

AGENDA

Meeting of the Strategic Planning
Committee of Council

To be held at the

Civic Centre

511 Burwood Highway

Wantirna South

On

Monday 10 February 2020 at 7:00 pm

KNOX
your city



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Tony Doyle
Chief Executive Officer

1 Apologies and Requests for Leave of Absence

2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest

3 Confirmation of Minutes

Confirmation of Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee Meeting on Monday 9 December 2019

4 Considering and Ordering Upon Officers' Reports

4.1 Annual Report - Early Years Advisory Committee

SUMMARY: Team Leader Policy, Learning and Quality, Robyn Renkema

The Early Years Advisory Committee's (EYAC) current Terms of Reference (ToR) requires an annual report to Council to advise of the topics and key themes discussed by the Committee in the preceding year. This report provides the annual report of EYAC activities and achievements for 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the report on the activities undertaken, and subsequent feedback and advice of the Early Years Advisory Committee between January 2019 and December 2019.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of the Early Years Advisory Committee (EYAC) is to provide advice to Council on early years issues and to promote greater awareness and understanding in the local community of early years services within the Knox municipality.

The Knox Community and Council Plan (2017-2021) sets the vision for the City of Knox through eight community and Council goals that include the needs of children and families as an important focus. In addition, Council's approved Key Life Stages Implementation Plan 2017-2021 provides the strategic framework for the work of the ongoing EYAC. This Implementation Plan focuses on the key life stages of early childhood, youth and older age and recognises that intervention during these key life stages has the greatest benefits for individuals, families and the community.

In addition to the Early Years Committee, as an outcome of the Council Committee review completed in 2018, Committees were structured under four groupings. Early Years, Youth and Active Ageing were incorporated into the Key Life Stages Group.

The current EYAC Terms of Reference (ToR) outline the Committee's key focus, which is to:

1. Provide advice and recommendations on the implementation of the early years key objectives of the Key Life Stages Implementation plan as incorporated in the Knox Community and Council Plan 2017-2021.
 - a. The advice and recommendations in relation to these plans include:
 - Agreed priorities;
 - The outcomes and achievements of the Knox Community and Council Plan's early years objectives; and
 - Effective communication and consultation strategies to facilitate engagement with the community and other key stakeholders on development and implementation of the Knox Community and Council Plan's early years objectives.

2. Provide advice to Council on emerging issues affecting families and children and the related services within the Knox community.
3. Identify emerging key research, policy and legislative issues that might impact on the implementation of the Key Life Stages Implementation Plan 2017-2021.
4. Consider advice and information made available through other Council advisory and community consultation processes related to families and children, local early years services and early years issues.
5. Provide council with an annual report on the key discussion topics and achievements of the EYAC.

This report provides the annual report of EYAC activities and achievements for 2019.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 EYAC Topics and Key Themes for 2019

The Committee discussed and endorsed a proposed work plan for 2019. The key topics proposed in the work plan emerged from a combination of identified policy changes for the early years in the State and Commonwealth Governments; and locally, issues identified through the Council and Community Plan and Key Life Stages Plan. In addition to these, the experiences and observations of individual Committee members relating to the life of children and families in the community contributed to the work plan.

Key themes included:

- In Out of Home Care – The LOOKOUT Centre’s aim is to engage children and young people under a statutory protection order in Out of Home Care in education;
- Middle Childhood (6 years to 12 years) – What supports are available for middle childhood?
- Parenting – Understanding and meeting the needs of families facing multiple challenges: the role of early childhood and family services;
- 3-Year-Old Kindergarten Expansion – State Government initiative to roll out the implementation of subsidised 3-Year-Old Kindergarten across the state;
- Knox Early Years Municipal Data Summary – data to inform early years planning and service delivery for the Knox community.

In the October 2019 meeting, the EYAC considered key insights and issues identified over the past 12 months resulting from the Work Plan and the opportunity to provide feedback relating to key policy and strategic work undertaken by Council.

In addition to the topics outlined in the 2019 Work Plan, individual Committee members provided areas of interest focused on education, and topics from newspaper articles that may be impacting young children and families in the community for group discussion.

These included:

- Average summer temperatures of play equipment and surfaces in local parks;
- Comparing lunch boxes across different socio-economic areas;
- Reading urged for Preschools.

2.2 Additional Meeting Including EYAC Members

In May 2019, the Annual Joint Committee Group met for the first time. The meeting entailed a presentation providing members with context on current municipal data, proceeding with two workshops.

Workshops included discussion on:

- Committee members' experience being on a Knox Advisory Group; and
- Success and challenges of Knox Advisory Groups.

In November 2019, the Key Life Stages Group met for a second time. The meeting commenced with an intergenerational presentation from Lively, concluding with a workshop.

Workshop included:

- Key Life Stages Mid Term review.

2.3 EYAC Committee Insights and Considerations

The Committee has identified the following for Council to note:

In Out of Home Care – The Committee continues to recognise the complexity of families and is genuinely supportive of the LOOKOUT Centre and their focus on ensuring education is at the centre of decisions made about the care, placement and future of children in Out of Home Care. Following a presentation from the Department of Education's Learning Advisor and the Knox Maternal Child Health Team, the Committee noted the initiative of the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care and the focused work inclusive of the Maternal Child Health (universal and enhanced), supported playgroups and the funded kindergarten roles in supporting children's learning and development.

Middle Childhood (6 years to 12 years) – The Committee noted data presented showing Knox young people's resilience levels in primary and high schools. The Committee found some statistics presented by Communities that Care in relation to alcohol and drug use confronting, the research demonstrates damaging cumulative effects on the long-term wellbeing of our young people. New research revealing that messages focused on the "parent's role" in supporting child development is more effective than messages focused on "effective parenting". There was Committee consensus highlighting a need for further advocacy to explore as a community how we can reframe our messaging to families with young children, considering the new research.

Parenting – Families Facing Multiple Challenges – The Committee noted Dr. Tim Moore's research concluding that as a society, we are currently experiencing a re-appraisal of our relationships and how we communicate and relate to one another. That children are affected by their relationships and environments in multiple ways starting from conception. The Committee described having a greater awareness of understanding and meeting the needs of families facing multiple challenges. The Committee acknowledged that vulnerability sits everywhere, and circumstances are not always permanent, therefore consultation is key to meeting the evolving needs of the community.

Consensus from the Committee noted that Council consults with the community well and is committed to using consultation methods that enable teams to deliver and work to the right focus.

3-Year-Old Kindergarten Expansion – Whilst there was genuine support for the State Government initiative to roll out the implementation of subsidised 3-Year-Old kindergarten across the state, the Committee noted the community's concerns and comments. The Committee had a strong agreement in relation to the quality of Council's early years services, highlighting a need for

further advocacy on considering upskilling of existing educators and teacher qualifications in maintaining quality education and care into the future.

Knox Early Years Municipal Data Summary – The Committee noted the data presented by Council’s Strategy, Learning and Evaluation Team. The summary of data included a range of sources including the Australian Early Development Census. The Committee noted the efforts to provide up to date data to inform ongoing effective early years planning strategies to raise awareness for early years and the need for quality services, identifying vulnerability across the municipality and collection of data to support applications for grant funding.

3. CONSULTATION

From a consultation perspective, members of the EYAC bring a range of viewpoints and advice to the Committee. Through the agreed work plan for 2019, EYAC members have the opportunity to consider and discuss a number of key issues impacting of the lives of children and their families in the Knox community.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL/AMENITY ISSUES

The EYAC continues to play a key role considering issues and advising Council in terms of child friendly spaces, which promote the health and wellbeing of Knox children and families into the future.

5. FINANCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The Family and Children’s Services Department supports the administration of Council’s EYAC. Officer time of approximately ten hours each month is absorbed within the Department budget in addition to an annual catering and supplies allowance of \$2600.00.

6. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Research clearly states that when a community places the child as a central concern in the context of family, community and its culture, then significant and lifelong benefits will result for the community.

Children between the ages of 0-6 years represented 8.25% of the municipality’s population, and this equates to 12,698 children according to data. (Census 2016).

The Key Life Stages Plan will continue to build on the opportunities for improved and different partnerships with non-Council service providers and community organisations. These partnerships will provide a benefit for all children and families across Knox, irrespective of the early years services they access within the community.

7. RELEVANCE TO KNOX COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2021

Goal 7 - We are inclusive, feel a sense of belonging and value our identity

Strategy 7.3 - Strengthen community connections

Strategy 7.4 - Promote and celebrate the contribution of our volunteers

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Under section 80c of the Local Government Act 1989 officers providing advice to Council must disclose any interests, including the type of interest.

Author – Team Leader Policy, Learning and Quality, Robyn Renkema – In providing this advice as the Author, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

Officer Responsible – Director, Community Services, Tanya Scicluna – In providing this advice as the Officer Responsible, I have no disclosable interests in this report.

9. CONCLUSION

The EYAC plays a key role in contributing to the objectives of Council’s overarching plan for families and children living in Knox. Through the agreed work plan for 2019, EYAC members have had the opportunity to consider a number of key issues impacting on the lives of children and their families and have highlighted these issues for Council to note as part of this report.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

There are no items of a confidential nature in this report.

Report Prepared By: Team Leader Policy, Learning and Quality - Robyn Renkema

Report Authorised By: Director, Community Services, Tanya Scicluna

Attachments

Nil

5 Motions for Which Notice has Previously Been Given

6 Supplementary Items

7 Urgent Business

7.1 Urgent Business

7.2 Call Up Items

8 Confidential Items

Nil