

GREATER BUNBURY
Early Years Strategy &
Action Plan
2018-2023

BUNBURY *Geographe*







GREATER BUNBURY Early Years Strategy & Action Plan **2018-2023**

Our Vision

The Greater Bunbury Early Years Strategy is a whole-of-community approach to ensuring children in the region are healthy, happy and socially and emotionally secure. This can be achieved through collaborative community mobilisation to provide safe inclusive environments and ensure all children and their families are supported and valued.

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The combined Councils of Bunbury, Capel & Dardanup are pleased to endorse this Greater Bunbury Early Years Strategy.



Background

This strategy is a joint initiative of the City of Bunbury, Shire of Capel and Shire of Dardanup along with other state government and not-for-profit agencies with a presence in the Greater Bunbury region.

A need for a collaborative strategy to ensure common goals and collective action towards meeting those goals was seen as vital, and funding support for the drafting of such a strategy was received through a Community Development Grants Program from the Department of Communities, as well as from contributions from each of the three Local Government Authorities (LGAs) identified in this strategy

This Strategy was formulated through a series of workshops and collaborations between key stakeholders. This project followed from an earlier research period when, in 2013-2014 an Early Years Officer funded by the Department of Education was hosted by the City of Bunbury, and engaged with local early years agencies to examine the benefits of engagement to build community capacity and wellbeing. Since the completion of that project, City of Bunbury officers and officers from the other local governments have continued to engage with the Early Years Networks and Schools of The Future group,

attending meetings and supporting community driven initiatives and outcomes.

The adoption of this strategy aligns with the goals of the LGAs involved. The City of Bunbury has indicated a commitment to the development of an Early Years Strategy in its Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan 2015-2020. The Shire of Dardanup identifies the facilitation of and lobbying for the provision of adequate health care and community services as an important part of meeting its objective for “a safe and vibrant community” in its Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028. The Shire of Capel has an aspiration to provide “facilities and services that the diverse needs of the community and provide a safe place to live, work and visit” in its Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028. The 2016 WA Public Health Act acknowledges that local governments have a unique ability to influence the health of their communities through policy, structure and behaviour change and will in future require all local governments to adopt a Health and Wellbeing Plan. The



formulation of this early years strategy is a proactive part of ensuring the health of children and families is supported by local governments.

Agencies working within the Greater Bunbury area service families from a number of LGAs additional to those outlined in this strategy including Donnybrook, Harvey and Collie. As such, collaboration is seen as vital in ensuring all families have the necessary support and access to services, whilst avoiding duplication.

The population of the LGAs party to this strategy is growing, with continued growth especially likely in the shire of Dardanup, with the new City of Wanju being developed and a likely future population exceeding 50 000 people. As of 2016, the combined population of Bunbury, Capel and Dardanup was 63, 075, with 4 118 children aged 0-4 years and 4351 children aged 5-9 years.

This strategy provides a framework to guide the efforts of the key stakeholders in engaging and supporting children and families over the next five years.

This Strategy has been endorsed by the Greater Bunbury Early Years Network, and was compiled with the collaborative input of representatives from the following agencies and organisations:

- Dardanup Primary School
- Eaton Day care
- Eaton Family Centre
- Eaton Primary School
- Glen Huon Primary School
- Investing in Our Youth
- Kingston Primary School
- Playgroup WA
- South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS)
- Relationships Australia (WA)
- River Valley Primary School
- WA Country Health Service
- City of Bunbury
- Shire of Capel
- Shire of Dardanup
- Edith Cowan University (South West)
- Parenting Connection
- Good Start Early Learning

Research

Early Childhood Research and Significance

Whilst early childhood policy might not immediately be seen as a local government responsibility, it is known that building a productive, safe and successful community relies on healthy child development. A strong start in life leads to increased social, economic and crime reduction outcomes for individuals and communities.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’. The health of a child from conception through the early years provides the foundation of physical, social and emotional wellbeing for the remainder of their life. This health is impacted by genetics and the health of parents and caregivers, as well as the interplay of environmental and social factors¹. The Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University² asserts that positive early experiences allow for the development of strong brain architecture, skills and learning capabilities, while poor early health will increase the prevalence of chronic disease in adult life, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease as well as mental health disorders. Thus, programs and efforts to target adult health and disease prevention are more effective if evidence informed investments are also made to strengthen the foundations of health in the early years.

Providing support to children and families in the early years is also shown to have economic benefits for communities. Investing in programs for children and families reduces disadvantage, in turn leading to reduction in crime, increased employment and other health and community advantages over both the short and long term. Conversely, the effects of disadvantage, if not addressed, appear early in a child’s life and accumulate over time. The most effective time to intervene in an individual’s health, development

and general wellbeing is in the antenatal and early childhood phase, with support given here preventing or significantly reducing problems in later childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Universal access to programs for all families, scaled to the level of need and vulnerability of individuals, has been shown to be preferable to service delivery focused on treating established problems.³

¹ Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council. (2011). National Framework for Universal Child and Family Health Services

² Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. (2010). The Foundations of Lifelong Health are Built in Early Childhood

³ Commissioner for Children and young People, Western Australia (2013). The Profile of Children and Young People in WA



The Australian Early Childhood Census (AEDC)

The Australian Early Childhood Census (AEDC)⁴ is a measure of the development of Australian children at school entry age, and is widely used by communities and agencies to track the progress of early childhood population and to shape decision making with regards to targeted service delivery. The AEDC report compiled every three years, measures children across five domains and identifies the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable in one or more of these domains. Results are reported based on the child's community of residence.

⁴ Australian Early Development Census data and explanations are accessible via <https://www.aedc.gov.au/>



The domains measured by the census and the key indicators of each are as follows:

- **Physical health and wellbeing**

Physical health, motor skills, independence.

- **Social Competence**

Getting along with other children and adults, self-confidence, ability to follow class routines.

- **Emotional maturity**

Able to concentrate, not aggressive, anxious, or impulsive, willing to help others.

- **Language and Cognitive Development**

Interested in reading and writing, able to count and recognise numbers and shapes.

- **Communication Skills**

Able to communicate with adults and other children, tell a story and articulate themselves.

Research



	GEOGRAPHY				
	Australia	Western Australia	Bunbury	Capel	Dardanup
PHYSICAL	9.7	9.9	18.7	12.3	12.7
SOCIAL	9.9	8.4	8.9	15.4	11.6
EMOTIONAL	8.4	8.5	12.2	11.1	12.7
LANGUAGE	6.5	6.6	12.4	5.5	10.5
COMMUNICATION	8.5	8.0	13.7	8.3	8.4
VULN 1	22.0	21.3	31.9	26.5	28.6
VULN 2	11.1	10.5	15.9	13.8	13.8

The table above shows results in the most recent AEDC report (2015) for the Bunbury, Capel and Dardanup LGA's and state and national results.

There are more children in the Greater Bunbury Region (across Bunbury, Capel and Dardanup), identified as being vulnerable in two or more domains and in one or more domains than both the state and national average. The percentage of children vulnerable in the physical domain was well above the state average, with other domains of concern varying.

AEDC results are used by agencies and governments across Australia to track the progress of populations in reducing developmental vulnerability and, as such, are the benchmark a good when measuring how children in the Greater Bunbury region are progressing in comparison with other regions. Tracking longitudinal results will show whether vulnerability rates are shifting in the Greater Bunbury region over time.

The South West Health Profile (2015), prepared by the WA Country Health Service, notes that AEDC results indicate 'A high need for child development services including access to multidisciplinary teams made up of medical services, child health nurses, speech pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy' Other relevant data reported in the South West Health Profile⁵ includes:

- **A significantly lower proportion of SW children (33%) are sedentary than statewide (39%)**
- **A higher proportion (6.6% compared with 3.8%) of children reported as having used an alternative health care service in the last 12 months.**
- **two in seven children (28%) had a parent who smoked during their pregnancy**
- **nearly half of children (46%) did not eat the recommended daily serves of vegetables**
- **two in three children (68%) did not eat the recommended daily serves of fruit**
- **half of children (50%) did not do sufficient physical activity, and**
- **one in twenty children (5%) reported height and weight measurements that classified them as obese.**

For all children to have the best possible start in life, and for families and children to be provided with opportunities to develop to their full potential, the LGAs, community agencies and interagency groups identified within this strategy have committed to working collaboratively.

⁵ WA Country Health Service. (2015) South West Health Profile





Outcomes

This strategy focuses on actions that are continuously developed and reviewed by stakeholders, identifying improvements and working together strategically. The strategy is effective if regularly monitored and opportunities to adjust action plans to meet the success factors are built in to relevant organisations, LGA's and groups relevant business plans.

There are four key strategies; health and wellbeing, learning, family capacity and collaboration. For each strategy, corresponding actions will be used to drive the development of relevant action and implementation plans for key stakeholders. Each strategy has associated success factors and indicators that can be used to guide and measure progress.

Each strategy and its corresponding actions aim to build capacity, develop, improve and retain services and resources available in the LGA's. Thus ensuring viable and sustainable options for support are available and suitable to the identified needs of children and families in the Greater Bunbury Region. Achieving the success factors will reduce identified gaps, develop optimal environments for children and families while increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood development.

The success of each strategy will be continuously evaluated by stakeholders.



1

Health and Well Being

Children and families have access to services, programs, facilities and events that support their health, wellbeing and quality family time.

STRATEGY

- Best practice and national standards should inform the development of facilities, services and programs.
- Priority in planning for facilities programs and services, related to early childhood development, should be informed by AEDC data, to ensure effective policy responses.
- LGAs in collaboration with community partners will disseminate information about early years services, programs and events to the community through a range of mediums.
- Spaces and places provided by LGAs prioritise early years needs in terms of accessibility and affordability, within what is possible under the Local Government Act.



2

Learning

Children, through their families and communities, have access to opportunities that promote skills development and learning for life.

STRATEGY

- LGAs continue to support early learning through exploring ways to build on the success of programs such as the Better Beginnings program.
- Early years learning programs to be informed by current research and best practice.
- Education and care services, and school holidays programs incorporate skills development and learning for children in a supportive and safe environment.
- Community agencies collaborate with LGAs to provide evidence informed programs for skills development and learning, particularly in areas of identified need.



Family Capacity

Families and service providers have the capacity to confidently support the development of the children in their care.

STRATEGY

- LGAs and community agencies work to maximise the use of community grants, internal and external funding to provide programs and events that build family capacity.
- LGAs support community agencies to provide programs to build family capacity, particularly for evidence informed programs in areas of identified need.
- LGAs facilitate accessible and inclusive events for families which provide for social inclusion.



Collaboration

Local Governments, agencies and service providers collaborate to ensure resources are directed for maximum effect to reduce duplication of services and eliminate gaps in service delivery for children and families.

STRATEGY

- The Greater Bunbury Early Years Network (GBEYN) will be the forum for the collaboration between community agencies and LGAs. LGAs will have membership at this forum.
- The GBEYN in collaboration with the LGAs will convene a workshop discussion and evaluation of the latest AEDC data when it becomes available
- Community agencies will provide information on services, programs and events with relevance to families and children, to the LGAs.
- Informing the community of services, programs and events with relevance to families and children is a shared responsibility between community agencies and the community facing areas of the LGAs.

Success Factors and Indicators

The success factors and indicators listed below align with the strategies and associated actions. These success factors and indicators will be reviewed by the Greater Bunbury Early Years Network and LGA's annually.

1

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: Services, programs, facilities and events in the Greater Bunbury area support the health and wellbeing of children and families.

- INDICATORS
- Improved AEDC results
 - Attendance records and activity reports, surveys, feedback and significant stories
 - Standing item on GBEYN agenda – minute identified success indicators as presented by LGA's and community agencies to GBEYN
 - Number of services, programs and events implemented
 - Number and types of facilities utilized for early years initiatives
-

2

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: Children have increased access to opportunities that promote skills development and learning for life

- INDICATORS
- Improved AEDC results.
 - GBEYN will measure increased opportunities and identify gaps through collation of information collected from members from the below sources;
 - Number of agencies involved in collaborative partnerships through the GBEYN
 - Attendance records and activity reports, surveys, feedback and significant stories
 - Number of evidence informed initiatives
-

3

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: Service and resources for children and families are identified and gaps addressed

- INDICATORS
- Standing item on GBEYN agenda – minute identified gaps
 - Standing item on the GBEYN – minute strategies, progress and success
-

4

SUCCESS FACTOR 4: Sustained operation of the Greater Bunbury Early Years Network including representatives of all major community agencies and LGAs

- INDICATORS
- Number of meetings and attendees remains constant or grows.
 - Reduction in the percentage of children identified as vulnerable in two or more components of the AEDC
 - Meetings remain constant and members continue to actively participate
 - Increased partnerships and collaborations
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