Notes/Minutes and Links from

Child Friendly Cities and Communities Network Meeting

# Thursday 29 April 2021

The Agenda

- Charter for CFCC Refresh
- Exploring the impact evidence
- Understanding the lived experience of children and young people
- Responding to the impacts

Refreshing the CFCC Charter

The CFCC Advisory Committee proposed a refresh of the Charter to update the language and be more inclusive of organisations outside local government.
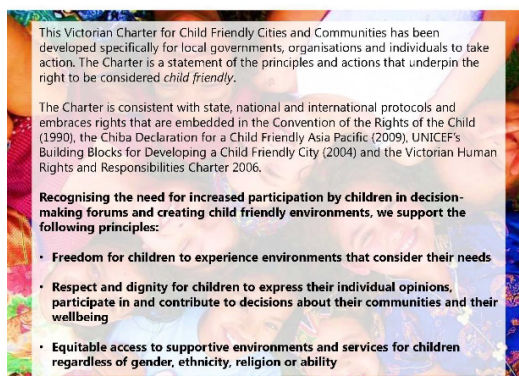
Existing Charter	**Proposed wording**

The Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities is a statement of principles that underpin actions that support communities to be child friendly.

This Charter is consistent with Victorian, Australian and international protocols and embraces the universal rights of children aged from birth to 17 years as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006) and represented in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Fundamental to positive health and wellbeing is the right for children to experience environments that consider their needs. Because children are valued members of communities, we commit to these principles:

- Act in the best interests of the child
- Freedom for children to express their individual opinions and right to have these considered in decisions that affect them
- Create equity for all children based on their needs.

This Charter guides organisations and individuals with a mandate to respond to the needs of children to:

- Uplift the child safety and child friendly organisational culture
- Improve the effectiveness of initiatives that support children to participate in civic life
- Amplify the voice of the child in decision-making forums.

There was general agreement that the Charter needs a refresh. Participants asked for the revised Charter to be sent to them as they would like to have more time to consider the changes and provide input.

Several participants suggested that children should contribute to the development of a new logo. Kids Own Publishing offered to work on a new CFCC logo and they will work with children who will contribute to the design.

COVID-19 Research on the impacts on children and young people

FIGURE 3: What has changed for young people since the response to the pandemic began
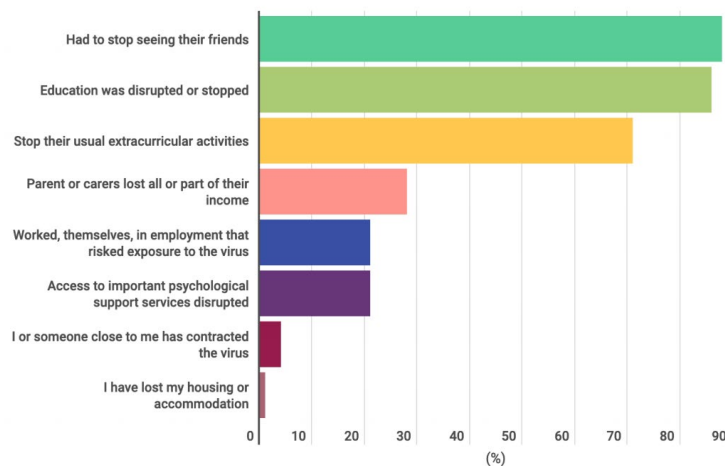
The table above represents the impacts discussed.

Lauren Thomas from the Australian Childhood Foundation presentenced research on the impacts of COVID on children and parents. The research can be accessed online https://australianchildhoodfoundation.crackerhq.com/pvl/9b20e31a6fa3c43f414af2fcb00f1a52/pdf/f04003b0-e4a0-41c9-8421-9bcb9fd464f7

Vivian, Anne and Amy presented a snapshot of research findings specific to education, mental health, social isolation and physical activity and screen time.

Mental health concerns noted:

- Children in Victoria were more affected than other Australian states – two to five times more likely to show behavioural and emotional difficulties

- Top concerns raised by children and young people calling Kids Helpline were mental health concerns and social isolation

- UNICEF survey – 45% young Australians coping well, compared to 81% when asked how they felt in January 2020

- Loss of connection to culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Children's safety concerns noted:

- Violence at home doubled – reported rate was 17% compared to 8% when children attending school in person (Save the Children)

- In 2019-20 1 in every 33 Australian children (or 174 700 children) had contact with child protection services

- More time online

- Increase in risk factors

- 33% increase in Kids Help Line duty-of-care interventions

Education concerns noted:

Save the Children reported issues with access to the internet for online learning, disproportionally impacting lower income families; Less than 1 in 100 'poor households' had access; approx. 1 in 5 'non-poor' households had access.

PWC Australia reported: Reduced one-to-one engagement with teachers; Difficulty in ascertaining engagement levels of students; Restricted ability to monitor individual student progress; Increased level of oversight required from parents and carers (particularly for younger children); Increased social isolation and reduced ability to support student wellbeing; Interruption to learning support for those children with additional needs; Differential levels of access to technology, including internet and devices, to support learning.

https://www.pwc.com.au/government/government-matters/covid-19-education-how-australian-schools-are-responding.html

Australian Education Survey by University of Melbourne noted: Online access difficult for many students experiencing disadvantage or in at-risk situations- leading to disengagement; Increased positive parental perceptions of schools and educators- positive light on home-school learning partnerships; Teachers upskilled to use technology and employed creative approach to teaching; High-ability students learning at own pace; Better engagement of some students due to less distractions.

The Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry noted affects similar to general population by amplified because of the precarious circumstances of many families for a child with a disability: 82% reported lack of targeted information; ½ experienced decline in mental health; 1/3 impacted by cancellation of support workers; Uncertainty about access to school based education.

"What are these children's right in terms of getting an education but in a safe environment. Schools are not safe places, especially if the child has difficulty understanding the social distancing rules as well as complete basic tasks like washing their hands properly."

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/paec/COVID-19_Inquiry/Submissions/2b._Children_and_Young_People_with_Disability_Australia.pdf

Physical activity and screen time:

As preventative measures to 'flatten the curve' there were school and park closures, stay at home orders and social distancing guidelines. Studies highlighted the renewed perspective of outdoor space- using front yards, backyards and cycling more.

- Of 375 AU parents, 71% reported increased screen time- (Tucci, Mitchell & Thomas 2020)

- Of 16,177 NSW parents, 48% reported increase in screen time; 31% reported PA decreased a lot (Reece et al 2020)

- Of 157 WA parents, 64% reported a 50% increase in minutes of screen time per week, 77% reported no change in total minutes of physical activity per week however the time and duration of active free play did increase (Nathan et al 2021)

Vivian's research highlighted the whole of community approach to increase physical activity/ outdoor engagement and minimize time spent indoors.
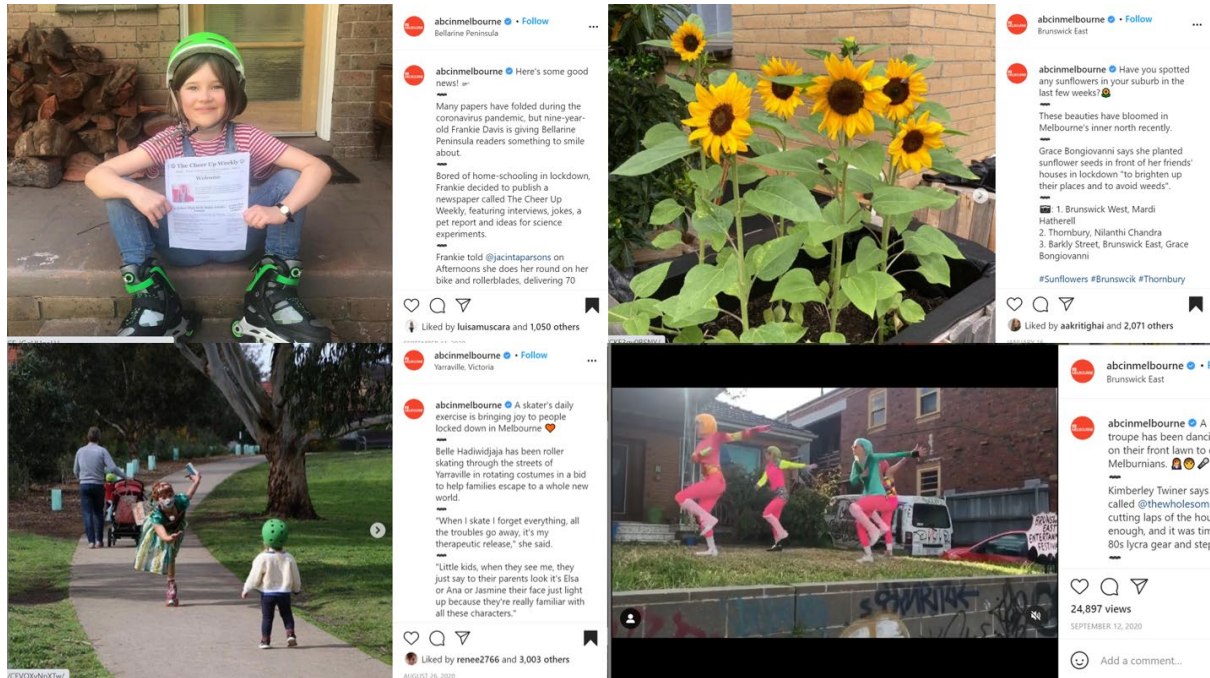
COVID-19 The Lived Experience of Children and Young People

Celia from Darebin City Council presented their Voice Lab project that aimed to capture the views of Darebin children as they experienced the impacts of COVID during 2020. The video can be viewed here: www.Darebin.Vic.gov.au/childrensvoices

The Commission for Children and Young People presented information on their consultation with Victorian children and young people. A new guide that responds to Standard 7 Empowerment of the Child Safe Standards is now available : https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Empowerment-and-Participation-Guide/CCYP-Empowerment-and-participation-guide-for-Web.pdf

Kids Own Publishing shared their 2020 consultation projects with children during lock down. Please visit **https://kidsownpublishing.com/in-2020-through-childrens-eyes/** or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tr5KaAmeK1E

For more accounts of children's lived experiences, visit Rookie Reports - Victorian Kids COVID Lockdown Diaries **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9FsvxBGTlo**

Responding to the impacts of COVID-19. Why is it more important than ever to uphold the CFCC principles? What can be done to moderate the impacts & reconnect children and young people with community life?

Discussion points included:

Important that children and young people have opportunities to participate and that their voices are heard.

Disadvantage and vulnerability have been amplified during COVID-19 and we need to continue to advocate for these children and families.

Many children and families are not accessing our services and we need to connect and reconnect with them.

Access to technology was a big issue for some families during lockdown and we need to be better prepared in the future.

Social connectivity and relationship building should be a major focus.

The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of children very concerning.

It is up to us to share the collective wisdom of children and young people.

The key takeaway points from research for organisations were:

1. Reactivate places and spaces
2. Understand and foster children's relationship with nature
3. Support children's innovative and creative spirit
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dPh5z3pSwk
4. Connect children with the consistent quality information
5. Rethink who we listen to and how
6. Influence and advocate with children
7. Rethink how we work and what we value
8. Join forces to improve child safety

Participants at the meeting were asked to complete an online survey

https://forms.gle/zAuvgg8N27HxtqP57

Meeting ended 12.30pm