses to emotional and behavioural concerns as they emerge.

Early Support, Navigation and Partnerships

Ensuring families can easily find, access and move between services at the right time. This includes strengthening service navigation, integrating Council and partner services, building workforce capability, and working collaboratively across health, early years and family support systems.

8.2.6 Outcome Measures

Children experience consistently strong health, development and wellbeing outcomes:

- Participation rates in MCH key ages and stages visits
- Immunisations delivered to infants and children
- Proportion of children identified with developmental concerns and referrals made
- Participation in physical activity or active play programs for children
- Community level early childhood health indicators (where available)

Families can easily access the right support at the right time:

- Percentage of parents reporting they know where to go for help
- Parent satisfaction with MCH, immunisation and family support services
- Uptake of parenting programs and family wellbeing supports
- Referral pathways used (e.g. MCH to family services, health or early intervention)
- Qualitative feedback from families about ease of access and support

Safe, nurturing home and community environments are the norm:

- Participation in child safety, injury prevention or safe environment initiatives
- Staff and service compliance with Child Safe Standards
- Community awareness of child safety and prevention of abuse and neglect
- Reported incidents or trends relating to preventable injury (where available)
- Evidence of culturally safe and inclusive practice in early years services.

Parents' wellbeing and family relationships are strengthened:

- Participation in parenting and family wellbeing programs
- Parent reported confidence, resilience or wellbeing (survey based)
- Referrals to family support or wellbeing services at early stages
- Qualitative feedback on feeling supported and less isolated
- Partner feedback on coordination and early response to family stress

A shared, preventative approach to child safety and wellbeing is embedded across the community:

- Number of community-facing child safety awareness, education or prevention initiatives delivered annually
- Participation by partner organisations and community services in shared child safety and wellbeing activities
- Evidence of child safe practices embedded across Council services, programs and community partnerships
- Workforce participation in child safety training, including Child Safe Standards awareness and mandatory reporting obligations

8.3 Priority Area 2: Inclusive Access and Participation

8.3.1 Priority Statement: Every child and family can access and participate in early years services, regardless of ability, culture, income or location

This priority focuses on eliminating barriers to Council services and early childhood programs and activities so that children and families feel welcomed and supported, regardless of ability, culture, income or location.

Special attention is given to vulnerable or disadvantaged groups to improve equity of access.

8.3.2 Strategic Directions

- Actively identify and address barriers to service access
- Conduct targeted outreach to vulnerable or hard to reach families
- Design and deliver programs that are accessible to all children and families.
- Promote social inclusion and create welcoming, non-judgmental environments

8.3.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

This priority reflects Council's Strategic Objective 1.1 by providing supportive, accessible and inclusive services and spaces where everyone feels welcome, valued and respected. By designing services and programs that respect diversity and reduce disadvantage, Council furthers its commitment to inclusive communities.

It also aligns with the Objective's emphasis on skill-building and inclusion for people of all abilities.

8.3.4 Intended Outcomes

- Participation in early years services reflects the diversity of the community
- Council services are widely experienced as welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe
- Barriers to access are identified early and addressed proactively
- Inclusive practice is embedded across Council planning and service delivery

8.3.5 Action Themes

Removing Barriers to Access

Identifying and addressing practical, systemic and perceived barriers that prevent children and families from accessing early years services and Council services. This includes cost, transport, service location, language, information, service hours, and administrative or eligibility barriers.

Targeted Outreach and Connection

Proactive outreach to families who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or less likely to engage with universal services, including culturally and linguistically diverse families, families experiencing disadvantage, families with children with disability, and geographically isolated families. This includes outreach through trusted services, community partners and informal networks.

Inclusive and Accessible Program Design

Designing and adapting programs, activities and services so they are accessible to all children and families. This includes universal design, flexibility in delivery, culturally responsive practice, accessible facilities, inclusive communications, and adjustments to support participation across abilities, cultures and circumstances.

Welcoming and Inclusive Environments

Creating early years services and community spaces that are welcoming, non-judgmental and culturally safe. This includes workforce capability, inclusive practice, positive service culture, and building trust so families feel respected, valued and comfortable participating.

8.3.6 Outcome Measures

Participation in early years services reflects the diversity of the community:

- Participation rates in early childhood programs (MCH, playgroups, parenting programs, early years activities)
- Participation by priority population groups (e.g. CALD families, children with disability, vulnerable families)
- Comparison of service participation with local population demographics
- Number and reach of targeted outreach activities
- Uptake of services following targeted outreach

Council services are widely experienced as welcoming, inclusive and culturally safe:

- Family satisfaction with inclusivity and accessibility of services
- Families reporting they feel welcomed, respected and not judged
- Community feedback on cultural inclusion and safety
- Participation of diverse families in community programs and events
- Evidence of inclusive practice across services (policy, environment, communication).

Barriers to access are identified early and addressed proactively:

- Parent reported ease of accessing Council early years services
- Percentage of families who report knowing what services are available and how to access them
- Feedback on cost, transport, location, language or administrative barriers
- Complaints and enquiries relating to access or exclusion barriers
- Qualitative feedback on service navigation experiences

Inclusive practice is embedded across Council planning and service delivery:

- Inclusion and accessibility considerations reflected in program design
- Use of community feedback to inform service improvements
- Workforce participation in inclusion, access or cultural safety initiatives
- Trends over time in participation gaps between population groups
- Partner feedback on access, referral pathways and inclusion

8.4 Priority Area 3: Strong Families and Community Connections

8.4.1 Priority Statement: Strong, supportive family relationships and connected communities underpin children's wellbeing and development

This priority focuses on strengthening families' capacity to care for their children and building supportive networks around them.

Emphasis is placed on supporting positive parenting, easing family pressures and strengthening social connections within the community.

8.4.2 Strategic Directions

- Offer parenting information and support to enhance parent confidence and capacity.
- Support family wellbeing through referral pathways.
- Strengthen community networks and engagement to reduce isolation.
- Collaborate with community organisations and agencies to support families

8.4.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

Council's Engaged, Connected and Inclusive Communities priority (Priority 2) covers social connection, inclusion and reducing disadvantage.

The Safe, Respectful and Equal Communities focus (Priority 3) emphasises safety, inclusion and preventing harm. It highlights *Positive childhood development and healthy family relationships* as key areas.

8.3.4 Intended Outcomes

- Families have stronger relationships and greater resilience
- Families feel connected, supported and less isolated
- Families receive timely, coordinated support
- Strong partnerships underpinning a supportive community system

8.4.5 Action Themes

Supporting Confident and Connected Parenting

Supporting parents and carers to build skills, confidence and positive relationships with their children. This includes parenting information and timely support to address potential issues before they emerge or escalate.

Strengthening Family Wellbeing and Support Pathways

Improving family wellbeing by supporting access to counselling, mental health services and practical assistance, including financial support. This theme focuses on reducing pressure on families, supporting parental wellbeing, and strengthening families' ability to provide consistent, nurturing care.

Social Connection and Community Belonging

Building opportunities for families to connect with each other and their local community, reducing isolation and building a sense of belonging. This includes inclusive programs and welcoming spaces that help families build relationships, access informal support, and feel a sense of belonging in their community.

Partnerships and Coordinated Community Support

Working collaboratively with community organisations, service providers and agencies to provide coordinated support to families. This includes shared pathways, referrals, place-based responses and collective approaches to support families.

8.4.6 Outcome Measures

Families have stronger relationships and greater resilience:

- Participation in parenting education and early intervention programs
- Uptake of mental health and family wellbeing supports
- Parent reported confidence and wellbeing
- Reduction in families presenting at crisis point (where measurable)
- Qualitative feedback from families about feeling supported

Families feel connected, supported and less isolated:

- Participation in playgroups, peer support and family focused community activities
- Families reporting a sense of belonging or connection to community
- Frequency of repeat participation in community programs
- Community feedback on reduced isolation and increased connection
- Participation of diverse family types in connection building activities

Families receive timely, coordinated support:

- Number of families supported through financial assistance, emergency relief or practical support
- Referrals between Council services and community partners
- Timeframes from identification of need to support provided
- Partner feedback on coordination and effectiveness of supports
- Family feedback on ease of navigating support systems.

Strong partnerships underpinning a supportive community system:

- Number and strength of partnerships supporting families
- Evidence of coordinated responses across agencies
- Partner participation in networks, forums and collaborative initiatives
- Feedback from partners on Council's coordination role
- Adjustments made to programs based on shared data and learning

8.5 Priority Area 4: High Quality Early Learning and Development

8.5.1 Priority Statement: Every child experiences enriching learning opportunities and gains strong foundations for school and life

This priority focuses on raising the quality of early education and care and increasing participation for all children through play-based learning that supports children's choice, curiosity, expression and active participation.

It emphasises equitable access to high-quality experiences that promote early literacy and numeracy, social and emotional wellbeing, and children's agency as confident learners.

Strong partnerships with parents are central, recognising families as children's first teachers and valuing their insights to support a seamless continuum of learning from the early years through to school.

8.5.2 Strategic Directions

Strengthen play-based early learning environments that promote children's choice, curiosity, expression and active participation, supporting children to be confident, capable and engaged learners.

Increase equitable access and participation in high-quality early education and care, ensuring all children benefit from inclusive learning opportunities that build strong foundations for literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Support children's agency and wellbeing by embedding practices that recognise children as active participants in their learning and promote positive mental health, resilience and a sense of belonging.

Partner with parents and families as first teachers, valuing their knowledge and insights to inform shared decision-making and support children's learning and development across home, early learning and community settings.

Strengthen continuity of learning from early years to school by supporting collaboration across services and settings, ensuring smooth transitions and consistent, high-quality learning experiences for every child.

8.5.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

This aligns with Strategic Objective 1.3: to support and strengthen positive early childhood development by fostering strong foundations in education and health. By prioritising early learning and child development services, Council recognises that quality education and health services in the from birth to school age are essential for children to thrive.

8.5.4 Intended Outcomes

Children are confident, curious and active learners.

Children experience a strong sense of belonging and confident transitions to school.

Families feel respected and empowered as partners in learning.

More equitable access to high-quality early learning across the community.

8.5.5 Action Themes

High-Quality Play-Based Learning and Children's Agency

Support and strengthen early learning environments that place children at the centre of learning by responding to their interests, strengths, voices and choices. This includes promoting play-based learning approaches that foster curiosity, creativity, expression, wellbeing and active participation in learning.

Equitable Access and Participation in Early Learning

Increase participation in high-quality early education and care for all children, with a strong focus on reducing barriers for children and families experiencing vulnerability. Activities focus on inclusion, outreach, flexible delivery and collaboration to ensure access reflects the diversity of the community.

Partnerships with Families as First Teachers

Strengthen partnerships with parents and caregivers by recognising families as children's first teachers and valuing their insights into learning and development. This includes supporting family engagement, shared decision-making and culturally safe, inclusive practice across early years services.

Continuity of Learning and Transitions to School

Support continuity of learning from early years through to school by strengthening collaboration between early learning services, families and schools. Activities focus on consistent, coordinated transition practices that build children's sense of belonging, confidence and readiness for school.

8.5.6 Outcome Measures

Children are confident, curious and active learners:

- Family-reported confidence in children's learning and development
- Practitioner reflections on engagement, curiosity and participation
- Council early years program evaluations
- Proportion of children demonstrating age-appropriate developmental milestones.

Children experience a strong sense of belonging and confident transitions to school:

- Family feedback on children's sense of belonging and wellbeing
- Evidence of consistent transition practices
- Evidence of collaboration between early years services and local schools.

Families feel respected and empowered as partners in learning:

- Parents report feeling welcomed, respected and valued as their child's first teacher
- Qualitative feedback on partnership and communication
- Council service-level parent feedback
- Proportion of families who report being actively involved in decisions about their child's learning and development.

More equitable access to high-quality early learning across the community:

- Increased engagement of priority groups in Council-run early years programs
- Evidence of culturally safe and inclusive practice
- Community consultation feedback
- Proportion of children entering school with age-appropriate developmental skills

8.6 Priority Area 5: Integrated and Responsive Early Years System

8.6.1 Priority Statement: Early years services operate as a coordinated, well-managed system that responds promptly and effectively

This priority focuses on joining up services across Council, health, education and community sectors so families experience seamless support (a 'no wrong door' approach).

A skilled, supported and well-connected workforce is central to delivering this approach.

8.6.2 Strategic Directions

- Strengthen service integration and coordination across the early years system
- Embed a 'no wrong door' approach for children and families
- Enable shared understanding through data, communication and continuous learning
- Support a skilled, connected and sustainable early years workforce
- Strengthen governance, leadership and system stewardship

8.6.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

This priority is consistent with Council's focus on performance and leadership. Strategic Outcome 4.6 calls for A forward-thinking and responsive council that values community input, committed to optimising services, ensuring robust governance and making sustainable decisions.

It also aligns with Strategic Objective 4.6 that aims to Build a well-managed, diverse workforce.

8.6.4 Intended Outcomes

- Families experience a seamless early years system, with a strong 'no wrong door' approach embedded in practice
- Partnerships and collaboration are well-established and effective
- The early years workforce is confident, connected and supported
- Evidence led learning drives continuous improvement

8.6.5 Action Themes

Joined up Access and Referral Pathways

Improve how families enter, move through and are supported across the early years system by strengthening shared intake, referral and follow up processes. This theme focuses on embedding a consistent 'no wrong door' approach, reducing duplication, and ensuring timely, coordinated responses across Council, health, education and community services.

Partnerships and System Collaboration

Strengthen relationships and ways of working across Council departments and with external partners to support coordinated planning and service delivery. This includes shared priorities, regular cross sector engagement and collaboration that enables the system to respond collectively to local needs and emerging trends.

Workforce Capability and Connection

Support a skilled, confident and well-connected early years workforce through shared learning, professional networks and clear understanding of local services and pathways. This theme focuses on building workforce capability to confidently identify needs, make effective referrals and work collaboratively to support families.

System Learning, Data and Continuous Improvement

Strengthen the use of shared data, feedback and insights to improve access, reduce barriers and inform service planning and improvement. This includes using system level information to monitor outcomes, identify gaps and support evidence-based decision making over time.

8.6.6 Outcome Measures

Families experience a seamless early years system, with a strong 'no wrong door' approach embedded in practice:

- Percentage of families who report they could find the right support easily, regardless of where they first sought help
- Family reported clarity and consistency of information across services
- Proportion of families supported appropriately at their first point of contact
- Reduction in families reporting being referred multiple times for the same issue
- Average number of contacts before families are connected to appropriate support
- Evidence of timely responses and coordinated follow up following first contact
- Qualitative family feedback describing smooth transitions and feeling supported across services.

Partnerships and collaboration are well-established and effective:

- Family reported smooth transitions between key services (e.g. MCH to kindergarten)
- Reduction in repeated information requests across services
- Number of coordinated or joint responses for families with complex needs
- Evidence of shared understanding of pathways across services.

The early years workforce is confident, connected and supported:

- Staff confidence in identifying needs and using referral pathways
- Staff understanding of roles, eligibility and thresholds across services
- Consistency in referral and follow up practices across services
- Evidence of reflective practice and system learning informing improvements.

Evidence led learning drives continuous improvement:

- Regular collection, review and reporting of early years system data across Council services and key partners
- Evidence of service or program adjustments made in response to data, community feedback or evaluation findings
- Staff participation in shared learning, reflective practice or continuous improvement activities
- Number of service planning or improvement decisions informed by shared data, population trends or community consultation.

8.7 Priority Area 6: Child Friendly, Accessible and Sustainable Places

8.7.1 Priority Statement: Council's built environment is safe, welcoming and designed to support the play, development and participation of young children and families, informed by children's and families' experiences

This priority focuses on designing and maintaining parks, buildings and public spaces that are safe, accessible and stimulating for children's play and development.

8.7.2 Strategic Directions

- Advocate for shared, sustainable and child friendly places across Council.
- Promote welcoming, safe and easy to use Council places for families with young children.
- Strengthen children's and families' voices in place-based decision making.

8.7.3 Council and Wellbeing Plan Alignment

This priority meets Strategic Objective 1.1, which encourages child-friendly community facilities, parks, libraries, and recreation programs.

8.7.4 Intended Outcomes

- Children's and families' needs are embedded in the design of Council places, spaces and decisions.
- Families experience Council spaces as welcoming, accessible and easy to use.
- Places are designed for shared benefit and long-term sustainability.

8.7.5 Action Themes

Fit for Purpose Facilities

Within budgetary constraints, ensure Council's early years facilities are safe, accessible, compliant and fit for purpose.

Child Friendly, Inclusive and Universal Design

Embed child friendly, universal and inclusive design principles into the planning, design and upgrade of parks, buildings and public spaces. Ensure Council places support safety, play, participation and accessibility, enabling young children and families to confidently engage in everyday community life.

Welcoming, Accessible and Easy to Use Council Spaces

Improve the accessibility, safety and usability of Council places and spaces so families experience them as welcoming and easy to use. Reduce physical, social and cultural barriers for families with prams, children with disability and diverse needs, building confidence to access and use public places.

Incorporate Children's and Families' Voices in Place Making

Strengthen mechanisms to hear, value and apply the lived experiences of children and families in the planning, design and evaluation of Council places. Ensure community input meaningfully informs place-based decisions and reflects local needs and experiences.

Advocacy for Child Friendly Places

Advocate across Council for the consistent application of a child friendly principles to promote inclusive, adaptable and sustainable places with shared benefits for all ages.

8.7.6 Outcome Measures

Children's and families' needs are embedded in the design of Council places, spaces and decisions:

- Council's early years team is consulted in project scoping, where appropriate
- families report increased confidence for children to engage in everyday community life
- evidence of early years design considerations reflected in completed projects.

Families experience Council spaces as welcoming, accessible and easy to use:

- Families experience Council places as welcoming, accessible and easy to use
- Reduced barriers to accessing parks, buildings and facilities
- Number of access improvements made to Council places in response to family or community feedback.

Places are designed for shared benefit and long-term sustainability:

- Increased opportunities for children and families to participate in place-based consultation
- Community input is reflected in place making decisions

9 From Priorities to Action

This section outlines the approach Council will use to identify, assess and implement initiatives that support improved outcomes for children from birth to school age and their families. Council will use an evidence-informed approach to guide decision-making and ensure actions respond to community needs and align with Council priorities.

In determining future actions and initiatives, consideration will be given to a range of factors including community need, equity and inclusion, gender-related impacts, anticipated benefits for children and families, strategic alignment, feasibility and available resources. Decisions will be informed by available data, community and stakeholder feedback, research evidence, service knowledge and professional judgement.

This approach is designed to support transparent and consistent decision-making while recognising that different initiatives may require different levels of assessment and evaluation. The nature and extent of evaluation undertaken will be proportionate to the scale, complexity and resource requirements of individual initiatives.

Decisions regarding future initiatives will also be informed by other relevant Council strategies, plans and planning processes. Consideration will be given to broader organisational priorities, service planning, infrastructure requirements and long-term resource implications to support a coordinated and integrated approach.

The implementation of initiatives will occur through Council's established planning, budgeting and funding processes and will take account of available resources, partnership opportunities and external funding where appropriate.

The initiatives identified through this process will be implemented through Annual Action Plans. These plans will identify specific actions, responsibilities and measures of success, and provide opportunities to monitor progress, respond to emerging needs and refine actions over time.

This approach supports continuous improvement and helps ensure that Council's efforts remain focused on improving outcomes for children, families and the broader community.

10 Annual Action Plans

Annual Action Plans translate the MEYP's priority domains into detailed initiatives, projects and service improvements to be delivered each year. The Decision-Making Framework outlined in S. 9 guides the assessment and prioritisation of potential initiatives, while the Annual Action Plans identify the specific actions Council and partners will undertake to progress the priority domains and intended outcomes.

Annual Action Plans provide the primary mechanism for implementing the MEYP. They identify responsibilities, timeframes and measures of success, and enable Council to monitor progress, respond to emerging needs and refine actions over time. This approach allows Council and service partners to remain responsive to emerging community needs, population changes, service system developments and government policy or funding opportunities.

The Annual Action Plans deliver the objectives of the MEYP by:

- Identifying practical initiatives aligned with each priority area
- Allocating responsibilities across Council and partner organisations
- Establishing timelines and performance indicators
- Supporting coordinated and collaborative service delivery
- Providing a mechanism for monitoring and reporting progress.

Annual Action Plans will be developed through collaborative planning processes involving Council, service providers, community organisations and relevant government agencies. Planning will be informed by:

- Community and family engagement and feedback
- Service provider consultation and partnership planning
- Population and service demand data
- Monitoring and evaluation findings
- Policy and funding developments across the early years sector.

Annual Action Plans will be prepared each year and will outline initiatives, lead responsibilities, delivery partners, timeframes and performance measures.

Implementation will be monitored by Council using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures, including:

- Service participation and utilisation data
- Community and stakeholder feedback
- Outcome indicators identified in the Priority Framework
- Partnership reporting and service system data.

Annual reporting will track progress, identify emerging issues and support continuous improvement.

Annual Action Plans will be reviewed and updated each year to respond to:

- Emerging community needs
- Changes in service demand or population growth
- Evaluation findings
- New policy directions or funding opportunities.

This annual review process ensures the MEYP remains flexible, evidence-informed and responsive to the needs of children and families across the municipality.

11 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

11.1 Purpose

This section explains how the MEYP will be tracked and assessed over time.

With regular monitoring and reporting, Council can confirm that the Plan is being implemented as envisaged, and that children from birth to school age and their families are benefiting as anticipated. It will also guide continuous improvement.

11.2 Monitoring

The progress of all MEYP initiatives will be tracked systematically using the performance indicators and anticipated outputs established in the Annual Action Plans. Wherever possible, these indicators will align with measures contained within the Council and Wellbeing Plan, and with other common benchmarks.

Data for these indicators and outcomes will be identified as part of the approval and implementation process, and steps put in train to source and obtain the data, at agreed intervals.

Periodic and annual progress checks will help flag risks or bottlenecks early. By comparing actual results against planned targets, corrective action can be taken, as required.

11.3 Reporting

Each year, an Annual Progress Report will be prepared for Council. The Report will summarise the status of each action item and indicator, noting achievements, delays or changes. It will identify any emerging trends or barriers and recommend new or revised actions for the next year. These updates will be integrated with Council's normal reporting and planning cycle.

11.4 Evaluation

Beyond tracking the delivery of individual initiatives, Council will also evaluate the overall impact of the MEYP on children and families. Evaluation helps Council understand whether the Plan is making a meaningful difference and where improvements to it may be needed.

Evaluation will focus on key questions, including:

- Are initiatives improving children's health, development and wellbeing?
- Are services and supports reaching the families who need them most?
- Which initiatives are working well and delivering strong outcomes?
- Are there opportunities to strengthen services or partnerships?

The MEYP will be reviewed periodically throughout its duration to support continuous improvement and ensure it remains responsive to community needs. This review will:

- Analyse data and performance measures identified in the Plan
- Consider feedback from families, service providers and community partners
- Assess whether priorities and actions remain relevant to community needs
- Identify any adjustments required to strengthen implementation

Evaluation will be practical and focused on continuous improvement. Findings will be used to:

- Strengthen initiative design and delivery
- Identify emerging needs and service gaps
- Improve coordination between services and partners

Throughout implementation, Council will continue to work closely with service partners and community stakeholders to share insights and learn from experience. This may include regular opportunities for collaboration and reflection across the early years service system.

This approach ensures the MEYP remains responsive, evidence-informed and focused on improving outcomes for children and families over time. It will also inform the development of future MEYPs.

12 Appendices

Appendix 1: Council's Direct Delivery of Early Years Services

Council Service	Details
Best Start Program	Best Start is a Victorian Government early years initiative that supports communities, services and families to provide the best possible environment, experiences and care for children from birth to school entry. It brings together local partners to use data and community knowledge to improve participation in key services such as kindergarten, maternal and child health and supported playgroups, particularly for children experiencing vulnerability. The program focuses on collaborative, place based action to strengthen early years outcomes and support children to enter school as confident and engaged learners
Breastfeeding Support Program	Supports mothers and families in breastfeeding their infants and children by providing accessible, professional assistance through MCH services.
Enhanced MCH Program	A short-term intervention based intensive support for families with children 0-3 years who are experiencing a period of increased need. This program is offered in addition to the Universal MCH Program.
First-Time Parent Groups	MCH facilitated groups addressing the challenges and stresses that may be associated with the transition to parenthood. The purpose is to enhance parental and emotional wellbeing, parent-child interaction, provide opportunities to establish informal networks and supports, and increase confidence in parenting.
Immunisation Program	Infant and secondary school immunisation programs delivered in accordance with the National Immunisation Program. The Vaccines for Purchase Program is also available, enabling families to access recommended vaccines not funded under the National Immunisation Program, providing additional protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.
Kindergarten Central Registration	A centralised registration and allocation process for community-based, sessional kindergartens located in the municipality. The allocation of places is consistent with priority of access guidelines determined by the Victorian Government to support equitable participation for the community's most vulnerable children.
Mahogany Rise Child and Family Centre	A 59-place long day childcare centre within the grounds of the Mahogany Rise Primary School. The service offers educational care to children from birth to school age and includes an integrated three- and four-year-old kindergarten program.
Playgroups	Various playgroup options, including community playgroups, supported playgroups (for specific needs), pop-up playgroups (rotating locations in parks), and baby playgroups. These programs offer socialisation, activities, and parenting support.
Sleep and Settling Outreach	Targeted, in-home support led by MCH nurses to help families with children aged 0–2 years address sleep and settling concerns through assessment and consultation.
Storytime Sessions	Frankston City Libraries deliver Storytime sessions for young children and families, supporting early literacy, language development and social connection through shared reading, songs and interactive activities.
Universal MCH Program	A free, universally accessible, state-wide service for all families with children from birth to school age.

Appendix 2: Council's Current Partnerships

Partnerships	Details
Bayside Peninsula Early Childhood Out of Home Care Compact Partnership	Guided by The Early Years Compact with representatives from State Government, The Orange Door and Local Government, to drive local strategies to deliver positive outcomes for families with children in Out of Home Care.
Bayside Peninsula MCH and The Orange Door Partnership	To facilitate communication and collaboration between local MCH services and The Orange Door in the Bayside Peninsula area.
Best Start Partnership	A partnership composed of agencies and local service providers that collaborate to improve the health, development, and wellbeing of children from birth to school entry. A strong emphasis is placed on prevention and early intervention, with a particular focus on children experiencing vulnerability and all Aboriginal children.
Communities for Children Frankston	Auspiced by Anglicare Victoria, Communities for Children Frankston aims to connect local children, families, and professionals with community resources to foster development for vulnerable children and families. Key elements include dedicated websites offering event calendars, parent resources, and training.
Frankston and Mornington MCH and Peninsula Health Early Childhood Early Intervention Partnership	To facilitate direct council related referral pathways for early childhood intervention between local MCH services and Peninsula Health.
Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative	Local service providers working together to provide optimal support for mothers' mental health in the perinatal period.
Frankston Mornington Peninsula Child and Family Network	A collaborative network of local councils (Frankston Council and Mornington Peninsula Shire), health services, community organisations, and schools working together to provide integrated support, resources, and early intervention for children and families, covering areas like maternal and child health, early learning, mental health, and family support.
Frankston North Education Plan	A Victorian Government initiative to improve the quality of education provision for the Frankston North community. The Colman Foundation is leading the implementation of the Our Place Model to deliver the resources children and families need to thrive — integrating high quality early learning, effective schooling, health and community services, and adult education.
Peninsula Health Midwives and Bayside Peninsula MCH Services	An established community of practice ensuring continuity of care between acute and primary health maternity services.

Appendix 3: Early Years Community Profile — Data to Planning Lever Alignment

Dataset	Services	Infrastructure	Partnerships	Advocacy
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population	Informs culturally safe, inclusive early years services that support engagement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families, improving access, participation and trust in universal services.	Supports planning of welcoming, culturally safe service environments and locations that are accessible to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families, including opportunities for co-location with trusted community services.	Strengthens collaboration with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, local Aboriginal services and community leaders to support culturally appropriate service delivery, engagement and referral pathways.	Provides evidence to advocate for culturally safe service models, targeted funding and initiatives that improve access, equity and outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families.
Australian Early Development Census	Highlights areas where children may benefit from additional early years programs, prevention or early intervention initiatives.	Helps prioritise place-based investment where developmental vulnerability is higher.	Supports collaboration across early years, health, education and community services to respond to identified trends.	Provides a strong evidence base for advocating for targeted funding, place-based initiatives or cross-government responses.
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Data	Informs the design of culturally responsive services, inclusive programs and accessible information for families.	Supports consideration of location and design of facilities to meet diverse community needs.	Guides partnerships with multicultural organisations and community leaders.	Strengthens advocacy for culturally appropriate resources, workforce capability and inclusive service models.
Early Years Population Forecasts	Informs future demand for MCH, kindergarten, early learning and family services and assists with service capacity planning.	Supports decisions about the scale, timing and location of early years facilities, particularly in areas experiencing demographic change.	Helps coordinate planning with providers, schools and health services based on projected demand.	Provides evidence to advocate to State Government for funding, service adjustments or infrastructure investment where demand is projected to change.
Immunisation	Supports accessible immunisation delivery through community sessions and outreach while informing strategies to improve timely uptake, participation and equitable access.	Informs planning for session locations, capacity and flexible delivery, supporting fit-for-purpose spaces, cold chain management and integration with early years facilities to enable accessible immunisation services.	Supports collaboration with health services, early learning providers and community organisations to improve immunisation uptake.	Supports advocacy for funding, workforce capacity, and responsive delivery models.
Kindergarten Enrolment and Participation	Informs planning to improve access, participation and inclusion in kindergarten programs, including targeted support where uptake is lower.	Supports planning for kindergarten rooms, integrated children's centres (hubs) and shared-use facilities.	Guides coordination with kindergarten providers, early learning services and the Department of Education.	Strengthens advocacy for infrastructure funding, inclusion support and participation initiatives under Victorian Government kindergarten reforms.

Appendix 3: Early Years Community Profile — Data to Planning Lever Alignment

Dataset	Services	Infrastructure	Partnerships	Advocacy
Kindergarten Enrolment and Participation	Informs planning to improve access, participation and inclusion in kindergarten programs, including targeted support where uptake is lower.	Supports planning for kindergarten rooms, integrated children's centres (hubs) and shared-use facilities.	Guides coordination with kindergarten providers, early learning services and the Department of Education.	Strengthens advocacy for infrastructure funding, inclusion support and participation initiatives under Victorian Government kindergarten reforms.
Maternal and Child Health	Identifies engagement levels with universal services and highlights opportunities to improve reach, continuity and early intervention.	Informs decisions about MCH facility capacity, outreach models and co-location opportunities.	Supports collaboration with health services, family services and community organisations to strengthen engagement with families.	Provides local evidence to advocate for enhancements to MCH funding, workforce or service models where participation gaps exist.
Socio-Economic Disadvantage Indicators	Informs targeted service responses and prioritisation of early intervention and support for vulnerable families.	Supports equitable infrastructure planning to ensure services are accessible in areas of higher disadvantage.	Encourages partnerships with social services, health providers and community organisations to address complex needs.	Provides robust local evidence to advocate for funding, policy attention and place-based responses to disadvantage.

Appendix 4: Alignment of Council Plan Themes/Outcomes with Early Years Focus

Table 1: Alignment of Council Plan Themes/Outcomes with Early Years Planning Focus

Council and Wellbeing Plan Theme / Outcome	Early Years Planning Focus
Healthy, Active and Resilient Communities (Priority 1)	This priority emphasises active lifestyles and nutritious food for all ages. It highlights the importance of Access to public open spaces, play spaces (playgrounds) and recreation facilities, as well as Access to nutritious food and food security (p. 16). These focus areas support physical activity and healthy diets in the early years, crucial for children's development.
Engaged, Connected and Inclusive Communities (Priority 2)	This priority covers social connection, inclusion, and reducing disadvantage, factors which indirectly affect early years, for example family mental wellbeing, housing security, and poverty.
Safe, Respectful and Equal Communities (Priority 3)	This priority focuses on safety, inclusion and preventing harm. Notably, it calls out Positive childhood development and healthy family relationships, and Safe, vibrant and welcoming public spaces as key areas (p. 18). Frankston City's high rates of family violence are noted. By fostering respectful, violence-free environments and valuing diversity, this priority directly supports the wellbeing of children from birth to school age and their families.
Healthy and Inclusive Communities (Strategic Outcome 1)	Improve community health, safety and wellbeing by reducing harms and promoting healthy lifestyles. Strengthen resilience, inclusiveness and enrich culture and diversity (p. 24).
Strategic Objective 1.1	Encourage healthy, active and skilled communities by providing supportive, accessible and inclusive services and spaces where everyone feels welcome, valued and respected (p. 29). This strategic objective includes young children and families, for example child-friendly community facilities, parks, libraries, and recreation programs. By designing inclusive public spaces and community activities for all ages and abilities, the Council helps young children participate safely in community life, for example well-maintained playgrounds and family events.
Strategic Objective 1.3	Support and strengthen positive early childhood development by fostering strong foundations in education and health, ensuring children can thrive (p. 29). This strategic objective directly targets children from birth to school age, ensuring Council efforts promote healthy development in the first years of life, for example through early learning, health services and family support. Maternal and child health services, immunisation services and children services are highlighted in the Plan as services and specifically identified as strategic indicators.
Strategic Objective 1.3	Support and strengthen positive early childhood development by fostering strong foundations in education and health, ensuring children can thrive (p. 29). This strategic objective directly targets children from birth to school age, ensuring Council efforts promote healthy development in the first years of life, for example through early learning, health services and family support. Maternal and child health services, immunisation services and children services are highlighted in the Plan as services and specifically identified as strategic indicators.

Appendix 4: Alignment of Council Plan Themes/Outcomes with Early Years Focus

Table 1: Alignment of Council Plan Themes/Outcomes with Early Years Planning Focus

Council and Wellbeing Plan Theme / Outcome	Early Years Planning Focus
Council Performance and Leadership (Strategic Outcome 4)	A forward-thinking and responsive council that values community input, committed to optimising services, ensuring robust governance and making sustainable decisions (p. 24).
Strategic Objective 4.6	Build a well-managed, diverse workforce that champions gender equality, ensures child safety and fosters a strong and inclusive culture, promoting fairness, respect and accountability across all levels (p.43). This strategic objective means that child-safe standards are embedded in Council's operations, from staff training and policies to how programs are delivered, so that children are protected from harm in any Council-run facility or service.

Appendix 5: Policy and Framework Context

This appendix identifies the key national, Victorian, and Frankston Council policies and frameworks that materially shape the scope, priorities and delivery of this MEYP. The frameworks included are those that most directly influence local government decision-making, service integration, access, equity and early intervention for children from birth to school age and their families.

To improve clarity, frameworks are grouped into core (foundational) and support frameworks. Other legislation and regulatory instruments apply to early childhood services in Victoria and remain relevant. However, these operate primarily as compliance or enabling frameworks and are, therefore, referenced more lightly in the body of the Plan, where appropriate.

Appendix 5: Policy and Framework Context

Framework / Policy	Relevance to the MEYP
Best Start, Best Life (Victorian Government reforms)	A system-wide reform impacting affordability, participation, workforce and service integration. Relevant to quality, accessibility and advocacy priorities.
Best Start Program (Victorian Government)	A targeted, place-based initiative that focuses on children and families experiencing vulnerability and / or disadvantage. Its key features include local partnerships, specific cohorts and evidence-based reform to identify and remove barriers to service participation.
Frankston City Council Community Infrastructure Plan, October 24, 2022	Provides an evidence-based assessment to inform the integrated planning of Frankston Council's community infrastructure, services and open space to meet current and future needs over a ten-year period.
Frankston Council and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029	Provides Council's overarching strategic and wellbeing framework, embedding a life-course and equity approach that recognises early childhood as foundational to long-term outcomes. Informs the focus on prevention, early intervention, safety, inclusion and coordinated support for children from birth to school age and their families.
Maternal and Child Health Program (Victoria)	A core, council-delivered early years' service and the primary universal contact point for families with children from birth to school age. Central to early identification, prevention, referral and local planning.
Preschool Reform / Universal Access to Kindergarten (within Best Start, Best Life)	The specific participation, access and funding arrangements within Best Start, Best Life that directly inform council planning for kindergarten enrolment, equity, inclusion, service coordination and family engagement.
Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years Compact (State Government–Local Government Agreement)	Supports shared accountability and partnership-based delivery, particularly for improving access for vulnerable children and families.
Victorian Government Child Safe Standards	A mandatory framework that applies across all council services and partnerships. Provides a foundational lens for children's safety, wellbeing and rights.
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework	Provides the shared language and outcomes for children's learning, development and wellbeing across education, health and family services. Underpins the vision, guiding principles and priority areas.

Supporting and secondary frameworks

Framework / Policy	Relevance to the MEYP
Australian Government Early Years Strategy 2024–2034	Provides a forward-looking national direction and contemporary policy alignment rather than an operational driver.
Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government)	Supports quality practice in early learning settings and complements the Victorian Government Early Years Learning and Development Framework where council operates or funds early learning services.
Closing the Gap – National Agreement (Early Childhood Targets)	Informs equity-focused planning and targeted strategies to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.
Disability Inclusion (Victorian Disability Act 2006 and State Disability Plan)	Provides the legislative and policy foundation for inclusive service design and equitable access for children with disabilities or developmental delays and their families. Informs priorities relating to participation, accessibility, service navigation and inclusion across early years services.
National Immunisation Program	Supports prevention and improved health outcomes for young children through access to immunisation services, guiding local delivery and promoting equitable access for families.
National Quality Framework	Provides national quality benchmarks relevant to workforce capability, service quality and safe environments.

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