



CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF BALLARAT
DECEMBER 2020



***“Our words are true
and from the heart.”***

Isabella, aged 11

***“We’re the ones that are
going to live in adults
choices...”*** ***Millie, aged 12***



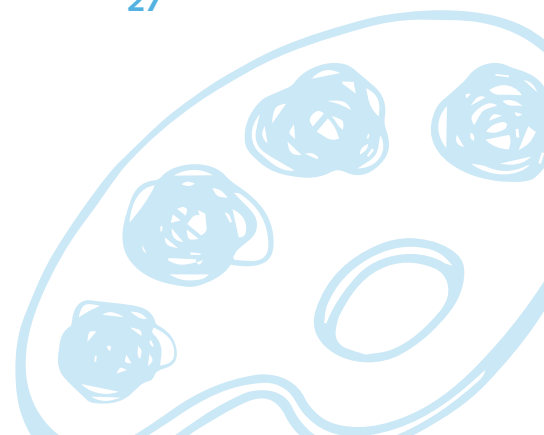
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

We would also like to acknowledge the many children who contributed their time and shared their experiences as part of this consultation. We would also like to thank our program partners for sharing this consultation among their networks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Why children's voices matter	7
1.2 Ballarat is a Child Friendly City	8
1.3 The importance of children across City of Ballarat policies and frameworks	9
2. WHAT MATTERS TO CHILDREN IN BALLARAT IN 2020	10
2.1 What we did	10
2.2 What children in Ballarat told us	11
2.2.1 Children have a strong desire to be heard	11
2.2.2 What children love about Ballarat	15
2.2.3 What makes a good neighbourhood	19
2.3 How they told us	22
3. STEPS FOR STRENGTHENING AS A CHILD FRIENDLY CITY	23
3.1 Building Blocks: Engaging children across the city of Ballarat in 2021	23
3.1.1 Work with the findings of the 2020 children's consultation	23
3.1.2 Embed consultation children in engagement plans	23
3.1.3 Engage children in the development of the new council plan	24
3.1.4 Connect with our team for support	24
3.2 Top of the class: A vision for Ballarat as a leading Child Friendly City	25
3.3 Opportunities to be a leading Child Friendly City	25
4. APPENDIX A: VISUAL SUBMISSIONS	27



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ballarat is a signatory to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities¹. The charter recognises that without voting rights, the ability of children to influence the communities they live in is limited by the opportunities afforded to them by adults.

There are more than 20,000 children in Ballarat, and children aged 13 years and younger make up approximately 20% of our population². Including children in city planning and decisions alongside young people³ and adults is essential if the City of Ballarat is to address the priorities and needs of its entire electorate, and to be a truly Child Friendly City.

In October and November 2020, the City of Ballarat conducted a children's consultation, and received responses from 148 children aged from two to 13 years old, who shared their opinions and experiences on three issues:

1. Why adults should listen to children
2. What makes a good neighbourhood, and
3. What they love about Ballarat.

Children's written submissions via MySay and hard copy were frank, passionate and articulate. Across all three consultation questions children demonstrated their strong engagement with the issue and their clarity about what was important to them. These written submissions were also accompanied by visual submissions by 14 children. These included drawings and photographs the children shared to express themselves and one was a screen shot of responses.

In their visual artworks, children shared many of the things they loved about Ballarat and were important to them. These responses strongly feature the landscape and nature, animals and people, and the beauty children identify in Ballarat. The complete visual submissions are included at appendix A.

It is hoped that future consultations will include the capability to accept video submissions.

WHAT WE LEARNED

CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG DESIRE TO BE HEARD

Children were able to provide a range of reasons why adults should listen to them, and these reasons reflected a number of fundamental principles. Half of children (51%) emphasised that children had unique knowledge or perspectives to and that adults would benefit from attending to these perspectives. One third (34%) of children identified their inclusion as an issue of justice on the basis of their personhood, seeing themselves as just as important as anyone else, and one in five (19%) felt that they were invested in the future at least as much, or more than, today's adults.

“That’s a big, hard question. You have to listen to everyone, not just kids. maybe poor people too.” Arkady, aged 7

“Because everyone has a say, it wouldn’t be fair for kids not to have a voice in the world just because of their age” Brooke, aged 12

1. Victorian Local Government Authority (2013); Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter; <https://www.vlga.org.au/sites/default/files/Victorian-Child-Friendly-Cities-and-Communities-Charter-2013.pdf>

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2016); Census quick statistics – 3350; https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/POA3350?opendocument

3. City of Ballarat convenes a Youth Council of young people aged between 12 and 25 years who meet routinely and develop youth led projects, campaigns and advocate for young people in the Ballarat region.

WHAT CHILDREN LOVE ABOUT BALLARAT

Children identified a broad range of things that they loved about Ballarat. More than one third of children (35%) commented on the 'feel' of Ballarat – the strong sense of community, peacefulness and safety that they experienced. Slightly fewer (31%) told us about the public amenities they strongly enjoyed, particularly parks and libraries for younger children, and bicycle tracks, skate parks, shops, restaurants and cafes for older children. One quarter of children (26%) singled out the natural environment, parks and nature reserves as a feature of Ballarat that they particularly loved.

“Everyone is so friendly and kind. It seems everyone knows each other.”
Josephine, aged 9

“I like playgrounds and I like water parks and I just love flying foxes.”
Isla, aged 4

A smaller proportion of children identified Ballarat's size, its heritage, and their school, as things they loved about Ballarat.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD

Knowing your neighbours and having good relationships with them was identified by two thirds of children (67%) as critical to a good neighbourhood. Children wanted to feel safe in their neighbourhoods (11%) and be able to do everyday things such as playing, walking and riding bikes outside their property (11%).

“Well you have to be a good persons and say ‘hello’ and ‘you’re welcome’ and ‘thank you’, and my favourite, ‘are you okay?’ We have to try and love everyone.” Isla, aged 4

“A good neighbourhood is a good place for riding bikes, skateboards and scooters.” Nive, aged 8

WHERE TO NEXT

There are a range of opportunities to further strengthen Ballarat as a Child Friendly City in the immediate term. These include:

- Ensuring business units across Council take time to engage with these findings and reflect on how well children's priorities are reflected in their work
- Business units embed consultation with children in their engagement plans
- Referring to the guide: Engaging Children in Decision Making
- Business units taking the opportunity to connect with the Early Years Partnership team for additional advice and support
- Engaging children in the development of the new Council Plan in 2021

BECOMING A LEADING CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

Ballarat City Council has an opportunity to become a leading Child Friendly City, to further empower our children as active citizens, and enjoy the benefits that will flow from having engaged children who learn from a young age that their voice is important, and develop into active citizens as youths and then adults.

Our vision is for Child Friendly Ballarat is:

Ballarat is a city where children thrive and are involved in the decisions that matter to them.

There are a range of ways that children's participation can be embedded more structurally in Council processes. These include:

- Embedding children's voices in Council plans, frameworks and strategies
- Convening a children's advisory group
- Letting children determine the issues for engagement
- Ensuring parents, teachers and those who support children are aware of opportunities for children to engage with Council
- Seeking to extend this work beyond Council, by advocating to schools and early childhood education centres to undertake more consultation with the children in their care.
- Seek alignment with school and kindergarten curricula to embed children's consultation through existing mechanisms. Investing in the Early Years Partnership team to engage more intensively with schools and ECEC has the opportunity to promote benefits for all involved, through activation of aspects of the civics and citizenship curriculum, adding a new dimension of engagement for student representative bodies, and as a strong demonstration of City of Ballarat's investment in being genuinely Child Friendly. The development of the new Council Plan for 2021 represents a sound opportunity to work with schools and ECEC in the development of a children's advisory group that can input to the Plan.
- Continue to develop the inclusivity of children's consultations through engaging with representative groups wherever possible.



1. INTRODUCTION

In October and November 2020, the City of Ballarat conducted a children's consultation, to invite children to share their opinions and experiences on three issues:

4. Why adults should listen to children
5. What makes a good neighbourhood, and
6. What they love about Ballarat.

This report presents the findings of this consultation and identifies further opportunities to include children's perspectives in decision making at City of Ballarat, to become a leading Child Friendly City.

1.1 WHY CHILDREN'S VOICES MATTER

Children are recognised as having the same fundamental human rights as adults, as well as their own special class of rights, by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴ (to which Australia is a signatory). Children's rights recognise their fundamental dignity and humanity, as well as their importance to a healthy society, both now and in the future.

Amongst these, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child expands on responsibilities of government to invite children's opinions and include their views in matters that affect them:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Including children in matters that affect them is considered important for multiple reasons, including:

- Recognition of **children's dignity** as individuals,
- Their **dependence** on families, communities and government to provide the conditions for nurturing their wellbeing, and rely on us to act in their interests,
- Children are not able to vote and without particular effort and attention are **at risk of being disenfranchised** from political and civic processes.
- Ensuring the **health and wellbeing of children** as they develop is an investment in our future society, with demonstrated ongoing social and economic benefits, and
- Children are particularly **future focussed** and bring **unique knowledge and perspectives** (as borne out in their responses to this consultation, see Section 2.2) and taking their views into account is a simple tactic for improving and future-proofing decision making.

There are more than 20,000 children in Ballarat, and children aged 13 years and younger make up approximately 20% of our population⁵. Including children in city planning and decisions alongside young people⁶ and adults is essential if the City of Ballarat is to address the priorities and needs of its entire electorate, and to be a truly Child Friendly City.

4. United Nations (1989); The Convention on the Rights of the Child; <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2016); Census quick statistics – 3350; https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/POA3350?opendocument

6. City of Ballarat convenes a Youth Council of young people aged between 12 and 25 years who meet routinely and develop youth led projects, campaigns and advocate for young people in the Ballarat region.

1.2 BALLARAT IS A CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

Ballarat is a signatory to the Victorian Charter for Child Friendly Cities and Communities ⁷. The charter recognises that without voting rights, the ability of children to influence the communities they live in is limited by the opportunities afforded to them by adults. The charter builds on recognition of the importance of including children detailed in the Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter, and the National Early Years Learnings Framework for Australia, *Belonging; Being & Becoming* (2009).

These frameworks all recognise that children are experts about their own experiences and aspirations.

The Charter has three basic tenets. That children are entitled to:

- 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**

The Ballarat community furthered the local understanding of what being a Child Friendly City means for Ballarat, as part of the development of the Municipal Early Years' Strategy (2015) ⁸, as a place that:

- 1. Has a community that actively engages in fulfilling the right of every child and their family**
- 2. Enables and ensures that children and families have access to, and receive, affordable services**
- 3. Builds an environment which encourages active community life**
- 4. Provides workplace environments that are flexible in meeting child and family needs**
- 5. Is safe in all dimensions**

7. Victorian Local Government Authority (2013); Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter; <https://www.vlga.org.au/sites/default/files/Victorian-Child-Friendly-Cities-and-Communities-Charter-2013.pdf>

8. <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-04/Municipal%20Early%20Years%20Plan%202015-18.pdf>

1.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN ACROSS CITY OF BALLARAT POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS

An increase in consultation with children is one of six priorities identified for improving Liveability in the City of Ballarat Council Plan (2017-2021), and a Child Friendly Ballarat Advisory Committee has been appointed to advocate for and act as ambassadors for Ballarat as Child Friendly City.

The importance of engaging children is also recognised across the following policies and frameworks:

- City Prosperity Framework – recognises the importance of including children’s visions of what they love about Ballarat, with suggestions including projecting children’s artworks around the city
- Today Tomorrow Together, Ballarat Strategy 2040 – this Strategy acknowledges that it serves the children of Ballarat, who will occupy the Ballarat of the future. The principles of the Child Friendly City are embedded in the Strategy, which calls for long term decision making to be based on the needs of children and communities, particularly noting the impact of land use decisions on children.
- Ballarat as a 10 minute city recognises the value of children having a nearby services, for example primary schools to facilitate walking to school
- The importance of establishing a future urban forest now, for the benefits of today’s children as adults as well as future children
- The importance of providing and protecting open green space and Ballarat’s distinctive soundscape

The Ballarat Municipal Early Years Plan – the Plan represents the City’s focus on children’s wellbeing and includes five priority areas for the City of Ballarat to invest in:

- Healthy children, thriving families
- Lifelong learning
- Positive leadership for a Child Friendly City
- Information for and about families
- Planning for growth and change

Community Engagement Framework – includes children as stakeholders in their own right

In addition to these, the needs of children are identified and reflected across a breadth of Council strategies and plans, including

- Active Ballarat Strategy
- Ballarat Aquatic Strategy
- Ballarat Open Space Strategy
- Digital Services Strategy
- Disability Access & Inclusion Plan
- Good Food For All Food Strategy 2019-2022
- Intercultural City Strategic Plan 2018-2021
- Playspace Strategy
- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Recreation Strategy
- Social Policy Framework

2. WHAT MATTERS TO CHILDREN IN BALLARAT IN 2020

2.1 WHAT WE DID

In October and November 2020, the City of Ballarat conducted a children's consultation, to understand the views and experiences of children across the municipality. The children's consultation was promoted via multiple means, including:

- City of Ballarat website
- Promotional video featuring local children in the target group
- City of Ballarat Facebook page
- Information and promotional materials emailed to partner organisations including schools, early education services (kindergartens and long day care), community organisations, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health and Human Services, family support services, Aboriginal community cooperatives and disability services.
- Newspaper article (The Courier)
- Word of mouth

Submissions were made via MySay on the City of Ballarat website between 26 October and 13 November. In total, 131 submissions were made with comments from 148 children⁹ aged from two to 13 years old.



9. Several submissions were made by entire school classes

2.2 WHAT CHILDREN IN BALLARAT TOLD US

Children's responses to the consultation questions were frank, passionate and articulate. Across all three consultation questions children demonstrated their strong engagement with the issue and their clarity about what was important to them.

2.2.1 CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG DESIRE TO BE HEARD

Children were able to provide a range of reasons why adults should listen to them, and these reasons reflected a number of fundamental principles. Half of children (51%) emphasised that children had unique knowledge or perspectives to and that adults would benefit from attending to these perspectives. One third (34%) of children identified their inclusion as an issue of justice on the basis of their personhood, seeing themselves as just as important as anyone else, and one in five (19%) felt that they were invested in the future at least as much, or more than, today's adults.

CHILDREN RECOGNISE THAT THEY HAVE UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES

Children recognised that they had a unique perspective and were full of ideas and opinions. Several children reported that adults were aware that children held different views, and should understand the importance of seeking out children's perspectives.

“‘cos they just have to and ‘cos they just know that kids actually know stuff. My emotions, I don't know, they're my feelings and they are so important alright!” Abby, aged 4

“Because we sometimes notice thing adult's (sic) don't”
Gabe, aged 11

Some children emphasised that children held knowledge that adults were seen to lack, and that adults stood to gain from asking children to share what they knew. Older children were more likely to refer to holding knowledge that they sometimes felt frustrated that adults did not share.

“Because sometimes children can have ideas that are more relevant then adults ideas (sic). Children can have a different point of view then adults.” Libby, aged 10

“Kids know more about the present day and they want a great city in the future”
Thomas, aged 12

Other children did not think it mattered whether their input was more or less valuable than an adult's but was seen to be worthwhile simply for its uniqueness.

“Because we have opinions too and they might not always be good ones but we should still get an opinion” Blake, aged 10

CHILDREN RECOGNISE THEMSELVES AS IMPORTANT AND DESERVING OF RESPECT, EQUAL TO ADULTS

Children understood themselves as individuals deserving of rights because of their fundamental humanity, and they extended this rationale equitably across all people. Some went so far as to express irritation that they should even have to justify why adults should listen to them; it was seen as inherently just that they should do so.

“That’s a big, hard question. You have to listen to everyone, not just kids. maybe poor people too.” Arkady, aged 7

“Because everyone has a say, it wouldn’t be fair for kids not to have a voice in the world just because of their age” Brooke, aged 12

Some children identified a transactional justice, believing that adults should listen to children because children have to listen to adults.

“We give adults a say, kids should have those same rights”
Lucy, aged 11

Other children noted that while they might not be as experienced or knowledgeable as adults, they were no less important.

“Adults should listen to kids because there opinion is no more important than ours (sic). We are all human so why do adults have more input just because they have gone to school longer than us why does that mean that they are more important”

Harper, aged 11

YOUNGER CHILDREN PARTICULARLY RECOGNISED THEIR DEPENDENCE ON ADULTS TO ACT IN THEIR BEST INTEREST

Young children expressed that their agency was contingent on the support of the adults in their world, and identified a range of everyday needs that required adults to listen to them.

“Because I need to tell you something. Sometimes I need to talk. I want to know something. I want them to talk to me.” Annie, aged 3

“When I am home Mummy listens to me. Because I have to tell the teachers what happened so they can help me.” Tiffany, aged 4

Older children recognised their reliance on adults to act in their interests on broader social and civic issues as a key reason that adults should consider the perspectives and impact of their decisions on children into the future.

“We’re the ones that are going to live in adults (sic) choices we know what we want to live in and how we want the world to be”

Millie, aged 12

OLDER CHILDREN ARE PARTICULARLY DESIROUS TO SHAPE THE COMMUNITY THAT THEY LIVE IN

Older children recognised their own leadership qualities, and were desirous to contribute and influence their city. They felt belonging and ownership of Ballarat, regardless of age.

“Because we have a voice and we can lead too” Isabella, aged 11

Children saw a lot of opportunity to improve the world and their community, and did not want to wait until adulthood to start influencing the world around them. They also recognised that they would inherit long term problems unless they were addressed now, and some indicated that they had a stronger vested interest in the future that adults currently do. Children’s comments demonstrate that they already felt a responsibility, but also burden, to take custody of the world they live in.

“Because kids will be here after our parents” Isaac, aged 9

“Because kids are the future, in 50 years’ time, it will be our world” Rex, aged 12

Older children in particular were passionate on this issue, and articulated clearly their desire to improve their world. Some children’s responses indicated that they held deep concern for the world, or referred to ‘saving’ it.

“I think adults should listen to kids because even though you have lots of choices and we depend on you, this world is going to be ours in a few decades, and us kids are the ones with the most recent information and the hardest time, because of global warming, overpopulation, poverty, the list goes on! But kids who might seem inexperienced, are the ones dealing with the trouble generations of people have caused, so please give us a say.” Kate, aged 10

2.2.2 WHAT CHILDREN LOVE ABOUT BALLARAT

Children identified a broad range of things that they loved about Ballarat. More than one third of children (35%) commented on the 'feel' of Ballarat – the strong sense of community, peacefulness and safety that they experienced. Slightly fewer (31%) told us about the amenities they strongly enjoyed, and one quarter of children (26%) singled out the natural environment, parks and nature reserves as a feature of Ballarat that they particularly loved.

A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Children told us that they loved Ballarat's sense of community, where people were generally friendly and welcoming, and they felt connected to those around them.

"I love my family. I love all my friend. I love people I don't know. That makes me feel bit happy." Isaac, aged 4

"Everyone is so friendly and kind. It seems everyone knows each other." Josephine, aged 9

"I like the cold and rainy weather and how people just get along with each other and its just great" Finnigan, aged 12

Children also talked about Ballarat as a calm and peaceful place, which they valued, as well as their sense of belonging.

"It's a calm and happy town and I grew up here" Isobel, aged 10

"The reason why I love Ballarat is probably because of its diversity with both the environment and the residence/visitors, it is a peaceful place with lots to do!" Nivash, aged 12

A sense of safety was mentioned by older children, and many commented on Ballarat being a safe place to live.

"I love that it is a safe environment and I feel safe" Harper, aged 11

STRONGLY VALUING COMMUNAL SPACES AND PLACES

Children told us about the public amenities that they loved in Ballarat. For younger children this was often a favourite playground, water parks and the library.

“I like playgrounds and I like water parks and I just love flying foxes.” Isla, aged 4

“Playgrounds, parks, libraries” Juan, aged 4

Older children valued having a range of amenities available to them locally. This included the aquatic centre, sporting facilities, libraries, skate parts, bike tracks, shops and cinema.



“I love ballarat because it has everything you could possibly need and want”
Alyssa, aged 11

NATURE AND THE OUTDOORS AS PART OF DAILY LIFE

Children of all ages singled out the natural environment as something they loved about Ballarat. For children, their enjoyment of nature was aesthetic (it made the town more beautiful), but also tangible, as they talked about places they frequented as part of daily life. Children's responses demonstrated a sense of care towards the environment, that they would like to see preserved.

Many children mentioned Lake Wendouree in the things they loved about Ballarat, as well as the gardens, Yarrowee River, Black Hill, wetlands, and nature trails.

"I like the big playground that is near the lake. All the trees that grow."

Eiley, aged 4

"I also love that it has beautiful nature and is very inviting and you always feel welcome." Harper, aged 11



OTHER FAVOURITE THINGS

Approximately one in ten children (11%) told us about they loved the range of food available in Ballarat, and mentioned their favourite cafes and restaurants and foodie spots.

“The variety of food options” Anonymous, Grade 6 Sebastopol Primary School

“The thing that I love most about Ballarat is the shops and the restaurants”
Lincoln, aged 12

The importance of school was also apparent, with just fewer than one in ten (8%) singling out their school as a thing they loved about Ballarat.

“I love about ballarat the type of school that I go to, it’s really nice and has lots of nice people. My friends live really close to me.” Lillian, aged 5

Several older children (8%) commented on Ballarat’s size as a thing they loved. For most, this was about sensing that Ballarat was not too big and the familiarity and sense of connection this fostered, whilst still offering lots of amenity.

“It’s not too big and it has lots of things other places don’t have” Thomas, aged 12

HERITAGE

A few children highlighted Ballarat’s unique heritage something they particularly loved.

“I love Ballarat because of it’s scenery (sic), it is very unique and I love that we kept most of the old original buildings.”

Brooke, aged 12

2.2.3 WHAT MAKES A GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD

Knowing your neighbours and having good relationships with them was identified by two thirds of children (67%) as critical to a good neighbourhood. Children wanted to feel safe in their neighbourhoods (11%) and feel able to do everyday things such as playing, walking and riding bikes outside their property (11%).

KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOURS

A majority of children recognised that having good relationships with their neighbours was key to a good neighbourhood, and this was consistent across both younger and older children.

“Well you have to be a good person and say ‘hello’ and ‘you’re welcome’ and ‘thank you’, and my favourite, ‘are you okay?’ We have to try and love everyone.” Isla, aged 4

“I believe having a good neighbourhood depends on the people around you. To have a good neighbourhood, you should have people you enjoy being around and people you can trust.”

Evie, aged 12

They referred to having friendly neighbours they could make small talk with, and rely on when needed, as things they appreciated in a neighbourhood. Children appreciated small acts of kindness and a sense of connection to those around them.

“A good neighbourhood is when you can rely on your neighbours to mind your belongings while you’re on vacation.”

Tyler, aged 11

Some children particularly valued having other children in their neighbourhood that they could make friends with, as a feature of a good neighbourhood.

“Friendly people and families that have kids (for everyone to get social with their neighbours)” Lucy, aged 11

A SENSE OF SAFETY AND BELONGING

Children told us they want to feel safe in their neighbourhood. They articulated this as an absence of unpleasantness including loud noises at night, and loud and scary traffic in their street. They also recognised clean and well kempt streets and houses as a signifier that the neighbourhood was nice and safe. That children noting the absence of these things in their unprompted responses suggests that these children were sometimes exposed to these elements in Ballarat and they had an impact on these children's sense of belonging and security in their neighbourhood.

"People to don't fight with other" Mia, aged 11

"The things that make a good neighbourhood is respect, a clean street and not being stupid" Quistis, aged 12

An ability to move freely beyond the bounds of their own home was valued by some children, who told us about having safe places to walk their dogs, ride their bikes and play in their neighbourhoods as important to a good neighbourhood.

"I like walking with my Mum." Eiley, aged 5

"A good neighbourhood is a good place for riding bikes, skateboards and scooters." Nive, aged 8

GREENERY, PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

Children sought connection to the natural world in their neighbourhoods. A good neighbourhood was seen as a place with an abundance of trees and nature, and green space such as attractive verges, parks and playgrounds. They also enjoyed the animal life in their neighbourhood, and appreciated seeing both wild and domestic animals.

“When it’s really pretty and has roses and flowers and trees. People taking their dogs for a walk.” Felicity, aged 4

A great neighbourhood is full of beautiful trees, nature and also great people.”
Tahlia, aged 11

Older children’s appreciation of nature extended to seeing their neighbourhoods as free of pollution and an interest in the health of the natural environment.

“Well, kindness and teamwork as well as clean air and nature, actually”
Emily, aged 12

2.3 HOW THEY TOLD US

Children's written submissions via MySay and hard copy were highly articulate. These written submissions were also accompanied by visual submissions from 14 children. These included drawings and photographs the children shared to express themselves and one was a screen shot of responses.

In their visual artworks, children shared many of the things they loved about Ballarat and were important to them. These responses strongly feature the landscape and nature, animals and people, and the beauty children identify in Ballarat. The complete visual submissions are included at appendix A.

It is hoped that future consultations will include the capability to accept video submissions.



3. STEPS FOR STRENGTHENING AS A CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

3.1 BUILDING BLOCKS: ENGAGING CHILDREN ACROSS THE CITY OF BALLARAT IN 2021

Being consulted in decisions that affect them is a child's right. Embedding children's perspectives in our understandings of Ballarat and our decision making will further strengthen Ballarat as a Child Friendly City. The following are some tangible actions that can be taken in the short term to further implement and embed the Child Friendly Cities charter across all areas of Council.

3.1.1 WORK WITH THE FINDINGS OF THE 2020 CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION

Suggestions for working with the findings of this consultation include dedicating time to discuss these findings with your team and reflect on how well children's priorities (as distinct from adult's priorities for children) are incorporated in your work, as well as opportunities to improve on Ballarat's liveability for children.

3.1.2 EMBED CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN IN ENGAGEMENT PLANS

If you don't already engage with children, suggestions to support consulting with children include:

- Ensure lists of stakeholders include children
- Embed consultation with children in your engagement plans (a step by step outline is provided below)
- Refer to the guide on Engaging Children in Decision Making for more detail on conducting a children's consultation

WHO SHOULD CONSULT WITH CHILDREN

Children are stakeholders in city life and should be consulted on a broad range of issues, including:

- City design
- Neighbourhood planning and engagement
- Communications and Marketing
- Learning and Community Hubs
- Strategic Planning
- Traffic and transport
- Sport and Active Living
- Heritage

WHEN TO CONSULT WITH CHILDREN

- Before developing plans, strategies and budgets
- Before designing any environments that children will use
- When developing, evaluating and reviewing environments, programs and services that children use
- When there is broad community consultation about issues that affect them
- During the review phase of planning (prior to implementation)
- Long term strategic planning (the Council Plan)

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- An inclusive consultation is designed to reach children of all ages, cultures and abilities
- Consulting with children can be a simple process
- The Early Years Partnership team is here to support you
- After consulting with, ensure you share back with children how you are working with what they've told you

3.1.3 ENGAGE CHILDREN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW COUNCIL PLAN

The development of a new Council Plan in 2021 is an opportunity to further strengthen Ballarat as a Child Friendly City. With children representing one fifth of our population, and many who will be approaching adulthood by the end of the Plan's life, the views of children are critical to ensuring the liveability and sustainability of our city now and into the future.

3.1.4 CONNECT WITH OUR TEAM FOR SUPPORT

The Early Years Partnership team are available to support your work in engaging with and consulting children.

Please reach out to us when you are planning a community consultation, and we can work with you to identify the most appropriate consultation methods for children, support to engage a diversity of children in the community, shape consultation questions and support analysis and interpretation. We can also connect you with our partners and networks to promote your consultation.

CONTACT:

Amy Treyvaud, *Coordinator Early Years Partnerships*

 amytrevaud@ballarat.vic.gov.au

 0419 282 390

3.2 TOP OF THE CLASS: A VISION FOR BALLARAT AS A LEADING CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

VISION

City of Ballarat has an opportunity to become a leading Child Friendly City, to further empower our children as active citizens, and enjoy the benefits that will flow from having engaged children who learn from a young age that their voice is important, and develop into active citizens as youths and then adults.

Our vision is for Child Friendly Ballarat is:

Ballarat is a city where children thrive and are involved in the decisions that matter to *them*.

3.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO BE A LEADING CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

There are a range of ways that children's participation can be embedded more structurally in Council processes. These include:

EMBED CHILDREN'S VOICES IN COUNCIL PLANS, FRAMEWORKS, AND STRATEGIES

Having children's perspectives informing and reflected in Council plans, frameworks and strategies as standard practice will demonstrate that children are seen as meaningful stakeholders, and put the sentiments of a Child Friendly City into practice city-wide.

CONVENE A CHILDREN'S ADVISORY GROUP

A Children's Advisory Group would sit adjacent to the Youth Advisory Group, and provide input on matters that are important to children. The Children's Advisory Group could also have responsibility for supporting engagement with a wider cohort of children through promoting consultation opportunities with City of Ballarat.

LET CHILDREN DETERMINE THE ISSUES FOR ENGAGEMENT

In a leading Child Friendly City, children should have opportunity to tell council what matters to them, not just respond to requests. Developing and promoting a forum or mechanism by which children can bring issues to Council would allow children greater agency and influence.

PARENTS, TEACHERS AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT CHILDREN ARE AWARE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN TO ENGAGE WITH COUNCIL

Children's participation is often contingent on the adults around them to facilitate opportunities. Opportunities for children to engage with City of Ballarat should include dedicated education and promotion to parents, teachers, child care workers and those who support children. This can also extend to a broader effort to increase awareness and understanding of Ballarat as a Child Friendly City, and what this entails.

SEEK TO EXTEND THIS WORK BEYOND COUNCIL

To continue to engage with schools, kindergartens, playgroups and community organisations and state government departments that work with children to understand children as stakeholders in their own right, and provide opportunities for children to have meaningful input on issues that matter to them. For example, increased consultation with ECEC and kindergartens can occur within individual centres, and include consulting children on their preferences for aspects of their curriculum such as excursions.

SEEK ALIGNMENT WITH SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CURRICULA

Partnering with schools and kindergartens is an inclusive approach, as it is likely to reach a greater breadth of children than mechanisms which rely on individual parents and guardians to facilitate them.

There may be some opportunity to align civic participation of children with components of the primary school and kindergarten curriculum, to increase children's awareness of their civic rights and opportunities. Ideally with the support of the Department of Education and Training, this could include a municipality wide approach to embed children's consultations on key issues in alignment with the curriculum, facilitated by schools and kindergartens in partnership with Council. With additional capacity, the Early Years team could support a range of opportunities.

Suggestions for working with ECEC and kindergartens

Determining the best way for City of Ballarat to engage young children through ECEC and kindergartens could be explored through a co-design approach with providers in Ballarat, to develop processes for children to be consulted on civic issues.

Suggestions for working with primary schools

Engaging with schools should align with existing structures and curriculum, and the approach should deliver value both for the City of Ballarat and for the participating schools in achieving delivery of their core work.

Student representative bodies (such as junior school councils) provide an existing forum that could be engaged by City of Ballarat. Establishing a relationship with the key school staff who lead these bodies could enable Council issues to be considered by the student representatives, who may also have capacity to canvass the student body more broadly. This approach may be strengthened through formalisation and recognition of participating schools through an MOU between principals and council to participate in Council consultations and designation as a Children's Council signatory, or some alternative appellation (such as an Actively Civic school) that could be promoted on the school's website or other communications. This approach is likely to require active liaison and support by Council to maintain school participation.

Further opportunities relate to aligning with school civics and citizenship curriculum. At levels 3 and 4 this curriculum requires that students:

- Identify features of government and law and describe key democratic values
- Identify how and why decisions are made democratically in communities
- Explain the roles of local government and some familiar services provided at the local level¹⁰

10. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority; Civics and Citizenship: <https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-humanities/civics-and-citizenship/curriculum/f-10>

4.

**APPENDIX A:
VISUAL SUBMISSIONS**

"
Charlie,
he's my
dog.
He's
sitting
down."
"



"
Just
me,
Isaac"
"

Why should adults listen to kids?

'Cos they just have to and cos they just know that kids actually know stuff. My emotions. I don't know. they're my feelings and they are so important. alright!

What do you love about Ballarat?

I like Ballarat. No... I actually love and love Ballarat. I like all the playgrounds and I like all of the lakes and I love all of the peoples. I love my family and next I love all the old peoples even though some old people just stop remembering. I like the little bit old people at Botanikids. They are my favourite.

What makes a good neighbourhood?

Lots of play areas and lots of animals and lots of walking places for my Mum and a community garden with a community cat like Pearly. Yeah!

Abby. 4 years

ABBY ALBY

My BALLARAT



I LOVE ALL THE OLD PEOPLE

Abby - Age 4

Why should adults listen to kids?

'Um, well they should. Um, because all people are different. People are like dogs because dogs are all different. All dogs are important and, so, all the people are important. You're welcome'

What do you love about Ballarat?

I like playgrounds and I like water parks and I just love flying foxes. I don't like the park when it's too sunny anymore. The sun burns my skin and the flying fox and the slide might burn my skin too. That's just too sad, actually.

What makes a good neighbourhood?

Well you have to be a good person and say 'hello' and 'you're welcome' and 'thank you' and my favourite, 'are you okay?'. We have to try and love everyone.

Isla. 4 years

IZLA
NOVEMBER 2020

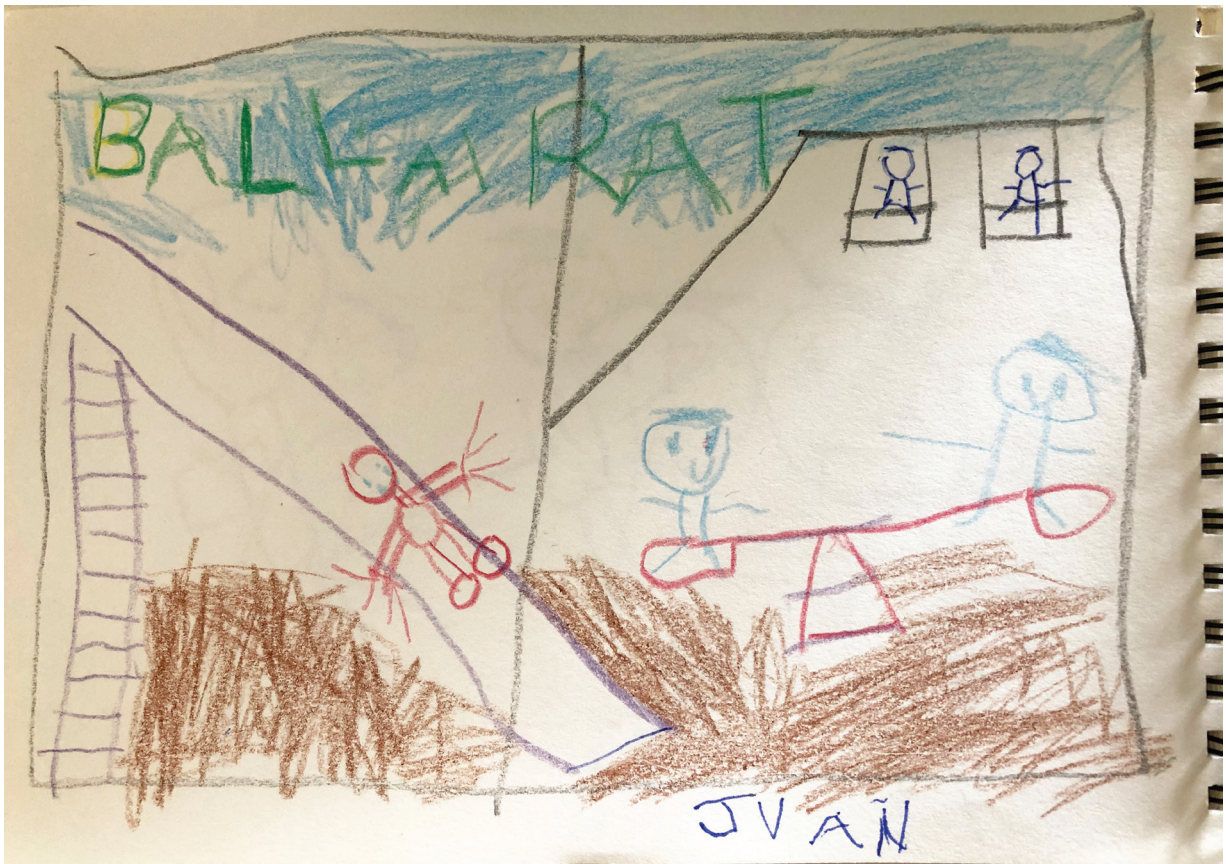
My BALLARAT



Isla - Age 4



Jairam - Age 11



Juan - Age 4

Why should adults listen to kids?
 "Because they can listen. They can do it. Their ears work cos theyre old and can use them good."

What do you love about Ballarat?
 "Cos I do love Ballarat. I love all of it. Yeah. I really like all the flowers. Ballarat not have many lady bugs. no. no they dont. Ballarat. I see butterflies and butterflies."

I miss the snow. It's just gone and it gone just like that. yeah.

What makes a good neighbourhood?
 "No naughty drivers. No noisy drivers. Hurts my ears. I like big. safe cars. Mel's car or Mum's red car."

I just love the 'playing' grounds everywhere.

But. um. Ballarat needs some coon-i-corns (unicorns). That will be so wonderful. actually.

Lexi. 3 years *Lexi*

November 2020

Lexi - Age 3

November 2020

Why should adults listen to kids?
 "Huh... Um... I the boss my body. I the boss too. I can talk. I talk so good. Hello. Listen now please. I say please. Okay."

What do you love about Ballarat?
 "Um... Baby chinos (of) course. Um... I like swans. I like ducks. I not scared. I sad. they gone cos I gone home. Red. pink. pink. purple and more purple flowers. Yeah. I like flowers. I like swings okay. That's enough now..."

What makes a good neighbourhood?
 "Huh? Um... Sunglasses. My hat. People. People be careful is good. See my Nanna. yeah. Nanna good neighbourhood. Water and flowers and an-mals (animals)."

Mia. 2 years

Mia - Age 2



Ida - Age 5



Declan - Age 11



Dominic - Age 11

CITY OF
BALLARAT



Child Friendly
Ballarat