

VLGA Child Friendly Cities and Communities– Network Meeting minutes

Friday 15 March 2019, 1.00 - 3.00pm

Venue: LGPro Offices - Level 3, 58 Lorimer Street, Docklands, VIC

Chair: Kate Beveridge (Cardinia Shire) and Karina Viksne

Minutes: Hayley Crawford (City of Port Phillip)

Attended: Karina Viksne, Hayley Crawford (City of Port Phillip), Vivian Romero (CQ University), Neil Rogers (City of Whitehorse), Claire Sideras (City of Monash), John O’Shaughnessy (DET), Amy Forward (City of Greater Dandenong), Ann Addinsall (City of Casey), Virginia Lloyd (City of Casey), Sherryn Prinzi (Banyule City Council), Nicole Lindsey (Brimbank City Council), Robyn Renkema (Knox), Brendan Wilson (Yarra Ranges), Clare Yip (Boroondara), Sophie Patitsas (Moreland City Council), Kate Beveridge (Cardinia Shire), Jo Smale (Darebin Council), Chrissy Singh (Brimbank City Council).

Apologies: Liz Wood (Geelong), Kylie Smith, Pam Martin (Cardinia), Matthew Welsh/Sarah Bowen (Melton), John MacDonagh (Brimbank), Linda Harman (Darebin), Eliza Levi (Glen Eira), Pam Heseley/Roberta Colosimo (Whitehorse), Narelle Hart (Nillumbik), David Wright (KU), Bec Ferguson, Brett Ferguson, Margaret Grose, Fancesca Pagani (Mooney Valley), Clare Mouat, Buffy Leadbeater (Mitchell Shire), Jeanette Cole/Jeff Tyson (Moreland), Cherrie Salmon (Whyndham), Callie Miratana (CGC), Bridgid Keele (Whittlesea), Jasmina Stanic (CoM), Jenny Rukuwai (Maribryngong), Barry Hahn (Moreland), Caroline Meier (Knox), Carmen Cappello (Whittlesea)

Agenda	Notes/Actions
<p>Welcome and Introductions Acknowledgement to Country</p>	<p>Kate and Karina welcomed the group to the first network meeting of 2019 and commenced the meeting.</p>
<p>Guest Speaker</p> <p>John O’Shaughnessy: Department of Education and Training Victoria, Early Childhood South East Region and Manager Early Childhood Improvement.</p> <p>Professional Learning Communities – A Community of Practice Approach Information and update on DET’s work around Professional Learning Communities – the sharing of expertise, professional learning and collaboration, with a focus on continuous</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to presentation • Overview: • Part of the Victorian Government's Education State vision is a Communities of Practice (CoP) approach where networks and system leaders share knowledge, experience and resources. There are CoPs across Southern Melbourne area (currently involving City of Dandenong, and City of Casey, and will soon spread to Cardinia Shire). • Victoria as the Education State – What DET is striving to achieve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning for Life - Happy, Healthy and Resilient Kids - Breaking the Link – ensuring post code doesn’t determine destination - Pride and confidence in our schools – new schools and regeneration of existing schools. • Investing in the early years:

improvement to support the needs of children and young people and improve outcomes.

- Early Childhood Reform recognises the importance of early years. If we get the early years right, we set families on a positive trajectory. Investments made in the early years, have long-term return (less likely to smoke, finish year 12, end in jail etc.).
- The Victorian Government has funded \$202.1 million in the early years. For every dollar invested in the early years, there is a savings of \$6 - 7 down the track, for every dollar invested during the antenatal period; we can see a savings of \$13 - \$14.
- Funded 3-year-old kinder will roll out from next year in some regional areas, and from 2022, there will be at least 15 hours of kindergarten funding for whole state.
- The Early Childhood Improvement Branch is in the process of establishing early years' champions in every preschool and collaborating them up with every primary school. They hope this will support the transition to school and will lead to informed program planning in kindergarten.
- Partnerships and Shared Priorities:
 - DET saw that local governments shared the same vision for children and were trying to achieve the same outcomes as the DET Reform Plan. John used Casey's Early Years Plan and City of Dandenong's Children's Plan as examples. DET reached out to these areas and spoke about how they can work together to achieve outcomes, and came up with CoP in the Southern Melbourne area.
 - CoP has been used in school education and medical field for quite some time. It is about a two-way conversation, recognising, reflecting, respecting expertise in the room. Asking, how can we do it better to improve outcomes for children? Recognises that people that know the answers are in the sector – it's an untapped resource. In addition, they know their community.
 - CoP in the Southern Melbourne Area – met once per term. There was a high level of interest in the City of Greater Dandenong Early Years CoP – spaces sold out within a week.
- What worked:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creating a hook to get people in, offering a professional development section to the CoP meeting.- Breaking into smaller geographic groups and speaking at local level also worked well - how we can share resources across that area, how we can support projects in that area. For large LGAs, this works well and leads to more authentic conversations and collaborations.- Offering an online CoP through LinkedIn platform. Enables people to continue conversations after sessions (once per term). Information in bite sized chunks – much like Facebook updates, easy and simple to use.- DET offered a small payment to local area lead/facilitator to encourage people to take on leadership roles in those groups.• Going forward<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The local area leads will take more of a lead in bringing people together and DET will support them to do this and help build capacity.- CoP will be rolled out next to La Trobe Valley, outer Gippsland (Sale-Bairnsdale), the Malley, North East Melbourne (Keilor), and Brimbank - Melton this year. More planned for next year.- Empowering children has come up as a topic in the CoPs, how do we involve children's voice. John said the CFCC group has an important role in this area.
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<p>Acknowledging new Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter signatories</p> <p>Claire Sideras Child & Young People Friendly City Project Officer, Monash Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The framed VLGA Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter was presented to Claire Sideras from City of Monash. Although Monash have been a signatory for some time, they were yet to receive the certificate. Congratulations to Monash for their work to date and for continuing to promote and progress the Child Friendly Cities and Communities momentum.
<p>Discussion – Communities of Practice to Empower Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What Communities of Practice are you/your organisation involved in or planning? - How do children and young people currently have a voice about issues that are important to them in your organisation? - How are you/your organisation leveraging Child Safe Standards to empower children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What CoP are you/your organisation involved in or planning? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yarra Ranges have joined up with Youth team and School Focused Youth Services for students and middle years’ children more broadly - sharing case studies, issues. - Boroondara have a Youth Services Advisory Group – professional development and information sharing. - City of Whitehorse have an early year’s sector network - looking at common issues across the sector. The youth sector (12-18 years) seem to engage people well (examples include a junior mayor, online engagement portal, youth advisory council). - Proving difficult to engage people sector wide and bringing early years’ networks together. • How do children and young people currently have a voice about issues that are important to them in your organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Casey – currently going through service reviews for kindergarten and children’s safety – advocating for children’s voice to be included. • Sharing experiences, what works: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding the champions in your organisation (it may be someone outside Family and Children’s services) and training them to be able to consult with children in an ethical and respectful way. Just because they sit under Childrens Services doesn’t mean they are always the right person for consulting; there could be other passionate ambassadors in your organisation with the right skills. - It helps to have someone who’s role it is to remind people to involve children when opportunities arise council wide e.g. consultations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We also need to develop our skills in listening to what children are saying. For example, a child who wanted a beach – could easily be dismissed but what child was saying was he wanted the <i>experience</i> of being at the beach. We can do ethical aspects of setting it up correctly – but we need to know how to hear when children are saying. - Participation must be meaningful, find the right topics – where Council care what children say (so it’s not just tokenistic and their contribution is not used). - Some children don’t know what a Council is, what they do. Be careful not to advocate for participation but miss important steps in coming from children’s level of understanding. - Children have a YES mindset – how do we prototype their ideas, work with children and come up with solution? Turn it into “YES and...”. Children think in a way that adults no longer can - we need their perspective. - Great example of children standing up for climate change today. The focus from politicians/media has been on the students wagging school rather than listening to their voices and their involvement in democracy. • Chrissy, Learning Officer from Brimbank distributed copies of Brimbank’s Lifelong Learning Strategy and shared their CoP approach across each life stage. Chrissy to speak to current project officer about providing a case study on Dynamic Young Citizens Project and sharing at future network meeting. Chrissy provided her contact details, happy to be contacted: chrissys@brimbank.vic.gov.au • Hayley mentioned Listen Up training provided by Child Wise, which helps staff empower children and young people about what makes them feel safe or unsafe in an organisation.
<p>Advisory Group Update/Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of CFCC Advisory Group membership for 2019 • Overview of 2018 network feedback and proposed meeting themes for 2019 • Recent activities of the Advisory Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of advisory group membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2019 member list is visible on VLGA Child Friendly Cities and Communities website: https://www.vlga.org.au/advocacy/child-friendly-cities-communities-hub-cfcc All are encouraged to look at new website. The toolkit is useful if you are looking for new ideas and are not sure how to articulate and navigate CFCC work. - Role of advisory group: helps to coordinate and facilitate the network meetings, and advocates for the voice of children in this area. Open to new advisory group members. You don’t need to be a signatory of the Charter to be an advisory group member – anyone is welcome. • Overview of 2018 network feedback and proposed meeting themes for 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback from 2018 was that hearing examples of our work in practice is invaluable. - Case study template has been designed to share good practice. Kate Beveridge and Neil Rogers’ case studies will be uploaded to VLGA website, we encourage all network members

	<p>to submit and share their examples. This also helps raise the profile of children at your workplace; you can print case studies and share with your team what is possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme for next meeting in May: IT, ethical consideration. Case study: online engagement portal. - In October meeting, coinciding with Children’s Week – a proposed activity for discussion: a collective project to have a louder voice. E.g. asking the same question – “why should children be listened to.” VLGA are happy to share work on their Facebook page. • VLGA as auspice – Sherryn, pleased to reinvigorate our relationship with VLGA and soon will have a formal MOU. Have offered additional support: Facebook posts, Leading the Agenda sessions. We have a solid relationship again.
<p>Guest Speaker</p> <p>Emily Sanders: Director Regulation, Commission for Children and Young People</p> <p>Early stages of Child Safe Standards, including Standard 7: Empowering Children, and the Reportable Conduct Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the Commission: In addition to overseeing Child Safe Standards (CSS) and Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Commission also investigates child deaths, Out of Home Care, youth justice – critical incidents. The Commission has the power to conduct systemic enquiries and systemic reviews. • How they hear the voice of children is a central part of enquiry work. It’s about creating preconditions to allow the voice of children, once spoken, to be heard. • CSS 7 is about empowering children – nothing else works if they are not empowered and don’t tell us what is wrong. • In January 2017, it became a legal requirement for organisations to comply with CSS. Victoria is the only state that has mandated CSS and reportable conduct scheme. The commissions approach is to support organisations to comply – spend time coaching, providing feedback and then if there is a breach they will act. • One thing that came out of Royal Commission that surprised Emily is organisations not interviewing children if an allegation is made. Prioritising interviewing the child about the allegation did not seem to be part of organisations’ practice and that’s still the case. Some factors include organisations being worried about leading child, understanding their role in it. The Reportable Conduct Scheme has made this simpler – there shouldn’t be this confusion in your organisation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing the child is a key component of the CSS approach. Children have a right to have a say. We need to make that happen. • Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How can we best empower children's voice in our organisations?</i> Emily believed sector sharing good practice is essential, as the CFCC network is doing. Child empowerment is a culture – there is no wrong move, just take some action and build on it. Doing these things, reviewing and evaluating them indicates you have a culture of child empowerment. - <i>How do you make this ethos live on as leadership changes?</i> Embed child empowerment into everything. Council have a range of policies – a sentence in a policy can make a big impact. Think about what you are leaving behind. How are you making the overall system stronger than when you started? The Commission want to see it is being actively thought through, it has continual engagement and has progressed rather than just having an end stage. - <i>What are the Commission looking for in regards to CSS 7?</i> There is no one thing, they want to see action. Some organisations have written a policy and that is all they've done. Culture and empowerment are living things (CSS 1 and 7). - <i>Do some organisations struggle with CSS 7, as they might not see why empowering children is about safety?</i> Every sector is a bit different – but yes there are difficulties but for different reasons, such as cultural perceptions of children in that organisation, some organisations have approaches that are solely compliance based, there are barriers regarding leadership's understanding of CSS (how do you get your CEO to understand it), some organisations think of it as child protection (protection against parents rather than organisation), some have a reluctance to talk about abuse (if you can't name abuse, you can't necessarily see the link in encouraging children to speak up). Emily recommends having someone in ELT as a champion. Banyule Council has made all their managers child safety officers. • Research clearly shows the impact of trauma on child development is most crucial during ages 1-3. Let's imagine the reverse, and see the impact empowerment can have on children's development from these early stages.
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Feedback & Wrap Up <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What benefit did you get from participating in today's meeting?	General discussions, with feedback forms completed to inform planning for the remaining 2019 meetings.
Network Meeting Dates for 2019 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fridays 1 – 3 pm• LGPro Offices, Docklands	Next meeting: Friday 31 May, 2019, 1.00 pm, LGPro Offices, Level 3, 58 Lorimer Street, Docklands