

1.1**MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS PLAN 2009 - 2012**

(CHILD22)

Responsible Director: Carolyn McClean

RECOMMENDATION*That Council endorses the Municipal Early Years Plan 2009 - 2012****INTRODUCTION***

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with its second Municipal Early Years Plan covering 2009 -2012

BACKGROUND

The first City of Monash Municipal Early Years Plan (MEYP) was implemented in January 2005 and covered 2005 – 2008. This second MEYP will cover 2009 – 2012.

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.

DISCUSSION

This plan focuses on families with children 0-12 years of age. Worldwide research is providing evidence that the early years are very important in the overall development of our future adult citizens. All levels of government are recognising this and are implementing policies and programs that provide greater support for children.

This plan is based on results and information provided from surveys sent to families and children's services, including primary schools, in Monash and focus groups from across the municipality. Staff also went out and asked the children what they liked and disliked about living in Monash and what made them feel safe. The overarching answer, from both parents and early childhood professionals, to the question "What do we want for our children?" was "We want them to be safe, happy and healthy". So in terms of what Council can do to support families to have children who are safe, happy and healthy, there are a number of strategies outlined in the MEYP 2009 - 2012. These include utilising the expertise of service providers and Council staff as well as utilising a document published by the Department of Human Services titled *Strategies for Improving Outcomes for Young Children. A catalogue of evidence based interventions. (2007).*

The activities to be implemented through this plan are grouped under the following strategic areas:

- Breastfeeding
- Immunisation
- Maternal & Child Health service (MCH)
- Sun protection
- Physical activity
- Oral health
- Reading, writing & numeracy
- Kindergarten (preschool)
- Preventable injury and
- Parenting support

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Many of the activities will not require any further budgetary input from Council, as they will be absorbed into the ongoing departmental budgets. However, there are some activities that may require additional funds to enable implementation and these will be brought forward for Council's consideration in future years' budget preparations.

CONCLUSION

The Municipal Early Years Plan provides a framework for the City of Monash to support a strong and supportive community that should help to enable parents to be confident and capable. The action plan in the MEYP is also aimed at supporting children to be safe, happy and healthy, and assist them to continue to develop, learn and achieve wellbeing.