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Message from the Mayor

Creating a positive, healthy, safe, learning environment for children in Latrobe City is the motivation for developing and implementing a Municipal Early Years Plan. Latrobe City Council is committed to creating environments that support our community’s health and well-being. The Latrobe City Municipal Early Years Plan 2016 - 2020 demonstrates Council’s commitment, and recognition of our role as a key partner in enabling children and their families to live in a diverse and equitable community where their children can thrive.

Based on solid community consultation and research, our Plan provides a clear framework for collective action in addressing the opportunities, challenges, aspirations and emerging issues facing our children and their families over the next four years.

Developed with Federal and State Government priorities in mind, the Plan builds upon existing child and family related strategies and programs as well as introducing new initiatives. It has also taken into account the feedback gathered by our community partners and Council staff, emphasising that we all play a role in the well-being of children living in Latrobe City.

Three strategic directions were identified in the development of this plan: Growing Up Happy, Healthy and Safe; Learning for Life and Strong Families, Strong Communities. These three strategic directions are in alignment and complement many of the core principles and objectives of Latrobe 2026 and the key themes in the 2013 – 2017 Council Plan.

The key purpose of Latrobe City’s 2016-2020 Municipal Early Years Plan is to ensure that all children in our community, as well as their families, have the opportunity to lead happy, active, safe and secure lives.

Cr Michael Rossiter
Latrobe City Mayor
Purpose of a Municipal Early Years Plan

A community whereby children feel valued and safe is important to Latrobe City Council, so to a strong connection between Latrobe City’s early year’s planning, its service delivery partners and the needs of the community.

With this in mind, the Latrobe City Council Municipal Early Years Plan:

- Provides a platform for the community, Latrobe City Council and other service providers and business partners to work together to provide direction and support in ensuring the health, learning and developmental needs of children are met and that parents, families and carers are supported in the essential role of ensuring all children grow and develop.
- Harnesses desires and aspirations of the community with recent research and data in order to strategically target services and infrastructure that achieve the best outcomes for children.
- Articulates Latrobe City Council’s role in planning and infrastructure development as well as advocacy and community development for children during the early years. It is not intended to be a Plan for the entire service system within the municipality, but to provide a starting point.
- Allows Latrobe City Council and other providers in the municipality to work in partnership in service development and evaluation, in maximising resources and in long term advocacy for children and their families.
- Is a key Plan for Latrobe City Council, defining the manner in which Council will work with other early years services providers, children and their families in order to ensure that improved outcomes are the aim for all members of the community.

Latrobe City Council’s Role in the Municipal Early Years Plan

Latrobe City Council will actively bring together stakeholders around key issues faced on a regular basis by children and their families. Council leads and facilitates partnerships so that local community priorities can be identified and then support and promote initiatives related to these priorities.

Council will then provide a lead role in the coordination and oversight of the MEYP to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are committed to the success of the Plan and its objectives.

Council will also play the lead role in evaluating, reviewing, consulting and developing future MEYP’s.
PLANNING CONTEXT

The MEYP has the potential to embed early years community priorities into Council planning processes and Business Plans.

Furthermore, Latrobe City’s Council Plan 2013 – 2017 is a key document in outlining Council’s priorities. The strategic priorities identified throughout the MEYP have been closely linked back to the Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Well-Being Plan. However, the priorities can also be linked to existing strategies and plans of Council and various other community organisations.

LATROBE MUNICIPAL EARLY YEARS PLAN 2011-2015: HIGHLIGHTS

Some of the initiatives that emanated from the previous MEYP were:

- The development of the Latrobe City Children’s Services Plan; a strategic document guiding the future direction of Latrobe City’s Children’s Services.
- The introduction of Family Support Workers into the Enhanced Maternal and Child Health team allowing intensive support to be provided to our most vulnerable families.
- Feasibility study into the future of the Family Day Care program.
- The development of the Early Years Reference Committee.
Latrobe City’s Municipal Early Years Plan 2016-2020 was developed with the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders and community members. Each stage of the process included engagement, consultation and active feedback.

The Plan has been informed by:

- Latrobe City Early Years Reference Committee.
- Demographic information relating to Latrobe City and the region.
- Research and policy supporting children’s early years.
- Internal and external stakeholders and the broader community through extensive consultation.

EARLY YEARS REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The Early Years Reference Committee was established in 2012 to ensure a partnership approach for the development and implementation of Latrobe City Council’s Early Years Plans into the future. This committee includes Councillors, agencies and community representatives and plays a crucial role in improving opportunities and environments for young children. The main objectives of the Committee are to:

- Assist in the promotion of the MEYP.
- Monitor the progress of the previous MEYP.
- Through the chair, to inform Councillors of matters related to the needs of children and their families that may affect their participation in community life or their development into the future.
- Advocate in relation to areas of identified need on behalf of children and their families.
- Provide input into the development of future Latrobe City Council plans and strategies that have a focus on the early years.

The following committee members were instrumental in the formation of the Latrobe City Municipal Early Years Plan 2016 – 2020:

- Cr Kellie O’Callaghan
- Frank Bezzina
- Lauren Beecroft
- Paul Ambrose
- Manager Family Services (Latrobe City Council)
- Early Education Teacher (Latrobe City Council)
GOVERNANCE

Chaired by Cr Kellie O’Callaghan, the Early Years Reference Committee has had internal oversight in relation to the development of this Plan. Comprising a combination of early years professionals, community members and Latrobe City Council officers, the committee has maintained close contact and is largely responsible for the development of this Plan. The Committee provides required updates and seeks endorsement from Council through presentation of relevant information at Council meetings.

Latrobe City Council remains responsible for the endorsement of the Plan and works closely with the Committee to ensure that it is implemented appropriately.

RESEARCH

Research was undertaken to determine the priorities for children 0-8 years old in Latrobe City. This included:

- Research using the latest release of data from a range of sources.
- Relevant Federal and State policies and frameworks.

Mapping, research and analysis identified a number of key findings which contributed to the development of the Strategic Priorities. The key findings have been included in the following pages against each Strategic Priority.

CONSULTATION

Involving the community and other stakeholders has been an integral part of understanding the needs of children and families in Latrobe City and thus, the formation of the MEYP 2016-2020.

A lengthy consultation period beginning in October 2014 was undertaken and resulted in 300 people participating in consultation activities. This captured important information of how the community felt about the future of the early years space and proved valuable in highlighting the three Strategic Priorities of this Plan.

Survey

- Predominantly web-based with option for hard copy if required.
- This method proved popular with the community and a total of 213 responses were received.

Face to Face Family Contact

- The 2014 Children’s Expo provided an opportunity to connect with Latrobe City’s families with 1520 people in attendance.
- At the expo, families were encouraged to discuss, through conversations and pictures, what was important to them in the early year’s space.

POST DRAFT CONSULTATION

- The Draft MEYP 2016-2020 was released for community comment in May/June 2016 which provided an opportunity for feedback.

Children’s Activities

- Activities were undertaken with children in Preschools and Early Years Primary Schools to understand their thoughts, ideas and needs in relation to their early years in Latrobe City.

Professional Workshops/Focus Groups

- Discussions were had with Early Years professionals and other stakeholders to gain their perspective of the current landscape of families within Latrobe City.
The population of Latrobe City is 73,846 with an annual growth rate of approximately 0.9%.

The population in Latrobe City will continue to grow and by 2031, it is expected to be in excess of 85,000 residents.

The median age of residents was 38 years at the 2011 Census.

There are currently 13,180 children between the age of 0-8 years (4,778 between 0-4) residing in Latrobe City with an approximate proportionate split of 50% male and female.

1028 new babies enrolled in Latrobe City’s MCH program in 2014-15

The Latrobe City community is becoming increasingly culturally diverse with many nations represented.

LATROBE CITY’S CHILDREN – HOW ARE THEY DOING?

Maternal and child health attendance at key age and stage visits:
- The average attendance, overall, at maternal and child health key age and stage visits is 82.5% (State average is 86.9%).
- 100% of families attended their first key age and stage visit.
- In the 2014/15 financial year the attendance rate for visits from 0 – 4 months increased by 1.9% to a total of 94.8% (State average is 97.2%).
- In the 2014/15 financial year the attendance rate for visits from 8 months was 70.2% (State average is 76.7%).
- Latrobe City offers an additional key age and stage visit, at 4 years. A total of 659 (65.9%) children were presented for this check in Latrobe City in the 2014/15 financial year (State average is 66.1%).

Immunisation:
- Immunisation rates in Latrobe City are 4% above the average for the State.
- 97.74% of Latrobe City’s children are fully immunised at 1 year compared to the State average of 94.08%.
- 93.8% of Latrobe City’s children are fully immunised at 2 year compared to the State average of 92.05%.
- 97.68% of Latrobe City’s children are fully immunised at 5 year compared to the State average of 94.49%.

Breastfeeding:
- Breast feeding rates for Latrobe City are below the average rate for the State of Victoria.
- 44.1% of babies are either partially or fully breastfed at 3 months of age compared to the State average of 64.5%.
AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS (AEDC)

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a population based measure of how children have developed by the time they start school. The data examines five areas of childhood development:

- Physical health and well-being;
- Language and cognitive skills
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Communication skills and general knowledge

The AEDC results provide some connections to the three strategic priorities identified in the formation of Latrobe City’s Municipal Early Years Plan and can be used as a reference point when analysing the plan’s objectives.
Three strategic priorities have been identified through the research and consultation process. These reflect the Community Vision within Latrobe 2026 and are aligned with the Council Plan 2013 – 2017.

- Strategic Priority 1 - Growing Up Happy, Healthy and Safe
- Strategic Priority 2 - Learning for Life
- Strategic Priority 3 - Strong Communities, Strong Families

The following pages in this Plan explain the rationale for identifying the three strategic priorities, how the priorities link to Federal and State policy, the Latrobe City Council Plan 2013-2017 and Latrobe City’s Municipal Public Health and Well-being Plan 2013-2017.

The Plan also outlines objectives, measures of success and partners who will work together to implement the Municipal Early Years Plan.

### Strategic Priority 1: Growing Up Happy, Healthy and Safe

A healthy and safe environment is vital to a child’s development. Children have a right to grow up in a safe environment free of harm and be confident to take risks to enhance their learning. Research shows that a healthy lifestyle from early childhood leads to improved outcomes both academically and socially into the future.

**What the community said...**

- “We need more child friendly housing developments where safe foot/bike paths for physical activity is considered”
- “We need safe routes to schools to encourage physical activity and independence”
- “We need safe and clean public toilets and playgrounds with shade structures”
- “Public open space and playgrounds require attention”
- “We generally have a healthy and safe environment”

**What the statistics say...**

- 23.6% of children aged 0-7 are reported to be obese and 17% of parents surveyed reported that their children eat ‘sometimes food’ daily.
- 79.7% of people believe there are good services in Latrobe City.
- Percentage of infants fully breastfed at three months is 44.1% compared to the State average of 51.4%
- Percentage of children attending Latrobe City 3 year old maternal and child health checks is 64.3% compared to State average 64.4%
- AEDC results indicate a decline in the Physical Health and Well-being domain with Latrobe lower than the State average.
Identified Partners who may work with the community toward achieving this:

Latrobe City Council (in particular the Family Services, Infrastructure, Planning and Recreation departments), Latrobe Community Health Services, Good Beginnings (part of Save the Children Australia), Anglicare, Ramahyuck and Latrobe Regional Hospital.

Other strategies and plans that are relevant:

- Best Start Action Plan (Latrobe City as lead agency of Best Start)
- Latrobe City Council Children’s Services Plan 2013-2017
- Latrobe City Public Open Space Strategy
- Latrobe City Playspace Strategy
- Latrobe City Tracks, Trails and Pathways Strategy.
Strategic Priority 2:

Learning for life

Learning starts early on in life (from birth) and continues through your entire life. Research shows that a loving, healthy and intellectually stimulating early childhood is critical to a person’s well-being and success throughout life. The brain has the greatest capacity for change during this these early years, that is why an investment in education from birth is the key to ultimate success.

Parents and caregivers are a child’s first teacher in life and it is extremely important that we consider them and other Educators when planning for the learning of our children.

What the community said…

- “Access for all children to early education through Preschools, kindergartens, schools and playgroup”
- “Learning needs to start early”
- “Encouragement and involvement of parents”
- “Learning through play”
- “We need continued access to affordable kinder, school, outdoor play areas undercover for rainy days, library access that meets the communities needs and free education sessions for children and parents”

What the statistics say…

- The percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in Latrobe (18%) has increased since 2009 and is higher than the State average (9.9%).
- The specific domains that have seen increases in developmentally vulnerable children are Social Competence and Emotional Maturity.
Strategic Priority 2: Learning for life

Identified Partners who may work with the community toward achieving this:
Latrobe City Council (in particular Family Services and Libraries), Latrobe Community Health Services, Good Beginnings (part of Save the Children Australia), Anglicare, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Berry Street, Ramahyuck, Department of Education and Training, and Department of Health and Human Services.

Other strategies and plans that are relevant:
- Best Start Action Plan (Latrobe City as lead agency of Best Start)
- Latrobe City Council Children’s Services Plan 2013-2017
- Children Youth Area Partnership plan (DET – currently being developed)
- Child First and Integrated Family Services Latrobe/ Baw Baw Catchment Plan (Anglicare as lead agency with ChildFirst)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEYP Strategic Direction</th>
<th>Related Council Plan Themes</th>
<th>Council Plan Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning for Life</td>
<td>Appropriate, affordable and sustainable facilities</td>
<td>▶ To promote and support a healthy, active and connected community. ▶ To provide facilities and services that are accessible and meet the needs of our diverse community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEYP Strategic Direction</th>
<th>Related MPHWP Themes</th>
<th>MPHWP Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning for Life</td>
<td>Skills for healthy communities</td>
<td>▶ Build the capacity of the organisation and community groups to deliver health and well-being outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW ARE WE GOING TO HELP OUR CHILDREN BECOME LEARNERS FOR LIFE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Measures of Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase participation in Maternal and Child Health key age/stage visits.</td>
<td>▶ Increase in participation across all 10 KA&amp;S visits (LCC MCH*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate on behalf of local families for parent education programs to support the learning needs from infancy through to Primary school.</td>
<td>▶ Number of parent education sessions that support the needs of local families and improve outcomes for the children (LCC FS*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase participation in Early Start Kindergarten for eligible children.</td>
<td>▶ Eligible children are offered and attending 15 hours of Prekinder per week (LCC FS*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase participation in the funded Kindergarten program.</td>
<td>▶ Increase in participation (LCC FS*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a smooth transition between the Universal Service System (MCH, Preschool, School)</td>
<td>▶ Children and families are transitioning well between the Service types (LCC FS, STN*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure local educators are well trained and highly skilled in supporting the developmental needs of all children.</td>
<td>▶ Reduction in the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable in the 5 domains of the AEDC (LCC FS, LCH*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase participation in libraries</td>
<td>▶ Participation of children under 8 years at Libraries increases (LCC L*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Measure of Success Data Source Legend on Page 21
A Community plays an enormous role in supporting families and children to thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes. The opportunities for communities and community organisations to empower families are endless. Community and professionals need to connect and plan to ensure place based planning occurs to meet the needs of each individual. Families also need to be aware of services and supports available within the local community to support them and ultimately improve outcomes for our children.

What the community said...
- 49% of survey respondents did not know where to go or where to refer a friend to if they needed food but could not afford to buy it.
- 33% of survey respondents did not know where to refer a friend who needs family support services.
- “Activities within the community need to be more affordable for all families to be able to participate.”
- “Families require more one on one support”.
- “Positive parents, make sure families are connected to services if they need help of any kind. Focus on early intervention, make sure all families have access to services that help children develop social skills, ensure there are campaigns to assist parents in making the right choices for their children”.

What the statistics say...
- 16.1% of children are at risk of developmental or behaviour problems entering Primary school compared to the State average of 14.7%.
- 38% of family violence incidents occur where a child is present.
- 50.7% of Latrobe’s children are living in families declared as most disadvantaged.
- Latrobe City has the highest rate of Child Protection notifications in the State.
Identified Partners who may work with the community toward achieving this:

Latrobe City Council (in particular Family Services), Latrobe Community Health Services, Good Beginnings (part of Save the Children Australia), Anglicare, Latrobe Regional Hospital, Berry Street, Ramahyuck, Department of Education and Training, and Department of Health and Human Services.

Other strategies and plans that are relevant:

- Children Youth Area Partnership Plan (DET – currently being developed)
- Roadmap to reform (Victorian State Government – currently being developed)
- Child First and Integrated Family Services Latrobe/ Baw Baw Catchment Plan (Anglicare as lead agency with ChildFirst)
- Best Start Action Plan (Latrobe City as lead agency of Best Start)
- Latrobe City Council Children’s Services Plan 2013-2017
Relationship to State Government Policy—Roadmap to Reform

The Victorian State Government recently released the Roadmap to Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children. The vision of the Roadmap is that Victoria will be a state with strong families and children who are safe, healthy and well. The delivery of this vision is underpinned via three reform directions:

- Building supportive and culturally strong communities and improving access to universal services.
- Supporting children, young people and families in need with integrated wraparound supports and targeted early interventions.
- Strengthening home-based care and improving outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

There is a distinct correlation between these directions and the three strategic priorities identified in the MEYP 2016-2020.

Implementation

Annual action plans will be developed on a yearly basis outlining the actions that Latrobe City Council and its key partners will undertake in order to meet the objectives of this plan.

Responsibility for the oversight of the plan will sit with Latrobe City Council officers, who will be required to report at agreed timeframes to the Early Years Reference Committee. Responsibility for the successful delivery of the plan sits with Latrobe City Council and its partners, who will work together in a collaborative fashion to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children of Latrobe City and their families.

Measures of success

The measures of success under each strategic priority were developed after considering what data sources are relevant, available and whether or not they appropriately provide a measurement of the MEYP objectives.

Below is a table and reference to those data sources that will enable the measurement of success for each objective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Data/Source Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC REC</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Recreation Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC PLAN</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Planning Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC REC OS</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Recreation &amp; Open Space Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC REC IO</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Infrastructure Operations Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHSV</td>
<td>Dental Health Services Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPHS</td>
<td>Victorian Population Health Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCH</td>
<td>Latrobe Community Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VH</td>
<td>Vic Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC MCH</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Maternal and Child Health Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC FS</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STN</td>
<td>School Transition Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC L</td>
<td>Latrobe City Council - Libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Volunteering Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSC</td>
<td>Future Surveys/Consultation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review and evaluation

The Early Years Reference Committee has developed a review and evaluation process for the Plan.

Some determinates of success that are listed against the Strategic Direction objectives can be obtained yearly, while others will only be accessible every three years to four years. The yearly measures of success will be collected annually and, along with the Action Plan review, be used to guide the development of the next years Action Plan.

At the completion of each annual review, a report will be provided to Council, stakeholders and the community.

The Latrobe City Municipal Early Years Profile will also be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as new data becomes available.

In 2019/20 an evaluation of the four year MEYP will be undertaken to determine positive outcomes and areas for further consideration in the 2020 – 2024 MEYP.

References

- Latrobe City Council – Community Profile
- Latrobe City Council - Children’s Services Plan 2013-2017
- Latrobe City Council – Municipal Health and Well-Being Plan
- Latrobe City Council – Council Plan 2013-17
- Australian Early Development Census
- Department of Education and Training - Maternal and Child Health Services Annual Report
- Department of Health and Human Services
- School Entrance Health Questionnaire 2012 to 2014, Department Education and Training.
- The Education State Early Childhood Consultation Paper, Department of Education and Training.
- Department of Health, Latrobe City Profile