

Child Friendly Cities and Communities



Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Hub



Statement of Purpose - CFCC Movement

Children are integral to the fabric of our communities, but without voting rights, their ability to shape the communities in which they live is limited by the opportunities afforded to them by adults. The Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities movement works to bring individuals, organisations and communities together to collectively uphold and individually practise the principles of the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. In fact, as a collective we will work alongside children to empower them to act as active and engaged citizens and share their unique perspective with their communities.

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CFCC Network

Statement of Purpose - CFCC Network

This Network comes together because we believe in a world where children are supported and empowered to be active citizens, and we can make a difference – individually or collectively!

In our network we will discover new ways to lead our colleagues and our communities to become child friendly, and share with each other examples of good practice.

Access the Agenda and Minutes via the following links:

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)
- [Network meeting dates](#)

Network meetings are held quarterly and we welcome new participants!

For more information about the CFCC network, to join or to discuss how you and your organisation can support the Charter, contact the [VLGA](#) on 03 9349 7999

Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter



This Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities has been developed specifically for local governments, organisations and individuals to take action. The Charter is a statement of the principles and actions that underpin the right to be considered *child friendly*.

The Charter is consistent with state, national and international protocols and embraces rights that are embedded in the Convention of the Rights of a Child (1990), the Chiba Declaration for a Child Friendly Asia Pacific (2009), UNICEF's Building Blocks for developing a Child Friendly City (2004) and the Victorian Human Rights and responsibilities Charter (2006).

Recognising the need for increased participation by children and young people in decision making forums and creating child friendly environments, we support the following principles:

1. Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs
2. Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing.
3. Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability.



About This Framework

This pack has been produced by the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Advisory Group (March 2018) and has been designed to support all organisations, including councils, in developing practices that promote the principles of the Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.

In this framework, a child is defined as a person that is under the age of 18 – as per the UNICEF definition.

The charter principles are linked to the UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities initiative.

This Frameworks pack provides information on:

- The Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter
- What Child Friendly Cities and Communities principles mean in practice
- The benefits of being a Child Friendly City and Community
- The importance of participation by children in decision making
- Involving children in local government policy
- Links to online resources

Becoming a child friendly city “doesn’t take a massive investment – only a shift in perspective”

Dr Norman Gillespie UNICEF Australia



Ben & Gwendolyn helped to launch the Charter on 15 October 2013



Framework

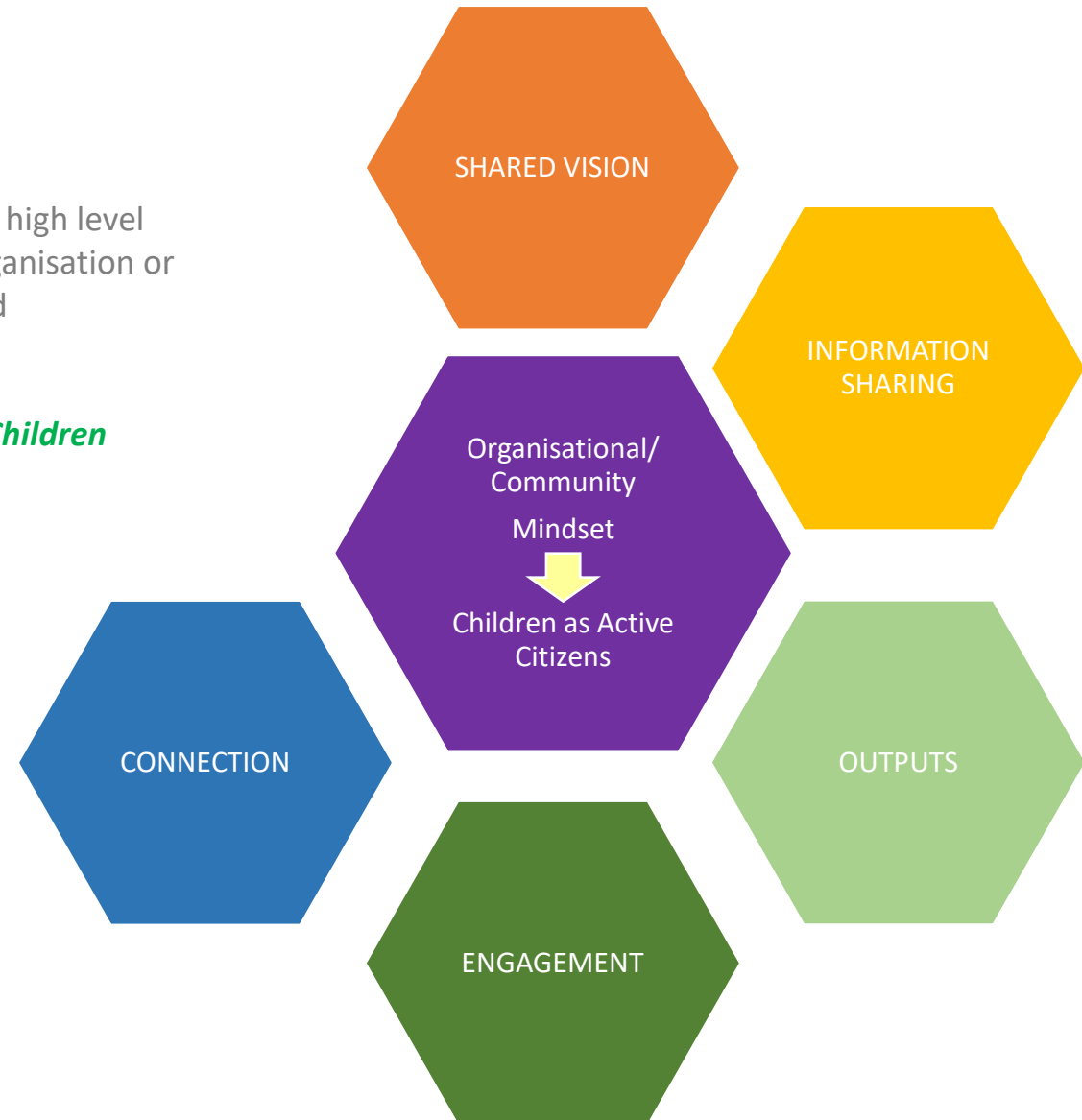
This Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFCC) Framework is a high level view of the potential activity involved in aligning your council, organisation or community with the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.

The central idea is that by following the suggested framework, Children become Active Citizens of their Community/City!

Although there is no order that needs to be followed in becoming Child Friendly there are a few suggestions here that may assist you in your journey.

The process you choose to follow will depend entirely on your organisational set up and your requirements.

Click through each area to learn more...





Shared Vision

A shared vision is one where stakeholders agree on the fundamentals of 'why' and agree on the 'problem' and the 'jobs' that needs to be done.

Firstly, the stakeholders need to develop a shared understanding of the what it means to be child and young people friendly and what needs to change.

Questions to consider:

- What behaviours do we want to see from 'active citizens'?
- What do we do now to empower active citizenship, and what needs to change or improve?

This section is all about determining what it means to be a Child Friendly City or Community for your organisation/council.

Shared visions should be shaped by evidence. For further insights into why organisations should become child friendly, please refer to the [brief literature review](#).

Once you have defined what a Child Friendly City or Community looks like and what you'd like to achieve, it's time to identify who your stakeholders are.

- Who do you need to communicate with / Who are your Stakeholders
 - a. Internal Stakeholders
 - b. External Stakeholders



Information Sharing

To get others on board, you need to share the who, why, what & when with your stakeholders. Information sharing is an important part of upholding the Charter Principles. By supporting each other to achieve the same goal we can empower ourselves as advocates for Child Friendly Communities and Cities.

As part of the project lifecycle process, you will develop a collection of documents, packs and presentations. These can be used to track progress, inform others and keep stakeholders engaged.

Potential areas of opportunity to share would include:

- Reports to Stakeholders
- Discussions with Networks
- Case Studies
- VLGA website
- Conference Presentations
- The Theoretical perspective

Presentation packs, workbooks to track actions, clips, roadshows or dashboards may all make up part of your communication plan.

You may wish to share this activity within your Network or with other organisations. This information sharing is a valuable tool in support other organisations get traction in their progress towards becoming Child and Young People Friendly.

You may also refer to existing case studies for insight or contact Charter members for support or direction.



Outputs

Becoming a Child Friendly City and Community is an exciting process that does not necessarily have a definite starting point or an end point. Your journey will begin with the acknowledgement that children and young people (under the age of 18 years as defined by the UN) are active citizens today despite their inability to vote. We all have a role in empowering children and young people to become active citizens.

Importantly, being Child Friendly is a **mindset that should continue within an organisation and community indefinitely.**

As a formal recognition of this commitment, your organisation is encouraged to endorse the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter. Council officers who have completed this process suggest there are four distinct steps to achieve endorsement.

1. Formal adoption of The Charter by an organisation
2. Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) notification
3. Certificate of Endorsement from VLGA
4. Sharing your examples of good practice widely with your organisation, networks and community

For Councils: Writing up a Council report may be needed to ensure your organisation is on - board and part of the journey. Examples of these council reports are available. You're invited to contact the Advisory Group for support.

Once your organisation has endorsed The Charter, contact the VLGA. Your organisation will be invited to receive a **Certificate of Endorsement.**

As part of the Child Friendly Cities and Communities network, there will be many opportunities to learn from others and share your journey via the VLGA website and network meetings.



Engagement

Keeping your stakeholders informed and actively involved in your journey to becoming a Child Friendly City and Community is one piece of the puzzle.

Changing perceptions and mindsets is sometimes challenging. Irrespective of where you are in your Child Friendly Cities and Communities journey, you'll need to be strategic in your engagement approach. The best advice is to aim to embed the philosophy within your organisation and engage stakeholders who can support your efforts to get on-board.

Some of your key questions will be:

- Who will own the Advocacy of the program?
- Who is in a position to support you? Who can cause a roadblock?
- What examples can you find to make your case more persuasive?
- What is the best way to convince others this is a problem worth solving?
- How can children and young people be involved to convince others of the value of the approach?

Try to think of the political and social levers you can pull.

Becoming Child Friendly is a good news story that you may want to share with your community.

Could social media, political lobbying or strategic meetings with councillors help build an understanding of the importance and benefits of becoming a Child Friendly City and Community?



Engagement



Connection

What organisational bodies or frameworks are you able to leverage to make your initiative come alive!

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

- Municipal Early Years Plans - can you embed this approach as an action in your next plan?
- Organisational plans and actions- can you align this approach to a broader organisational objective?
- Government policy reforms and agendas- what policy statements can you refer to within State or Federal
- Government Policy (e.g. Child Safe Standards Principle 7)
- Victorian Local Government Association's Advisory Group

As you develop a strategy or a project plan to map out the actions required to reach your organisations goal you can create solid linkages to broader internal and external documents.

Your plan will become a useful tool in bringing stakeholders and the community along on your journey.



Benefits of being a CFCC

✓ Families with children are shopping around for a family friendly lifestyle

There is growing interest in ranking cities according to how family friendly they are with websites dedicated to this in the UK and the USA. In January 2013 the inaugural Suncorp Bank Family Friendly Index was published ranking Australia's 30 largest cities. The study received widespread media coverage.

✓ A dollar spent in the early years, is several saved in later years

What happens in the early years has an impact on outcomes later in life. Investment in early childhood services are cost effective, yielding long-term benefits that are disproportionate to the original cost. Studies have shown the earlier services are provided, the greater the economic return. For example the return on revenue spent on preschool programs or early intervention services is significantly higher than those spent on employment training.

✓ Revitalising communities

Embracing the principles of the Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities creates a vibrant and welcoming community and has the potential to revitalise and enhance the cultural life of the city and strengthen the liveability of neighbourhoods.

✓ Families with children are important for community and economic growth

Vibrant communities need people of all ages for long-term economic stability. Families with children are important to community growth, sustainability and diversity. Studies have found that it is families with young children that spend the most locally.

✓ Child Friendly principles address social exclusion

More effective planning and development of cities and communities through a Child Friendly City and Community lens can significantly reduce risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at risk of social exclusion.

✓ Families with children contribute significant tourist dollars

The economic benefit of attracting families is evident in the success of cities that offer specific children's festivals. ABS data collected about domestic overnight visitor stays provides cities with a breakdown on the amounts spent. Figures are significant, and break down spending in terms of the proportion of visits from people with children under the age of 14 years.

✓ The built environment impacts on health and wellbeing

Increasing attention has been given to the links between children's physical activity and the built environment. Building communities with good access to public spaces and recreation, and that enable children to independently access places by walking, cycling or public transport helps create healthy and resilient communities.



Charter Principles

The Victorian Charter lists 3 key principles that exemplify what it means to be a Child Friendly City and Community.

Principles in action

1. Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs



- **Public places and spaces encourage the capacity for children to be healthy, feel safe and welcomed, and engage actively in their local community environment.**

For example: facilities welcome children and their carers, and invite them to stay; features are in place to ensure child safety.

- **The community is safe and nurtures the development of children.**

For example: safety features are included in public places and spaces, emergency preparedness and planning specifically considers children.

2. Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and wellbeing



- **Policies and governance processes are developed in the best interest of children.**

For example: Children's needs are investigated; children are consulted with; actions are developed based on the assessment of children's needs, and; resources are allocated for incorporating the principles of the Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities.

- **Communities and services actively seek the input of children on matters that impact them. Organisations seek their opinions and permission to use their images, thoughts and ideas in planning and developing programs that consider their needs.**

For example: children give permission to have their images to be used in publications, consultation forums are designed to include appropriate processes for children to have their say, and children are asked their opinions

3. Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability



- **All children have good access to basic services and a range of suitable activities and events.**

For example: services and activities cater for a range of age groups and abilities; they can be accessed by public transport, walking or cycling; barriers that prevent access are addressed

- **Our communities and services are actively promoted as a welcoming place for children and their families to live, work and visit.**

For example: Work place practises promote work life balance; local businesses establish/encourage family friendly services and amenities; local councils and organisations actively promote themselves as a signatory to the Charter for Child Friendly Cities or Organisation



Becoming Child Friendly...

The suggested considerations, listed in the table to the right, are set out as a guide to planning activities that will potentially result in a Child Friendly City and Community.

Each of the considerations map against one of the **3 Charter Principles** discussed on the previous page.

Charter Principle	ACTIVITIES TO INCORPORATE INTO YOUR ORGANISATION
1	• For relevant Council and organisational policies & project consultations, ensure children are considered as a key cohort and involved in as many consultations that are relevant and meaningful to children – at least 2
	• Introduce to your organisation a committee comprising of children, carers & parents to focus on the specific needs of children
	• Provide opportunities for staff to be trained to listen and work with children & consider their specific needs
	• Develop a record keeping system to enhance service capacity to identify child specific needs.
2	• Conduct Annual Workshops encouraging Children leadership and participation in council decision making process
	• Ensure active children citizens have opportunities and resources to participate in the formation, implementation and evaluation of local policies & strategies
	• Publicise & promote the charter for child friendly cities and communities with local groups and invite their input on ideas for Charter Implementation
	• Introduce an annual award for children and youth in the community whom have demonstrated excellent leadership.
	• Build Relationships with schools and early childhood centres
3	• Review council policies and strategic plans to ensure there are safe and well connected paths, safe cycling routes, easy access to public transport and adequate shade for children.
	• Introduce practices to audit facilities and infrastructure such as play spaces, public toilet facilities, seating arrangements (different sized seating, disability access to picnic tables), car parking spaces (suitable for pram access), lighting and sport facilities are safe and accessible for children.
	• Review council and organisational services to ensure they are supportive to the needs of children from all backgrounds.
	• Community Engagement Plan

The Importance Of Children's Participation In Decision Making



The involvement of children in decision making processes in areas that impact on their lives has gained growing support over the last twenty years. Working alongside children, treating them as equal stakeholders and valuing their knowledge and expertise is now considered a best practice approach to consulting around facilities and services relevant to children.

Children are experts about their own experiences and aspirations. This is acknowledged and promoted in law including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), the Chiba Declaration for a Child Friendly Asia Pacific (2009), UNICEF's Building Blocks for Developing a Child Friendly City (2004) and the Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter (2006). It also underpins state and federal policy including Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2009), and the National Early Years Learning Framework for Australia *Belonging; Being & Becoming* (2009)

Examples of the many benefits of involving children in decision making include:
For children:

- Participating in matters that directly affect them
- Seeing their community in a new way
- Meeting new people
- Developing confidence and sense of self
- Improve their experience in receiving services, increasing potential success of interventions

For community:

- Developing intergenerational interactions and understandings
- Building a strong sense of community
- Recognising the value of children's contribution to community





For Policy Makers

Grounding decision making in the reality of children experience includes:

- ☐ Removing assumptions about who children are, what they need and what they want
- ☐ Recognising children's right to participate in community development processes as citizens of their community.
- ☐ Recognise that how children experience their environments differs from adults
- ☐ Development of services that reflect the expressed needs of children, thereby improving access and participation



There is much to be gained by listening to children – taking their words, interpreting and analysing their responses, understanding their concerns, wants and desires.

Developing an understanding of the nature of children concerns and perspectives for the future will benefit, have a significant impact on and perhaps, change the way we think about children.

Involving Children And Young People In Local Government Policy



There are many opportunities to involve children in the development and implementation of local government policy.

Collaboration is sought across council departments and partnership with other levels of government and community organisations to provide life-long benefits for all children, their families and our community.

Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement provides a vision for strategic planning, land use and development objectives and outlines strategies to achieve this vision taking into consideration the health and wellbeing of the community.

Municipal Public Health Plan

The Municipal Public Health Plan requires local governments to identify and assess public health issues and to maximise the wellbeing of all of its residents.

Municipal Early Years Plan/Municipal Middle Years Plan/ Municipal Youth Years Plan

These Plans specifically provide a strategy to plan, develop and evaluate Council's programs, activities, services and facilities aimed at early, middle and youth years.





CFCC Advisory Group

Statement of Purpose- CFCC Advisory Group

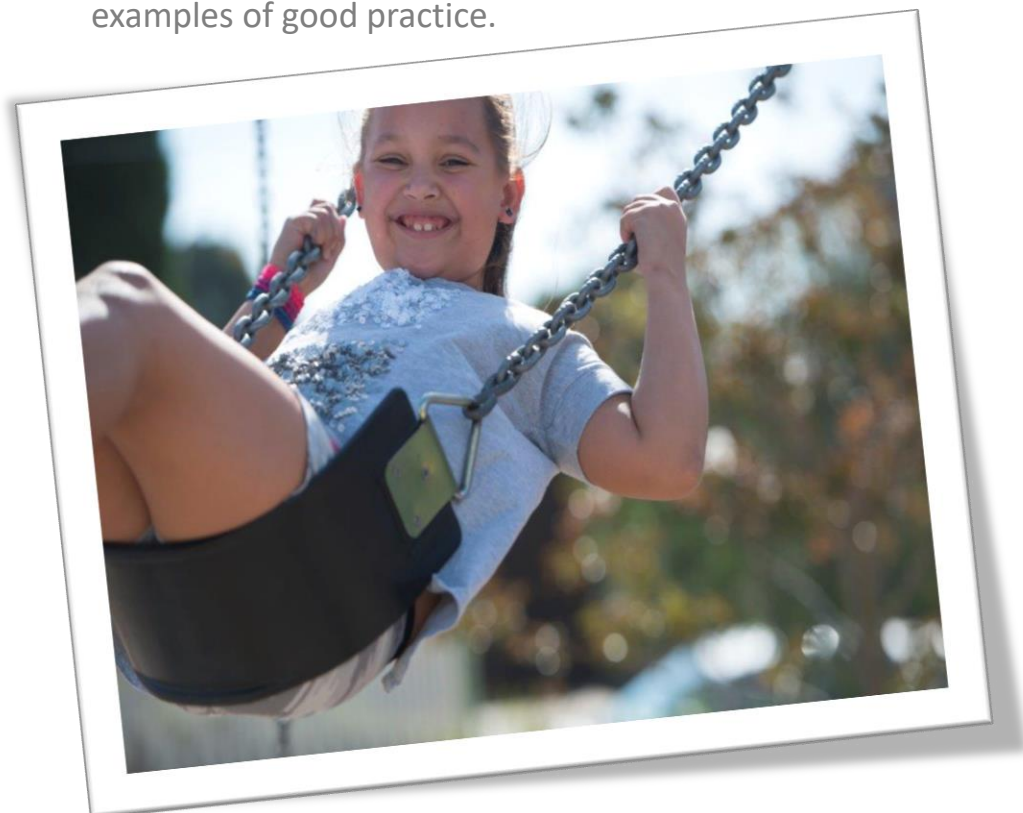
The Child Friendly Cities and Communities Advisory Group meet to act as the 'backbone' organisation to the Child Friendly Cities and Communities movement in Victoria. The Advisory Group's role is to coordinate the common CFCC agenda, facilitate ongoing communication between partners, uphold the principles of The Charter, and collate and celebrate examples of good practice.

The Advisory Group meets quarterly and welcomes new member applications annually.

Please contact any of the members listed below for further information on how to join the group.

Advisory Group members Email Contact

Ballarat City Council	wendyjones@ballarat.vic.gov.au
Casey City Council	vlloyd@casey.vic.gov.au
Cardinia Shire Council	k.beveridge@cardinia.vic.gov.au
Maribyrnong City Council	Infoearlyyears@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au
Moreland City Council	amcgregor@moreland.vic.gov.au
Port Phillip City Council	Hayley.Crawford@portphillip.vic.gov.au
KU Children's Services	David.wright@ku.com.au
Whittlesea City Council	carmen.cappello@whittlesea.vic.gov.au
Monash City Council	claire.sideras@monash.vic.gov.au
Banyule City Council	
Whitehorse City Council	neil.rogers@whitehorse.vic.gov.au
Dandenong City Council	
Monee Valley City Council	kviksne@mvcc.vic.gov.au





Charter Signatories

The following Organisations have endorsed the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities and have received recognition from the VLGA.

Brimbank City Council	Whitehorse City Council	Nillumbik Shire Council
Darebin City Council	Boroondara City Council	Moonee Valley City Council
Whittlesea City Council	City of Greater Bendigo	Port Phillip Council
Maribyrnong City Council	Ballarat City Council	Baw Baw Shire Council
Melton City Council	Moreland City Council	Greater Dandenong City Council
Cardinia Shire Council	Bass Coast Shire Council	





Resources

There are a number of great resources available online that provide guidance around how to build a Child Friendly City and Community.

Links to some of these resources are provided below:

Legislations & Principles:

[Convention on the Rights of a Child](#)

[Principles for Children - Chile Wellbeing and Safety Act](#)

[Vic Legislation](#)

Child and Young People Friendly City Resources

[Child Friendly Cities](#)

[Criteria and practical tools to build a friendly city](#)

[What constitutes child friendly communities & how are they built?](#)

[Creating child friendly cities conference](#)

Actively Engaging with Children

[Creating better cities with children and youth, a manual for participation](#)

[Children as Active Citizens](#)

Planning & the Built environment

[Child friendly communities - Planning Institute Australia](#)

[Play spaces and landscaping](#)

Case Studies

[Casey city Council](#)

[Ballarat City Council](#)



Brief Literature Review

Convention on the Rights of the Child

'Rights are invisible and inter-dependent. Human rights- for that is what children's rights are- include the whole range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights' Freeman (2011, p.8).

In addition to fundamental human rights, children and young people are afforded the additional right to special protection because of their vulnerabilities. In December 1990, Australia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), enshrining our shared duty to 'ensure that all children in Australia enjoy the rights set out in the treaty' (Australian Human Rights Commission).

Child Friendly Cities and Communities

'A Child Friendly City is committed to the fullest implementation of the CRC' UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2004.

In a child friendly city, 'children [and young people] are active agents; their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision making' (UNICEF 2013). All child friendly initiatives are developed with a common aim to build cities, towns and suburbs that provide positive advantages to children and young people's development, sense of connection and interdependence.

Further to our legislative responsibility assigned through Australia's ratification of the CRC, UNICEF (2004) compels organisations to recognise and consider:

- Children as individual people and active citizens
- The link between children's healthy development and active participation to long term societal outcomes.
- The sensitivities of children and young people to social, environmental, economic and other changes.
- Children and young people's lack of voting rights and historical disconnect with the political process.

Brief Literature Review 2

The Planning Institute of Australia (2015) contends that ‘creating child friendly environments generates broad economic, social and cultural benefits. It is an action and a policy that serves the general community and is a long term investment in that life of that community’.

The Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter (the Charter) scaffolds from the UNICEF’s Building Child Friendly Cities: A Framework for Action. It was developed to provide organisations with a concrete starting point to becoming Child Friendly, and helps organisations analyse how they currently measure up before developing actions and plans for continuous improvement. The three principles of The Charter are:

PRINCIPLE 1: Freedom for children to experience environments that consider their needs

PRINCIPLE 2: Respect and dignity for children to express their individual opinions, participate in and contribute to decisions about their communities and their wellbeing

PRINCIPLE 3: Equitable access to supportive environments and services for children regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or ability

Further justifications for pursuing child friendly objectives

‘Each time we let in an excluded group, each time we listen to a new way of knowing, we learn more about the limits of our current way of seeing’ Menkel-Meadow (1987, p. 52)

Advancing the rights of children and young people is of critical importance. We share the responsibility to work towards ensuring children and young people’s ‘voices, needs and priorities’ are authentically reflected in the decisions and activities we pursue, particularly as it relates to those decisions and activities that impact children and young people’s lives (UNICEF 2017).

Brief Literature Review 3

A child's right to express their views is inextricably linked with our responsibility to ensure that 'the views of the child be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child', as articulated in the first point of Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. MacNaughton et al. (2007) contends that children can effectively express their views on issues that affect them, thus should be afforded appropriate opportunities to authentically participate.

Involving children in decisions and activities promotes development of their civic skills, involves children in community life, and raises the profile of children's unique perspectives, knowledge and experiences. Freeman (2001, p. 56) discusses children and young people's participation through the lens of 'social' and 'political' relations. Freeman suggests children's participation can promote social inclusion through connection, enhanced adult-child interactions, and access to networks. Furthermore, from a political perspective, participation can facilitate shared power, challenge the status quo and lead to change.

Orchestrating an organisational change mindset

Authentic involvement in decisions and activities is important. In some cases, organisations will need to orchestrate cultural and political shifts to position children as active citizens (Fonseca & Bajunda 2011, p.246). Before considering involving children in decisions and activities, it is prudent to consider understanding and overcoming your organisations structural barriers. Matthews (2003) contend there are three barriers to involving children in local decision making, and we propose there are multiple ways to address them on the following page...

Brief Literature Review 4

1. Nature of the engagement activities

- Identify appropriate opportunities for children to contribute to decisions and activities, in particular those that will impact children and young people. Local government examples include the development of the Council Plan and the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Where appropriate, explicitly list children as key stakeholders in consultation frameworks and project plans.
- Establish a collaborative platform with playgroups, child care, preschools, schools etc. to consult on behalf of Council, as safe places for participation are crucial.
- Undertake cooperative and agreed-upon engagement activities.

2. Adult views

- Work with your organisation to develop a shared understanding of what active children's citizenship means.
- Support your colleagues to understand the value and build the skills required to engage children in participatory decisions and activities.
- Document your methods of consultation to share with others, adapted in a local context, and have their effectiveness evaluated.

3. Characteristics of the children and young people

- Develop clarity over which consultation processes and tools you will employ to account for the differences between groups of children. Beware of the pitfalls of mimicking mainstream adult consultation strategies.
- Help develop good dialogues by ensuring children understand the purpose of the consultation and support them to explore ideas with input from all.
- Promote thoughtful inquiry by helping children to seek information, critically analyse and build shared understanding of different perspectives and solutions.
- Consider referring to the Hundred Language of children (Rinaldi 2013), 99 of them being non-verbal.
- Be innovative- perhaps digital technologies can be used to support children to participate online.