

# Children's Plan Background Paper 2024<sup>1</sup>



Artwork by local artist, James Parker



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<sup>1</sup> Last updated 30 January 2024

## Kaurna Acknowledgement

Campbelltown City Council acknowledges that we meet on the traditional Country of the Kaurna people and respect their physical and spiritual connection to Country. We as Council will act in a way that pays respect to Kaurna Heritage. We also acknowledge elder's past, present, and future and the continuing importance of their living culture.



**Goodstart Early Learning Campbelltown Acknowledgement of Country. Developed in 2019 by children with the support of staff and feedback from Senior Kaurna Man, Mickey Obrien**



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## About the Background Paper

The background paper is a detailed reference document to provide rationale (the why) for the Children's Plan. This includes:

- A summary of past Council initiatives that are the foundations or building blocks for the next phase of the Children's Plan.
- Community research - formal and informal community research methods have included conversations, observations, workshops and surveys with children, families, and organisations.
- Relevant academic research and data as well as government policy, as part of an evidence-informed approach.

The background paper is constantly updated as new information becomes available.



## Background

Past initiatives provide a strong foundation for the Children's Plan.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 2009   | The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) was launched, and a three-year cycle of child development data collection (at 5 years of age) and local, state, and national analysis commenced.  |
| 2009 - | AEDC has contributed to evidence informed Child Friendly Campbelltown initiatives.   |
| 2010   | A Council internal audit identified 'children' or 'families' did not appear in Council strategic documents including the Annual Business Plan and Annual Budget.   |
| 2011   | Dr Fraser Mustard, Adelaide Thinker in Residence, argued for early years investment for economic and social benefit. Children's Centres as a community hub were established including the il nido Children's Centre in the Campbelltown City Council area. |
| 2011   | Children and families embedded in Council's Annual budget and business plan.   |
| 2012   | AEDC indicated a need for targeted focus in the suburbs of Campbelltown & Paradise. Council report <i>'How can we better improve the wellbeing, learning and development of children in the Campbelltown &amp; Paradise area'</i> was developed.           |
- AEDC data was a catalyst for Council and il nido Children's Centre partnerships and children's voice projects.





- 2012 Council commissioned a research report on factors contributing to children's development and wellbeing. This research informed Child Friendly Campbelltown initiatives.
- 2012-2017 Council secured 'OPAL' (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) funding to support children and families to eat well and be active. Annual campaigns motivated community action and supportive structural change. For example, **Water. The Original Cool Drink** campaign motivated children to drink more water and less soft drink. Structural change included an increase in the quality and number of public drinking fountains in Campbelltown Public Spaces.
- 2012 Child Friendly SA was established. Council was one of 3 Council pilot sites selected to undertake UNICEF Australia Child Friendly City accreditation. The other Council sites were Onkaparinga and Gawler.
- 2012 - 2014 Council facilitated children's voice contribution to play space redevelopment projects. Since these pilot projects, opportunities have been available for children's voice for all Council Playspace developments.
- 2013 Carla Rinaldi, Adelaide Thinker in Residence, advocated for a Child Friendly City where children are visible, competent learners and active citizens in their community. These principles were embedded in Child Friendly Campbelltown and the Community Development Officer (Children and Families) role statement.
- 2013 - Council staff have engaged with children ranging from 4 years old to 13 years olds to inform Council Strategic Plans, Library, Aquatic Recreation Centre & Playground designs, Fourth Creek / Morialta Parri trail improvements, walking and cycling plans and school holiday programs.
- 2013 – 2015 Council developed the Social Plan, informed through consultation with over 2000 residents, including children and families. Council's commitment to supporting children and families was embedded in the Social Plan.



- 2014-15 Council allocated a permanent part time Community Development Officer (Children and Families) to support Child Friendly Campbelltown initiatives.
- 2015 Council was awarded 'bronze' Child Friendly City accreditation from UNICEF Australia.
- 2015 - Over 125 mothers in Campbelltown & Charles Sturt Councils informed a practical guide to creating supportive environments for breastfeeding. 13 organisations in Campbelltown are recognised as Breast Feeding Welcome Here sites.
- 2013 - Tim Gill, child development expert delivered community forums in  
2016 Campbelltown in 2013 and 2016. Key messages included:
- Balance risk with benefit when making decisions about playground design. (Ball DJ. et al 2012).
  - Children need time and space to play & move freely in their neighbourhood. Car convenience planning in local neighbourhoods needs to be balanced with planning for safe children's play and independent mobility. (Gill, T. 2021).
- 2014 Council changed their playground policy to support a risk benefit approach. Walking and cycling plans were endorsed and the actions to address the needs of vulnerable road users, including children, were embedded in these plans.
- 2014 - Council endorsed Street Play as an initiative to support children's play on quiet local roads. 33 Street Play activities have been attended by over 1,650 residents in Campbelltown since 2014.
- 2014 - Over 150 children have participated in learn to ride programs. A learn to ride bike track was built in Flinders Parade Reserve, Newton.
- 2016 Dr Emily Moskwa article 'Playwriting 101: Moving play beyond the playground' published in Journal of Playwork Practice. It documented whole of community activity to support children's play.



- 2017 Dr Jane Webb-Williams published research report for Council 'Connecting Community through Children's play: A Collective Impact Research Project. It documented a local neighbourhood development project in Hectorville.
- 2018 Campbelltown AEDC data indicated a significant improvement in children's physical health when comparing 2009 and 2018 data.
- 2021 AEDC data indicated a mixed picture. See Campbelltown Children and Families Profile for more information.
- 2022- The Children Friendly Campbelltown Working Group was established comprising Council, Childcare, Preschool and Primary School key contacts.
- 2022- Council awarded an LGA Early Years Innovation Grant to deliver a Co-designed Children's Policy and Children's Plan.
- 2023 Council commissioned a 'Campbelltown Village-Raising Children Report'. This is informing 'whole of community' approaches to support Campbelltown Children and Families.
- 2023 Council commissioned Magill Deep Dive Research & Report in response to 2021 AEDC. This was about formal and informal engagement with Magill families to better understand the challenges and opportunities for raising children.
- 2023 Children's Policy endorsed by Council. Council Staff engaged with children ranging from 4 years old to 13 years old to inform this Policy. Children shared their views about a range of things including what they think Child Friendly is, what they like about their community, who they spend time with and what they do, and why asking children for their opinions and ideas is important.
- 2023 Video case study Council-Kindergarten Street Play Partnerships developed.

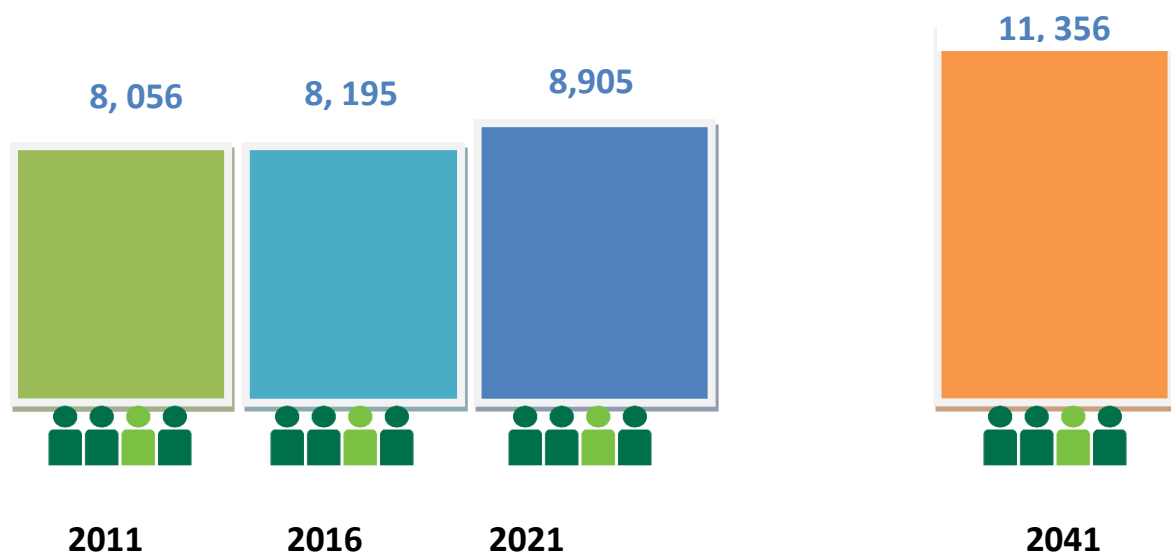




## Campbelltown Children and Families Profile

### Campbelltown Children and Families ABS profile

In Campbelltown every 1 in 6 people is aged under 14. In 2021, there were 8,905 children aged 0-14 (16% of total population) living in Campbelltown compared to 8,195 in 2011. By 2041, this is projected to increase to 11,356 (16% of the total population). This includes a projected increase of 901 children 0 – 4 years old, 760 5 – 9 years old, and 790 10 – 14 years old (ABS, 2021).



There are 21,401 households in the Campbelltown LGA.

- 31.6% are households living with children.
- 10.6% report as single parent households.
- 3,861 (18%) are low-income households (less than \$ 650pw).
- 907 are renting social housing (4.3%).
- 1,586 are households with no motor vehicle (7.4%).
- 13.5% of children are born overseas and of those, 32% English is a second language.
- ABS (2016 v 2021) indicate large changes in birthplace countries in recent years, especially for those born in India (+1, 090) and China (+842).



## Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC is a nationwide census of early childhood development captured as children transition into their first year of school and is a reliable measure of how children are developing. The AEDC measures how children are developing as they transition into their first year of school based on 5 key areas known as domains.

1. Physical health and wellbeing
2. Social competence
3. Emotional maturity
4. Language and cognitive skills (school-based)
5. Communication skills and general knowledge.

The AEDC 2021 Campbelltown Profile shows most children in Campbelltown are 'on track' (80%) across the 5 AEDC domains. However, there is a mixed picture when analysing individual domain trends.

1. A significant increase in the percentage of children 'on track' in the physical health and wellbeing domain from **79.5% (2009) to 84.3% (2018)**
2. Significant increases in the percentage of children vulnerable in the
  - a. emotional maturity domain from **6.6% (2009) to 8.8% (2021)**,
  - b. language and cognitive skills domain from **2.6% (2009) to 5.9% (2021)**,
  - c. Communication skills and general knowledge domain from **6.0% (2009) to 8.8% (2021)**.

Summary indicators (see table below) show there has been a **significant increase\*** in the percentage of children who are vulnerable on 2 or more domains.

### AEDC Campbelltown Data: 2009, 2018 and 2021

Summary Indicators	2009	2018	2021
On track %	81.6	82.6	80.7
Vulnerable on 1 domain	17.7	17.6	20.1
<b>Vulnerable on 2 or more domains (DV2)</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>11.5</b>

**70 children are in the DV2 category, 25 live in Magill.**



## A snapshot of 2015 vs 2021 AEDC in Campbelltown

	2015	2021
Children with English as a second language	24.1	32.9
Children attending Centre-based care	32.5	40.0
Children being cared for by a Grandparent	34.4	28.5
Children attending Playgroup	70.6	58.0
Children attending Preschool/Kindergarten	98.3	97.3

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people born overseas increased by 1280 or 8.1% in the Campbelltown LGA. The largest changes in birthplace countries were for those born in China (+792 persons), India (+521 persons), Italy (-435 persons), United Kingdom (-170 persons)

### Children's Wellbeing; Protective Factors

Attending preschool is a protective factor for children's wellbeing. Other factors include secure and affordable housing, secure and meaningful employment (of families), non-smoking parents, living in a high SEIFA index neighbourhood, and access to quality outdoor space, breast-feeding, eating well and being active.

### Children with additional needs.

**There has been a gradual increase** in the number of children identified by teachers as requiring further assessment in the Campbelltown LGA.

	SA	Campbelltown		
	2021	2015	2018	2021
	%	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Children with additional needs status	6.1	5.2 (29)	3.0 (17)	3.9 (25)
Children identified by teachers as requiring further assessment.	16.7	12.3 (65)	12.7 (71)	14.3 (86)



### **Existing or emerging State and National Plans and Reports**

1. Child Development Council Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People. Available at <https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/outcomes-framework/>
2. National Early Years Strategy (draft). Available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services/early-years-strategy>
3. South Australia Early Learning Strategy (2021-2031). Available at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/departments/strategies-and-plans/early-learning-strategy>.
4. Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care in SA Report (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.royalcommissionecec.sa.gov.au/what-is-the-royal-commission/about>
5. Wellbeing SA Strategic Plan (2025), the early years focus area. Available at <https://www.wellbeingsa.sa.gov.au/about-wellbeing-sa/strategy-plans/strategic-plan-2020-2025>



## Childcare, Early Learning, Preschools and Primary Schools

<p><b>Childcare and Early Learning Centres (ELC)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Campbelltown Community Children's Centre</li> <li>2. Eden Academy Early Learning Centre (ELC), Newton.</li> <li>3. Emali ELC, Hectorville</li> <li>4. Goodstart ELC, Campbelltown</li> <li>5. Goodstart ELC, Rostrevor</li> <li>6. Greenleaves ELC, Newton</li> <li>7. St. Ignatius ELC</li> <li>8. Magill Community Children's Centre</li> <li>9. Nido Early School, Athelstone</li> <li>10. Nido Early School, Paradise</li> <li>11. Rostrevor College Stepping Stone ELC</li> <li>12. Sunrise Christian School ELC, Paradise</li> </ol> <p><b>Preschools and Kindergartens</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Athelstone Preschool</li> <li>2. Campbelltown Preschool</li> <li>3. Paradise Kindergarten</li> <li>4. il nido Children's Centre</li> <li>5. Thorndon Park Kindy</li> <li>6. Rostrevor Kindergarten</li> <li>7. Magill Kindy</li> </ol>	<p><b>Primary Schools (PS)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Athelstone PS</li> <li>2. Charles Campbell College</li> <li>3. East Marden PS</li> <li>4. Magill PS</li> <li>5. Paradise PS</li> <li>6. Stradbroke PS</li> <li>7. Rostrevor College</li> <li>8. St. Francis of Assisi School</li> <li>9. St Ignatius College</li> <li>10. St. Joseph's School, Hectorville</li> <li>11. St. Joseph's School, Tranmere</li> <li>12. Sunrise Primary School</li> <li>13. Thorndon Park PS</li> </ol>
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## Playgroups

There are 12 Playgroups in are near the Campbelltown Council area including.

- 1 Aboriginal focussed playgroup.
- 1 Dads focussed playgroup.
- 1 Multicultural focussed playgroup.
- 4 Church based playgroups.
- 4 playgroups at il nido Children's Centre.
- 1 playgroup based at a Catholic Primary School.
- 1 playgroup based at a local preschool.

More information

[www.campbelltown.sa.gov.au/community/childrenandfamilies/other-resources](http://www.campbelltown.sa.gov.au/community/childrenandfamilies/other-resources)



## Children's Plan at a Glance

The Children's Plan has been informed by community engagement (children, families, and organisations) and academic and government policy research. It has led to the development of a plan with four themes and focus areas within each theme.

Themes	Focus areas
My Connection	Child - parent Family - Family Family - service providers Connected service providers Books and reading
My Play	Playgroups Play beyond playgrounds Playgrounds
My Neighbourhood	Places to connect Freedom to move
My Ideas	Children as citizens Children's voice

An annual action plan will be developed and implemented, prioritising actions each year.





## My Connection

A desire to be more connected was the strongest theme to emerge from conversations with children and families at community gatherings, an online survey of parents and 1:1 meetings and focus groups with organisations.

The Children's Plan has 5 focus areas for this theme, acknowledging the importance of connection between a child and their primary carer (s) through to improved connections and partnerships between organisations.

### Child-Parent Connection

**Research** (Winter, 2010) shows

- Parenting is the primary influence on children's development.
- The first 3 years are the period of the most rapid growth and development. By the time a child is three years old, 90% of their brain has been developed.
- The quality of relationships and learning environments for babies and toddlers is critically important. Children are born ready to learn, and the best learning happens in nurturing relationships. They learn and develop through being engaged and doing, watching, and copying.
- The key message for parents is to include children in everyday, nurturing life, where they are loved, talked with, played with and are well nourished; where they can socialise and explore and are kept safe from chronically chaotic or abusive environments.
- There is an over-representation of refugee/parents from non-English speaking background agreeing to statements that do not align with the evidence base. For example,
  - 18.4% of refugee parents said that the first 5 years were not very important for children's future learning, compared with 3.7% of non-refugee parents.
  - 50% refugee parents said that parents need to be strict with a baby to avoid spoiling them.



## Campbelltown Research

- Children love spending time with family and friends.  
*"I play outside with my dog then annoy my brother." (Years 3-4)*  
*"I went to Flynn's house (my cousin) then we went to the playground." (Years 3-4)*
- Campbelltown is a multicultural community, and with this comes a diversity of beliefs about living and growing up within a community. (Millbanks, 2023)
- The largest changes in birthplace countries in Campbelltown were for those born in India (+1, 090) and China (+842) (ABS 2016 v 2021).
- Topics like parenting practices, beliefs about community, understanding of schooling and education, beliefs about nutrition and sleep are diverse amongst the community (Millbanks, 2023).
- Some families report feelings of being overwhelmed and underprepared for parenting today. Many families are looking to online sources of information but finding it hard to put this into practice or to find the information that is accurate and correct. (Millbanks, 2023b).
- Most Campbelltown children are on track (AEDC, 2021). However,
  - a. There has been a significant increase in the number of children vulnerable on two or more of five domains, from 34 to 70 children or 7.5% to 11.5%. 25 out of those 70 children reside in Magill (2009 v 2021).
  - b. There has been an increase in the number of children recommended for further assessment from 65 to 86 or 12.3% to 14.3% (2015 v 2021).



## Family-Family Connection

### Campbelltown Research

- An online survey of parents was conducted in December 2022 and included questions about connection.

Question	Response
<i>How connected do you feel to other families?’</i>	<b>41% rated 1 or 2</b> out of five where 1 = not at all connected and 5 = very connected.
<i>Would you like to be more connected?</i>	<b>74% answered yes</b> and 23% answered maybe.
<i>What would help you to be more connected?</i>	<b>44% answered</b> regular local community activities including park and street gatherings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council coordinated several community play street and park activities in Magill in response to 2021 Magill AEDC data. One family attended 3 of these local activities and the mother said:  <i>“I went along to the Community BBQ at Nightingale Reserve in the hopes of meeting some locals and build connections. I made friends with a lovely family who lived only 100m away. Our kids are the same age and became instant best buddies. They both started at Magill Kindergarten 6 months later and the fact that they knew each other made a huge impact on the transition. Now we walk home together every Kindy Day.</i>  <i>There is a sense of connectedness in the neighbourhood that I never felt before despite living here 10 years.”</i></li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kindy leaders report opportunities to connect families is needed, especially because COVID has contributed to more social isolation. Families loved connecting through Kindy play streets.</li></ul>	



## **Family-Service Providers**

### **Policy Research**

Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (2023), recommendations include:

- Improve access to parenting groups,
- Improve information about childcare quality,
- Improve child development checks access,
- Improve information to parents through the ‘Words Grow Minds’ campaign and
- Build capacity for childcare that connects parents to other supports.

Winter, P. (2010) recommendations remain relevant:

- Provide age specific initiatives e.g. baby, toddler, preschooler.
- Provide information at times when parents are ready for the information e.g. toddler information when the child is a toddler.
- Provide more initiatives welcoming to fathers.
- Improve the cultural appropriateness of initiatives and/or increase cultural outreach.
- Encourage parents to be involved in the design of parenting initiatives.

### **Campbelltown research**

- Barriers to accessing programs and services in Magill were raised in conversations with families at 5 Magill Community Play Dates in 2023. (Millbank, 2023b)
  - Inconvenient times due to work commitments.
  - Too far to travel.
  - Unsure of what is available if new to the area.
  - Language was a barrier for families from a non-English speaking background.
  - Families with children with additional needs expressed difficulty in accessing support for their children. They reported travelling outside of the area and waiting lists to access early intervention services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc).



- Many culturally diverse families are not accessing programs (early childhood services, library, playgroups) before their children reach preschool. This means that they aren't accessing parenting and education information, health information and aren't aware of the services that are available to them. (Millbank, 2023)
- Barriers to access for some culturally diverse families include the cost of childcare and depending on their migration status (visa), many aren't able to access Childcare Benefit (**CCB**) from the Federal Government to contribute to the cost of care. (Millbank, 2023)

### **Connected Service Providers**

### **Policy Research**

Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care (2023).

- The Commission spoke specifically about the role of local facilitators and the importance of supporting connections in communities.
- Recommendation 8 talks about creating regular opportunities for connection ('the glue') between different service providers working with families with young children in local areas and the need for community navigators working with families.

### **Campbelltown Research**

- A desire for improved communications and better connections was a strong theme from a stakeholder focus group in 2022.

*"We want to connect... my hopes and dreams are we really do refer to one another through these connections." (Preschool Director)*

*"I want to see more connection in the community, I mean that's very big sky. I want to see, you know, more community family connections. So, when they come into our community, they feel like they come into a community." (Primary School Principal)*

- Many schools have bi-lingual educators.
- School sites have systematic pressures that limit time to invest in new initiatives and partnerships. (Millbanks, 2023)



- Alignment to legislation, the National Quality Framework, (AGDE, 2022), and school plans may help build more Council-school partnerships.

The National Quality Framework has a definition of ‘belonging’ for children that aligns with Council’s Children’s Plan.

*‘Experiencing belonging – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence. Children belong to diverse families, neighbourhoods, local and global communities. Belonging acknowledges children’s interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, trusting relationships and affirming experiences are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.’*

- There are 12 Childcare and Early Learning Centres in the Council area. These centres have expressed interest in attending networking sessions to share information on challenges and opportunities for working together to support children and families.
- The percentage of children attending Centre-based care has increased from 32.5% to 40.0% (2015 v 2021 AEDC).

## **Connection through books and reading**

### **Research**

- Children love to learn new things when they have developed an early interest in reading and counting and recognise numbers and shapes.
- Babies become confident learners through listening to stories, being sung to and hearing adults talk about what they see.
- Toddlers enjoy reading books with adults, listening to stories and playing learning games.
- Children become confident by reading books, writing stories, and being supported on research topics of interest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> AEDC fact sheet





AEDC data indicates:

- A significant increase in the percentage of children vulnerable in their language and cognitive skills development. In 2009, twenty-seven children (2.6%) were vulnerable, and this has increased to 36 children (5.9%) in 2021.

### Policy research

- The number of children vulnerable in their language and cognitive skills development is a statewide trend and a statewide roll out of the Words Grow Minds campaign has been recommended to address this issue.<sup>3</sup>

### Campbelltown Community Engagement

- The Council Library is popular with children and families and schools are prioritising reading in curriculum. But there are some barriers to access for families where English is a second language or if there is stigma associated with parents with low literacy.

*“I want to get more library cards in kids’ hands. That’s my dream especially. I’m trying to reach those who fear libraries.” (Primary School Principal)*

*“There is stigma where parents have low literacy. We need to build trusting relationships through safe places.” (Preschool Director)*

- Parents and service providers have expressed a desire for more outreach services, going to children and families who experience barriers to visiting the library.

*“It would have been fun if there was a Storytime in the Park where the librarian does the regular Storytime session outdoors.” (Magill resident)*

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<sup>3</sup> Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care in SA, 2023



## My Play

This theme emerges from decades of international evidence on the importance of enshrining play as an international right of children. Fulfilling this duty in our community is a part of the commitment Australia made more than 30 years ago in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) article 31 which states:

*Every child has the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.*

The Children's Plan has 3 focus areas for this theme reflecting the value our community places on our playgrounds and research showing play beyond playgrounds is an important part of children's development.

### Council background

- Council has a strong history of supporting a range of play initiatives.
- Campbelltown has an abundance of dedicated community, paid and volunteer leaders in childcare, education and playgroup settings who understand the value of play to support children's development.
- Campbelltown is also blessed with a range of parks, trails, natural spaces, and playgrounds that provide access to outdoor places for play.

### Play Research (Play Research, 2023)

- Benefits of play include cognitive development, social and emotional health, physical health, improvements to attention, coping, memory, solving problems, dealing with trauma, planning and decision-making skills, motivation to learn, building friendships and social skills, just to name a few.

### Campbelltown Research

- Children love to play.  
*"It's good to be a child because you can play. Adults don't play so much."* (4yo)  
  
*"I play footy (at local club) and basketball (at the ARC) and practice on my own."* (10yo)



*“A good thing about kids is that they get to play a lot and they get to go to parks. A bad thing about kids is that kids can't go places by themselves, and they have to go to school.” (5yo, Charles Campbell College)*

*“Sometimes I feel I have all the time in the world to have fun.” (Year 3 East Marden Primary School)*

*“After school I also eat, rest, do homework, and play sports with my brother.” (Year 4 Paradise Primary School)*

- Community leaders report children’s access to play is diminishing.
- 2021 AEDC data indicates participation in Playgroups in SA has been low and is decreasing from 70.6% in 2015 to 58% in 2021.
- The value of play is being lost in the context of many factors including busy working parent lives, the impact of technology, curriculum not valuing the play in child development, urban development where size of backyards is diminishing, and local roads are unsafe, and structured children’s lives that reduce opportunity for free play.

## **Playgroups**

**Playgroup Research** (Child Welfare Information Gateway,2014).

- Children who do not attend playgroups are 1.7 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable.

## **Campbelltown Research (2022 Online parent survey)**

- Parents were asked about barriers to Playgroup participation. Responses were mixed and included:

*“All seem to be church affiliated, and I’m worried it's just a way to get people to join the church/religion.”*

*Time not suitable because working fulltime.”*

- Parents were asked ‘would you like to be involved in a local playgroup?’ 43% answered yes.
- The Magill Community Play Dates reinforced interest in a community-based playgroup, held at a convenient time and welcoming for a diverse local community.



- There is interest in a weekend playgroup that could be led by community members with support from Council.

### **Government Policy Research**

- The State Government Early Learning Strategy (2021 to 2031) includes a long-term commitment to maintaining a coordinated and high-quality playgroup system. This creates an opportunity to advocate for resources to improve the local playgroup system in Campbelltown.
- Facilitated playgroups to support families from non-English speaking backgrounds and families with children with additional needs should be considered.

### **Play Beyond Playgrounds**

### **Campbelltown Research**

- Children value freedom, choices and time to relax.

*“Sometimes I feel I have all the time in the world to have fun.” (4yo)*

*“After school I also eat, rest, do homework, and play sports with my brother.” (10 yo)*

*“I love riding my bike at the play street with my friends Everly, Ali & Charlie & meeting new friends.” (4 yo)*

- Kindy leaders report loose parts play is important for children’s development and families need education on the importance of pretend play.

**Child Friendly Urban Design** (Gill, 2021). An emerging field of child-friendly urban planning:

- It advocates for planning and design of neighbourhoods that create a safe and pleasant environment for children to play and socialise with a high level of freedom.
- The dominance of cars in cities is considered one of the biggest barriers to child friendly neighborhoods.
- Council hosted Tim Gill in 2013 and 2016. He presented to senior staff and Elected Members on rethinking local neighbourhood development to be more child friendly and less car friendly.



## Council background

- Council has supported over 35 Street Play events since 2013. These are temporary street closures on quiet local streets that enable residents of all ages to connect and play on their street. Common to all these events has been positive feedback on the opportunity to play and connect with neighbours. Children are observed adapting quickly and enjoying the extra space and freedom to play on their street when car access is limited.

## Playgrounds

### Council background

- Playgrounds are highly valued by the Campbelltown Community.
- When asked ‘what do you love most about where you live?’ the most popular response (20%) from parents was proximity to a park or playground.

*“Green trees, linear park trail, playgrounds, and libraries.” (Campbelltown mother of 3 children.)*

- Council’s Playground and Exercise Equipment Development and Maintenance Policy (2021) includes a commitment to authentic engagement with children to inform playground design and to providing a range of play choices including risky and nature play based play.
- Children’s engagement in Council playground design decision is embedded in the Community Engagement process and children have been recruited to have their say through schools and community activities.
- There has been mixed feedback on the level of authentic engagement in playground consultations. Millbanks (2023) reports a ‘tick the box’ approach to children’s participation can have a negative impact.

*“... I could see the difference it made to the children’s level of engagement and ownership and their eagerness to be involved in future consultations based on how their feedback was valued, used, and reported back on during future sessions. Children understand when an adult is being genuine (regardless of their age) and will respond appropriately.”*



## My Neighbourhood

Research shows improvements to the quality of social interaction in public open space and the built environment can make a difference to communities, including those experiencing disadvantage (Wallerich L. et al 2023).

Internationally, child-friendly Urban Planners argue (Gill, 2021) local roads are safer and more pleasant for connection, play, walking and cycling with fewer and slower cars.

The Children's Plan has 2 focus areas under this theme. One focus is creating local opportunities for social connection. The other focus is creating a supportive environment for children's independent mobility.

### Places to Connect

#### Campbelltown research

- Children have provided their vision for a Child Friendly Campbelltown in consultations through pre-schools and primary schools.

*"It would feel safe and happy. It would probably have parks, streetlights, trees that make lots of shade, more public bathrooms and lots of plants and pretty flowers. With lots of nice houses and lots of people playing games." (Years 3-4)*

*"Cars stop for children. No speeding." (Student Representative Council, Athelstone Primary School)*

*"Children walking to school and allowed to feel safe. Lots of safe areas kids can play in." (Years 3-4)*

- Children want the community they live in to be safe & kind.

*"If someone looks sad, they would ask if they are feeling okay."*

*"To be able to feel safe in Campbelltown. To be able to be happy in our local area. To be able to feel protected by others." (Years 3-4)*





*“Inclusive, happy, kindness, saying hi to next door neighbours, full of laughter, and kids playing together.” (Years 3-4)*

*“It would feel like happiness. It would look like everyone was being kind.” (Year 3-4's.)*

*“Knowing someone is there for you if you feel unsafe. Smile and say hello. Flowers, to keep the people happy, Lots of birds.” (Year 3-4)*

- In a Child Friendly Campbelltown survey of over 50 parents in 2022, 41% rated their feeling of connection to other families as very low, or ‘not at all connected’. 75% of parents said they would like to be more connected. Many families said they would like to help build these connections.

*“I’d love to be able to send a group text to local families and say we are going to nightingale park sat at 3 - anyone who is free come along” (Magill Kindy Parent)*

### **Research (AEDC, 2021)**

- The recent increase in children considered to be developmentally vulnerable (on 2 or more of 5 domains) in 2021 (11.5%) compared to 2015 (7.8%), approximately a quarter of those children live in Magill.

### **Child Wellbeing Research**

- Social networks within the neighbourhood can provide supportive spaces where children and families feel safe. (Wallerich L., et. al. 2023)
- Local social cohesion also plays an important role in children’s developmental health: learning language, managing emotions & behaviour. (Wallerich L., et. al. 2023)
- Local social support provided to mothers, informally or formally, is important and particularly influential on the development of children. (Wallerich L., et. al. 2023)



## Freedom to Move

### Council background

- Council invests in local parks, trails and natural space improvements and has endorsed walking and cycling plans.
- Examples of more child friendly public spaces beyond playgrounds, include Magill Village, Jan Street and Hamilton Terrace. Common to these improvements are slower speed limits, wider footpaths, tree plantings for shade and amenity, and safe road crossings for people walking, wheeling, or rolling.

### Campbelltown research

- Despite built environment and public space improvements, children's families are mostly car dependent in travel to early learning, school, friends, parks, and shops.
- Parents say they would like their children to walk or cycle in their local neighbourhood, but don't feel safe to do so. To counter this, they would like:

*"Safer streets to ride (reduced speed of cars, bike lanes), more pocket parks and play spaces, increased green space and tree canopy."*

- Council consulted community on a slower speed limit on Stradbroke Road near the Morialta Mukanthi Conservation Park Playground and Fourth Creek Morialta Parri, the change was not supported. So, despite research showing cars are the biggest barrier to child friendly neighbourhoods, car convenience is highly valued by our community.



## **My ideas**

This theme is core to the vision of the Children's Plan to value children as competent citizens and for their rights to be recognised.

The Children's Plan has 2 focus areas under this theme. The first focus is about promoting the rights of children under international, national and state legislation. The second is about translating these rights into a commitment to ensuring children have a voice in decision making that impacts their lives.

### **Children as Citizens**

#### **International Policy**

- The international convention is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, (UNCRC),1989) states.

*Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions considered.*

#### **Council policy**

- Council values children as capable, competent, and active citizens and is committed to work with children to bring their ideas together to inform Child Friendly Campbelltown. This commitment has been embedded in Council's Children Policy.

### **Children's Voice**

#### **Government Policy**

- The Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia (Connolly, H. ,2020) states:

*"At the core of creating child friendly environments is the need for organisations to put policies and procedures in place that ensure children...feel they are being listened to and believed.*



*Committing to child friendly environments is not merely something that is nice to do. It is a requirement under international conventions that are embedded in State legislation.”*

### **Campbelltown research**

- Children value having their ideas and opinions heard:

*“It's not fair if adults get their say only. It's important for kids to join in because adults' decisions affect children.” (Years 3-7)*

*“We are the next generation. If they don't let us have a say now, we might not know how to make decisions as adults.” (Year 7)*

- Children want to have their say on issues and provide valuable insight when provided the opportunity.

*“We are the future, so we need to make sure the opinions are good.” (Years 3-4)*

*“To make the Community better is to listen to children and to take them seriously, not a joke.” (Years 3-4)*

*“As it is our neighbourhood, and we may see things differently. It is important we enjoy our childhood as we only get it once.” (Years 3-4)*

- A local educator experienced a consultation with children, that appeared to be a ‘tick the box’ process. This negatively impacted the children’s level of engagement, ownership, and eagerness to be involved in future consultations. The educator said:

*“Children understand when an adult is being genuine (regardless of their age) and will respond appropriately.”*

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**Conversations and connection with children, families and organisations will continue as well as reviews of relevant evidence and policy. This Background Paper will be updated regularly to reflect the new and emerging evidence informed context.**



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