

1.1 MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS PLAN

(JS:CHILD22)

Responsible (Acting) Director: Geoff Loftus

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

1. *Notes the progress report regarding the implementation of the Municipal Early Years Plan.*
2. *Notes a new Municipal Early Years Plan will be presented to Council later this year.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the implementation of the Municipal Early Years Plan in 2007/08

BACKGROUND

The City of Monash Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) was first implemented in January 2005 and is due to continue until June 2008. An annual report on its implementation has been provided to Council in 2006 and 2007.

The MEYP provides a strategic direction for the City of Monash on behalf of young children and their families. It considers the environment of children, their families and the community. It considers Council's role across the early childhood, educational, care and health systems and has the potential to enable program coordination and planning for emerging initiatives, including community partnerships (City of Monash, Municipal Early Years Plan January 2005-June 2008)

DISCUSSION

The attached table outlines the current status with the achievement of the goals and objectives of the MEYP.

One of the initiatives achieved in 2006/07 was for Council to provide the funding for the position of Coordinator, Children's Services Support & Planning. This position was filled in December 2006. Since this time children's services staff, including Maternal & Child Health staff have participated in a number of activities, including:

- attendance at Council festivals;
- a Children's Services banner for festivals and events was designed and produced;
- providing information to Monash families by distributing a children's services brochure;

- regular networking/meetings for preschool teachers including preschool staff working in long day care services;
- participating in the planning and development of an annual preschool staff conference;
- exploring training opportunities for early childhood staff in the municipality;
- guest speakers and activities organised for Children's Week (October) that were available for children, parents, early childhood staff, and playgroups;
- regular linkages/meetings with community service organisations and government, including MonashLink, bestchance (Child & Family Care Network), Department of Human Services – Preschool Field Officer, Children's Services Advisers;
- supporting early childhood services, by assisting them in a variety of ways including submission writing techniques;
- employing a temporary Preschool Dental Health Support Officer to work with early childhood services on a project to support the development of nutrition and oral health policies within their services; and
- successfully applying for funding from Dental Health Services Victoria to provide a "Smiles 4 Miles" program in Ashwood, Chadstone, Clayton and Oakleigh.

Other initiatives include the following activities that support the key outcomes for children and families living in Monash:

- optimal postnatal and infant development through the Council's Maternal & Child Health (MCH) service;
- avoidance of preventable disease through the immunisation program;
- optimal social and emotional development through early childhood services, such as preschools, (including the Central Enrolment Scheme for preschools), childcare centres, occasional care centres and playgroups;
- healthy teeth and gums through the preschool dental health program;
- adequate exercise and physical activity through both the Monash playgrounds and Monash Aquatic & Recreation Centre (MARC);
- parent promotion of child health and development through new mum's groups held at MCH centres and seminars and workshops for parents including fathers;
- high quality early education and care experiences available to families including adequate supports to meet needs of families with children with a disability supported by Inclusion Support Program;
- early identification of child health needs through support networks and partnerships between Council services, community service organisations and both Federal and State Governments; and
- communities that enable parents and children to build connections and draw on informal assistance through Council's Early Childhood staff and services, MCH, Family Day Care and attendance at local festivals and events. (Adapted from Key outcomes for children: Victoria's framework).

Over recent months, work has been undertaken to consult with the community, examine demographic data and identify the needs of children in Monash and their parents. This will lead to the development of a new MEYP that will be submitted to Council later this year.

CONCLUSION

The Municipal Early Years Plan has provided a framework for the City of Monash to support the development of a strong and supportive community that enables parents to be confident and capable and where children who are safe, healthy, continue to develop, learn and achieve wellbeing. (Adapted from *Key outcomes for children: Victoria's framework*). Over the past year several activities and interactions have been implemented so as to achieve the goals and objectives of the MEYP.