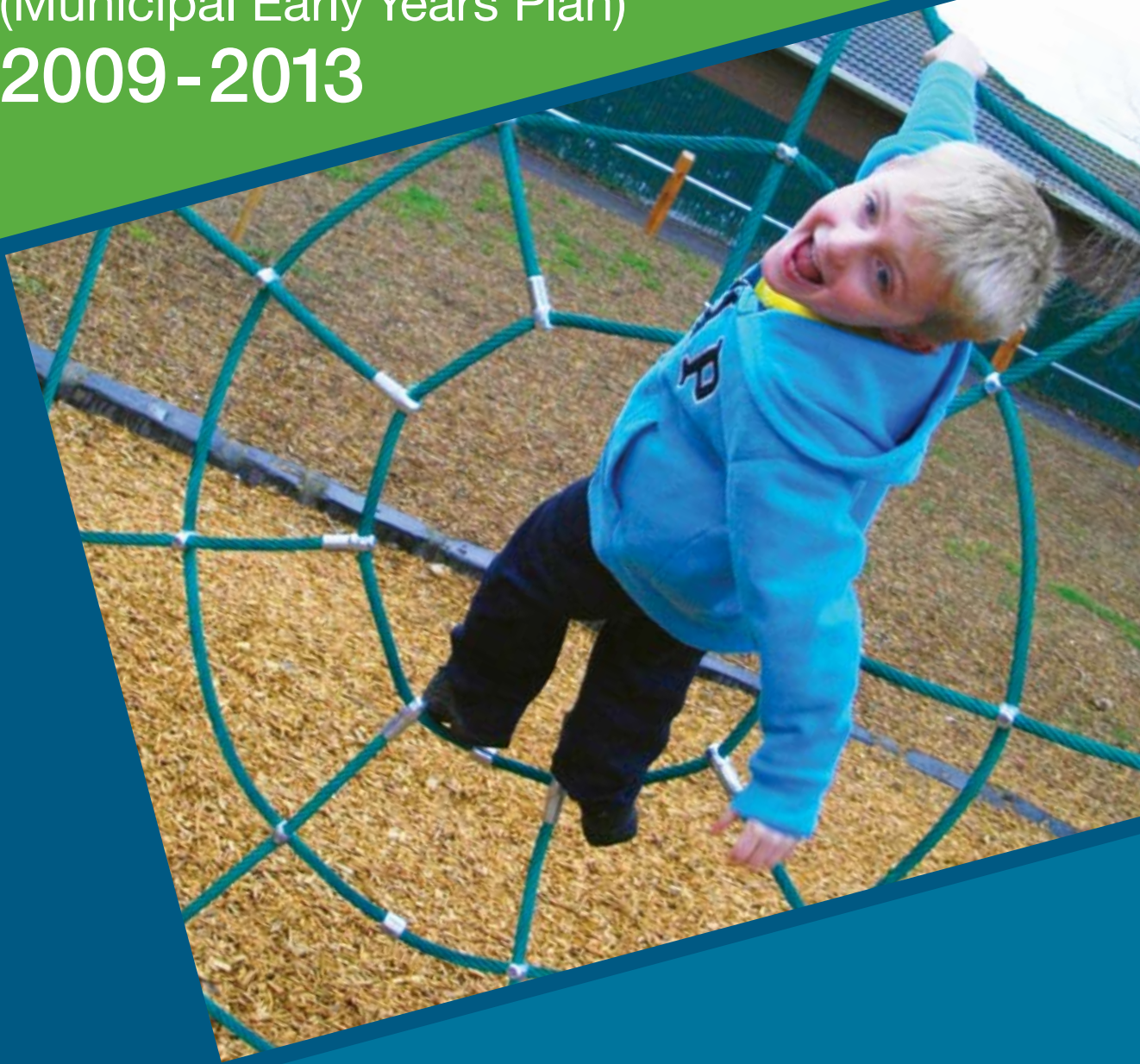


THE CHILDREN'S PLAN
(Municipal Early Years Plan)
2009 - 2013



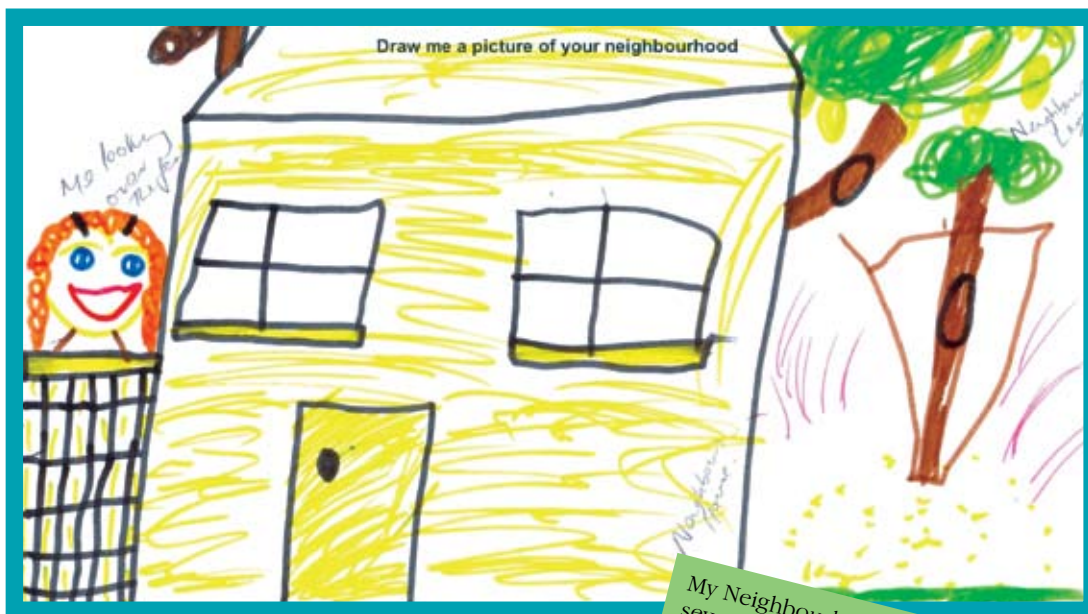
**'Happy, Healthy Children
At The Heart Of Our
Inclusive Community'**



Hobsons Bay
CITY COUNCIL

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My Neighbourhood Drawing by seven year old female children's consultation participant.

Message from the Mayor

The early years of a child's life are of major importance in the growth and development of healthy and responsible individuals.

Hobsons Bay City Council recognises that the provision of nurturing and responsive care, good nutrition, quality childhood services, support and education further strengthens the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children, their families and the community as a whole.

The Council has a long tradition in providing direct services to children and families, particularly in the form of maternal and child health and childcare. In line with recent policy changes at both the Federal and State Government levels, local planning for the early years will need to focus on integrating early childhood education with care.

Consequently, the Children's Plan 2009-2013 (Municipal Early Years Plan) will provide the Hobsons Bay City Council with the strategic direction needed to ensure the effective development and coordination of family centred services, programs and initiatives for children up to eight years of age.

The Children's Plan promotes the vision that children in Hobsons Bay will be happy and healthy as they play, learn and grow in a safe, sustainable and inclusive community. As such, the plan sets out values which underpin the Council's work with young children and their families including:

- Building on family and community strengths
- Maximising opportunities
- Valuing diversity
- Promoting flexible, responsive, accessible and integrated services that are of high quality
- Encouraging community participation and involvement and
- Creating family friendly environments.

The development of the Children's Plan is guided by demographic analysis, research and consultation with stakeholders, including children. The Children's Plan covers a four-year period, 2009-2013, and incorporates annual action plans to ensure priorities for action remain relevant to the community and the Council.

I take this opportunity to personally thank everyone who has been involved in the development of this new and exciting plan and look forward to celebrating its achievements in the months and years ahead.



Cr Peter Hemphill

Mayor of Hobsons Bay 2008 - 09

Introduction

The Children's Plan 2009-2013 (the Plan) articulates the Council's role in service and infrastructure provision, planning, advocacy and community development for children under eight years of age and their families. The Plan provides a strong basis for collaboration between all areas of the Council, service providers, other tiers of government and the community. The Plan aims to deliver quality outcomes that ensure:

- Children and families in Hobsons Bay benefit from safe, accessible and attractive built and natural spaces
- The Council works to support and encourage the participation of children and families in community life
- The potential of every child is maximised by working together to support their health, wellbeing and development during the early years
- Children and families in Hobsons Bay have access to a broad range of quality services, facilities and social supports.

The development of the plan is guided by research into population demographics, current Federal and State Government Policy, as well as community consultation with children aged four to eight years, parents and carers, service providers and Council staff.

More detailed information about the background documents that accompany this plan is available from the Council's website or by contacting the Council's City Strategy Department on 9932 1000.

Context for Developing the Plan

At the Local Government level, the nature of service provision and planning for children has typically focussed on children in their early years, up to the age of six, with education providers carrying on from there.

However, Federal and State Government policy directions now recognise that 'care' and 'education' are in fact inseparable, and hence, planning for children in their early years now includes the early years of primary school (children aged between seven and eight years).

The Plan embraces these changes in government policy and serves to develop a sound basis for communication with government; foster meaningful partnerships with key stakeholders and assists the Council in achieving positive outcomes for children and families.



Playgroup participant enjoying her book.

Introduction

UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Principles

One key aim of this plan is to support and educate the community about nurturing the creation of child friendly environments.

According to UNICEF, a Child Friendly City is a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children's rights. A Child Friendly City is actively engaged in fulfilling the right of every young citizen to:

- Influence decisions about their city; and express their opinion on the city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life; including cultural and social events
- Receive basic services such as health care, education; and social support services
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Walk safely in the streets on their own; meet friends and play
- Have green spaces to play in nature with plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Be an equal citizen of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation.

Ref: <http://www.childfriendlycities.org/>



In addition to the child friendly cities principles, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities; and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) have assisted in identifying and framing the Plan's goals and objectives.



A Hobsons Bay family enjoying the playground.

Safe and Accessible Places and Spaces

Children and families in Hobsons Bay will benefit from safe, accessible and attractive built and natural spaces.

Hobsons Bay has approximately 24 per cent of land devoted to open space, over 25kms of coastline and numerous bike paths, waterways and natural attractions. It is no wonder then that consultation with children via drawings and photographs identified the importance of their interactions with nature, as well as their connection to playgrounds and other open spaces.

While many children identified that they were able to access local neighbourhood parks, many commented that these were not very engaging compared to a number of the larger more regional parks. They felt these parks, although harder to access, provided more useful, entertaining quality spaces.

Similarly, the availability of quality parks and playgrounds and improving their accessibility were identified by the community as the single most important thing that the Council could do to make Hobsons Bay more child friendly.

The Children's Plan recognises that the Council has a role to play in ensuring children can access places and spaces where they can experience nature and other fun activities alongside their families.

The consultation identified that children felt lucky that they were able to go places and for living in neighbourhoods that provided for their needs. Children reported a firm connection to their homes and neighbourhoods, and that they felt quite safe and able to move about freely. This was in contrast to responses received from nearly all parents consulted, who identified the safety and welfare of children as their foremost concern. Consequently, being able to move safely and freely in neighbourhoods was the second most important area for action, closely followed by safer streets and community places.

The Children's Plan recognises that allowing young children to make calculated risks and make their own decisions, is an important factor in ensuring their development. Hence, the Plan not only takes into account the physical safety of our places and spaces, but also gives consideration to the need to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), to ensure everyone is able to move about the municipality safely.

An unsafe place for me. Photograph taken by six year old male children's consultation participant.



Safe and Accessible Places and Spaces

Objectives

1. Create, maintain and improve attractive playgrounds and open spaces which promote exciting opportunities for children to play and experience nature safely
2. Future urban design will take into account the need to encourage children and families to move about the municipality using active transportation methods (e.g. walking and cycling)
3. Ensure Council infrastructure is planned and built to enhance safety and accessibility
4. Take a lead role in fostering a sense of community which encourages the creation of safe neighbourhoods.

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities principles which relate to these objectives aim to ensure that children:

- Can walk safely in the streets on their own; and meet friends and play
- Have green spaces to play in nature with plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.



A favourite place to go with my parents.
Photograph of seven year old female
children's consultation participant.

An Informed, Caring and Inclusive Community

The Council will work to support and encourage the participation of children and families in community life.

In line with the Child Friendly Cities principles, the Plan aims to increase children's opportunities to fully participate in family and community life, and to be treated as equal citizens regardless of their ethnic origins, religion, income, gender or disability.

A consistent theme throughout the children's consultation, in particular within the photographs and drawings, was the importance of connecting with their community and belonging within their neighbourhood. Photos and drawings of neighbours and their houses, featured significantly as did friends, pets and vegetation. The significant regard children in Hobsons Bay have for their neighbourhoods was a unique finding, one not previously identified amongst similar studies in other municipalities.

Consequently, survey and focus group participants identified a lack of 'family friendly' spaces deterred them from being able to meet and interact comfortably with other children and families. Supporting families to access locations where they can socialise was seen as essential to developing positive bonds and happy children in Hobsons Bay.

In addition to providing appropriate spaces for socialising, the importance of providing information in appropriate and alternative formats, at key points of connection such as libraries, community centres or schools was also raised as an area of action.

The Plan recognises that 19.5 per cent of children aged under nine within Hobsons Bay have parents who were born overseas, with eight per cent of these parents not proficient in English. Of new arrivals in Hobsons Bay, 13 per cent were children who predominantly hailed from the Philippines and Burma.

As such, the Council has a role to play in facilitating residents' and children's opportunities to build social connections within their municipality.

I love my garden and we eat this too.
Photograph of four year old female
children's consultation participant.



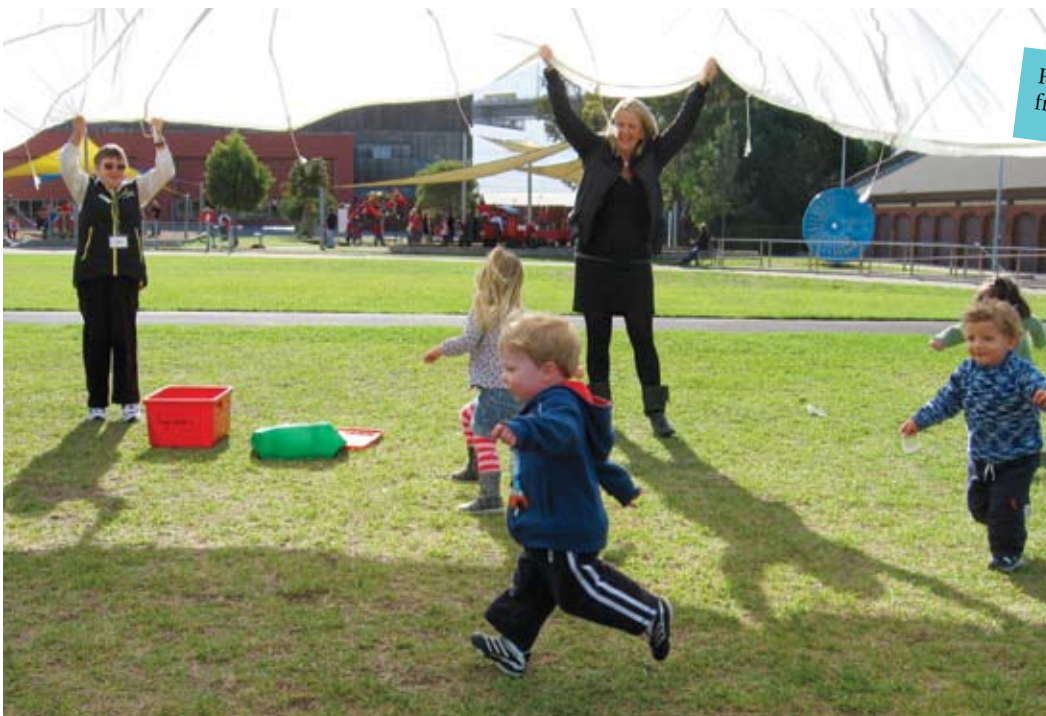
An Informed, Caring and Inclusive Community

Objectives

1. The Council will work to promote children as equal citizens in the community
2. Encourage opportunities for children and families to participate in events and activities that embrace the diversity of the Hobsons Bay community
3. Establish and maintain communication pathways that provide information in alternative formats, languages and at key service points across the municipality
4. Establish links and partnerships with relevant external service providers, businesses and community groups, to promote social connections for parents and carers.

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities principles which relate to these objectives aim to ensure that children:

- Can influence decisions about their city; express their opinion on the city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life including cultural and social events
- Are equal citizens of their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability
- Participate in cultural and social events.



Playing with my playgroup friends at Scienceworks.

A Great Start for Every Child

Maximise the potential of every child by working together to support their health, wellbeing and development during the early years.

Although parents and families have the most important role to play in maximising the potential of their child, the collaboration of service providers is also important to supporting children's health, wellbeing and development during the early years.

Providing for the best start to a child's life involves providing the basics of an unpolluted environment, the best possible care and health services, healthy food options, opportunities for physical activity and safe places to play, grow and experience the world around them.

A major concern relating to children's development amongst parents and professionals is the incidence of obesity. It is estimated that obesity affects 25 per cent of Australian school aged children and 20 per cent of preschoolers. For Hobsons Bay this translates to around 11 per cent of preschoolers being overweight. With the incidence of obesity rising at a rate of between one per cent per year, this is an issue which requires ongoing commitment to action by the whole community.

Having access to quality services, educational and play opportunities is also an important factor to ensuring a great start for every child. The Council is aware that participation rates in maternal and child health, immunisation, breastfeeding and kindergarten vary significantly across the municipality, and in some areas, participation rates are lower than the Victorian average. Furthermore, Hobsons Bay's rates of family violence are higher (7:1,000 persons) than the north west and the Victorian rates (6.3 and 5.8 per 1,000 persons respectively).

Over 50 playgroups operate in Hobsons Bay, and through the Children's Plan the Council is committed to raising awareness about the value of play in early childhood development.

The Plan also aims to continue to improve upon all the wellbeing indicators mentioned above by recognising that investment in the early years is critical to ensuring the health and wellbeing of the whole community, now and into the future.



Mastering the art of Chinese cuisine with my parents. Photograph of four year old female children's consultation participant.

A Great Start for Every Child

Objectives

1. Raise awareness of the value of play in enhancing a child's learning and creativity and advocate for a range of affordable, educational, active and creative play activities in the municipality
2. Assist families to have access to information that enables them to incorporate educational experiences, exercise and healthy food choices into their children's lives
3. The Council will lead by example to encourage healthy eating practices within schools and across children's services and programs within the municipality
4. Utilise the Council's role as a direct service provider and its links to other agencies to foster and advocate for safe and supportive family environments for children.

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities principles which relate to these objectives aim to ensure that children:

- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Participate in cultural and social events
- Participate in family, community and social life including cultural and social events



Playgroup participant with her grandmother at Scienceworks.

Quality Services and Facilities

Children and families in Hobsons Bay will have access to a broad range of quality services, facilities and social supports.

Children and families require access to a broad range of services, facilities and social supports. The Council has long been a principle provider of a range of early childhood and family services.

Consequently, services and facilities was an area of concern most commonly commented on by participants and service providers throughout the consultation. It represented a top priority for Council action and an issue which impacts the wellbeing of families and children.

However, the recent policy shift at the Federal and State Government level will have an impact on the traditional role of local government as the focus moves to providing families with high-quality, integrated early childhood education and child care. In light of this, the Plan is

integral to ensuring the Council is able to work towards a more integrated service system.

With the introduction of community hubs as a model for service delivery, the Plan provides a driver for developing partnerships with key stakeholders and for ensuring that the Council's service models are adaptive to the changing needs of children and families in the municipality.



I like riding my scooter at the beach.
Photograph of six year old male
children's consultation participant.



Enjoying play with my
friends at playgroup.

Quality Services and Facilities

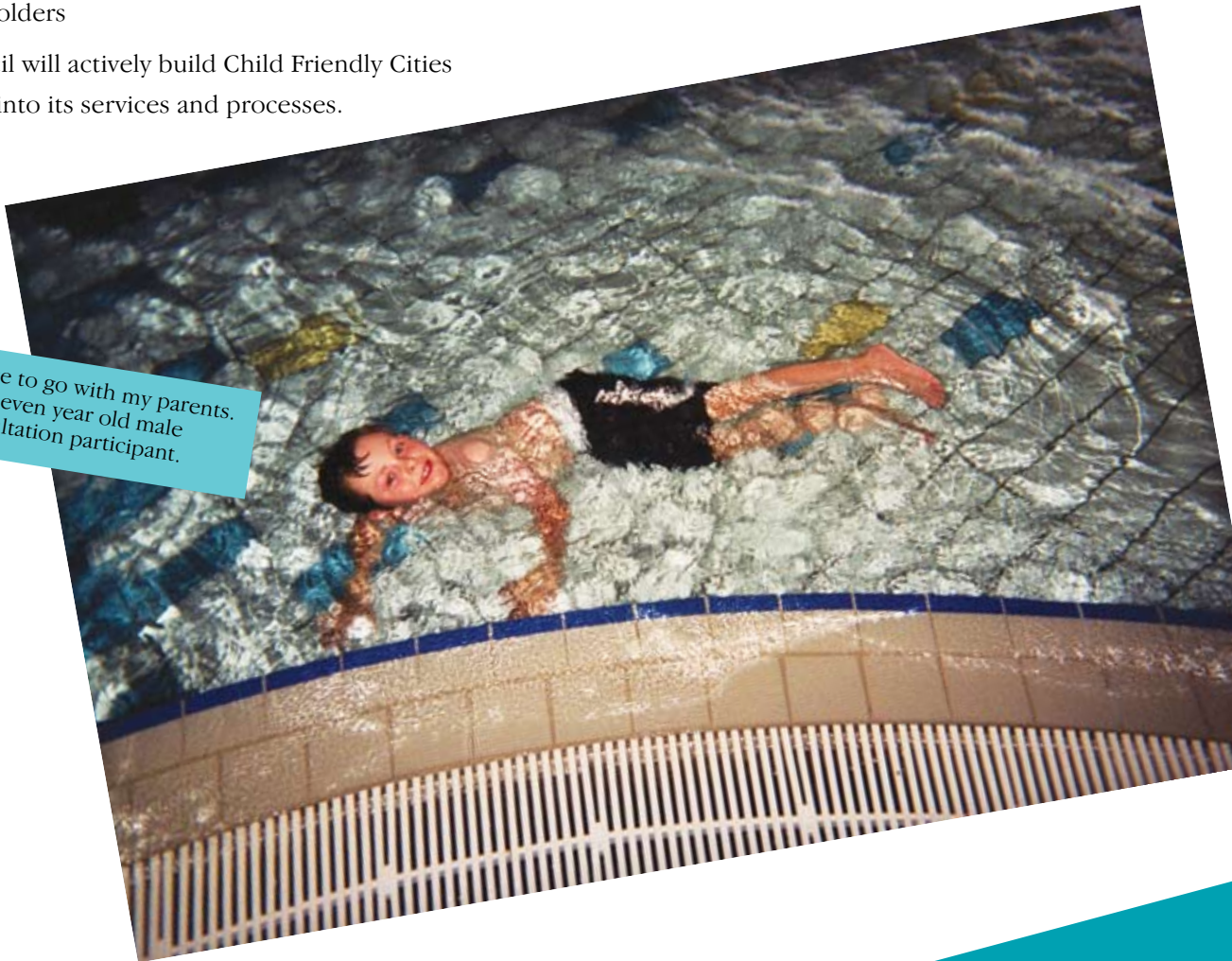
Objectives

1. Develop and maintain partnerships with all levels of government, schools and service providers to ensure an integrated approach to service delivery
2. Advocate for high quality, locally based services, education, care and support that meet the needs of families and children in Hobsons Bay
3. The Council will plan, review and provide services in consultation with children, families and other key stakeholders
4. The Council will actively build Child Friendly Cities principles into its services and processes.

The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities principles which relate to these objectives aim to ensure that children:

- Receive basic services such as health care, education; and social support services.

A favourite place to go with my parents.
Photograph of seven year old male
children's consultation participant.



Acknowledgements

The following people are acknowledged for their contribution to the development of the Children's Plan.

Hobsons Bay City Council Project Team

Michelle Rowe	Social Planning and Policy Officer
Alexandra Sosa	Coordinator, Social Planning and Development
Karen Carter	Family Day Care Team Leader
Denise Chadwick	Social Researcher, Social Planning and Development
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Sharon McGrath	Coordinator, Childcare Services
Jenny Rukuwai	Family Resource and Development Officer
Kerrie Taylor	Kids - 'Go For Your Life' Project Officer

Hobsons Bay City Council Children's Plan Steering Group

Michelle Rowe	Social Planning and Policy Officer
Alexandra Sosa	Coordinator, Social Planning and Development
Carolyn Cartwright	Coordinator, Community Facilities and Access
Danny Colgan	Manager, Community Development
Suzanne Gately	Manager, Libraries
Peter Hunt	Director, Community Services
Kathleen Mc Clusky	Coordinator, Strategic Planning
Leanne Mc Guire	Manager, Family Youth and Children's Services
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Consultants:

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Will Ward-Ambler	Research Assistant

Children and families involved in the community surveys, workshops and focus groups.

Altona Green Primary School

Sacred Heart Primary School

Altona North Children's Centre

The drawings and photographs used throughout this document were provided by the children during the consultation workshops.

For further information or to have a copy of a report in an alternative format contact the Social Planning and Policy Officer
Telephone (03) 9932 1000

To access the full text documents:
The Children's Plan Community Profile;
The Policy Review and the Community Consultation Report; may be accessed from the Council's website by visiting www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

Hobsons Bay City Council
115 Civic Parade, Altona
PO Box 21, Altona 3018
Telephone: (03) 9932 1000
TTY: (03) 9398 8504
Email: customerservice@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au
Website: www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

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