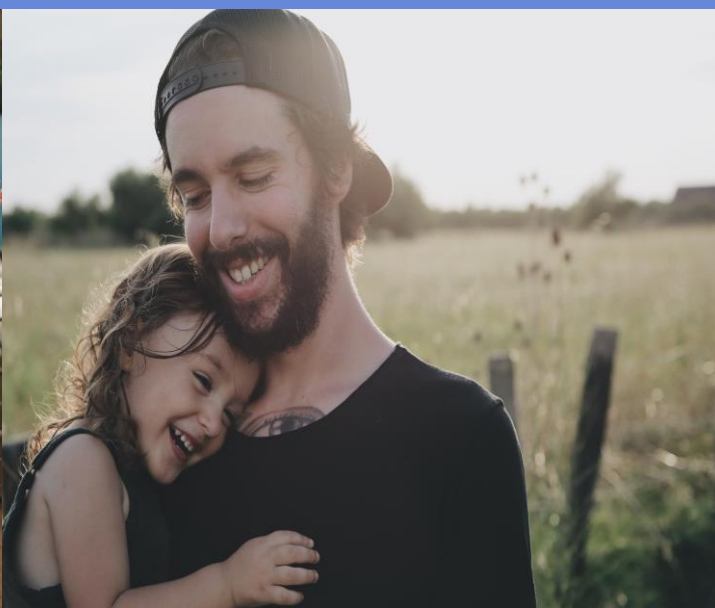




**Moreland**  
City Council

# Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

Moreland City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Moreland. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, as well as all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

## Acknowledgement of Contributors

Thank you to Moreland's children, young people, parents, residents and service providers who gave ideas and feedback on the *Children, Young People and Families Plan*. Your contributions have shaped the Plan!

Thank you to the Steering Group members for your input, support and generosity of time during the development of the Plan:

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## Executive Summary

Moreland's *Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021- 2025* (the 'Plan') aims to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The Plan has a vision that all children, young people and families in Moreland live in a community where they are healthy, resilient, empowered, safe and belong. This vision sets an ambitious goal to improve outcomes across a range of domains of early learning, development and wellbeing.

The Plan was informed by extensive community engagement and consultation, evidence-based research and data analysis which resulted in three outcome areas and their respective objectives:

- Outcome 1: Inclusive City and Community
- Outcome 2: Improved Health and Wellbeing
- Outcome 3: Lifelong Learning and Participation.

While Council has many roles in supporting children and young people's outcomes in the municipality, this work cannot be done alone. It is through collaboration with community, service providers, and other tiers of government, that the greatest change will occur. The collective impact of combined efforts across the municipality will make the greatest difference.

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# 1. Developing the Children, Young People and Families Plan

The *Children, Young People and Families Plan 2021-2025*, also known as the 'Plan' is a five-year integrated strategy with a key goal to improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of all children and young people in Moreland, from 0 to 24 years. The Plan explicitly includes families, acknowledging they are central to the lives of children and young people. The Plan details the key outcomes and objectives needed to achieve this goal.

To improve health, wellbeing and educational outcomes for all children and young people in Moreland, an integrated approach is needed. A collective effort across Council, service providers and community members are needed to ensure all children get the best start in life and young people have opportunities to reach their full potential. The Plan offers a range of opportunities for involvement, collaboration and partnerships, recognising that to improve outcomes, we need to work together.

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**The Plan's vision:**  
**A community  
where children,  
young people and  
families are  
healthy, resilient,  
empowered, safe  
and belong.**

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The Plan's development marks an important milestone. It is Council's first integrated Plan to support children, young people and families in Moreland.

There are currently two key strategies which provide direction for programs, services and activities for children and young people; the *Moreland Early Years Strategy 2016-2020* and *Full Potential: A Strategy for Moreland's Young People*. While the *Moreland Early Years Strategy 2016-2020* was finishing and a new strategy was needed, *Full Potential: A Strategy for Moreland's Young People* had recently been endorsed in 2019 and the insights from this strategy will inform the Plan. Integrating the two strategies into one unified Plan provides opportunities for collaboration, shared planning and supporting transitions between services and educational systems, supporting children and young people from birth to adulthood.

There were many stages to developing the Plan. The latest research was analysed to better understand what improves children and young people's health, wellbeing and educational outcomes. Data and statistics on children and young people were reviewed. The plans and strategies of other Councils and service providers were examined. Most importantly, children, young people and families were asked what they thought was important and what would make a difference to health, wellbeing and educational outcomes. The lived experience and wealth of knowledge of Moreland's community has shaped the Plan.

## 2. The Plan Summary

### Moreland Children, Young People and Families Plan

A community where children, young people and families are healthy, resilient, empowered, safe and belong.

Outcomes	 <b>Outcome 1: Inclusive City and Community</b>	 <b>Outcome 2: Improved Health and Wellbeing</b>	 <b>Outcome 3: Lifelong Learning and Participation</b>
Objectives	Objective 1.1: Welcoming and inclusive activities, programs and services.	Objective 2.1: Increased knowledge of support services and referral pathways.	Objective 3.1: Involve children and young people in decision making.
	Objective 1.2: Increased social cohesion.	Objective 2.2: Engagement in preventative health and wellbeing programs.	Objective 3.2: Increase participation in learning and education from birth to adulthood.
	Objective 1.3: Access to life's necessities.	Objective 2.3: Access to services to support mental health and resilience.	Objective 3.3: Collaboration to support quality education settings.
	Objective 1.4: Develop and activate child, young people and family-friendly spaces.	Objective 2.4: Participation in physical activity.	Objective 3.4: Opportunities for training and employment pathways.
	Objective 1.5: Invest in infrastructure which meets the needs of the growing population.	Objective 2.5: Safety in the community and home.	
Council's Role	Plan   Provide   Engage   Collaborate   Advocate		



### 3. Council's Role

Council's role is to Plan, Provide, Engage, Collaborate and Advocate with and on behalf of children, young people and families.



Council works in many ways to improve children and young people's outcomes through planning for future services and infrastructure, providing services, engaging with children, young people and families, as well as collaborating and advocating on issues that impact children, young people and families.

Council does this work by:



Upholding the rights of children, young people and families



Supporting children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability



Planning and delivering high quality, universal and targeted services



Effective communication and teamwork



Community engagement and partnerships



Developing a skilled workforce

### 4. An Ecological Systems, Life Course Approach

There are two key approaches to improving outcomes which influence the Plan; ecological systems theory and life course approach.

Ecological systems theory recognises that outcomes for children and young people are influenced by a range of factors including family, community, educational institutes and broader economic, political and social influences, also called 'systems'.<sup>1</sup> Rather than a single factor influencing outcomes for children and young people, it is the influence of these different systems and their collective impact.

At the centre of the ecological model is the child and young person, they are influenced by their parents and immediate family, culture and experiences. The next layer of influence are extended family, peers and cultural associations such as religious places of worship and cultural leaders. The community environments, networks and services include the local

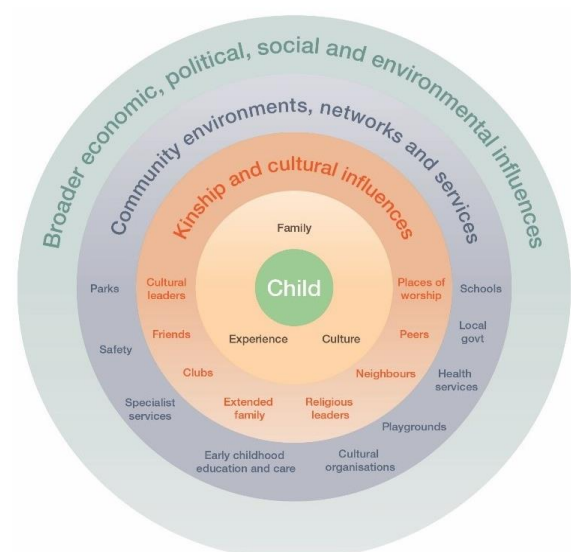


Figure 1: Ecological systems model<sup>2</sup>

neighbourhood such as parks and open space, child care, playgroup, kindergarten, schools, health services and how children and young people can access and participate in these services. The final system is the social, political, economic and environmental influences which impact children and young people's outcomes. The Plan recognises how these systems are interrelated and how they collectively impact children and young people.

A life course approach complements ecological systems theory as it highlights critical periods in life where additional supports interventions can be effective. These interventions can be targeted at important stages of life such as transition to primary school and secondary school, transition from school to employment, leaving the parental home and the transition to parenthood.<sup>3</sup> Interventions during these transition points focus on minimising risks and enhancing protective factors and need to be adaptive to the age and development of the child and young person.<sup>4</sup> For example, when a child commences primary school, they are transitioning to a new system and this is also a critical time in their life, this presents as an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the child, family, kindergarten and school to support this transition.

An ecological system, life course approach is about understanding how different systems interact and supporting children and young people to move between institutions and services and during critical life stages. The Plan's outcomes and objectives seek to strengthen these different systems acknowledging a multi-level, collective approach is needed to improve outcomes.

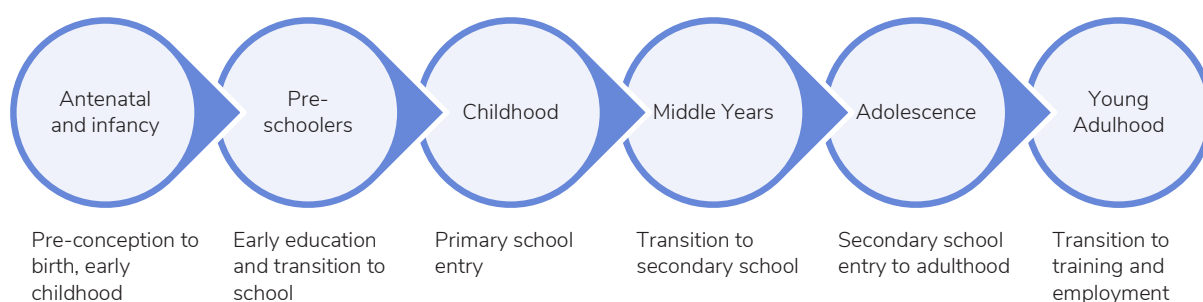


Figure 2: Key life stages and intervention opportunities<sup>5</sup>

## 5. The Evidence Base

There is a strong evidence base on the factors which make a difference to the lives of children and young people. The general factors which support all children and young people are being loved and safe, material basics such as housing and food, being healthy, learning, participating and having a positive sense of identity and culture.<sup>6</sup> There is also evidence of specific needs at various ages and stages of development which will be explored in further detail.

### Antenatal and Infancy (0-2 years)

The first 1000 days (from conception to two years of age) is a critical period in early childhood development and presents an opportunity to shape health and wellbeing over the life course.<sup>7</sup> The



research tells us that during the first 1000 days, children are impacted by family, community and environmental factors.<sup>8</sup> This highlights opportunities to support new parents in their parenting role with a focus on attachment, safety and parental health and wellbeing. It is also important during the first 1000 days to reduce parental stressors through access to support services, affordable housing, open green space for physical activity.<sup>9</sup> There is also evidence that suggest the initiation and duration of breastfeeding decreases the likelihood of obesity and developing allergies in later life.<sup>10</sup> This research suggests an opportunity to support the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding.

### **Pre-schoolers and childhood (3-7 years)**

Early childhood is a significant period of development as the brain's foundations are laid. It is during this time that early life experiences create the foundations for lifelong learning, behaviour and development.<sup>11</sup> Parents have the most important role in influencing children's outcomes, although other professions involved in care and education also shape the lives of children.<sup>12</sup> This provides evidence of the need for children to access quality learning experiences, from playgroups to child care and Kindergarten. It is also during this period of childhood that children transition to primary school, providing an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between parents, service providers and schools.

### **Middle years (8-11 years)**

The 'middle years' are increasingly being recognised as a specific time in childhood where interventions can be made to improve outcomes. A recent Australian study into student wellbeing and learning, found that around 10% of children in the middle years self-reported low wellbeing and over 20% in Years 3 to 5 reported they were bullied across two or all three years.<sup>13</sup> The research suggests interventions can be made within a school setting and needs to focus on wellbeing and mental health, addressing behaviour such as bullying and engagement with support services.

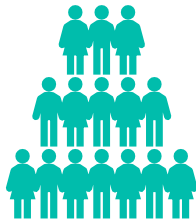
### **Adolescence (12-17 years)**

Adolescence can be a time of increased mental health concerns and risky behaviour i.e. alcohol and drugs, as well as the importance of identity, sexual health and relationships.<sup>14</sup> This suggests the needs for increased knowledge of referral pathways and available support services for both adolescents and parents. The transition to secondary school also presents as an opportunity for additional interventions to strengthen the relationship between schools and parents.

### **Young Adulthood (18-24 years)**

Young adulthood is a time of transition, from formal schooling to further training, education or employment. During this period, young adults benefit from a range of diverse educational and employment pathways to assist transitioning to the workforce. This period presents an opportunity to keep young adults engaged in further study or employment.

## 6. Children, Young People and Families in Moreland – A Data Snapshot



In 2019, the population of people aged 0-24 was 55,256.<sup>15</sup> This is forecast to grow to 66,285 in 2036, an increase of 11,019 people aged 0-24.<sup>16</sup>



One third (33%) of people aged 0-24 speak a language other than English at home, with the most common being Arabic, Urdu and Greek.<sup>17</sup>



337 people aged 0-24 who identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in 2016.<sup>18</sup>



68.4% of children beginning primary school were reported to have attended their 3.5 year Maternal and Child Health check in 2019.<sup>19</sup>



89% of eligible children were participating in 4-year-old Kindergarten in 2019.<sup>20</sup>



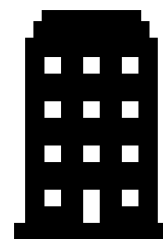
20% of children at school entry were experiencing developmental vulnerability in one or more domains of physical, social, emotional, language and communication in 2018.<sup>21</sup>



1,626 young people aged 15-24 (8.1%) were 'disengaged', neither studying or working in 2016.<sup>22</sup>



Almost 9 out of 10 people (87.5%) aged 18-24 had completed Year 12 or equivalent in 2016.<sup>23</sup>



37% of people aged 0-24 years lived in rental dwellings and 10% lived in group housing in 2016.<sup>24</sup>

## 7. Community involvement Shaped the Plan

Moreland's community was central to creating the Plan. Children, young people, parents, residents and service providers all contributed ideas about what would improve outcomes for children and young people. Involvement and feedback was invited in many ways, from completing the Children's Activity or Community Survey to participating in the Youth Workshop, a Focus Group or Network Conversation.

Over 400 children, young people, parents, community members and local organisations provided ideas on how children and young people's outcomes can be improved.



Figure 3: Community engagement activities which informed the Plan

Community engagement activities:

- The Children's Activity invited children from 0-12 years to complete drawing, write text or express through art what is important to them in their community. This broad theme provided children an opportunity to respond in a diverse way to the central theme of community.
- The Community Survey provided an opportunity for parents, residents and service providers to respond to a range of questions on access to services, local facilities and open questions on how to improve children and young people's outcomes.

- Focus Groups were held with existing groups in Moreland, enabling participants to explore in greater detail questions on how to improve children and young people's outcomes.
- A series of Network Conversations provided an opportunity for service providers to respond to broad questions and were held in existing service provider networks in Moreland.
- The Youth Workshop provided an opportunity for young people, aged 12-24 years of age to participate in a facilitated workshop where four key themes on community, place, resilience and opportunity were discussed.
- The Stakeholder Workshop included participants from Moreland's Family and Children's Services Advisory Committee and the Plan's Steering Group members. Similar to the Youth Workshop format, four key themes on community, place, resilience and opportunity were discussed.

The range of activities provided many opportunities for children, young people, families, residents and services providers to have input into the Plan's development. Following the activities, the responses were analysed for key themes which have informed the Plan's outcomes and objectives.

## 8. Key Emerging Issues

There are key emerging issues that impact children, young people and families; population growth, equity, impact of pandemic and recovery, and climate change.

### Population growth

The population of children and young people is increasing in Moreland. This is putting pressure on early years infrastructure such as maternal and child health centres, childcare centres and kindergartens to meet the service the increasing population. In particular, the roll-out of funded 3-year-old Kindergarten from 2022 will increase pressure on these services. Young people will also be impacted, and services may need to look at further innovations to address these gaps and ensure continued high-quality services.

### Equity

Analysis of demographics across the municipality highlights differences in socio-economic disadvantage and developmental vulnerability across the municipality. In the Northern suburbs, there are concentrated areas of socio-economic disadvantage and higher rates developmental vulnerability and youth disengagement. An equitable approach to infrastructure, services and programs will be needed to address these locational differences.

### Impact of pandemic and recovery

The impact of the global pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people. Children and young people are disproportionately vulnerable to its impacts.<sup>25</sup> The impacts on mental health and wellbeing, family relationships, disrupted education and lack of employment in common workplaces for young people such as retail and hospitality are still being experienced. Recovery will

require tailored interventions and collaborative approaches to ensure all children and young people remain engaged and thrive again.

### Climate change

Climate change continues to negatively impact children, young people and families. Mitigation strategies will need to continue to be implemented to address the 'heat island' effect in the inner urban areas through urban greening and associated programs. Families also identified climate change as a key issue impacting children and young people in the consultations. Further advocacy will be needed to support children and young people to have their voices heard on climate change.

## 9. The Plan's Outcomes and Objectives

# Outcome 1: Inclusive City and Community



*An inclusive city and community where all children, young people and families can engage and participate in activities, programs and services. It is where Moreland's diversity of cultures and identities are valued and celebrated. There is access to life's necessities, including affordable housing and food security. It is where there are child, youth and family-friendly spaces and places.*

### Objectives:

- 1.1: Welcoming and inclusive activities, programs and services.
- 1.2: Increased social cohesion.
- 1.3: Access to life's necessities.
- 1.4: Develop and activate child, young people and family-friendly spaces.
- 1.5: Invest in infrastructure which meets the needs of the growing population.



# Outcome 2:

## Improved Health and Wellbeing



Health and wellbeing has a direct influence on children and young people's outcomes. In Moreland, there will be an increased understanding of how to access support services and knowledge of referral pathways, including mental health support. There will be participation in physical activity which also supports overall health. Engagement in preventative health and wellbeing will support early identification and prevention. Safety strongly contributes to the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.

### Objectives:

2.1: Increased knowledge of support services and referral pathways.

2.2: Engagement in preventative health and wellbeing programs.

2.3: Access to services to support mental health and resilience.

2.4: Participation in physical activity.

2.5: Safety in the community and home.

# Outcome 3:

## Lifelong Learning and Participation



Opportunities for learning and participation starts from birth and continues through childhood, adolescence to adulthood. There are opportunities to learn through play in the home with parents supporting children's learning and development. There is increased participation in learning and education from early years services, Kindergarten to formal schooling, training and beyond. Children and young people participate in quality education with a skilled workforce. There are multiple opportunities for training and skills programs, leading to employment.

Children and young people are also involved in decision making with specific activities that engage them in age-appropriate ways. Their voices and opinions are valued.

### Objectives:

- 3.1: Involve children and young people in decision making.
- 3.2: Increase participation in learning and education from birth to adulthood.
- 3.3: Collaboration to support quality education settings.
- 3.4: Opportunities for training and employment pathways.

## 10. Policy Context

The Plan aligns with a range of International, Federal, State and local Moreland policies which focus on children and young people's rights and responsibilities, supporting early childhood development, frameworks for improving health and wellbeing and increasing the participation of children and young people in decision making. The policy context has been analysed and alignment with the Plan's key outcomes is evident (see Figure 4).

	Policy	Alignment with Plan Outcome	
International	United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child <sup>26</sup>	  	
Federal	Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework <sup>27</sup>	  	
	National Youth Policy Framework (currently being finalised – alignment with Interim Report) <sup>28</sup>	  	
	National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030 <sup>29</sup>	  	
State	Early Childhood Reform Plan: Ready for Schools, Ready for Life <sup>30</sup>	  	
	Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children <sup>31</sup>	  	
	Victorian Early Learning and Development Framework <sup>32</sup>	  	
	Maternal and Child Health Framework <sup>33</sup>	  	
	Victorian Youth Strategy (under development - alignment with Discussion Paper Outcomes) <sup>34</sup>	  	
Moreland City Council	Council Plan 2021-2025 (under development – alignment with Key Issues Topic Papers) <sup>35</sup>	  	
	Moreland Human Rights Policy 2016-2026 <sup>36</sup>	  	
Plan Outcomes	 Inclusive City and Community	 Improved Health and Wellbeing	 Lifelong Learning and Participation

Figure 4: The Plan outcomes and alignment with local, state, federal and international policy

## 11. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

An Implementation Plan will be developed with a series of actions to address each objective. These actions will include Council's role, timeframe for completion and resources required.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Plan is an important part of understanding its impact. A monitoring and evaluation framework with clearly defined measures will be developed. This will provide a clear framework for undertaking regular reviews of the Plan to monitor its success.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Education and Training 2016, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, State of Victoria: Melbourne.

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- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, Population Census.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet 2020, What Matters to Young People in Victoria: Victorian youth strategy discussion paper, State of Victoria: Melbourne.
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